CAP UCLA presents

Eighth Blackbird
featuring Will Oldham
(Bonnie “Prince” Billy)

Sat, Apr 21, 2018 | The Theatre at Ace Hotel

Photo by Saverio Truglia
Welcome to the Center for the Art of Performance

The Center for the Art of Performance is not a place. It’s more of a state of mind that embraces experimentation, encourages a culture of the curious, champions disruptors and dreamers and supports the commitment and courage of artists. We promote rigor, craft and excellence in all facets of the performing arts.

2017–18 SEASON VENUES
Royce Hall, UCLA
Freud Playhouse, UCLA
The Theatre at Ace Hotel
Little Theater, UCLA
Will Rogers State Historic Park

UCLA’s Center for the Art of Performance (CAP UCLA) is dedicated to the advancement of the contemporary performing arts in all disciplines—dance, music, spoken word and theater—as well as emerging digital, collaborative and cross-platforms utilized by today’s leading artists. Part of UCLA’s School of the Arts and Architecture, CAP UCLA curates and facilitates direct exposure to contemporary performance from around the globe, supporting artists who are creating extraordinary works of art and fostering a vibrant learning community both on and off the UCLA campus. The organization invests in the creative process by providing artists with financial backing and time to experiment and expand their practices through strategic partnerships, residencies and collaborations. As an influential voice within the local, national, and global arts community, CAP UCLA serves to connect audiences across generations in order to galvanize a living archive of our culture.

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MESSAGE FROM THE ARTIST

People are obsessed with murder. This might seem like a recent thing—it’s hard to find a tv drama that doesn’t depict murder at some and even many points (GoT, anyone?)—but people have been riveted by artistic depictions of salacious, gruesome murder for millennia. The murder ballad, an American staple from the 1800s, has its roots in Northern Europe from the mid-1600s and earlier, depending on how and what you count. What made it distinctly American when imported is that it lost its supernatural ties, became more visceral, more human. Bryce’s takes on both well-known murder ballades and his creation of new ones honors the tradition by exploring the full range of human emotion found in these songs, from heightening the sweetness and innocence to creating a desolation and calculated coldness all too appropriate to the actual events.

The episodic, specific nature of Murder Ballades is countered with the grand emotional arc and universality of Coming Together: through repetition, one prisoner describes his descent from sanity into madness. While this is specific text from a specific person, the strength of the piece is that it could be spoken by anyone, that anyone could feel this, in that place and under those circumstances, and becomes more powerful by doing so.

These folk songs and stories, specific and common, are followed by newer folk songs by Will Oldham (Bonnie “Prince” Billy). There is a gut-wrenching honesty and unvarnished beauty to both his voice and his music that makes Will a perfect narrator for the Rzewski and his music a perfect finish to the program, and we’re incredibly honored to be performing with him tonight.

—Nick Photinos, Cellist and Co-Artistic Director of Eighth Blackbird

Murder Ballades
featuring Will Oldham (Bonnie “Prince” Billy)

David Lang: learn to fly (2008)

Bryce Dessner: Murder Ballades (2013, expanded 2015)
1. Omie Wise-Young Emily
2. Hocket
3. Dark Holler
4. Lewisburg
5. Wave the Sea-Brushy Fork
6. Underneath the Floorboards
7. Pretty Polly-Tears for Sister Polly
8. Down in the Willow Garden

Intermission

Will Oldham, speaker

Will Oldham: Songs (to be announced from the stage), arrangements by Lisa Kaplan
Will Oldham, voice and guitar

Murder Ballades was commissioned by Eighth Blackbird and Lunapark and funded by The Doelen Concert Hall, Rotterdam, Muziekgebouw aan ´t IJ, Amsterdam, and Muziekgebouw Frits Philips, Eindhoven, with the financial support of The Van Beinum Foundation, The Netherlands, with additional support from Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

Eighth Blackbird
Nathalie Joachim, flutes
Michael Maccaferri, clarinets
Yvonne Lam, violin
Nick Photinos, cello
Matthew Duvall, percussion
Lisa Kaplan, piano

Eighth Blackbird is ensemble-in-residence at the University of Richmond. 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.

