

aRT

akLaff, Robinson, Thayer

ScienSonic Laboratories SS16

www.sciensonic.net

www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHZKnpIOXrk

“The trio aRT has been playing together since the late 1980s, yet somehow – we can’t explain it – this is our first album.”

The trio known as **aRT** – akLaff, Robinson, Thayer – is a highly adventurous group of creative minds that has been performing new and startling music since 1988. Scott Robinson and Julian Thayer had been college roommates in 1977, and already had an extensive performing history together when they recruited Pheeroan akLaff to join them for some festival appearances in the late 1980s. With akLaff’s adventurous drumming added to Thayer’s idiosyncratic bass approach and Robinson’s unique voice on instruments like bass sax, alto clarinet and theremin, a new and distinctive group sound emerged... and **aRT** was born. **aRT** has since appeared at jazz festivals, art galleries, and scientific conferences here and abroad, and has produced collaborative multimedia projects incorporating the work of sculptor Rob Fisher, choreographer LaRue Allen, drummer/researcher Milford Graves, and surrealist painter Richard Powers. **aRT**’s 1991 “Flying Carpet” multimedia performance at the Knitting Factory premiered a new, improvisational method of interactively intermixing art/performance video streams. This idea was expanded upon in 1996 for the Studio for Creative Inquiry in Pittsburgh, where their planetarium performance “Night of the Living Cell” combined imagery of cell life with real-time video feed of the performers – in 3D! “The result,” *The Wall Street Journal* reported at the time, “could become a new form of artistic experience.” In 1997, **aRT** was selected to be the closing act for the Sun Ra Festival in New York. Then in 2020, **aRT** performed in Philadelphia for the Institute of Contemporary Art’s exhibition on Milford Graves, with whom **aRT** had been working toward a collaborative music/science project. As Mr. Graves was not well enough to perform, he graciously provided a set of his TonoRhythmology/Sonification recordings – which he created by translating his own physiological data into musical sound -- along with his blessing to incorporate them into the performance. This provided a means by which he could, in a way, be present and part of the music... an idea that **aRT** hopes to expand on in future performances. Most recently, **aRT** mounted a major multimedia concert event at Roulette, “Higher Powers,” in honor of painter Richard M. Powers’ 2021 centennial.

Despite such a long performing history, no recordings of this remarkable trio have so far been commercially available. Robinson decided to rectify this, convening the group in his ScienSonic Laboratories facility for a day of recording in January of 2024. He labored over the next several months, doing all the mixing, mastering, editing and album cover design himself (despite undergoing cancer surgery at the time), determined to have the album in hand for the group’s June performance at the Rochester International Jazz Festival (prior to the official Nov. 1 release). That performance was a resounding success, and **aRT** is now proud to finally present its first album. Many unusual sounds are heard, such as sarrusophone, theremin, electric contrabass sax, and Robinson’s first recording on his new

and very special instrument: the F tuba that once belonged to the great Howard Johnson (a dear friend). As is usual with aRT, no written or predetermined material was used. Although many of the pieces sound rehearsed and/or composed, this music was entirely improvised.

aRT:

Pheeroan akLaff is one of the most important drummer/percussionists in creative music. Since a very young age he has been a major contributor to the artform, working alongside giants such as Anthony Braxton, Cecil Taylor, Andrew Hill, Oliver Lake, Sam Rivers, Henry Threadgill and many more. Pheeroan's music is steeped in powerful ritual and imagination, and through his organization Seed Artists he is finding new ways to present this music to the public.

Scott Robinson is an award-winning composer and multi-instrumentalist who has presented his music in nearly every corner of the globe, appearing on approximately 300 recordings. He has worked with Joe Lovano, Ron Carter, Maria Schneider, Chet Baker, Henry Grimes, Ella Fitzgerald, Anthony Braxton and many more. Scott's ScienSonic Laboratories imprint has released 16 adventurous and far-reaching albums, including *Flow States* with Milford Graves, Roscoe Mitchell and Marshall Allen. His quartet album *Tenormore* was named "Best New Release" in a 2019 *JazzTimes* poll.

Dr. Julian Thayer is currently Distinguished Professor of Psychological Science at UC Irvine. A Fulbright Fellow and winner of the Distinguished Scientist Award, he has produced more than 650 publications, and is ranked among the top .1% of most-cited researchers worldwide. His research on music and psycho-acoustics has been featured in the *Wall Street Journal* and *Psychology Today*. An accomplished bassist, Jules has recorded with Geri Allen, Charlie Mariano, George Garzone and others.



aRT in performance at Roulette in Brooklyn, NY on Oct. 30, 2021: "Higher Powers"