

Old Dominion University's F. Ludwig Diehn Concert Series



Eighth Blackbird

Nathalie Joachim, flutes
Michael Maccaferri, clarinets
Yvonne Lam, violin

Nick Photinos, cello
Matthew Duvall, percussion
Lisa Kaplan, piano

Concert: Jan. 23, 8 p.m.
Master Class: Jan. 24, 12:30 p.m.

Wilson G. Chandler Recital Hall
F. Ludwig Diehn Center for the Performing Arts



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Program

Nico Muhly: *Doublespeak* (2012)

Ted Hearne: *By-By Huey* (2015)

Timo Andres: *Checkered Shade* (2015)

INTERMISSION

Ned McGowan: *The Garden of Iniquitous Creatures* (2016)

Bryce Dessner: *Murder Ballades* (2013)

1. *Omie Wise—Young Emily*
2. *Dark Holler*
3. *Wave the Sea—Brushy Fork*
4. *Pretty Polly—Tears for Sister Polly*

Murder Ballades was commissioned by Eighth Blackbird and Lunapark and funded by De Doelen Rotterdam, Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ in Amsterdam, and Muziekgebouw Frits Philips in Eindhoven, with the financial support of The Van Beinum Foundation in The Netherlands, with additional support from the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. *The Garden of Iniquitous Creatures* was commissioned by De Doelen Rotterdam for Eighth Blackbird. *By-By Huey* and *Checkered Shade* are part of *Hand Eye*, commissioned by the Maxine and Stuart Frankel Foundation for the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival and by Carnegie Hall.

For the legal and physical safety of the artists and for the comfort of the audience, cameras and other recording devices are not permitted in the theatre during the performance.



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Nico Muhly: *Doublespeak* (2012)

Nico Muhly (b.1981) is an American composer and sought-after collaborator whose influences range from American minimalism to the Anglican choral tradition. The recipient of commissions from The Metropolitan Opera, Carnegie Hall, St. Paul's Cathedral, and others, he has written more than 80 works for the concert stage, including the operas *Two Boys* (2010), *Dark Sisters* (2011), and the forthcoming *Marnie*; the song cycles *Sentences* (2015), for countertenor Iestyn Davies, and *Impossible Things* (2009), for tenor Mark Padmore; a viola concerto for violist Nadia Sirota; and the choral works *My Days* (2011) and *Recordare, Domine* (2013), written for the Hilliard Ensemble and the Tallis Scholars, respectively. Muhly is a frequent collaborator with choreographer Benjamin Millepied and, as an arranger, has paired with Sufjan Stevens, Rufus Wainwright, Joanna Newsom, and Antony and the Johnsons, among others. He has composed for stage and screen, with credits that include music for the 2013 Broadway revival of *The Glass Menagerie* and scores for the films *Kill Your Darlings*; *Me, Earl And The Dying Girl*; and the Academy Award-winning *The Reader*. Born in Vermont, Muhly studied composition with John Corigliano and Christopher Rouse at the Juilliard School before working as an editor and conductor for Philip Glass. He is part of the artist-run record label Bedroom Community, which released his first two albums, *Speaks Volumes* (2006) and *Mothertongue* (2008). He currently lives in New York City.

About *Doublespeak*, Muhly writes:

Doublespeak was written for Eighth Blackbird for the Music Now! festival in Cincinnati, in honor of Philip Glass's 75th birthday. My mission in writing the piece was twofold: first, to write 8bb the most fun piece possible for them, at just the right length. The second was to in some way tip my hat to Philip Glass, whom I admire broadly and deeply. Eighth Blackbird has played so much fast, loosely repetitive music over the years; I wanted to refine this kind of material into

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its purest, most delicious form and point back to the '70s, when classical music perfected obsessive repetition. The piece begins by applying an additive process to a small cell on the solo violin. This is the defining gesture of the piece, and is subject to much variation. Occasionally, the busy textures give way to drones under which we begin to hear chords from Philip's insanely beautiful *Music in Twelve Parts* (1971-1974). The piece unfolds in similar episodes: fast music offset by slow, melancholic memories of the music of the late 1960s and 1970s (Aren't those the intervals from *Violin Phase*? Was that a cell from *In C*?). Towards the end of *Doublespeak*, the language of *Music in Twelve Parts* becomes more dominant, and gradually overtakes all the busy material and the piece ends in a stylized dream-state.

Ted Hearne: *By-By Huey* (2015)

Composer, singer and bandleader Ted Hearne draws on a wide breadth of influences ranging across music's full terrain, to create intense, personal and multi-dimensional works. *The New York Times* included Hearne's oratorio *The Source* on its list of the best classical vocal performances of 2014, noting that the work "offers a fresh model of how opera and musical theater can tackle contemporary issues: not with documentary realism, but with ambiguity, obliquity and even sheer confusion." *Law of Mosaics*, his 30-minute piece for string orchestra, was named one of *The New Yorker's* most notable albums of 2014 by Alex Ross. His most recent collaboration paired him with legendary musician Erykah Badu. Hearne is the recipient of the Gaudeamus Prize in composition and the New Voices Residency from Boosey and Hawkes. He recently joined the composition faculty at the University of Southern California.

