

Constellation 100

Eric Boeren cornet
Greg Ward alto sax
Jason Adasiewicz vibraphone
Wilbert de Joode double bass
Mike Reed drums



A new ensemble for listeners, but one with a considerable history for the musicians themselves. **Constellation 100** is a continuation of the intensive contact between the Amsterdam and Chicago progressive music scenes, in Doek's case particularly with the post-Ken Vandermark generation – Mike Reed, Nate McBride, Jason Adasawieca, Greg Ward, Dave Rempis, Josh Berman et al – who now congregate at Mike Reeds' Chicago club Constellation. Mike, Jason and Greg play together in various formations, including Loose Assembly and Living by Lanterns. Eric and Wilbert have a long history together in Eric Boeren 4tet, All Ellington and a host of ad hoc ensembles. Sun Rooms (Reed, Adasawiecz, McBride) guested at Doek's annual impro festival. Cross-Atlantic collaborations include guest appearances from Eric Boeren in Loose Assembly and Sun Rooms (Bimhuis), the band NEWS (Boeren, Cor Fuhler, Nate McBride, Mike Reed), an All Ellington edition in Chicago, performances by Jason Adasiewicz in Boerenbond and numerous ad hoc line-ups in both Chicago and Amsterdam.

This particular quintet first played in Chicago in 2013 and have reunited for a European tour. They play compositions by all group members and bring the particular aesthetics and traditions of both cities to bear on the material and ensuing improvisations. Sound-wise this group resembles early sixties Dolphy and Booker Little outfits. For energy, precision, playfulness and

aesthetics this group is hinting at Charles Mingus. But do bear in mind they also listened to John Kirby. And the Art Ensemble Of Chicago is no stranger to them either.

Links

Jason Adasiewicz & Mike Reed

[Sun Rooms DOM club 22 may 2014 #2](#)

[Sun Rooms: Made in Chicago Festival in Poznan, Poland](#)

Jason Adasiewicz

[Peter Brötzmann and Jason Adasiewicz live in Ljubljana 2013](#)

Greg Ward

[South Side Story - Greg Ward's Fitted Shards, Greg Ward | Songs, Reviews, Credits, Awards | AllMusic](#)

[Greg Ward's Phonic Juggernaut - Greg Ward | Songs, Reviews, Credits, Awards | AllMusic](#)

<https://soundcloud.com/phonicfittedjuggernaut>

Eric Boeren & Wilbert de Joode

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M0JrZEMlvhw>

<https://soundcloud.com/eric-boeren>

Individual Biographies

Jason Adasiewicz is a vibraphonist, drummer, and composer. He is an integral member of Chicago's jazz and improvised music scene, bringing his aggressive yet lyrical style to over 10 working Chicago groups, including Rob Mazurek's Starlicker and Exploding Star Orchestra, Mike Reed's Loose Assembly, Peter Brotzmann: Jason Adasiewicz Duo, Josh Berman and His Gang, Ingebrigt Håker Flaten Chicago Sextet, James Falzone's Klang and Ken Vandermark's Topology and Midwest School. Adasiewicz formed his own quintet Rolldown, with Josh Berman, Aram Shelton, Jason Roebke, and Frank Rosaly in 2004. He performs frequently in Europe and is a member of groups lead by Peter Brotzmann, Mats Gustafsson, and Stefano Bollani. Adasiewicz won the 2011 *Downbeat* Annual Critic's Poll in the Rising Star Vibes category, and for the last 5 years has placed in the Vibes category.

