



About *subText*

The *subText* ensemble is five of Atlantic Canada's foremost improvising composer-performers, led by pianist Steven Naylor.

With their eclectic backgrounds—in jazz, rock, contemporary classical, electroacoustic and electronic music, film, television, theatre, and radio—the ensemble breaks down the borders between musical styles.

subText aims for thoughtful—and thought-provoking—performances that blend the intensity and energy of free improvisation with the elegance of chamber music.

Since their first concert in 2009, the ensemble has performed in many configurations—duo, trio, quartet, quintet, and sextet. They've merged open improvisation with through-composed music, mingled acoustic instruments and electroacoustic elements, blurred the boundary between vision and sound—and even performed with a wind-up toy.

The *subText* ensemble is a project of subText Music & Media Arts Association, a not-for-profit society registered in the Province of Nova Scotia, Canada.

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A short history

The roots of *subText* go back to 1982, when Tom Roach and Steven Naylor met as mutually reluctant members of a best-forgotten bar band. Seven years later, Steven contracted Jeff Reilly to play on a film score session—where they spent much of Steven’s precious studio time joyfully improvising, instead of actually recording the score.

Shortly after, Jeff invited Steven to join him as a founding member of *Upstream*; Steven immediately suggested Tom as the ideal drummer for the collective. When Christoph Both arrived in Nova Scotia, he was quickly snatched up as *Upstream*’s cellist, and the four played together as members of *Upstream* for several more years.

Fast forward to 2009. After nearly a decade focused mostly on electroacoustic music and studio composition, Steven wanted to make instrumental and improvised music a key part of his artistic practice once again. Remembering the remarkable creative synergy and shared aesthetic he had felt playing with them, he asked Tom, Christoph, and Jeff to join him for the first *subText* concert.

Not long after, Derek Charke performed with the band as a guest artist. It was instantly clear that Derek’s musical sensibility meshed perfectly with everyone else’s—and the permanent core of *subText* became a quintet.

Selected reviews (excerpts)

“Absolutely stunning...[they] know how to listen, to bring about the quiet moments, the slow, the smallest sounds, to make an audience listen to and get so wrapped up in these without even thinking about it.

Michelle Bush, Guest Blog, Sound Symposium 2014

“An object lesson in improvisation...engaging, even lyrical music.”

Bill Shoemaker, pointofdeparture.org

“There was much to delight the ear in this group’s nimble inventions.”

“Every musician on stage...a first-rate player and an inventive improviser.”

Stephen Pedersen, Halifax Chronicle Herald

“Mature creators with intelligent ideas and a huge vocabulary to draw on.”

Andrew David Terris, Arts Nova

“Playfulness and moments of great beauty.”

Mike Chamberlain, Signal to Noise Journal of Improvised & Experimental Music

Core ensemble

Christoph Both (cello) is a member of the *Sanctuary Trio*, a *Warner Classics* recording artist, and a senior Professor, award-winning researcher, and head of Strings at Acadia University. As a performer, he has toured widely through Europe and Asia, most recently in Shanghai and Moscow.

Derek Charke (flutes) has won a Juno award and multiple ECMA awards for his music, as part of a high-profile compositional career that includes several commissions for the *Kronos Quartet*. Derek is also Professor of Composition at Acadia University.

Steven Naylor (artistic director, piano, electronics) is a multiple *ECMA*-nominated *empreintes DIGITALes* recording artist, and a film, television, radio and theatre composer with dozens of regional, national, and international credits. His scores for *Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia* have played world-wide to live audiences of over five million.

Jeff Reilly (bass clarinet) is an *ECM* and *Warner Classics* recording artist, a member of the *Sanctuary Trio*, and a highly sought-after soloist. He has received multiple nominations for *ECMA* and *Juno* awards. Jeff is also a senior music producer for *CBC-Radio*.

Tom Roach (drums, percussion) — whose teachers included jazz legends Jack DeJohnette and Colin Walcott — won an *ECMA* award for his first CD as leader, *Piano Trios*. After years of international touring with leading East Coast artists, Tom joined the *Stadacona Band*, and continues to be a first-call drummer for jazz performances and recordings.

subText's guest artists and collaborators to date include Mark Adam (percussion), Dani Oore (saxophones), Lukas Pearse (video), and the Subscription Opus Duo (Mack Furlong & Chris Tonelli).

Photographs

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