new music festival 2012
BRYARS FESTIVAL

VICTORIA SYMPHONY
Tania Miller, Music Director
Jesus’ blood never failed me yet

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2012, 8 PM (Pre-concert talk 7:15pm)
PHILLIP T. YOUNG RECITAL HALL (UVIC SCHOOL OF MUSIC) FREE ADMISSION

Sonic Lab (University of Victoria)
Ajtony Csaba, Christopher Butterfield conductors

Gavin Bryars, At Portage and Main — 2009
Gavin Bryars, Jesus’ Blood Never Failed Me Yet — 1971

INTERMISSION

Soundpainting

Program Notes:
AT PORTAGE AND MAIN — 2009
Gavin Bryars (1943–)

“For me the family of keyboard percussion is as important as, say, the string family and a great percussion ensemble are as musically subtle and expressive as a well-seasoned string quartet. From the mid-1970s onwards I have maintained a strong commitment to this instrumental formation and my first opera Medea (1984) included a quintet of tuned percussion in the orchestra, replacing the more conventional violins. The five percussionists in Medea became Percussions Claviers de Lyon and At Portage and Main was commissioned for them. It exploits the wide range of colours and textures that this unique combination of instruments affords—two vibraphones, two marimbas, bass marimba, xylophone, glockenspiel and assorted cymbals, tom-toms and other drums.” —Gavin Bryars

JESUS BLOOD NEVER FAILED ME YET — 1971
Gavin Bryars (1943–)

“In 1971, when I lived in London, I was working with a friend, Alan Power, on a film about people living rough in the area around Elephant and Castle and Waterloo Station. In the course of being filmed, some people broke into drunken song—sometimes bits of opera, sometimes sentimental ballads—and one, who in fact did not drink, sang a religious song “Jesus’ Blood Never Failed Me Yet.” This was not ultimately used in the film and I was given all the unused sections of tape, including this one. When I played it at home, I found that his singing was in tune with my piano, and I improvised a simple accompaniment. The first section of the song—13 bars in length—formed an effective loop, which repeated in a slightly unpredictable way. I took the tape loop to Leicester, where I was working in the Fine Art Department, and copied the loop onto a continuous reel of tape, thinking about perhaps adding an orchestrated accompaniment to this. The door of the recording room opened on to one of the large painting studios and I left the tape copying, with the door open, while I went to have a cup of coffee. When I came back I found
the normally lively room unnaturally subdued. People were moving about much more slowly than usual and a few were sitting alone, quietly weeping. I was puzzled until I realised that the tape was still playing and that they had been overcome by the old man's singing. This convinced me of the emotional power of the music and of the possibilities offered by adding a simple, though gradually evolving, orchestral accompaniment that respected the tramp’s nobility and simple faith. Although he died before he could hear what I had done with his singing, the piece remains as an eloquent, but understated testimony to his spirit and optimism” —Gavin Bryars

**SOUNDPAINTING — 2011**

Ajtony Csaba, director

Soundpainting comprises more than 1200 gestures and is currently being used by many professional performers and educators worldwide. Soundpainting was originally developed by Walter Thompson at the Creative Music School in Woodstock, NY. During these early days he focused on creating basic gestures for leading large-group jazz-based improvisation. During the next 10 years in New York City, Thompson further developed Soundpainting into a comprehensive sign language for creating *live composition* from structured, jazz-based improvisation. In the early 1990s Thompson expanded the Soundpainting language to include actors, dancers, poets, visual artists, and people from all walks of life.

**Sonic Lab** is a contemporary music ensemble devoted to the performance of music of our time. Comprised of the young professionals and future advocates of new music the ensemble is under the direction of professors Ajtony Csaba and Christopher Butterfield. Recent concerts have included Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire*, Varese’s *Ionization* and *Octandre*, Cage’s *Atlas Eclipticalis*, Kurt Schwitters’s *Ursonate*, as well as works from student and emerging composers from the University of Victoria.

**Ajtony Csaba** was born in Cluj, Romania. He began his studies on the cello, and later, piano and composition at the Academy of Music in Budapest. Csaba studied conducting at the Vienna University of Music with Uroš Lajovic, Peter Eötvös, Lucas Vis, Zsolt Nagy and Zoltán Pesko. Since 2006, he has served as the chief conductor of the Central European Chamber Orchestra (Vienna) and has led the orchestra on tours in China. In 2007, Csaba was appointed director of the Vienna Jeunesses Chor. In 2010 he was appointed as Assistant Professor at the University of Victoria, where he conducts the UVic Symphony and teaches conducting.

**Christopher Butterfield** studied composition with Rudolf Komorous at the University of Victoria, and with Bulent Arel at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. For 15 years he lived in Toronto, where he played in a rock band and made performance art and sound poetry. His music has been played and broadcasted across Canada, as well as in Poland, Finland, Slovakia, France and Russia. He is recorded on the Artifact and CBC labels. Since 1992, he has taught composition at the University of Victoria. He was resident composer of the Victoria Symphony from 1999 to 2002. A highly respected educator, Butterfield has served as composer mentor in workshops with the Aventa Ensemble, Bozziini Quartet and Array Music. In 2013, his vibraphone concerto for Toronto percussionist Rick Sacks will be premiered by the Aventa Ensemble.