About *By-By Huey*, Hearne writes:

Robert Arneson's painting "Bye Bye Huey P." is a portrait of 24-year-old Tyrone "Double R" Robinson, who murdered Huey P. Newton (co-founder of the Black Panther Party) in 1989. Robinson, a member of the Black Guerrilla Family, is painted with a giant praying mantis superimposed over his face, its wings circling Robinson's bloodshot eyes. When I saw this work at the Frankel Gallery, my guide told me Arneson included the mantis in the portrait because "they eat their own." Like Arneson's painting, my piece *By-By Huey* memorializes the (self-) destructive. The piano leads, with aggressive and unhinged music that forces the other instruments to follow or be left behind, but its strings are muted for much of the piece, leaving its voice muzzled and growling.

Timo Andres: *Checkered Shade* (2015)

Timothy Andres is a composer and pianist. He grew up in rural Connecticut and lives in Brooklyn, NY. His compositions meld a classical-music upbringing with diverse interests in the natural world, graphic arts, technology, cooking, and photography. He has been praised for his "acute ear" by *The New York Times*' Anthony Tommasini and "stubborn nose" by *The New Yorker*'s Alex Ross. An avid pianist from an early age, Timothy (Timo for short) performs widely, focusing especially on music by his contemporaries. His debut album, *Shy and Mighty*, was released by Nonesuch in May 2010. Andres earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees from Yale. In addition to music, he gravitated toward visual arts, and moonlighted as a professional graphic and web designer. An avid cyclist, Andres can often be sighted commuting astride his 1983 Mercian. He is one-sixth of Sleeping Giant, a composers' collective of "talented guys" (*The New Yorker*) who are "rapidly gaining notice for their daring innovations, stylistic range and acute attention to instrumental nuance" (WQXR).

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About *Checkered Shade*, Andres writes:

The patterned pen-and-ink abstractions of Astrid Bowlby—and by association, the work of Edward Gorey—inspired the textures of *Checkered Shade*. The piece is structured as a gradual zoom outward; tiny fragments of repeated material resolve into larger patterns, which, at the urging of the violin, eventually coalesce into an expressive chorale.

Ned McGowan: *The Garden of Iniquitous Creatures* (2016)

"If you are having a slow day, his samples will wake you right up."
(Alex Ross, *The Rest Is Noise*)

Ned McGowan is a composer, teacher, flutist, improviser and curator. Known for rhythmical vitality and technical virtuosity, his music has won awards and been performed at Carnegie Hall, the Concertgebouw and other halls and festivals around the world by many orchestras, ensembles, and soloists. Ned's compositions are informed by his experiences as a flutist in European contemporary, improvisational, and non-western musical circles and his main artistic goal is to create self-contained musical worlds through a process of cross-genre translation.

About *The Garden of Iniquitous Creatures*, McGowan writes:

Throughout *The Garden of Iniquitous Creatures* there is a recurring rhythmical spine composed of a series of groups with the lengths 7 7 5 5 3 3 3 3 2 2 2 2 3 3 3. It is repeated, built upon and altered throughout, an influential rhythmic landscape on top of which much of the music travels. Also, the lengths add up to 60, which is neatly divisible by 3, 4, and 5 (plus a few other numbers), another source for material.

For me this piece is inspired by the ferocity of the Swedish metal band Meshuggah, the complexity of Carnatic rhythms from South India, the harmonic movement of Reich, the tempo manipulations of Nancarrow, the virtuosity of Zappa, the raw sounds of Zorn and the mystical fantasy of Crumb. Does one also hear those influences, or does it just sound like McGowan?

Bryce Dessner: *Murder Ballades* (2013)

1. *Omie Wise—Young Emily*
2. *Dark Holler*
3. *Wave the Sea—Brushy Fork*
4. *Pretty Polly—Tears for Sister Polly*

Bryce Dessner is one of the most sought-after composers of his generation, with a rapidly expanding catalog of works commissioned by leading ensembles. His orchestral, chamber, and vocal compositions have been commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Metropolitan Museum of Art (for the New York Philharmonic), Kronos Quartet, BAM Next Wave Festival, Barbican Centre, Edinburgh International Festival, Sydney Festival, Eighth Blackbird, Sō Percussion, New York City Ballet, and many others. Recently Dessner was tapped to compose music for Alejandro Iñárritu's film, *The Revenant*, which received a 2016 Golden Globes nomination for Best Original Score. Recordings include *Aheym*, a Kronos Quartet disc devoted to his music (Anti-); *St. Carolyn by the Sea* on Deutsche Grammophon, with the Copenhagen Philharmonic under Andre de Ridder; and *Music for Wood and Strings*, an album-length work performed by Sō Percussion (Brassland). Dessner's music – called “gorgeous, full-hearted” by NPR and “vibrant” by *The New York Times* – is marked by a keen sensitivity to instrumental color and texture. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from Yale University. Dessner formed the instrumental quartet Clogs, and in 2001, co-founded the critically acclaimed, Grammy-nominated band The National.