In a way every improviser's story is a refraction of their personal experience. Cornetist and composer **Eric Boeren's** begins in the brass band in the Netherlands' far south—where folks speak their own dialect—grooving on the horns' interplay and massed power. After he came to Amsterdam to study, he learned other communal dialects, as free improviser and as a member of (among other bands) Available Jelly, Sean Bergin's South African-influenced M.O.B., new music composers Guus Janssen's and Paul Termos's improvising groups, and Michiel Braam's orchestra Bik Bent Braam. From the mid-1990s Eric has helped organize weekly improvisers' series in Amsterdam (currently at community center Zaal 100, Tuesdays), where he began his own investigations into Ornette Coleman's compositional and improvisational methods—Ornette's way of tweaking forms and inventing new material on the fly. That led to the Eric Boeren 4tet with Michael Moore on reeds, Wilbert de Joode on bass and Han Bennink on drums, a band that mixes Coleman's themes and Boeren's contrasting numbers in freewheeling suites. With that band's frequent presence at international festivals, Eric's circle has grown; witness his Boerenbond, with New York's Peter Evans on trumpet, Berlin's Tobias Delius on tenor saxophone and Chicago's Jason Adasiewicz on vibes. Eric's compositions and musical games are designed to facilitate focused collective improvisations. Boeren has likened every new language he's learned, in his journey from Brabant village to Amsterdam to the global stage, to another new door opening, onto new vocabularies and syntactical possibilities. Eric says: "I am very fond of collective improvisation—where music in the background can move to the front, and foreground music can be used as a background, and several musical ideas can co-exist in multiple layers. Improvisation to me is about adjusting musical ideas on the spot. A band is a team, and I want to be a team player. One of the most difficult aspects of

collective improvising is to hear other musicians developing melodic ideas in a different direction than I was working on at the moment. The challenge is to bring all of this information together in a way that makes sense!”

Wilbert de Joode has been playing double bass since 1982 and is self-taught. He began playing in groups that improvised with jazz as starting point. His idiosyncratic style was quickly evident and resulted in numerous invitations to play in musical, dance and visual arts projects. de Joode is currently regarded as one of the foremost specialist in collective improvisation and instant composing. Creating music on the spot that has never sounded before requires a strong spirit that always looks further, takes risks and can start from ‘nothing’, and doesn’t let ego get in the way. That’s what de Joode does, with his characteristic wide-ranging musical vocabulary, expressiveness, sound-imagination and gut strings. De Joode is in demand over the whole world in a wide range of groups (Eric Boeren 4tet, Jan Clare’s 1000, Ab Baars trio, All Ellington) and ad hoc ensembles. He is also a respected mentor and teacher of improvisation.

Mike Reed is a musician, composer and presenter based in Chicago. As a drummer, Reed has been part of the vibrant Chicago jazz and improvised music community since 1997. He has performed regularly with local luminaries such as Fred Anderson, David Boykin, Nicole Mitchell, Jeff Parker, Josh Abrams, Jim Baker, and Rob Mazurek, as well as Chicago Jazz legends Ira Sullivan, Julian Priester and Art Hoyle. As a performer he tours extensively in Europe and South America. While performing in a variety of projects locally, nationally and internationally, Reed also leads two widely acclaimed groups, Loose Assembly and People, Places & Things. Reed was named Chicagoan of the Year for Jazz (2008) by the Chicago Tribune and in the 57th Annual Downbeat Critics Poll was distinguished as “Rising Jazz Star”. Over the course of a decade Reed has also established himself as a leading producer of musical performances and advocate for the performing arts. He is one of the main organizers for Umbrella Music, a five member team presenting weekly Jazz and Improvised music at various Chicago venues (approximating 280 sets of music per year as well as an accompanying festival). As a fresh addition to the historical collective known as the AACM, Reed was named Vice Chairmen in the spring of 2009. In other areas Reed works with the City of Chicago as a member of the Chicago Jazz Festival planning committee, programing partner for the Downtown Sound series at Millennium Park. Most notably Reed is the Director of the internationally renown Pitchfork Music Festival, drawing over 50,000 attendees to Chicago over 3 days and featuring today’s most cutting edge rock and pop artists.

