

*"My goal is to make music that has structure and freedom, that is in and of the moment and timeless."*

*Jazz Report* calls Glen Hall "Canada's best kept secret." A multi-instrumentalist, composer, arranger and producer, Hall combines emotion, intelligence and sensuality in his internationally acclaimed recordings and his compelling live shows. Hall is an uncompromising visionary on whose sonic adventures he has been joined by such luminaries as arranger-composer Gil Evans, percussion virtuosos Nexus and Trichy Sankaran, trombonist Roswell Rudd, pianist JoAnne Brackeen and a host of others. While having resonances as diverse as Charles Mingus, Frank Zappa, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Sonic Youth, Muddy Waters, Ornette Coleman, Patti Smith and Thelonious Monk, Hall's music bears the unique and unmistakable stamp of a singular individual. *The Globe and Mail* says he is "aggressively contemporary... Hall has all the marks of an original mind."

Born during a tornado on August 7, 1950, in Winnipeg, Glen grew up in the musically broad-minded mid-western environment that was conducive to his creativity. He says that his first "instrument" was the shortwave radio his parents had in the basement: "I used to play the shortwave radio and tune in to the music of the world on that set." This adventure later came back to him when he started working with the music of Stockhausen and his CD *Hallucinations*. It was watching Mahalia Jackson on the Ed Sullivan Show that first got Hall involved in music. Her emotional and spiritual power convinced him to explore the potential of music as an outlet for his creative energies. He took up the guitar and harmonica in his early teens, playing the music of The Yardbirds, The Kinks, The Who, Jimi Hendrix, The Cream, various Motown artists and the Paul Butterfield Blues Band in a six piece rock group with the dubious name Ragnar and the Pagans.

At about this time, he had a musical epiphany that changed the course of his life. A musician, Bob Mowbray, who played saxophone and flute and used to sit with Hall's band, played him four recordings that still are influences on his music: Sonny Rollins' *East Broadway Rundown* and *Sonny Meets Hawk*, Rasaan Roland Kirk's *I Talk With the Spirits* and Archie Shepp's *On This Night*. Glen began to investigate jazz in a serious way and became a devotee of local guitar genius Lenny Breau whose trio members, Reg Kelln on drums and Ron Halldorsen on bass, he later hired for his own group. At this time he also began a longtime fascination with electronic and electro-acoustic music as well as world music. He absorbed the music of Edgar Varese, John Cage, Frank Zappa, Ali Akbar Khan and the Australian aborigines. He also began playing the flute, the first of many new instruments he would later adopt as his "voices" in his musical explorations.

Having decided on a career in literary scholarship, Hall began his university studies fully intent on becoming a professor of literature. But music kept calling, first in the form of a folk-country trio that featured his guitar skills and a jazz group called Undercurrent. It was at this time that Hall had another formative experience that forever altered his life. A friend suggested he go to a club that featured underground legend, Chicago-based musician, Tommy Ponce. He went and Ponce, a multi-instrumentalist who played piano, saxophone, flute, trumpet and valve trombone, invited him to sit in whenever he wanted.

Hall played with Ponce four or five nights a week and developed a deeper understanding of the jazz idiom. At one point, noticing Hall's use of large leaps in his improvisations, Ponce asked him what he was trying to do. He said that he was using ideas from saxophonist Eric Dolphy. Ponce suggested that Hall should play the saxophone and that's just what he did.

Hall continued his education at university, deciding to write his thesis on William S. Burroughs cut-up technique. Another experience sitting in with some of Duke Ellington's musicians had a profound impact on him. It was trumpeter Money Johnson who asked him what he intended to do with his life. When Hall said that he was probably going to teach literature, Johnson said, "Anybody can teach. You've got a talent. Don't waste it." While completing his thesis, he found that Burroughs wanted to "rub out the word". Putting two and two together, Hall decided to abandon his career in literature, and left Winnipeg for the Berklee College of Music in Boston. He was there full-time for one year when one of his instructors, Robert Hores, known for his stern manner and seldom bestowed praise, told him, "You know enough now. Go out and play."

