

# Grand Canyon Music Festival

The 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season

Program Notes for Saturday, September 7, 2013

## Jeff Buckley Grace

Although musician Jeff Buckley (1956 – 1997) released only one studio album during his lifetime, his popularity and influence continue to resonate today. The son of Tim Buckley, a prominent folk musician in the 60's and 70's, Jeff Buckley only met his father once, and did not attribute much, if any, of his musical abilities to him. His mother was an accomplished cellist and pianist, but his real musical education came from his exposure to Led Zeppelin, Queen, Jimi Hendrix, The Who, and other similar groups at a young age. *Grace*, the album Buckley recorded with his band in 1993 and 94, appears frequently on “100 Best” lists, and its title song makes clear the appeal of Buckley's musical and poetic sensibility.

## Mary Ellen Childs Shavasana from “Dream House”

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, such as *Dream House*, written for ETHEL. Childs was in the midst of a home renovation at the time, and was struck by the inherent rhythms of work, the beauty of the “rough-hewn hands...and the intertwined nature of destruction and creation.”

## Vijay Iyer Mutation #1 from “Mutations”

Vijay Iyer (b. 1971) is an example of a modern-day renaissance man. A celebrated jazz pianist and composer, he holds a Ph.D. in the cognitive science of music from the University of California, Berkeley.

As an undergraduate student at Yale University, Iyer studied mathematics and physics. Not too shabby, one might say. His Grammy-nominated jazz albums are virtuosic, and his ability to cross genre and style make him an ideal collaborator. ETHEL commissioned and premiered *Mutations*, and he and the ensemble continue to work together. "Mutation 1" is shot through with intense rhythmic drive, while featuring melodic and harmonic elements that soar above the fabric of the musical whole.

## **Kip Jones** Chorale

Kip Jones is so young, his birthday is nowhere to be found on the Internet! Should he be in the market for someone to write him a Wikipedia article, this author is happy to help. 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.

## **Son Lux** Opening Quartet from "Dividing Line"

Son Lux, the stage name of post-rock and alternative hip-hop artist Ryan Lott, is a much better choice than Felix Mendelssohn, the stage name of classical composer Jacob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. If only Felix had been friends with such musical innovators as Sufjan Stevens and Serengeti, he might have gotten some better name advice. As it is, Son Lux is coming out ahead in the cool department, but he has the musical bona fides to back it up as well. Educated at the prestigious Indiana University Jacobs School of

Music, his first album earned him the title of NPR's All Songs Considered "Best New Artist." As a composer of film, dance, and theater music, Ryan Lott's music has been featured on such films as "The Brothers Bloom" and "Looper." *Dividing Line* will have its premier this fall with Gibney Dance in New York. An "investigation of points of no return," this full-length dance piece is a return to Lux/Lott's roots in music written for dance and movement.

### **Carlo Mombelli** Song for Sandra

Pianist, bassist, and composer Carlo Mombelli continues tonight's theme of composers without birth years on the Internet. A sneaky bunch, these living artists! Born in Pretoria, South Africa, Mombelli's musical education began in earnest when, at the age of 23, he was asked to join legendary guitarist Johnny Fourie in his band, playing six nights a week at a club in Johannesburg. Mombelli has written music for international dance companies, and has also composed the music for fourteen films. He has been described as "visionary, emotional, and experimental...he has found in his music the expressive soul of the developing world mixed with the technical profundity of the classical world" by The Sunday Independent. *Song for Sandra* was written for his wife.

### **Ennio Morricone** Suite from "The Mission"

If you have seen such screen classics as *A Fistfull of Dollars* or *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, then you are familiar with the music of Ennio Morricone (b. 1928). Born in Rome, the young Morricone learned to read music and to play several different instruments from his father, an accomplished trumpeter. He got his start as a professional composer ghost writing music for radio serials, television, and film. In addition to film music, for which he is most famous, Morricone was a member of "Il Gruppo," an avant-garde improvisatory ensemble dedicated to experimenting with noise techniques and other new-music methods. *The Mission* is a 1986 film by Roland Joffé starring Robert De Niro and Jeremy Irons, based on

the experiences of a Jesuit missionary in 18<sup>th</sup> century South America. Morricone used traditional church music, Spanish music, and the indigenous language and instruments of the Guaraní people to create a score that evokes the drama and tension of the movie's plot.

### **Nico Muhly** *Diacritical Marks*

Nico Muhly (b. 1981) grew up in Providence, Rhode Island, singing in the choir at Grace Episcopal Church. He studied first at Columbia University, and then at the Juilliard School. Muhly has worked with composers such as John Corigliano and Philip Glass, and performers like Björk and Grizzly Bear. His works have been commissioned and premiered by such organizations as the Metropolitan Opera, the American Ballet Theater, and the Los Angeles Master Chorale. Muhly claims to have anxiety about the string quartet form – he says: “they are normally meant to be giant expressions of a composer’s emotional life.” In *Diacritical Marks*, he takes the opposite tack: focusing on details, Muhly combines driving energy with intense lyricism.

### **Marcelo Zarvos** *Memory from “Nepomuk’s Dances”*

Like many composers featured this evening, Marcelo Zarvos (b. 1969) is a highly versatile musician, whose work is largely rooted in jazz and film scoring. Movies such as *Kissing Jessica Stein* and *Remember Me* feature scores by Zarvos. Born in Brazil to a Greek family, he studied with H.J. Koelreutter, who had also taught such greats as Antonio Carlos Jobim. ETHEL has recorded many of Zarvos’ compositions for string quartet.