Greg Ward is rapidly emerging as one of the leading virtuoso saxophone players of his generation, with a unique versatility in a wide variety of styles including modern jazz, funk, latin as well as classical, Indian, klezmer and African Music. Ward grew up in a musical household, singing in gospel groups as a child before the discovery of Charlie Parker led him to dedicate his life to the saxophone. Honors quickly followed, including the Downbeat Magazine High School Jazz Soloist Award (2000), participation in the exclusive Stean’s Institute at Ravinia (2001), scholarships from the Vail Jazz Workshop in Colorado, and selection as a Jazz Mentor with the Jazz Institute of Chicago. Ward has performed with musical greats including Von Freeman, Frank Wess, Al Jarreau, Carl Allen, Rufus Reid, Jeff Parker, Brian McNight and Hamid Drake, He has toured across the world and has been featured at festivals including Ravinia, Souns d’ Hiver, Montreaux Jazz Festival, Umbria Jazz Fest, Vision Festival in NYC, and Suoni Per Il Popolo Festival in Montreal. He is a member of Ernest Dawkins’ Chicago 12, the Occidental Brother’s Dance Band, Ted Sirota’s Rebel Souls, the Proliferation Quartet, Bindu and the Chicago Afro-Latin Jazz Ensemble. He also leads the experimental soul band We Tree, and co-directs the TBD Improvisation Orchestra. Ward’s diverse musical interests have led him to explore the world of classical and crossover music as a composer and performer. Recent commissions include a chamber work for ICE (International Contemporary Ensemble), a new ballet for the Peoria Ballet Company, and a septet for Gallery 37’s Downtown Sound Gallery Composer’s Series.

Article – Chicago’s Mike Reed Gets a Second City (Amsterdam)

The drum set is a collection of instruments, assembled to let one percussionist do the work of several. In that way, every drummer is a multitasker. Though he may have bloomed late as a drummer, multitasking isn’t much of a problem for Chicago’s Mike Reed. He’s co-organizer of Chicago’s autumn Umbrella Festival (where local improvisers meet European peers), runs logistics for the summer’s Pitchfork Music Festival, and helps program the Labor Day weekend Chicago Jazz Festival. And he now has his own northwest-side venue, Constellation. He even finds time to play the drums, with a broad Midwestern beat and low-to-the-ground sound, using any part of the kit (deep toms included) to throw off accents.

So which is the real Reed: jazz musician or industry power man? A clue to the answer came at the fall 2012 Dutch Jazz Meeting, a biennial showcase that focuses mainly on international presenters. Some impresarios use the opportunity to create a grand impression, sweeping into the Bimhuis bar between sets. But Reed would be huddled in a corner like a musician: talking to someone he’d played with on a previous trip, who’d introduce him to an up-and-coming player, who’d tell Mike about a gig he’d be playing later on that Reed would probably go to. He has that kind of curiosity.

Later this year he’ll release a duo album with Chicago elder/saxist Roscoe Mitchell called *In Pursuit of Magic*, recorded at Constellation. They started playing together a few years ago when Reed was an officer of the Chicago musicians’ co-op that Mitchell helped found in the ‘60s, the AACM — a group comprised of similar self-starters. “Mike is a drummer, composer, organizer and person of the highest caliber,” Mitchell said in an email. “There is always magic in the air when we are together. I am looking forward to playing with him again.”

Mike Reed’s Dutch contacts go all the way back, to when his Indonesian mother’s family immigrated to the southern Netherlands after World War II. She met Reed’s American dad when he served with her father at a German NATO base. Reed was born in Bielefeld, Germany, in 1974, and spent time as a toddler in Holland, but from age five was raised in Evanston, north of Chicago.

“I’d wanted to play drums from when I was tiny, and bought my first set using eighth-grade graduation money, but didn’t start playing seriously till college in Dayton,” Reed says. “I had listened to some jazz records, and wanted to be Philly Joe Jones. I wasn’t a jazz major but hung out with the jazz department people. When it was time to get out I told bassist Bob Bowen, ‘Maybe I should move to New York.’ He said, ‘I dunno — maybe it’d be better if you moved back to Chicago.’”

Bowen tried to get him interested in the AACM avant-garde, but it was too way out for Reed at the time. His education was just beginning. “I started going to Von Freeman’s Sunday jam session at The Note in Wicker Park,” he says. “I wasn’t very good, and only beginning to realize how not good I was. I was floundering; the guys I’d met who were interesting and weird wanted to make, like, free Beefheart music. Or they were jazz nazis. Or prodigies like trumpeter Amir ElSaffar, playing his ass at 19. I was already 23! I felt really far behind.”

Reed started studying with saxophonist Freeman’s crisp drummer Michael Raynor. “When I’d go to sessions he played, Mike would put me in the first round of sitters-in, so I could get my ass kicked, and he could critique my playing at our next lesson,” Reed says. “That quickly changed things. I stopped trying to pursue straight-ahead jazz gigs. All these people around my age were coming to town. They weren’t as self-conscious as I was. Suddenly, I’m trying to listen to everything.”

