

# BRAITHWAITE & KATZ

Communications

## NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Ann Braithwaite  
(781) 259-9600  
Ann@bkmusicpr.com

### **Ken Thomson and Slow/Fast Release the powerful composed-jazz milestone, *Settle***

**On 2<sup>nd</sup> CD reedman Thomson (Bang On a Can All-Stars) is joined by guitar sensation Nir Felder, trumpeter Russ Johnson, bassist Adam Armstrong, and drummer Fred Kennedy**

**Upcoming CD Release Concerts in Chicago, IL; Detroit, MI; Milwaukee & Whitewater, WI; Minneapolis, MN; Baltimore, MD; Shenandoah, VA and Brooklyn, NY**

*"Ken Thomson is an artist who is accustomed to threading between musical worlds, but *Settle* feels seamless, as if cut from whole cloth. The compositions are exquisitely tailored to the members of Slow/Fast, who play with soul and wit throughout. This is elegant, well-turned, sophisticated music that isn't afraid to bloody its knuckles when the situation demands it."* – Darcy James Argue

*"Mr. Thomson's compositions are intricately wrought and incident-steeped, even when they move in snowlike drifts."*  
– Nate Chinen, The New York Times

***Settle***, the new recording from **Ken Thomson and Slow/Fast**, exhibits the kind of stylistic breadth and alert experimentation that one would expect from a leader famed for his work in both the worlds of new jazz and contemporary classical music. Alto saxophonist, bass clarinetist and composer Thomson — a co-founder of the acclaimed band Gutbucket and a recent addition to the Bang On A Can All-Stars — digs deeper into uncharted musical realms with Slow/Fast, a visionary quintet that includes the guitar phenomenon **Nir Felder**, trumpeter **Russ Johnson**, bassist **Adam Armstrong** and drummer **Fred Kennedy**. *Settle*, the band's second album, will be released on **September 23, 2014** on NCM East Records (40138).

Combining the sounds of improvisation-filled chamber jazz with the lucidity of contemporary classical composition – infused with distortion-laden twists that reveal the band's embrace of rock influences -- Thomson and Slow/Fast bring new ideas to small-group jazz. Vivid composition rather than head-solo-head norms prevail here, lending the album a freshness that leads the listener on a journey to unexplored, yet inviting, sonic landscapes.

The five main pieces on *Settle* were developed after the band toured behind their debut record. Each piece has a discernable focus and theme – whether the ever-shifting grooves of "Settle," the pushing of Thomson and Felder to new heights on "We Are Not All In This Together," the wild use of instrumentation on "Bend Towards Light," or the wide compositional-dramatic arc of "Spring" – but all display the seamless interweave of rigorous composition and exhilarating go-for-broke improvising that has become the calling card of this outfit. *Settle* is the sound of a compact band creating a massive musical groundswell.

Slow/Fast has remained consistent in its personnel since the release of the band's first album, *It Would Be Easier If*, in 2010. Finding its way on to many of the Jazz Journalist Association's Best of 2010 lists, the debut recording also received a featured New York Times review which pointed to the "intricately wrought and incident-steeped" compositions and "gutsy precision of the playing." The members of Slow/Fast are each new jazz mainstays, including guitarist Nir Felder whose own debut recording as a leader was released to critical accolades earlier this year; the newly Chicago-based trumpeter Russ Johnson, and the New York go-to players: bassist Adam Armstrong and drummer Kennedy.

In addition to his work with Slow/Fast, Thomson's recent compositional output includes *Thaw*, a CD for string quartet and bass clarinet recorded with the heralded JACK Quartet. *Thaw* was ranked the #1 Classical CD of 2013 by Rhapsody.com and garnered a four-star review in DownBeat; the piece was also listed on NPR's "10 Songs Public Radio Can't Stop Playing." <http://ktonline.net/>

## About Ken Thomson

**Ken Thomson** is a Brooklyn-based clarinetist, saxophonist, and composer. In demand as a composer and freelancer in many settings, he moves quickly between genres and scenes, bringing a fiery intensity and emotional commitment to every musical situation; *Time Out NY* called him “the hardest-working saxophonist in new-music show business.”

He has recently released a CD of his compositions for the heralded JACK Quartet, entitled *Thaw*, on Cantaloupe Music, called #1 Classical CD of 2013 by Rhapsody.com, and was featured in NPR’s “10 Songs Public Radio Can’t Stop Playing.” His latest project of exclusively his music, called *Slow/Fast*, released its debut CD *It Would Be Easier If* internationally on Intuition Records in 2010, garnering a feature review in *The New York Times* highlighting the “intricately wrought and incident-steeped” compositions and “gutsy precision of the playing.” A followup disc, *Settle*, will be released in 2014.

