

# Grand Canyon Music Festival

## The 30th Anniversary Season

Program Notes for Friday, September 6, 2013

### **Kip Jones** Shout Out

Kip Jones is so young, his birthday is nowhere to be found on the Internet! Here's what we do know: born in Minnesota, Jones struck out as a purveyor of "traditional fiction" or "experimental folk." He lists influences as diverse as J.S. Bach, Steve Reich, and the Delta Blues. The son of a violinist, Jones received his undergraduate degree from the Berklee College of Music in Boston, where he studied with Matt Glaser. Further travels and studies took him to Mumbai, South Korea, and South America. Much of his music, including *Chorale*, incorporates vocalization, stomping, and other extra-violinistic sounds. Jones emphasizes that while we might not be used to seeing this kind of performance in the concert hall, its roots run deep throughout almost every world culture. A proud member of ETHEL, Jones enjoys performing in almost any context, from the concert hall to the living room.

### **Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate** Pisachi (You See)

Born in Norman, Oklahoma, Chicksaw composer Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate (b. 1968) is one of a small number of American Indian classical composers. A graduate of Northwestern University and the Cleveland Institute of Music, his works have been performed by the National Symphony Orchestra, the Colorado Ballet, and the string band ETHEL, who have championed his work. He counts among his influences Bach and Rachmaninoff, as well as many evenings spent at rehearsals for his mother's dance and musical theater projects. A professor of dance and a professional choreographer, Tate's mother Patricia exposed her young son to a variety of musical styles at a young age. His father was also musical, and Tate grew up surrounded by a mixture of western and American Indian musics, which he combines to create his vision of "American Indian solutions to classical music composition."

## **Ulysses Owens Jr.** The Simplicity of Life: Swaying of the Trees, The Simple Things, Revival Crusade, The Magical Quilt

Prolific jazz drummer, composer, and educator, Ulysses Owens Jr. is a Juilliard graduate, and a native of Jacksonville, FL. Since 2010, Owens has won several Grammy awards, and has performed and recorded with Kurt Elling, Christian McBride, and Nnenna Freelon. He is deeply invested in education, and is co-founder and Artistic Director of Don't Miss a Beat, his family's non-profit foundation. "The Simplicity of Life" is the composer's first composition for string quartet, and he started by listening to some classics of the genre by Ravel, Debussy, and Mozart. His biggest jazz influences include Thelonious Monk, Duke Ellington, and Quincy Jones. For Owens, "all music is connected, and it's the industry that likes to keep the genres divided." He describes the first two movements of "The Simplicity of Life" as an introduction, followed by a "lift off" movement. The third is more sentimental, highlighting, the "ancestral, reverent" nature of American culture. Finally, the fourth movement is a celebration.

## **Tema Watstein** Interlude 1, 2

A member of ETHEL, violinist and composer Tema Watstein has been a champion of new composition since her undergraduate days at the Rice University Shepherd School of Music. Frequently commissioning and premiering works from her peers, Watstein has also worked and performed with such established composers as John Zorn, Kaija Saariaho, and John Corigliano. Watstein holds a Master of Music from the Contemporary Performance Program at Manhattan School of Music, and has served as concertmaster at the Tanglewood Festival, where she also premiered many works by program's composition fellows. In addition to ETHEL, Watstein has performed with the Grammy-nominated Metropolis Ensemble, Novus, Tactus, the Mark Morris Dance Group Ensemble, and the Argento New Music Project.

## **James “Kimo” Williams** Into the Liquid

James “Kimo” Williams (b. 1950) led an unusual life for a modern composer. Raised by his extended family in places as diverse as Amityville, NY, a sharecropper farm in North Carolina, Biloxi, MS, and Hawaii, Williams served in Vietnam with the 25th Combat Engineer Battalion. He attended Berklee College of Music in Boston on the GI bill, where he studied guitar and composition. After joining the Army Band program, Williams and his wife continued to pursue music, and in 1987 he resigned from active duty to pursue music full-time. He wrote his first symphony shortly thereafter, and his work has continued to garner both critical and popular acclaim. Commissioning organizations are as diverse as the Steppenwolf and Goodman Theatres, and the West Point Military Academy. “Into the Liquid” is one of several string quartets by Williams.

## **Dorothy Lawson** Epic Soda

In addition to being a founding member of ETHEL, Dorothy Lawson is also a composer and educator; her blog postings on ethelcentral.org are rather lovely, too. She has performed throughout North and South America, as well as Asia and Europe. She is a member of the American Symphony Orchestra and Philharmonia Virtuosi, and has performed with the New York Philharmonic, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Bang On A Can, and Lincoln Center Community Concerts. Lawson is also a founding member of the Rosserti Quartet, Roerich Quartet, and Andreas Trio, and has recorded on Deutsche Grammophon, Koch International, Pro Arte/Fanfare, and Albany. She has described ETHEL’s experiences at the Grand Canyon Music Festival as “intense, joyful, nonstop rainbow activity.” Lawson is on the faculty of the Mannes College of Music Preparatory Division.

## **Ralph Farris** Factions

Ralph Farris may be the only Juilliard School graduate to have toured as musical director with The Who’s Roger Daltrey. A Grammy-nominated arranger, Farris is also an original member of the ensemble for the Broadway hit “The Lion King.” A true musical polymath, Farris has worked with musicians ranging from Leonard Bernstein and Yo-Yo Ma to Depeche

Mode and Gorillaz. A boy soprano and “wunderkind” string player, Farris grew up playing and conducting in his native New England. He continued his studies at the Walnut Hill School for the Arts, Tanglewood, and Juilliard. Founded in 1998, ETHEL has transformed the landscape of classical music, and has appeared at the Venice Biennale, Sydney Opera House, TED, Lincoln Center, FIAC in Guanajuato, Mexico, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Farris believes that there is “only one world, and only one music,” and ETHEL truly performs it all.

## **Mary Ellen Childs** Ephemeral Geometry: Arcs, Points, Lines

Composer and multimedia artist Mary Ellen Childs (b. 1957) creates music that is deeply rhythmic, and is known for integrating music, dance, and theater in unexpected ways. She is the recipient of many awards, such as the USA Friends Fellowship, and the McKnight Foundation. Although much of her music is created with a visual element in mind, she has also written “purely instrumental” works, including “Ephemeral Geometry,” written for ETHEL’s *Documerica*, in which composers were given photographs to work from as inspiration. Childs states: “I loved the photos that were a bit abstract...music is abstract too, so these particular photos gave me an “in,” a place to connect musically where image and sound were coming from the same impulse.”

Program Notes by Cabiria Jacobsen