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Junior Recital: Joshua Condon, piano

Joshua Condon

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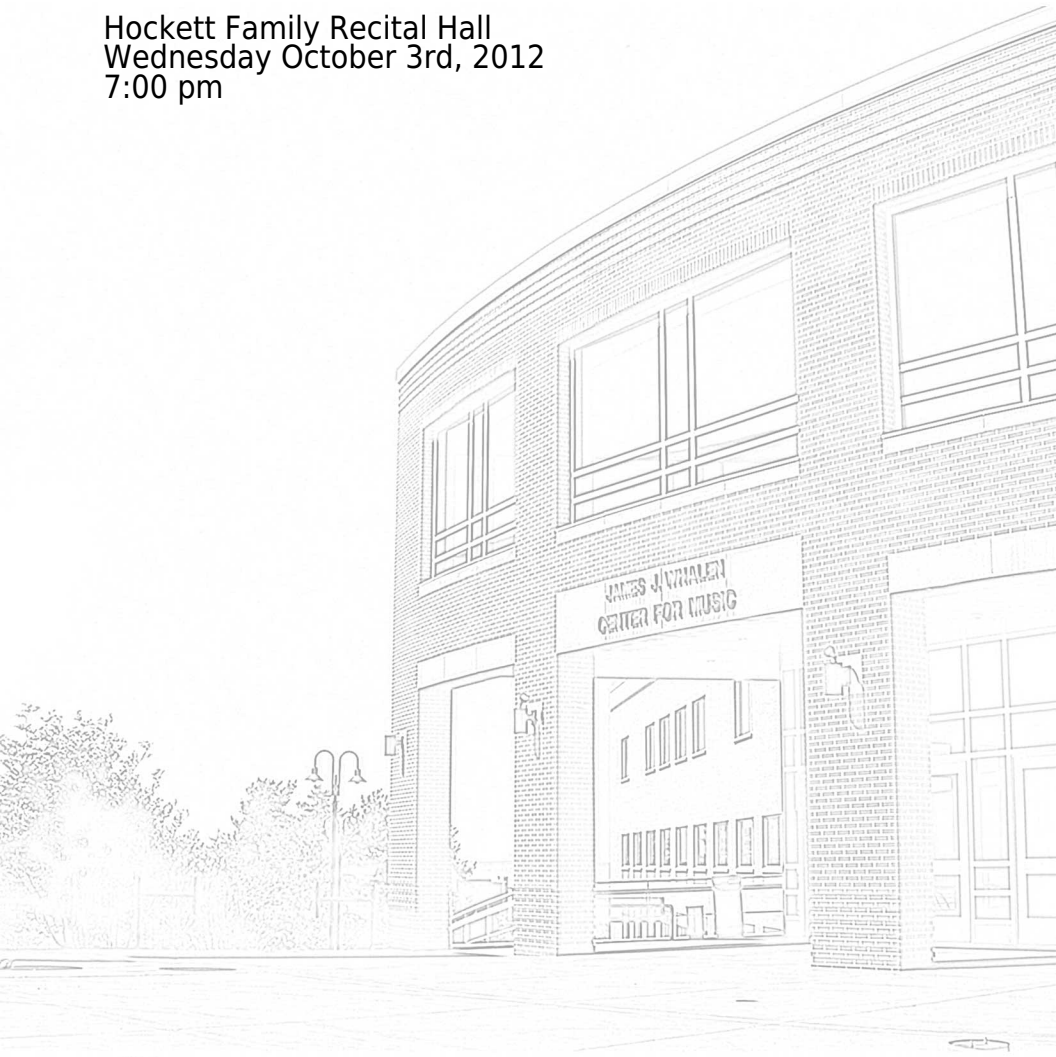
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Junior Recital:

Joshua Condon, piano

Damien Scalise, guitar
Ethan Jodziewicz, bass
Will Sigel, drums

Hockett Family Recital Hall
Wednesday October 3rd, 2012
7:00 pm



ITHACA COLLEGE

School of Music

Program

Retrospection (1953) / I'm Beginning to See the Light (1944)

Duke Ellington
(1899-1974)

The Man I Love (1924)

George Gershwin
(1898-1937)

Lulu's Lullaby (2012)

Joshua Condon
(b. 1991)

Ruby, My Dear (1947) / Waltz for Debby (1956)

Thelonious Monk / Bill Evans
(1917-1982) / (1929-1980)

Intermission

The Bach Suite (1986)
I. Allegro
II. Fugue
III. Andante - Blues

Oscar Peterson
(1925-2007)

Dziękuję ("Thank You") (1958) / (Blue Rondo à la Turk) (1959)

Dave Brubeck
(b. 1920)

New Dance (1979)

Keith Jarrett
(b. 1945)

You Are the Sunshine of My Life (1973)

Stevie Wonder
(b. 1950)

Place-Saint-Henri (1964)

Oscar Peterson
(1922-2007)

This recital is in partial fulfillment of the Jazz Studies degree. Joshua Condon is from the studios of Nick Weiser and Charis Dimaras.

