

SNAP — YOU'RE MUSIC!

BY DAVID RUBIEN

**“I REMEMBER VERY CLEARLY HAVING
THE THOUGHT THAT I COULD DISPLACE
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DRUMS ONTO MY BODY.”**

Keith Terry, on discovering body music in 1978

What do eight dancing teenage girls out of San Francisco's African American Cultural Center have to do with a pair of Inuit women from the Arctic who throat-sing directly into each other's mouths? Answer: Both acts are performing Tuesday through next Sunday at the first International Body Music Festival.

Produced by Keith Terry, whose tireless advocacy of body music is heard around the world, the festival draws together nine ensembles, domestic and foreign, that use their bodies to create unorthodox, percussive sounds and movements. These can include slapping the chest, belly and backside, finger snaps, cheek popping, skipping, growling, rhythmic chanting and more.

“It's as old as dirt,” Terry says of the art form. “I feel like it was probably the first music. People were probably clapping and stomping their feet before they picked up any instruments.”

In addition to the above-mentioned Top Notch Steppers and Celina Kalluk & Lucie Idlout, the festival will include Barbatuques, a 12-member body percus-

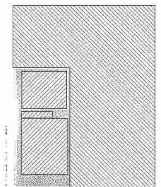
sion ensemble from Brazil; KeKeCa, two men from Istanbul who re-create their country's folk music via body percussion and movement; the Kecak Project, an ensemble from Bali that employs trance-like interlocking vocal chanting; Derique McGee, a San Franciscan who practices hambone, a slave-era form of body percussion; Sandy Silva, a Montreal artist who combines Celtic step dance, flamenco, tap and other forms with body percussion; Loop-It, a comedic French duo whose skits revolve around clapping, finger snapping, stomping and some acrobatics; and the Slammin' All-Body Band, which is Terry's own group of body-percussion aces, soul and jazz singers, plus a human beat-boxer, someone who mimics drum sounds by vocalizing into a microphone.

Terry, 57, has been thinking about putting on a festival for several years.

“Just feeling like a conduit for all these body-music groups around the world that would contact me regularly,” he says during an interview in his bright-orange bungalow in Oakland, where he lives with his wife, Evie Ladin, who's also a musician, and their 5-year-old son.

Money and luck

Money — and some luck — allowed the festival to happen this year. Terry won a \$50,000 Guggenheim Fellowship





in the spring, and Barbatuques, the Brazilian group he'd been scheming to bring to the States, got a gig in Chicago for Thanksgiving weekend, making it less expensive to bring the ensemble to the Bay Area.

"We decided to jump at that point," Terry says.

As a musician and impresario, Terry has quite a center of gravity. He's responsible for bringing dozens of international body music acts to the Bay Area over the years, and he regularly spreads the gospel by touring the world either as a solo act — at which he's formidable — or in the various groups he leads or as an educator.

"A lot of people do body percussion, but they don't have the depth of Keith's knowledge," says Latin percussion master Michael Spiro of Orquesta Batanga fame. "Whether it's Balinese music or Latin music or what-have-you, Keith is able to take all of it and apply it to his body."

Terry has been at it for 30 years. Before that, the Waxahachie, Texas, native was a drummer, working in several outfits, among them the Jazz Tap Ensemble, the Pickle Family Circus and the San Francisco Mime Troupe.

"I created my first body music piece in 1978 while I was in the Jazz Tap Ensemble," Terry says. "I remember very clearly having the thought that I could displace everything I was playing on the drums onto my body. . . . One piece led to another, and another, and finally I said, 'I think I have to leave the group because I'm more interested doing this.'"

In the Jazz Tap Ensemble, Terry drummed behind many great tap dancers, including Steve Condos, Eddie Brown, Charles "Cookie" Cook and Charles "Honi" Coles. The latter two "really encouraged me," Terry says. "Both are passed now. But they saw what I was doing and said it's kind of like the hambone they did in vaudeville, but it moved in a different way, and I was doing different kinds of rhythms, but they really encouraged me to pursue it. So I took their advice, and I'm still pursuing it."

Terry, naturally enough, also is a historian of body music and is prone to diving into dissertations on various styles such as palmas, saman, sasa, gumboot.

Hambone, he explains, arose after the 18th century Stono Rebellion led to a prohibition against slaves playing drums, because owners feared the slaves were communicating via the instruments, "and they probably were," Terry says. "So slaves, who had all this rhythmic knowledge, started playing their bodies."

Hambone, or drumming on the body, was thus the United States' original contribution to body music. One of the country's last remaining practitioners of hambone, Sam McGrier, was slated to appear at the International Body Music Festival in a dialogue with McGee, but he had to bow out because of health problems.

"He had a huge hit record in 1952 called 'Hambone Hambone' and was one of the original Hambone Kids," Terry says of McGrier. "He was featured in a film called 'The Human Hambone.'"

The nonprofit Terry formed 30 years ago to promote his body-music ideas — including performance, audio and video production, concert presenting, and community outreach and education — is called Crosspulse. Through it, he leads not only the Slammin' All-Body Band but also the Crosspulse Percussion Ensemble; Body Tjak, a 25-year-old collaboration with Indonesian choreographer I Wayan Dibia; and Professor Terry's Circus Band Extraordinaire, which combines jazz with novelty acts such as contortion and sword-swallowing.

Crosspulse has released five CDs and two educational DVDs, with more to come in 2009.

Educational focus

"We have a very strong educational component," Terry says of Crosspulse. "We work with everything from preschool and kindergarten families all the way through high school and postgraduate professional training."

The Body Music Festival, too, will have training sessions, lectures and demonstrations, beginning Tuesday and continuing through the weekend, featuring several of the festival's acts. (See www.crosspulse.com for details).

How does Terry juggle it all?


"It's a long-term commitment to developing all these relationships over decades," Terry says. "Plus, I work with a lot of young people."

Take Steve Hogan, the beat-boxer in Slammin'.

"I met his mom when she was pregnant with him. So I've known him his entire life," Terry says. "And it's great working with him. I don't feel like I'm his mentor at all. I feel like he's kicking my ass every time we get together." ■

INTERNATIONAL BODY MUSIC

FESTIVAL: Nine ensembles, plus workshops and demonstrations, Tues.-next Sunday at Theatre Artaud, 450 Florida St., in San Francisco and other locations. Check Web site for details. \$10-\$25. (510) 601-9797, www.crosspulse.com.

 To see video samples of Keith Terry and his various ensembles, and samples of some of the festival's artists, go to www.crosspulse.com or youtube.com.

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SCENES



Keith Terry,
artistic director
of the
International
Body Music
Festival, takes a
leap in his
Oakland studio.

PHOTOS BY LANCE IVERSEN / THE CHRONICLE



Keith Terry, a historian of body music, practices his footwork in Oakland.