

For Immediate Release

September 25, 2008

CONTACT: K. Mensah Wali

Email: kmwali@comcast.net

Daytime Phone: 347-528-6008

Evening Phone: 412-322-0292

www.kentearts.org

PITTSBURGH, PA – Kente Arts Alliance presents its next installment in its **Harmonies Across Cultures series**. The next installment will feature violinist/composer **Billy Bang and *the Aftermath Band*** performing *Sketches of Vietnam*. The event is scheduled for Saturday, November 8, 2008 at the Kelly-Strayhorn Theater, 8 PM.

The violin is hardly the first instrument that comes to mind when you think about jazz, but that's never daunted Billy Bang, one of the instrument's most adventurous exponents.

While attending a Massachusetts prep school under full scholarship, he met and began playing with fellow-student, folk-singer Arlo Guthrie. Drafted into the army following graduation, Bang was sent to Vietnam, an experience that profoundly affected his life, often quite painfully. Returning home and radicalized, Billy became active in the anti-war movement, and by the late '60s had returned to music.

Heavily inspired by the exploratory fire of John Coltrane, Eric Dolphy, Ornette Coleman and the liberating energy of the free-jazz movement, Bang returned to the violin as his principal means of expression. Attending New York's Queens College, and studying privately with renowned violinist Leroy Jenkins, Bang became a key member of the dynamic New York avant-garde scene of the '70s.

Currently, Bang records for Canada's Justin Time Records, for which he recorded *Bang On* in 1997 and *Big Bang Theory* in 1999. *Vietnam: The Aftermath* (released in October 2001) evokes and confronts the memories of his Vietnam experiences and showcases the fine compositional skills that have always marked his own recordings.

The experience proved to be emotionally cathartic as well as a boon to his career, as it led to rave reviews the world over, awards from recording societies, and invitations to perform the resulting work at such prestigious jazz festivals as the Festival International de Jazz de Montreal, the Monterey Jazz Festival in California, and the Saalfelden Festival in Austria. A film documentary, chronicling Bang's return to Vietnam, with European and North American backing, is currently in the works.

Bang's recording *Vietnam: Reflections*, chronicles his life in America after returning from that country. Recorded in May, 2004 in New York, it was released May 10, 2005, and featured many of the same players on *Aftermath* (five of them, including Bang, are also Vietnam veterans).

The Aftermath Band

1. James Spaulding [alto sax, flute]
2. Ted Daniel [trumpet]
3. Andrew Boehmke [piano]
4. Todd Nicholson [bass]
5. Newman Taylor Baker [drums]
6. Nhan Thanh Ngo [Dan Tranh]
7. Billy Bang [composer, band leader, violin]

The concert is being held to correspond with Veteran's Day, commemorated Tuesday, November 11 to honor all who have served in the US armed services, living and dead.

Billy Bang will be available for telephone interviews for pre publicity.

Advance purchase - \$25. At the door - \$30.

Tickets are available through ProArtsTickets: www.proartstickets.org or 412-394-3353.

Tickets are also available: Dorsey's Record Shop (Homewood)

Paul's CDs (Bloomfield)

This program is made possible by funds from the Heinz Endowments. DUQ 90.5 FM is the Media Sponsor. Also endorsed and supported by Black Voices for Peace.

Kente Arts Alliance is a non-profit tax exempt organization.