Thomson plays clarinet for the Bang on a Can All-Stars, one of the world’s preeminent new music ensembles. He leads the *Asphalt Orchestra* - a 12-piece next-generation avant-garde marching band, called “cooly brilliant, infectious... top notch players” by *The New York Times*. He plays saxophone and is one of the 3 composers in the punk/jazz band Gutbucket, with whom he has toured internationally to nineteen countries and 32 states over fourteen years, and released CDs for Knitting Factory, Enja, NRW, Cantaloupe and Cuneiform Records. He is on faculty at the Bang on a Can Summer Music Festival.

As a composer, he has been commissioned by the American Composers Orchestra, Bang on a Can, the True/False Film Festival, and others, and has received awards from New Music USA, ASCAP and Meet the Composer. *The New York Times* wrote of his work *Wait Your Turn* for the American Composers Orchestra upon its debut at Carnegie Hall: “The concert ended on a high note.... the music offered a density worthy of the closing bars of a Led Zeppelin epic;” and of his work “seasonal.disorder” for the Bang on a Can All-Stars, “a virtuoso piece... a texture laced with power chords, screaming clarinet lines and cluster-laden piano writing. In the end it is sheer madness, in a good, thrillingly visceral way.” The *San Francisco Weekly* writes about his music, “Thomson’s original compositions are as complex as a beehive, filled with amber-hued nooks and crannies that bear traces of jazz, world music, and classical, without succumbing to any of them.”

As a saxophonist and clarinetist, he is a member of the next-generation chamber orchestra Signal (conducted by Brad Lubman), working directly with composers from Steve Reich to Helmut Lachenmann and a performer on CDs for Mode, Orange Mountain, and Cantaloupe Records. He is a frequent collaborator with many new-composed music groups including Alarm Will Sound. He has also worked as a music director, notably, directing composer Julia Wolfe’s “Traveling Music” at the Bordeaux Conservatory, France, 2009, and has conducted performances of “Music for Airports” with the Bang on a Can All-Stars, choir, and guest musicians in Melbourne and Buenos Aires.

He has performed extensively across the US and Europe at major jazz festivals including Jazz a Vienne, San Sebastian Jazz Festival, London Jazz Festival, Warsaw Summer Jazz Days, Rotterdam Jazz, Jazz Saalfelden, Copenhagen Jazz Festival, Belgrade Jazz Festival, and many others. He is a Conn-Selmer Artist, and endorses D’Addario Reeds and Sibelius software.

## About the musicians

Trumpeter **Russ Johnson** is a recent Midwest transplant after spending 23 years as an important member of New York City’s jazz community. He has six recordings as a leader or co-leader and has performed on more than 75 recordings as a sideman. Johnson has worked alongside many legendary figures in jazz including Lee Konitz, Steve Swallow, Bill Frisell, and Joe Lovano. In addition, he has performed and/or recorded with a long list of the prominent musicians currently on the international jazz scene including Ken Vandermark, Myra Melford, and Jenny Scheinman. His most recent recording, *Meeting Point* was released in May 2014 on Relay Recordings, and is already receiving critical acclaim. Johnson currently serves as the Director of Jazz Studies at the University of Wisconsin - Parkside.

Called “the next big jazz guitarist” by NPR, hailed by the New York Times as a “whiz kid”, and dubbed “incredible” by the Montreal Gazette, **Nir Felder** is a new voice in jazz guitar. Growing up in the New York City suburbs, Felder spent his youth playing in rock bands while learning about jazz at the local record store, inspired by icons from John Coltrane to voodoo child Jimi Hendrix. After attending Berklee College of Music on a full scholarship, Felder moved to New York City in 2006 and quickly became one of the city’s most highly sought-after sideman, notching credits in bands led by Grammy winner Esperanza Spalding, Terri Lyne Carrington (whose recent release featuring Felder on guitar won a Grammy for Best Jazz Instrumental Album), Jack DeJohnette, Greg Osby, Joey DeFrancesco, Eric Harland, Jose James, Meshell Ndegeocello, and Cindy Blackman and performing with the New York City Opera, Dianne Reeves, Bobby McFerrin, Stanley Clarke, Lizz Wright, Matisyahu, Black Sheep and others at venues including Radio City Music Hall and the Village Vanguard and national television stations NBC and Fox.

