Solos & Duos Series concludes with William Parker/Hamid Drake Duo

The UMass Fine Arts Center’s Solos & Duos Series concludes its 3rd season with a duet performance by William Parker, bass and Hamid Drake, percussion, on Thursday, December 9, 2004 at 8:00 pm. in Bezanson Recital Hall, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

“William Parker and Hamid Drake are the best rhythm section in jazz right now,” says Phil Freeman in Alternative Press. This assessment is based on their years of collaboration in Roy Campbell’s Pyramid Trio, the bands of saxophonists Peter Brotzmann, Fred Anderson and Edward ‘Kidd’ Jordan, and various Parker-led ensembles. Although both Parker and Drake have each performed in the Pioneer Valley at least a dozen times over the years, they have never appeared in a duo context.

Parker will also perform on balafon, shakuhachi, bombard, dumbek, sintir and slit drum. Drake will play tablas, frame drum, bells and trap drums.

"Not since Don Cherry and Ed Blackwell joined forces have two musicians so organically wedded world-music influences with free jazz," writes Ed Hazell in Jazziz magazine’s review of Piercing the Veil (Aum Fidelity, 2001). “The resultant music is connected to history and culture yet true to its contemporary American roots. And the rhythms groove so deeply that if dance-club DJs got hold of this CD, all America would be moving to it." In fact Sasha Crnobrnja, aka Organic Grooves, did take the music on Piercing the Veil and produced Black Cherry, (Aum Fidelity), one of the most successful remix projects of 2002.

William Parker, whom the Village Voice has characterized as "the most consistently brilliant free jazz bassist of all time," has commanded a unique degree of respect throughout his career. After entering the New York music scene in 1972 at the age of 20, Parker quickly became the bass player of choice among his peers. Within a short time he was playing with established musicians such as Bill Dixon, Milford Graves, Billy Higgins and Sunny Murray. In 1980 he became a member of the Cecil Taylor Unit, in which he played a prominent role for over a decade. Since 1995 Parker has produced more than 20 albums as a leader, and directs the Little Huey Creative Music Orchestra, The Curtis Mayfield Project, and two small groups: In Order To Survive and Raining on the Moon Quartet.

Hamid Drake was born in Monroe, LA, in 1955, and later moved to Chicago with his family, where he was mentored by tenor saxophonist Fred Anderson. By the close of the 1990s, Hamid Drake was widely regarded as one of the best percussionists in improvised music. Adding Afro-Cuban, Indian, and African rhythms and instruments to his standard trap set, Drake has moved easily between work with top jazz improvisers like David Murray, Don Cherry and Pharaoh Sanders on the one hand, and international artists like Foday Muso Suso (Gambia), Mahmoud Gania (Morroco) and Gigi (Ethiopia) on the other. “Drake can play anywhere from deep in the pocket to way out in space,” says Peter Margasak in The Chicago Reader.

Tickets are $10 and $5 (students), and are available through the Fine Arts Center box office, 545-2511 or 1-800-999-UMAS.

The Solos & Duos Series is produced by the UMass Fine Arts Center and made possible by the: Student Affairs Cultural Enrichment Fund and UMass Alumni Association. Thanks to the Campus Center Hotel and WMUA, 91.1FM