

# Wednesday Noon Hours

Roy Barnett Recital Hall  
September 28, 2022 | 12:00pm

## Aram Bajakian *Guitar*

### Artist Statement

I spent seven weeks this summer at my parent's place in central Massachusetts. It was the home I grew up in, so while it was comforting, there's also ghosts of my past there. I found a wooden box that my high school girlfriend gave me containing a lock of her hair. I had buried it in a closet after she broke my heart.

We spent the summer having long dinners on my parent's brick patio. My mom makes a mean cocktail, and my wife and I would spend hours sipping negronis and martinis while the sun set, the kids screaming as they ran through the sprinkler. Bunnies, squirrels and hummingbirds were our visual entertainment. My daughters played long backgammon tournaments with their Baboog (grandfather) throughout the day. They can both beat him now, though he still holds his own.

I hadn't seen my parents in three years and they're getting older. We really appreciated every moment. The mornings were spent outside slowly drinking coffees. Just chit-chatting. Our days bookended on the patio.

Later at night, I would go on long drives through the old New England villages with the windows rolled down. The sound of the night life there, the crickets, is so loud. In Vancouver there are lovely frogs across the street from our apartment that lull us to sleep at certain times of the year. Now there's a high-rise going up in their old home, so their orgiastic parties may be kaput. We'll listen for them this fall.

The summers in Massachusetts are hot and humid and as I tried to fall asleep in my old bedroom, I remembered my attempts to practice my guitar in July and August. I often gave up trying to get anything done, defeated by the heat. I had a high-power rotating fan in my bedroom and one day I noticed that when it blew on my electric guitar's strings, a beautiful shimmering sound would be emitted from my amplifier. It often verged towards a chaotic feedback but would never quite pass that event horizon. The sound was always changing as different harmonics were emphasized by the fan's artificial breeze. For hours I would sit in my room as the fan passed over me and then to my guitar, just listening. The sounds of crickets would join the mix as the sun set.

My mind would wander, thinking about my grandparents, my girlfriend. All I was afraid of.

The music I will play today comes from that spirit of listening, though I may mix in my own interpretation of a Beatles number. Even when I do create "programs" or "set lists" they're rarely followed. For me, part of the great fun of music is being on that precipice of having no idea what's going to happen next, like when I listened to the sound of the fan on the strings.

What path do you choose to take at that exact moment?

I've observed over the years that certain magical things can happen in that space, especially if the people you're in communion with at the concert (i.e. the audience and/or other musicians) also believe in magic.

As listeners, please know that the places that your mind wanders to when listening to my music are just as important as whatever I play. Let your mind go. Maybe you'll think about how your roommate doesn't do their dishes. Or about that test next week. Or about how you should go to Spain one day. Or about your grandparents or parents. It's all okay.

I also invite you to fall asleep during my performance. Concert sleeping is a bit different than night-time sleeping. It's in a different space and can be delicious! Just be aware that if you snore, the cricket sounds that I'm creating might get really loud and jostle you. Or they might get really quiet, so that the rise and fall of your snores are accentuated by the music, and all the eyes (and ears) in the hall will be on you instead of me.

Thanks for reading and listening.

Aram

*We gratefully acknowledge that we are gathered together for this performance on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam people.*

Aram Bajakian

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## Aram Bajakian guitar

The music of guitarist and composer Aram Bajakian has been called “a masterpiece” (fRoots, July 2017), “shape-shifting” (FreeJazzCollective, January 2017), and “sometimes delicate, sometimes punishing” (Chicago Reader, January 2018). As a guitarist, “the virtuosic jack of all trades” (Village Voice, May 2015) has toured extensively with Lou Reed, Madeleine Peyroux, John Zorn and Diana Krall, performing at many of the world’s greatest venues, including Carnegie Hall, Royal Albert Hall, the Acropolis, L’Olympia, as well as the Montreaux, Newport, Monterey and Antibes jazz festivals, among others. From 2018-2021 Bajakian served as the New Music Curator at Western Front in Vancouver, one of Canada’s leading artist-run centers for contemporary art and new music. During his tenure at Western Front Bajakian curated work with artists such as Darius Jones, Tiffany Ayaluk, Jen Shyu, Ian William Craig, Yu Su, Raven Chacon and others.



Bajakian received his Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst where he studied with Dr. Yusef Lateef. He holds a Master of Arts Degree in Music Education from Teachers College, Columbia University and a Master of Music degree in Music Composition from the University of British Columbia. He is currently a PhD student in Ethnomusicology at the University of British Columbia, where his advisor is Dr. Nathan Hesselink. Bajakian's research focuses on the role of music in contemporary and historic Armenian communities.

*Thank you for coming!*

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