

Biography

GLEN VELEZ

Four-time Grammy award winner, Glen Velez is the founding Father of the modern Frame Drum movement and is regarded as a legendary figure among musicians and audiences world-wide. Velez brought a new genre of drumming to the contemporary music scene by creating his own performance style inspired by years of percussion and frame drumming studies from various cultures. Velez's virtuosic combinations of hand movements, finger techniques, along with his original compositional style, which incorporates stepping, drum language and Central Asian Overtone singing (split-tone singing), has undoubtedly opened new possibilities for musicians around the globe, resulting in a shift in modern percussion.

Velez is the first percussionist to gain international recognition as a successful solo artist using frame drums. In 1989 Velez's undeniable mastery caught the attention of twentieth century composer John Cage, who wrote "Composed Improvisation for One-Sided Drum with or without Jingles" especially for Velez. His extensive array of frame drum innovations and sounds have inspired decades of collaborations with an epic and eclectic list, including Steve Reich, the Paul Winter Consort, Suzanne Vega, Maya Beiser, Tan Dun and Pat Metheny. Other collaborations include: Israel Philharmonia, Brooklyn Philharmonia, Opera Orchestra of New York, Taipei Chinese Orchestra, Zakir Hussain, Sonny Fortune, New York City Ballet, Stuttgart Ballet Orchestra, Orchestra of St. Luke's, David Darling, Howard Levy, Eugene Friesen and Coleman Barks. Live performances also include radio concerts and interviews broadcasted on Spanish National Radio 4, German Public Radio, Italian National Radio 3, Radio Freistadt (Austria). Velez maintains an International touring schedule as a soloist and continues to collaborate with prominent artists in many styles. His Ta Ka Di Mi Duo with virtuoso Rhythm Vocalist Lori Cotler has garnered critical and audience acclaim around the world.

The Velez signature sound can be heard on numerous films, television commercials and modern dance scores. He is also an experienced collaborator in Early Music, including a renowned recording with the Ensemble for Early Music entitled Istampita. Velez has recorded on hundreds of albums on ECM, CBS, RCA, GRP, Warner Brothers, Deutsche Gramophone, Geffen, Nonesuch, Capital, CMP, Music of the World, Sounds True, Interworld, Ellipsis Arts, Daftof Records and Sony. In addition he has released numerous recordings of his own music. Glen's most recent recordings are Glen Velez Solo and Breathing Rhythms Duo – Glen Velez and Lori Cotler (Daftof records).

Glen is a prolific composer whose compositions have been used extensively by dance companies and he has written numerous compositions for his own ensembles as well as chamber music for various combinations. His compositions have been commissioned by the Rockefeller Foundation, Jerome Foundation, American Music Center and Reader's Digest. Velez wrote a solo cello piece for Cellist Maya Beiser, entitled Kinship, which Beiser chose as the title for one of her recent CD's. Another of Glens compositions, Sol Tunnels, was commissioned by the Ethos Percussion Ensemble and is the title of one of their new recordings. In 2009 the Ensemble DuoJalal premiered his composition "Homage for Viola and Frame Drum". His most recent composition is entitled "Intarsio" for String Quartet and Frame Drum, commissioned by the Lark String Quartet.

Velez has several instructional videos and has published numerous instructional books and articles on the subject. He is a master teacher who conducts workshops worldwide. Velez developed his own teaching approach called The Handance Method. It incorporates voice and body movement into the process of learning to play the frame drum and has been presented in dozens of universities and conservatories. Velez is an adjunct professor at Mannes School of Music in New York City and conducts regular master classes at The Juilliard School and Tanglewood Summer Music Program. Glens groundbreaking research efforts into the history of the Frame Drum has inspired a host of his protégé to continue the quest into the mystery of the frame drums origins.

The Frame Drum is one of the most ancient types of musical instruments. It is a single headed drum, which includes the Western tambourine, whose origins encompass the Ancient Middle East, India, Rome and which reached medieval Europe through Islamic culture. During Glen Velez's illustrious career he has single-handedly popularized this ancient drum for the modern world. His performances prompted the Remo Drum Co. in 1983 to develop a line of frame drums called the Glen Velez Signature Series. The Cooperman Drum Co. introduced a hand made Signature Series Glen Velez Tambourine and Frame Drum line in 1999. Velez is also considered a virtuoso on other percussion instruments and has introduced dramatic innovations in the playing of Maracas and Shakers, which are outlined in his instructional book, The Shaker Manual. This new approach to playing Shakers led the German based instrument company Anklang to release a handcrafted Glen Velez Signature Series Shaker set. These instruments are carefully designed based on their specific high – low tuning and ergonomic shape. For more info, visit: www.glenvelez.com