

MISSOULA CHAMBER MUSIC COLLECTIVE PRESENTS

SONGBOOK BY DAVID MASLANKA

October 15 7:30pm
UM Recital Hall

October 22 3pm
2520 Duncan Drive



JEFF TAYLOR
MARIMBA

JESSE DOCHNAHL
ALTO SAXOPHONE



CAITLIN CISLER
SOPRANO

MAC MERCHANT
PIANO

KIRA LEE
VIOLIN

PROGRAM

"I love the dark hours of my being" (2005).....Brad Mehldau
Caitlin Cisler, soprano and Mac Merchant, piano

Song Book (1998).....David Maslanka
I. Song for Davy
II. Lost
III. Hymn Tune with Four Variations
IV. Serious Music – In Memoriam Arthur Cohn
V. Summer Song
Jesse Dochnahl, alto saxophone and Jeff Taylor, marimba

Song of 'Almah (2006)Andrew Beall
Mvt. 1 "Rose of Sharon"
Caitlin Cisler, soprano and Jeff Taylor, marimba

Come Down Heavy (1994)Evan Chambers
I. Steel Drivin' Man
II. I Gave My Love a Cherry
III. O Lovely Appearance of Death
IV. Drill Ye Tarriers
Jesse Dochnahl, alto saxophone; Kira Lee, violin; Mac Merchant, piano

ARTISTS

CAITLIN CISLER made her professional debut headlining as Cunegonde in *Candide* with Four Seasons Theatre in Madison, Wisconsin. Praised for her “breathtaking range of voice”, Caitlin has appeared as Marie in *La fille du régiment*, Lucia in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Queen of the Night in *Die Zauberflöte*, among many other beloved coloratura roles. Off the operatic stage Caitlin enjoys the intimate setting of chamber music and the opportunity to perform new music. Her upcoming performances include Samuel Barber’s *Knoxville Summer of 1915* with the Great Falls Symphony, and “Baroque in the New Year” with the Missoula Chamber Music Collective. Visit www.caitlincisler.com for more upcoming performances.

JESSE DOCHNAHL hails from the great metropolis of Ennis, MT. An active chamber musician, clinician, and conductor, Jesse has worked with young musicians across Montana, Wisconsin, and Illinois. He is deeply honored to begin his first year as the Director of Bands for Hellgate High School and his 14th year of teaching music.

KIRA LEE currently teaches in the Missoula County Public School System where she directs the Big Sky High School orchestras and 5th grade beginning strings. She performs with the Missoula Symphony, String Orchestra of the Rockies, and The Queens & Mr G. Her primary teachers and music education influences include Angella Ahn, Johan Jonsson, Darcy Drexler, and Bernard Zinck. Kira received a Bachelor of Music Education from Montana State University and a Master of Music with an emphasis in String Pedagogy from University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. She is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts in Music Education through Boston University. When she’s not teaching, performing, or studying Kira enjoys reading, cooking, and playing outside.

MAC MERCHANT is a collaborative pianist and vocal coach hailing from Stevensville, Montana. He studied at University of Colorado, Boulder for his Master of Music degree in collaborative piano. Mac’s first job was playing for church services at the age of 14, when he realized he could be paid to do something he loved. Since then, Mac has collaborated with numerous musicians, both professional and student level, choral and instrumental ensembles, and theater groups in Washington state, Montana, and Colorado. Currently Mac is a vocal coach for singers at the University of Montana as well as a freelance collaborative pianist in the Missoula area, serving as pianist for Dolce Canto and Stevensville United Methodist Church. Mac is passionate about advocating for the role of the collaborative pianist in school and professional settings as well as training and mentoring future collaborative pianists.

DR. JEFF TAYLOR is a percussionist and educator based in Missoula, Montana. He teaches music for the Missoula County Public Schools and maintains an active private studio. Jeffery has served as a band director and music educator in Montana, Idaho, Nevada, and Arizona. He holds degrees from the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, Boise State University, and Minnesota State University at Moorhead.