Program Notes

Duke Ellington rarely recorded in a trio format, let alone in a solo piano context. One of the exceptions to this was the album "Piano Reflections," released in 1953, gives us insight to Ellington as not only a thoughtful and expressive composer, but also as a masterful pianist. "Retrospection," found on this album, is neither happy nor sad; yet the emotion conveyed in this rather simple piece expresses how deeply Ellington, like many composers, used his uniquely codified harmonic language to express his reminiscents of time gone by. "I'm Beginning to See the Light" is one of Ellington's most famous songs, and the attempt to create the driving swing that is undoubtedly attached to this work is of foremost importance to the solo pianist in this arrangement. While some may not call George Gershwin a "jazz pianist" by today's standards, his compositions had a tremendous influence on all future jazz musicians, as well as popular music as a whole. Gershwin's "The Man I Love" was originally conceived to be performed in his 1924 musical "Lady, Be Good," only to be deleted from the show. It was subsequently deleted from the 1927 musical "Strike Up the Band," and again from his 1928 musical "Rosalie." Nevertheless, the song became famous as a composition independent from any one musical, and Gershwin even used it as his theme song for his 1930s weekly radio show. This melodically simple and harmonically lush love song is a quintessential example of Gershwin's unique writing style, and it has been interpreted by countless jazz pianists for well over half a century.

My composition "Lulu's Lullaby" continues a "Songs for Friends" project I have been slowly developing. Lulu hails from Zimbabwe and brings a certain degree of elegance to everything she does. In this piece, I attempt to bring that into the melody of a Lullaby, sung to Lulu as she drifts off to sleep. The piece opens up by letting the imagination take hold, and perhaps we are hearing some of the animals that Lulu might have heard during many of her experiences of "camping in the bush." But these animals are off to sleep, just as Lulu is--and this is where the Lullaby comes in, aided by the light offbeat rhythms that hints at something you might hear played by a small African drum. As she drifts off to sleep, she dreams (which is represented by some free improvisation at the piano), and as we know from our own dreams, they are always subject to a variety of interpretations.

Next I combine two famous solo piano works by two of the great master composers and interpreters in jazz piano: Thelonious Monk and Bill Evans. "Ruby, My Dear" was named after Rubie Richardson, Monk's first love and his older sister Marion's best friend. "Waltz for Debby" was written for Bill Evans' niece Debby Evans. The original lyrics of the "Waltz" were written by Gene Lees, and describes how the young girl has "dolls and clowns and a prince and a big purple bear...unaware of the worried frowns that we wearied grownups all wear." But the songwriter concludes that one day "she'll grow up and she'll leave her dolls and her prince and her silly old bear; when she goes they will cry as they whisper goodbye. They will miss her, I fear, but then so will I."

"The Bach Suite" by Oscar Peterson was an attempt to take some of the typical compositional elements of Johann Sebastian Bach and reinterpret them for a jazz trio

context. As we can see from the musical contrasts in a Prelude and Fugue by Bach, here Peterson recreates that feeling between the first and second movement of this Suite. After a piano introduction, the *Allegro*, in simple binary form, utilizes harmonies moving in fifths within a thinner texture, before moving onto the second area of the piece with a soaring melody, and the harmony moving downward by step before cadencing. After a solo piano transition, the second movement, *Fugue*, opens up with some counterpoint between the bass and piano, and then finally adding a third voice in the guitar. It is here the jazz takes over, and the remaining final movement, *Blues*, is a simple 24-bar blues in the original key of D Major--perhaps a nod to Bach's 24 preludes and fugues.

In 1958, Dave Brubeck visited the Chopin museum while on tour in Poland. Afterward, on the train to his final concert, and touched by how deeply the Polish people were still affected by the travesties of World War II, Brubeck composed the Chopin-esque "Dziękuję" (*Thank You*) and performed it as the encore at his concert, dedicating it to the people of Poland. To this day, he still performs this piece at nearly every live concert. Another piece Brubeck frequently performs today is "Blue Rondo a la Turk," which perhaps is one of the most significant piano pieces in the history of jazz. After hearing Turkish musicians perform this "1-2, 1-2, 1-2, 1-2-3" live on a street, Brubeck was inspired to take that rhythm and build a composition around it, structuring in the classical *rondo* form. This rhythm is broken, of course, by launching into a full-fledged F blues, only to come full circle by closing out the piece with the return of the end of the main theme.

Keith Jarrett's "New Dance" was originally released on a 1979 album titled "Nude Ants." A break stylistically from some of the previous repertoire, this piece is typical of a Keith Jarrett composition in that it utilizes a short vamp with an ostinato bass. The vamp creates a lot of room for exploratory improvisation, which then leads into the main "head" of the piece, which tonight is performed by the guitar. After several modulations, the piece manages to find its way back to the vamp, returning to the groove that initially gave the entire piece momentum in the first place.

Perhaps hailed more for his singing voice than his pianism, Stevie Wonder is no doubt one of the most influential singer-songwriters of the past half a century. This influence carries over into the world of jazz, as many of his compositions have entered the realm of standards known by many jazz musicians. This includes, "You Are the Sunshine of My Life," which Wonder still performs frequently. Here, we pay tribute to this incredible musician by performing our own arrangement of this genuine classic.

"Place-Saint-Henri" is a train station located within the hustling and bustling metropolitan Saint-Henri area of the borough of Le Sud-Ouest in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Written as one of the movements in his "Canadiana Suite," Oscar Peterson harkens back to his childhood, and attempts to recapture the excitement that the area brought him. In most performances of this composition, he frequently used the technique of stride piano. At the tempo of this piece, it is no doubt aptly used to illustrate the fast-moving passengers eager to catch their trains and leave for their next destination.