Glen returned to Winnipeg where he was invited to teach music at Yamaha's music education center. He also helped put together a jazz quartet, The Whole Life Communication Orchestra, with bassist Ian Gardiner (Mood Jga Jga, Burton Cummings), drummer Jim Hillman (Sonny Greenwich, Oliver Jones, Merlin Factor), and pianist Mark Rutherford (Diane Heatherington). Rutherford also included him in his nine piece Jazz Composers Workshop. In 1976 he went to Darmstadt, Germany to study with Gyorgy Ligeti, Mauricio Kagel, Rolf Gelhaar, and Giuseppe Sinopoli. Hall co-founded the jazz-rock group, Zdenka, whose pyrotechnical compositions and performances became highly regarded. After recording one as yet unreleased album, the group reconfigured and Hall decided to concentrate on jazz playing and composing.

In 1979 he recorded his first album, *The Book of the Heart*, with pianist JoAnne Brackeen, drummer Billy Hart, bassist Cecil McBee and longtime friend from his Berklee days, guitarist Joshua Breakstone, and released it on his own label, Sonora. *The Book of the Heart* (InRespect; Koch Jazz), perhaps the first independently produced and released album by a Canadian jazz musician to be recorded in the U.S. and to utilize internationally renowned jazz stars. After its release, Glen traveled for six months in Asia and the Middle East. Upon returning to Canada, he married and moved with his wife Lynn to Toronto where he hoped to develop his musical career.

In Toronto, Hall mixed with the who's who of the jazz scene: drummers Claude Ranger and Terry Clarke, bassists Don Thompson and Dave Young, guitarists Ed Bickert and Rob Piltch and many others. In 1984 he began work on his second recording, *The Mother of the Book* (InRespect; Koch Jazz), featuring legendary arranger/composer Gil Evans and the percussion group, Nexus. A work of extraordinary depth and richness, *Jazz Forum* said Hall's compositions are "surely of timeless worth" and *Jazz Times* noted that "it features one of the most singular ensembles ever assembled, the most thoroughly post-modern jazz album cutting across the expected."

In 1987 Glen put together Left Hand/Right Hand, an octet that was to play Gil Evans' arrangements of Hall's compositions. The process of their collaboration was going to be the subject of a documentary film by Larry Hicoek, a biographer of Gil. The music was also to be recorded with Evans band featuring drummer Elvin Jones and soprano saxist Steve Lacy. Evans' death ended this plan, but Hall kept the group together for eight years, playing only sporadically due to its inherent financial drawbacks. Hall had resumed his academic career in 1985 teaching communications, mystical literature, psychology, which he continues up to the present.

He played in trio and quartet settings and eventually formed and recorded with the improvising iconoclasts, Strange Attractors, which used only verbal texts for its spontaneous, electrifying performances. Hall's interest in William Burroughs eventually led him to composing a series of pieces called *Hallucinations: Music and Words for William S. Burroughs* (Leo) that he recorded with eleven musicians, featuring trombonist Roswell Rudd. In 1997 he assembled one of his current groups, the quintet OutSource with guitarist Michael Occhipinti, drummer Barry Romberg, bassist Michael Morse and vibraphonist Allan Molnar. This group recorded and performed with Rudd, producing a CD released in 2001, *The Roswell Incident* (Leo).

Recently, Hall has assembled a genre-defying eleven-piece group, redShift, consisting of two turntablists, two bassists, two guitarists, a percussionist, vocalist, a drummer, and his own woodwind arsenal, tam tam, electronics, and spoken word. He also leads Sonora an improvising chamber group with violin, cello, contrabass and woodwinds, Emit, a jazz horn-based quintet, and Trio Muo, a saxophone/bass/drums jazz trio.

Hall is also a member of the Woodchoppers Association, an expansive free improvisation orchestra, Powerbuch, a spontaneous composition quartet, the dadaist Big Band Massacre, and is a guest with The Cronics, a power rock trio, and the Free Work Band, a trumpet/bass/drums jazz trio, and the Ken Aldcroft Trio + One. In June, 2001, he organized and produced (416) 2001, a festival of creative improvised music involving nearly eighty musicians and multiple venues, as well as conducting the Here To Go Arkestra. Lately, Glen has combined forces with such formidable instrumentalists as trombonist Ray Anderson, drummer Gerry Hemmingway, bassist Dominic Duval, and saxophonist Sabir Mateen, as well as forming an on-going trio with Sonic Youth guitarist Lee Ranaldo and drummer William Hooker.

As for the future, Hall is currently developing music for performance, recording, film and CD-ROM involving multimedia images, electroacoustic sounds, spoken word, and improvisers from different fields of music.

Nano-interview

*Q. What is it you do in your music?*

A. Communicate

*Q. What do you communicate?*

A. Being. Being in action