PROGRAM NOTES

I LOVE THE DARK HOURS OF MY BEING

Grammy Award winning jazz pianist Brad Mehldau has recorded and performed extensively since the early 1990s. Mehldau’s musical personality forms a dichotomy. He is first and foremost an improviser, and greatly cherishes the surprise and wonder that can occur from a spontaneous musical idea that is expressed directly, in real time. But he also has a deep fascination for the formal architecture of music, and it informs everything he plays. In his most inspired playing, the actual structure of his musical thought serves as an expressive device. As he plays, he listens to how ideas unwind, and the order in which they reveal themselves. Each tune has a strongly felt narrative arch, whether it expresses itself in a beginning, an end, or something left intentionally open-ended. The two sides of Mehldau’s personality—the improviser and the formalist—play off each other, and the effect is often something like controlled chaos. *The Book of Hours: Love Poems to God*, text by Rainer Maria Rilke, was commissioned by Carnegie Hall. These songs were recorded with acclaimed classical soprano, Renee Fleming, and released in 2006 on the *Love Sublime* record. In his essay about this record, Mehldau writes:

“Often in these pieces, I have made the piano part dense, favoring the lower register of the instrument. Writing in the lower register of the piano appealed to me sonically because of the way the high soprano voice and the piano then cover such a broad range. My deep love of the genre of art song informs everything I wrote here. Other sources of inspiration, specifically for the rhythmic phrasing of the vocal line, came from singers that I admire who are not beholden to a literal interpretation of a music text. In their partially improvised performances, much of their style is determined by rhythmic displacement—by the way a particular singer’s phrases begin, unfold, and end ahead or behind the expected, metrically “correct” place in time. Translating an improvisatory style of singing to paper was appealing to me, precisely because I’ve left nothing to chance and there is no improvisation involved. I was able to take advantage of the written-out aspect of a full-scale composition to elaborate with a fair degree of specificity on some of the vocal styles I grew up listening to, performances where the melody was never so specifically written out.”

*I love the dark hours of my being,
My mind deepens into them.
There I can find, as in old letters,
the days of my life, already lived,
and held like a legend, and understood.
Then the knowing comes: I can open
to another life that’s wide and timeless.
So I am sometimes like a tree
rustling over a gravesite
and making real the dream
of the one its living roots
embrace:
a dream once lost
among sorrows and songs.*

SONG BOOK

Song Book was commissioned by Steven Jordheim and Dane Richeson of the Lawrence University Conservatory of Music, and was composed in the summer of 1998. The movements of “Song Book” are relatively brief. They have a particular thing to say, a particular mood and attitude to express, and then they are done. I think of the pieces as emotional scenes.

- I. “Song for Davy” is a reworking of the chorale melody “Das alte Jahr vergangen ist” (“The Old Year is Past”). This is a song for my young self, written at a time of personal transition. The music touches a very old memory chord and has a wistful and haunting character.
- II. “Lost” is based on the chorale “Herr, Ich habe misgehandelt” which translates roughly as “Lord, I have done the wrong thing”. Out of this sensibly comes the feeling of being lost and needing help.
- III. “Hymn tune with Four Variations” is the only movement that uses a hymn tune verbatim. The melody is “Werde Munte, mein Gemute” (“Be strong my heart”). Each variation is a successive speeding up of the chorale statement, with the last being a chaotic scramble.
- IV. “Serious Music – In Memoriam Arthur Cohn” is the longest and severest piece in the set. Arthur Cohn was for many years Director of the Serious Music Department of Carl Fischer, and over a lifetime of stalwart champion of living composers and new music. My association with Fischer began through Arthur in 1974, and over the years he became both mentor and friend. His death in 1998, though not untimely, was a great sadness for me. The designation “Serious Music” by the Carl Fischer Company of what would otherwise be called “Concert Music” has always amused me. And so I have written a VERY serious piece for Arthur and hope that he appreciates the little joke.
- V. “Summer Song” is a sweet piece that needs no further explanation.

–Program notes by David Maslanka

SONG OF ‘ALMAH

Andrew Beall’s work has been performed in Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa, and North/South America. Grammy-winning Broadway Records released albums of his musicals, *Song of Solomon* (starring Tony-nominee Ramin Karimloo) and *Platinum Girls* (starring Tony-winner Beth Leavel) both of which have been produced on the international and domestic stage, and his latest album, *Goodbye New York*, a commission by NewYorkRep, which won a top nod at the New York New Works Festival. Beall is a graduate of Manhattan School of Music and New York University.

The text of *Song of ‘Almah* is taken from the Old Testament book, Song of Solomon, written c. 945 BC. King Solomon called this composition his Shir Hashirim – his most exquisite “Song of all Songs.” It is an incomparable celebration of romantic love in all aspects. In the entirety of Solomon’s 700 marriages and 300 additional maid-servant relationships, his search for true love led him to one ‘almah, one young girl, one maiden, who captured his heart like no other.