In 2000, having established himself as one of Australia’s most versatile and in-demand bass players, **Adam Armstrong** relocated to New York with the assistance of an Australian Arts Council professional development grant. He currently performs in groups led by jazz saxophonist Eric Person, drummer Christian Finger, composer/saxophonist Ken Thomson (Slow/Fast), the singer-songwriters K.P. Devlin, Dana LaCrix and more. Armstrong has played with such jazz greats as Kenny Kirkland, Kenny Wheeler, Maria Schneider and drumming legend Billy Cobham and has toured through 34 countries, performing in clubs and at major festivals in Europe, Asia, Australia and the Americas. Armstrong appears on over 80 albums, including two ARIA (Australian Recording Industry Award) winners, has played on the soundtracks of feature films, theatre productions and has given master classes and workshops at institutions around the world. When he’s not touring, Armstrong can be seen performing in many of New York City’s notable venues including Cornelia Street Café, Joe’s Pub, Le Poisson Rouge, Barbès, the Blue Note and Jazz at the Lincoln Center’s Dizzy’s Club Coca Cola.

*All About Jazz* has likened drummer **Fred Kennedy**’s “multi-phase pulse” to a “snarling beast,” and says that Kennedy’s “slashing” drumming keeps the listener “locked in and off-balance at the same time.” Brooklyn-based Kennedy’s pursuits cover a wide range of genres, from folk to free; electro-acoustic to chamber music; and indie-rock to traditional and modern jazz. Kennedy has had the opportunity to perform and/or record with many of New York’s contemporary jazz masters and has toured throughout Europe and North and South America. He has played on dozens of recordings, and can be heard regularly in such NYC clubs as the Blue Note, Smalls, Rockwood Music Hall, Zebulon, the Knitting Factory, Tea Lounge, 55 Bar, and the Stone. Some recent projects and collaborators include Zach Brock and the Magic Number, Gray Code, Ken Thomson and Slow/Fast, Pamela Rodriguez, and Elin Sigvardsson. In addition to his work as a performer, Kennedy is a frequent collaborator with theater, dance, and video artists as both a composer and sound designer.

**NCM EAST** is an artist-run record label/collective whose main goals are to provide an outlet for new, original music and to establish the NCM East name as a synonym for honest, well-crafted, forward-thinking sounds. Founded in 1995, the label has grown to include everything from electronica and songwriting to improvised and composed instrumental music. All NCM EAST releases are artist-produced and funded, feature excellent artwork and maintain a high quality of sound and production.

<http://ktonline.net/>

# # #

**KEN THOMSON AND SLOW/FAST TOUR DATES**

<b>Thurs, October 2</b>	<b>9:30pm</b>	<b>Constellation</b>	<b>Chicago, IL</b>
<a href="http://www.constellation-chicago.com/event/668049-ken-thomson-slow-fast-chicago/">http://www.constellation-chicago.com/event/668049-ken-thomson-slow-fast-chicago/</a>			
<b>Fri, October 3</b>	<b>7pm/8:30pm</b>	<b>Detroit Institute of the Arts</b>	<b>Detroit, MI</b>
<a href="http://www.dia.org/calendar/friday-night.aspx?id=4625&amp;iid=">http://www.dia.org/calendar/friday-night.aspx?id=4625&amp;iid=</a>			
<b>Sat, October 4</b>	<b>7:30 pm</b>	<b>Light Recital Hall Univ. of Wisc.</b>	<b>Whitewater, WI</b>
<a href="http://events.uww.edu/MasterCalendar">http://events.uww.edu/MasterCalendar</a>			
<b>Sun, October 5</b>	<b>8 pm</b>	<b>Sugar Maple</b>	<b>Milwaukee, WI</b>
<a href="http://www.mysugarmaple.com/">http://www.mysugarmaple.com/</a>			
<b>Mon, October 6</b>	<b>10:45 pm</b>	<b>Icehouse</b>	<b>Minneapolis, MN</b>
<a href="http://www.icehousempls.com/events/">http://www.icehousempls.com/events/</a>			
<b>Wed, October 8</b>		<b>Venue TBA</b>	<b>Baltimore, MD</b>
<b>Thurs, October 9</b>	<b>8 p.m.</b>	<b>Shenandoah Conservatory of Music</b>	<b>Shenandoah, VA</b>
<a href="http://shenandoahnewmusic.org/events/">http://shenandoahnewmusic.org/events/</a>			
<b>Fri, October 10</b>		<b>Shapeshifter Lab</b>	<b>Brooklyn, NY</b>
<a href="http://www.shapeshifterlab.com/">http://www.shapeshifterlab.com/</a>			