That still-tight group of post-Ken Vandermark Chicago improvisers includes vibraphonist Jason Adasiewicz and bassists Joshua Abrams (who now play in Reed’s chamber-jazzy quintet Loose Assembly), cornetist Josh Berman, saxophonist Dave Rempis, and future People, Places & Things bassist Jason Roebke. They built up their stamina playing with each other and older players.

“I started playing with saxophonist David Boykin two or three times a week for five and a half years, three sets a night playing two songs a set, Coltrane-style,” says Reed. “A mind-blower! Compositionally, his tunes would seem weird to me, till I got the sense of them. I identified with his personal way of writing for the band and getting it to do certain things.”

By the early ‘00s Reed had already begun organizing stuff on the side; he and Berman ran an improvisers’ Sunday series at the Chicago bar Hungry Brain, and that led a few years later to their helping organize the Umbrella consortium of small venues that hosted improvised music, which led to the annual Umbrella Festival, launched with support from the city and several European consulates. After all that it made sense that Reed would wind up on the Chicago Jazz Festival programming committee; that fest had its own history of staging meetings between Europeans and homegrown players.

But for Reed, it wasn’t all jazz, all the time. He says, “The condensed version of how the Pitchfork festival got started: I had worked in events planning for a marketing company, doing street festivals with music, and I thought, ‘What if there was a cool street festival with music I actually liked?’ I teamed up with a couple of travel-agent guys who were looking to do something new. We needed a sponsor, so we contacted the Pitchfork people — like, three guys in a basement running a website. When we announced the lineup, the response was crazy. ‘We’re going to need a park.’ Preparation was a big whirlwind: All the

things that could have gone wrong didn't. I never played the festival, but I did get Craig Taborn, 8 Bold Souls and William Parker on, when I was involved with the booking. But I have other outlets for that now."

When that first fest was over (it wasn't even called Pitchfork yet, but Intonation) he went to Holland to chill out and reconnect with family. An artist rep he knew booked him a few gigs with Dutch players who liked what they heard. "Then all of a sudden I'm going there to play, and to the Dutch Jazz Meetings, and I've kept on going," he says. "And then when the Dutch guys came through Chicago on tour and they had an extra day, we'd do something together, and they'd bring their tunes."

That activity led to People, Places & Things' new *Second Cities, Vol. 1*, recorded in Amsterdam in November 2012. The two-reeds, two-rhythm PP&T (with Greg Ward and Tim Haldeman on saxes) started out reviving neglected Chicago hardbop of the '50s before morphing into a looser repertory project.

Second Cities skims great tunes from a close-knit bunch of mid-career Amsterdam luminaries — brassmen Eric Boeren and Joost Buis, pianist Guus Janssen, reedists Michael Moore, Ab Baars and Sean Bergin; all but the late Bergin drop in to play Reed's arrangements of their own compositions. Reed had the scores already, from playing with the composers in Chicago. He had been going through old sheet music, cleaning house, and thought, it'd be nice to play some of these again.

(The name *Second Cities* comes from some Lester Bowie/AACM wisdom someone once laid on Reed: when you've become established in one city, start building relationships in another. Then you've got two places you can always play. Then get a third and fourth.)

Cornetist Eric Boeren, whose own quartet features the ridiculously hard-swinging Euro drum hero Han Bennink, first played with Reed in Chicago in 2006, on one of those Sundays at the Hungry Brain. Says Boeren: "It was a mixed Chicago-Dutch quartet. We started out trying to find each other, but when we found the momentum, there was this push from the back. 'Ah, this is what it's like to play with an American drummer.' It was different from any experience I had before." They have played together many times since. "One night at Amsterdam's Zaal 100, Mike made all the musicians sweat to keep up with his threatening, exciting, directing, inescapable drive, that's held numerous bands together in the moments that count," Boeren says. "Mike can sniff out those moments like no one else."

Still, Boeren says the two cities' players have different working methods. The Amsterdammers like to invent a tune's arrangement even as they're playing it; the Chicagoans like to have a roadmap, even if they don't stick to it.

Mike Reed concurs: "The Dutch are used to building something. We're more used to deconstructing — 'Let's learn it so we can tear it apart!'"

Kevin Whitehead: Wonder Sound, 02-06-2014