

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Music of U of M Professor James Dillon featured in the Southern Theater's 'Ensemble Dal Niente: Music of James Dillon' on Sunday, April 3

"Unquestionably one of Britain's leading composers... [James Dillon's] musical language may have the rigour of 20th-century modernism behind it, but it also carries the weight of the musical tradition, and seems fully aware of its debt to the past." – *The Guardian*

"[The music of Ensemble Dal Niente is] full of surprising, jaw-dropping beauty that lingers in the mind long after the final note has faded." – *Chicago Classical Review*

Minneapolis, MN (3/3/2011)—The music of University of Minnesota School of Music composition professor James Dillon will be featured in an evening of music at the Southern Theater (1420 Washington Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55454) titled "Ensemble Dal Niente: Music of James Dillon" on Sunday, April 3 at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$20 and are available at www.southerntheater.org.

The Chicago-based Ensemble Dal Niente performs a range of music from the past century: European avant-garde, American high modernism and styles influenced by popular music and jazz. For this performance, the group tackles the cutting-edge music of composer and University of Minnesota professor James Dillon, showcasing an array of solo and ensemble pieces featuring U of M School of Music alumna and Twin Cities soprano Carrie Henneman Shaw, clarinet, vibraphone, piano, string quartet and more. Dillon's catalogue is rooted in the European classical tradition, touched by his formative exposure to Scottish pipe music, and displays a wide interest in other music from jazz and Delta blues, to the Hindustani classical tradition and Oriental court music.

"In James Dillon, Ensemble Dal Niente sees an opportunity for collaboration with one of the world's most sophisticated and unique musical minds, whose music we feel is underrepresented," says Ryan Muncy, executive director and saxophonist of Ensemble Dal Niente. "As several members of the ensemble are deeply interested in Dillon's music, and considering the geographical convenience of presenting a concert of James' music in his city of residence, this opportunity is the perfect of marriage of imagination, ideality and practicality."

"Dillon's works demand musicians who are fearless, deeply committed to contemporary music, and open to exploration of unconventional playing techniques," says Muncy. "Dal Niente's musicians are of a rare breed; they are willing to push themselves to physical and mental extremes for the sake of expression."

The programming for Dal Niente's performance at the Southern Theater has been largely influenced by the composer himself, who took great care in sculpting its overall shape and musical experience.

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Evening Program:

- *The Book of Elements, Vol. 4* (2002) for piano
- *Time Lag Zero* (1982) for female voice and viola
- *Come Live with Me* (1981) for mezzo-soprano, flute, oboe, percussion, and piano
- *Todesengel* (1996) for clarinet and vibraphone
- *The Soadie Waste* (2003) for piano and string quartet

One of the most ambitious composers of our time, **James Dillon**'s music is extremely complex and virtuosic, marked by intricate rhythms, irrational meters, extended instrumental techniques and excessive ornamentation and embellishments. Dillon composes massive cycles of extractable works which are multi-movement formal structures containing pieces with various instrumentations that may be performed as independent, stand-alone pieces on an event, or in succession as a massive cyclical work when programmed in succession. He has composed numerous cycles, the most ambitious of which is considered his "Nine Rivers," a nine-piece set of works with various instrumentations ranging from a single percussionist to fifty instrumentalists, vocalists and live electronics that requires two different venues next door to one another.

Dillon is a self-taught composer. In his early years, he was involved with Scottish bagpipe music and was in a rhythm and blues band, called Influx and he later studied Indian music with Punita Gupta. His music, however, is rooted in the European classical tradition and in the 1970s-1980s was influenced by the music of Xenakis and Varese.

Dillon is often associated with the New Complexity movement—a movement that began in England in the 1960s—by Brian Ferneyhough, Michael Finnissy and Richard Barrett. This is a movement in which composers use highly detailed, multileveled forms of musical notation, microtonality, irrational meters and extended instrumental techniques. This music calls for a performer that is extremely committed to contemporary music with a fearless, experimental and open attitude toward unconventional forms of notation and playing techniques, and is willing to put several months (or in some cases years of work into learning a single piece of music).

Founded in 2004, **Ensemble Dal Niente** has since established itself as one of the country's leading new music organizations by bringing today's most revolutionary, ambitious and virtuosic contemporary concert music to the forefront. Bringing new music to new audiences in new venues is the ensemble's mission and passion. The ensemble presents its daring musical programs throughout the Chicagoland area, playing to packed halls as diverse as the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, legendary jazz club The Green Mill, and the Chicago Cultural Center. Dal Niente has premiered over 55 new pieces in its six-year performing history and has collaborated with visual artists and playwrights to create rich new experiences for audiences and artists of various disciplines and styles. With a strong commitment for commissioning and premiering new works, Dal Niente demonstrates the vitality and relevance of the composer in today's artistic world and ensures that contemporary music will be an engaging and exciting presence on concert stages for years to come.

Dal Niente understands that an essential part of a vibrant and sustainable music community of the education of young composers and performers. Partnered with local high schools, the group performs music of teenage composers, helping guide their musical development. The ensemble also holds residencies and conducts masterclasses at colleges and universities. Currently, Dal Niente is the ensemble-in-residence at Columbia College Chicago.

The ensemble is comprised of young artists and international virtuosos who bring challenging repertoire to life with enthusiasm and devotion. Dal Niente includes in its ranks faculty from DePaul University; conducting staff and members of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago; former participants in the Lucerne Festival and International Ensemble Moderne Academies; and past fellows of the Aspen Music Festival's Contemporary Ensemble and U.S. Department of State's Fulbright Grant program. The ensemble has also collaborated with such world-class composers as Kaija Saariaho, Augusta Read Thomas, Bernard Rands, Mark-Anthony Turnage, Lee Hyla, and Alvin Lucier.

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Recently, Dal Niente received a grant from the National Endowment of the Arts to produce a festival of contemporary American music during the 2010-11 season, entitled *UNBOUND*. The ensemble also won a Kranichsteiner Stipendienpreise during the 45th International Summer Courses for New Music in Darmstadt, Germany, having participated in the ENSEMBLE 2010 program.

Southern Theater mission and artistic statement

The Southern Theater cultivates artistic exploration by providing a vibrant home for performance, fostering a multiplicity of voices and catalyzing connections among artists and audience.

The Southern presents and produces performance characterized by innovation and originality. We value connections to the local community and celebrate artwork that holds potential for transformative exchange. On stage, we are unyielding in our commitment to the highest levels of professionalism and artistic integrity.

Established in 1902, the **University of Minnesota School of Music** offers a dynamic, comprehensive program to more than 550 music students in undergraduate and graduate programs, led by a world-class faculty of more than 50 artists, scholars and teachers. The School of Music presents more than 400 free concerts per year. For a complete schedule of events, visit www.music.umn.edu or call (612) 626-1094 for a brochure.

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