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About *Murder Ballades*, Dessner writes:

When Eighth Blackbird asked me for a piece, I immediately knew what to do: let great American folk music inspire a great American new music ensemble. The “murder ballad” has its roots in a European tradition, in which grisly details of bloody homicides are recounted through song. When this tradition came to America, it developed its own vernacular, with stories and songs being told and re-told over the generations.

In *Murder Ballades* I re-examine several of these old songs, allowing them to inspire my own music. *Omie Wise*, *Young Emily*, and *Pretty Polly* are classic murder ballads, tales of romantically charged killings that are based on real events. *Dark Holler* is my own composition, loosely modeled on the clawhammer banjo style which would have accompanied many of these early folk songs. *Brushy Fork* is a Civil War era murder ballad/fiddle tune, and *Wave the Sea* and *Tears for Sister Polly* are original compositions woven out of the depths of the many months I spent inhabiting the seductive music and violent stories of these murder ballads.

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Eighth Blackbird

Nathalie Joachim, flutes

Michael Maccaferri, clarinets

Yvonne Lam, violin and viola

Nick Photinos, cello

Matthew Duvall, percussion

Lisa Kaplan, piano

Eighth Blackbird is “one of the smartest, most dynamic contemporary classical ensembles on the planet” (*Chicago Tribune*). Launched by six entrepreneurial Oberlin Conservatory undergraduates in 1996, this Chicago-based super-group has earned its status as “a brand-name ... defined by adventure, vibrancy and quality ... known for performing from memory, employing choreography and collaborations with theater artists, lighting designers and even puppetry artists” (*Detroit Free Press*).

Over the course of two decades, Eighth Blackbird has commissioned and premiered hundreds of works by composers such as David Lang, Steven Mackey, Missy Mazzoli, and Steve Reich, whose *Double Sextet* went on to win the Pulitzer Prize (2009). A long-term relationship with Chicago’s Cedille Records has produced seven acclaimed recordings and four Grammy Awards for Best Small Ensemble/Chamber Music Performance: *strange imaginary animals* (2008), *Lonely Motel: Music from Slide* (2011), *Meanwhile* (2013), and *Filament* (2015). *Hand Eye*, their most recent recording released in March 2016 and featuring the music of composer collective Sleeping Giant, was hailed as “dazzling” and “vigorously, flawlessly performed” (WQXR).

Eighth Blackbird celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2016, winning its fourth Grammy Award and the coveted MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions. Anniversary celebrations continue throughout the 2016-17 season with tours from its two most recent and broadly acclaimed albums, *Filament* and *Hand Eye*, as well as keystone performances celebrating Steve Reich’s 80th birthday, a fresh round of raucous shows with “Appalachian post-punk solipsist” (*The Wanderer*) Will Oldham (Bonnie Prince Billy), and world premieres by Holly Harrison, Pulitzer Prize-winner David Lang, and Ned McGowan. This season marks debuts at

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Justin Vernon's (Bon Iver) and Aaron Dessner's (The National) Eau Claire Festival, a collaboration with the San Francisco Symphony, performances in Paris, France, and a three-week tour of Australia.

Eighth Blackbird's mission—to move music forward through innovative performance, advocacy for new music by living composers, and a legacy of guiding an emerging generation of musicians —extends beyond recording and touring to curation and education. The ensemble served as music director of the Ojai Music Festival (2009), enjoyed a three-year residency at the Curtis Institute of Music, and holds an ongoing ensemble-in-residence position at the University of Richmond. The 2015-16 season featured a pioneering residency at Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art, serving as a living installation with open rehearsals, performances, guest artists, and public talks. In 2017, Eighth Blackbird launches its boldest initiative yet with the creation of Blackbird Creative Laboratory, a tuition-free, two-week summer workshop and performance festival for musicians in Ojai, California.

Eighth Blackbird's members hail from the Great Lakes, Keystone, Golden, Empire, and Bay states. The name "Eighth Blackbird" derives from the eighth stanza of Wallace Stevens' evocative, imagistic poem, *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*: "I know noble accents / And lucid, inescapable rhythms; / But I know, too, / That the blackbird is involved / In what I know." Eighth Blackbird is managed by David Lieberman Artists. For more information, go to www.eighthblackbird.org.

Nathalie Joachim is a Burkart Flutes & Piccolos artist, Michael J. Maccaferri is a D'Addario Woodwinds artist. Matthew Duvall proudly endorses Pearl Drums and Adams Musical Instruments, Vic Firth Sticks and Mallets, Zildjian Cymbals, and Black Swamp Percussion Accessories. Lisa Kaplan is a Steinway artist.

Booking direction by David Lieberman - Artists Representatives
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Simone Dinnerstein

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