

# PROFILES

## Edgar Meyer

In demand as both a performer and a composer, Edgar Meyer has formed a role in the music world unlike any other. Hailed by the *New Yorker* as "... the most remarkable virtuoso in the relatively unchronicled history of his instrument," Meyer's unparalleled technique and musicianship in combination with his gift for composition have brought him to the forefront where he is appreciated by a vast, varied audience. His uniqueness in the field was recognized by a MacArthur Award in 2002.



MEYER

As a soloist, Meyer has released a concerto album with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra featuring Bottesini's Gran Duo with Joshua Bell, Meyer's Double Concerto for Bass and Cello with Yo-Yo Ma, Bottesini's Bass Concerto No. 2, and Meyer's Concerto in D for Bass. In 2006, he released a self-titled solo recording on which he wrote and played all of the pieces, incorporating seven varied instruments. His newest recording, a CD/DVD of original material with mandolinist Chris Thile, was released in Fall 2008.

As a composer, Meyer has carved out a remarkable niche. In the 2006-07 season, he premiered a triple concerto for double bass, banjo and tabla (co-written and performed with Béla Fleck and Zakir Hussain) and a piece for double bass and piano that he performed with Emanuel Ax. Meyer premiered his Double Concerto for Bass and Cello with Yo-Yo Ma and the Boston Symphony under Seiji Ozawa. In October 1999, Meyer's violin concerto, written for Hilary Hahn, was premiered and recorded by Hahn with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra under Hugh Wolff.

Collaborations are a central part of Meyer's work, including widely-acclaimed performances and recordings with Chris Thile, Béla Fleck, Joshua Bell, Sam Bush, Mike Marshall, Yo-Yo Ma and Mark O'Connor. Meyer collaborated with Ma and O'Connor for *Appalachia Waltz* in 1996 and its Grammy® Award-winning follow-up *Appalachian Journey* in 2000.

## Béla Fleck

Béla Fleck is often considered the premiere banjo player in the world. A New York City native, he picked up the



FLECK

banjo at age 15 after being awed by the bluegrass music of Flatt & Scruggs. While still in high school, he began experimenting with playing bebop jazz on his banjo, and in 1980 he released his first solo album, *Crossing the Tracks*. In 1982, Fleck joined the progressive bluegrass band New Grass Revival, making a name for himself ever since on countless solo and ensemble projects as a virtuoso instrumentalist unbounded by genre.

In 1989, Fleck formed the Flecktones with members equally talented and adventurous as himself. The band was hailed by *Entertainment Weekly* as "heavyweight players who make an endearing fusion... it's hard to resist a band that draws on bluegrass, funk, world music, pop and jazz with such glee and blissful lack of pretension." The Flecktones, comprised of Victor Wooten on electric bass, Jeff Coffin on sax and flute and Future Man on percussion, have recently released the holiday record *Jingle All The Way* with guests Edgar Meyer, Andy Statman and Tuvan throat singers.

Fleck and director Sascha Paladino are currently premiering the documentary *Throw Down Your Heart* at festivals nationwide. Motivated by a deep love of African music, the film follows Fleck on a boundary-breaking musical adventure to explore the little-known African roots of the banjo and record an album. Transcending barriers of language and culture, Fleck finds common ground with musicians ranging from local villagers to international superstars such as the Malian diva Oumou Sangare to create some of the most meaningful music of his career. The album and tour are planned for Spring 2009.

Béla Fleck and the Flecktones perform for over 500,000 people annually, and Fleck has received more Grammy nominations in more diverse categories than any other musician in history.

## Zakir Hussain

Zakir Hussain is today appreciated both in the field of percussion and in the music world at large as an international



HUSSAIN

phenomenon. A classical tabla virtuoso of the highest order, his consistently brilliant and exciting performances have not only established him as a national treasure in his own country, India, but have also earned him worldwide fame. His playing is marked by uncanny intuition and masterful improvisational dexterity, founded in formidable knowledge and study. The favorite accompanist for many of India's greatest classical musicians and dancers, he has not let his genius rest there.

Widely considered a chief architect of the contemporary world music movement, Hussain's contribution to world music has been unique, with many historic collaborations including Shakti, which he founded with John McLaughlin and L. Shankar in the early 1970's; the *Diga Rhythm Band*, *Making Music*, *Planet Drum* with Mickey Hart; *Tabla Beat Science*, *Sangam* with Charles Lloyd and Eric Harland; and recordings and performances with artists as diverse as George Harrison, Joe Henderson, Van Morrison, Airto Moreira, Giovanni Hidalgo, Pharoah Sanders, Billy Cobham, Rennie Harris and the Kodo drummers of Japan.

A child prodigy, Hussain was touring by the age of 12, the gifted son of tabla legend Ustad Allarakha. Hussain came to the United States in 1970, embarking on an international career which includes no fewer than 150 concert dates a year. He has composed and recorded many albums and soundtracks, and has received widespread recognition as a composer for his many ensembles and collaborations. He has composed soundtracks for the films *In Custody* and *The Mystic Masseur* directed by Ismail Merchant, Bertolucci's *Little Buddha*, for which Hussain composed, performed and acted as Indian music advisor, Vanaprastham (*The Last Dance*), chosen to be screened at the Cannes Film Festival in May, 1999, Saaz, and Everybody Says I'm Fine.