From the Song of Solomon we learn that ‘Almah grew up with harsh brothers who forced her to labor in her family’s vineyards. She viewed herself as a common girl, like the common meadow flowers “a rose of Sharon” and “a lily of the valleys.” Yet, ‘Almah’s life changed forever when the most powerful ruler known to man fell deeply in love with her, making her his only beloved. Like a shepherd, Solomon gave her rest. Like an oasis, he gave her water and safety. Like an apple tree in the forest, he stood out broadly among men. Such are the beginning images in the Song that describe her new life with the king. In Hebrew, ‘Almah means “young girl, maiden, or damsel”. A variation on the word is the Hebrew musical term ‘alamoth, which can be translated “soprano.” So the Song of ‘Almah is the composer’s duet for marimba and ‘alamoth. It was commissioned by Charles Beall, who also chose the Song of Solomon as the text. Although the Song of Solomon contains parts spoken by the King and parts by the Chorus (the Daughters of Jerusalem), the composer only selected key passages spoken by the beloved ‘Almah.

–Program notes by Andrew Beall

*Dark am I, yet lovely,
O daughters of Jerusalem,
dark like the tents of Kedar,
like the tent curtains of Solomon.
Do not stare at me because I am dark,
darkened by the sun.
I am a rose of Sharon,
a lily of the valleys.
My lover is mine and I am his;
Like an apple tree in the forest
is my lover among men
and his fruit is sweet.
His left arm is under my head,
and his right arm embraces me.
How handsome you are, my lover!
You
Take me away with you.*

COME DOWN HEAVY

Evan Chambers is currently Professor of Composition at the University of Michigan. Chambers’ compositions have been performed by the Cincinnati, Kansas City, Memphis, New Hampshire, and Albany Symphonies, among others. He has also appeared as a soloist in Carnegie Hall with the American Composers Orchestra. He won first prize in the Cincinnati Symphony Competition, and in 1998 was awarded the Walter Beeler Prize by Ithaca College. His work has been recognized by the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Luigi Russolo Competition, Vienna Modern Masters, NACUSA, and the American Composers Forum. He has been a resident of the MacDowell Colony and Yaddo, and been awarded individual artist grants from Meet the Composer, the Arts Foundation of Michigan and ArtServe Michigan. His composition teachers include William Albright, Leslie Bassett, Nicholas Thorne, and Marilyn Shrude, with studies in electronic music with George Wilson and Burton Beerman. His solo chamber music disk (Cold Water, Dry Stone) is available on Albany records.

The title *Come Down Heavy!* is taken from a line in the folksong *Drill Ye Tarriers* upon which the last movement of the piece is based. I grew up listening to my parents singing folksongs--this piece was inspired by memories of my father beating on his guitar, belting out *John Henry*, and the quiet sadness in my mother's voice as she sang me to sleep. To me, folksongs are not quaint, naive or innocent, as they've often come to be misrepresented--they are powerful, sometimes gritty, bitter and ironic, full of the sadness and longing of life. Although these particular songs are part of my past, they are also part of my present--my goal was to avoid casting them in a cloud of nostalgic mist or nationalistic fervor, and to capture some of the raw, rough energy and genuine ache of the music. These are not "arrangements" of folksongs, but rather settings or treatments of them; while the tunes are present, they are often transformed, extended, and even abandoned.

The first movement, *Steel Drivin' Man*, is based on the African-American worksong *John Henry*, about the mighty African-American railroad man and the legendary contest pitting his mythical human strength against that of the steam-drill. The style is based upon my father's full-tilt performances of the song and is dedicated to him, (with tips of the hat to *Huddy Leadbetter*, *Dave Van Ronk* and *Doc Watson*).

I Gave My Love A Cherry or *The Riddle Song* is dedicated to my mother; it is one of her favorite lullabies. I've treated it as a mountain lament that uses an unusual violin tuning taken from Scottish fiddle playing.

Oh lovely Appearance of Death was written by the Reverend *George Whitefield* in 1760. It was a song that my Grandmother used to sing as a lullaby, and I learned it from my father. Although the words are quite morbid, (dealing with a deeply religious aesthetic reaction to death as a release from worldly suffering) I've always been haunted by the melody. It receives the simplest and most unadorned treatment of the songs in this work.

The piece is also informed to a large extent by my involvement with traditional Irish music--the worksong *Drill Ye Tarriers* is itself rooted firmly in the Anglo-Irish tradition, and is presented first as a modified Irish reel, and later as a jig, layered with the song *Patsy on the Railroad*. (It is also finally transformed into a wild tarantella, no doubt a direct influence of my wife's Italian-American family!)

-Program notes by Evan Chambers

THANK YOU

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