Photo by Nathan Keay
David Lang: *learn to fly* (2008)

David Lang is one of the most highly-esteemed and performed American composers writing today. He was the recipient of the 2008 Pulitzer Prize in Music for *little match girl passion*, a rewriting of the libretto to Bach’s St. Matthew’s Passion, and the recording of the piece was also awarded a 2010 Grammy Award for Best Small Ensemble Performance. Lang has also been the recipient of the Rome Prize, Le Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres, and Musical America’s 2013 Composer of the Year. Lang’s *simple song #3*, written as part of his score for Paolo Sorrentino’s acclaimed film *Youth*, received many awards nominations in 2016, including the Academy Award and Golden Globe. In addition to his work as a composer, Lang is Professor of Composition at the Yale School of Music and co-founder and co-artistic director of New York’s legendary music collective Bang on a Can. His music is published by Red Poppy Music (ASCAP) and is distributed worldwide by G. Schirmer, Inc. About *learn to fly*, the composer writes:

> “With *learn to fly* I wanted to make a music that danced and pushed forward, in the hope that it would encourage the musicians to do so as well.”

**Bryce Dessner: Murder Ballades (2013, expanded 2015)**

1. Omie Wise-Young Emily
2. Hocket
3. Dark Holler
4. Lewisburg
5. Wave the Sea-Brushy Fork
6. Underneath the Floorboards
7. Pretty Polly-Tears for Sister Polly
8. Down in the Willow Garden

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, *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 Phil under André 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. About *Murder Ballades*, the composer 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 retold 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, Pretty Polly and Down in the Willow Garden* are classic murder ballads, tales of romantically-charged killings that are based on real events. *Hocket, Dark Holler, Lewisburg,* and *Underneath the Floorboards* are my own compositions, with *Dark Holler* 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.”

*Murder Ballades* was commissioned by Eighth Blackbird and Lunapark and funded by The Doelen Concert Hall, Rotterdam, Muziekgebouw aan ’t IJ, Amsterdam, and Muziekgebouw Frits Philips, Eindhoven, with the financial support of The Van Beinum Foundation, The Netherlands, with additional support from Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

**Frederic Rzewski: Coming Together (1971), arrangement by Matt Albert (2000/03)**

Born in Westfield, Massachusetts in 1938, Frederic Rzewski studied with Charles Mackey, Walter Piston, Roger Sessions, Milton Babbitt and Luigi Dallapiccola. His compositional career has had many phases; his music from the late 1960s and early 1970s (*Les Moutons de Panurge, Coming Together*) combine elements of written and improvised music, which in the seventies led to a greater experimentation with forms in which style and language are treated as structural elements (*The People United Will Never Be Defeated*). He briefly returned to experimental and graphic notation (*Le Silence des Espaces Infinis, The Price of Oil*), before exploring new uses of the twelve-tone technique in the 1980s (*Antigone-Legend, The Persians*). His more recent work adopts a more free and spontaneous approach. Eighth Blackbird
commissioned Frederic Rzewski to write two pieces: *Pocket Symphony* (2001) for sextet, and *Knight, Death and Devil* (2008) for sextet and string quartet. About *Coming Together*, Rzewski writes:

“Coming Together was written in November and December of 1971 in response to an historical event. In September of that year, inmates at the state prison of Attica, New York, revolted and succeeded in taking possession of a part of the institution. Foremost among their demands was the recognition of their right to be treated as human beings. After several days of fruitless negotiations, Governor Nelson Rockefeller ordered state police in to retake the prison by force, justifying his action on the grounds that the lives of the guards whom prisoners had taken as hostages were in danger. In the ensuing violence 43 persons, including several of the hostages, were killed and many more wounded. One of the dead was Sam Melville, a prisoner who had played a significant role in organizing the rebellion. In the spring of 1971, Melville had written a letter to a friend describing his experience of the passage of time in prison. After his death the letter was published in the magazine *Ramparts*. As I read it I was impressed both by the poetic quality of the text and by its cryptic irony. I read it over and over again. It seemed that I was trying both to capture a sense of the physical presence of the writer, and at the same time to unlock a hidden meaning from the simple but ambiguous language. The act of reading and rereading finally led me to the idea of a musical treatment.

“The text is as follows: ‘I think the combination of age and a greater coming together is responsible for the speed of the passing time. It’s six months now, and I can tell you truthfully few periods in my life have passed so quickly. I am in excellent physical and emotional health. There are doubtless subtle surprises ahead, but I feel secure and ready. As lovers will contrast their emotions in times of crisis, so am I dealing with my environment. In the indifferent brutality, the incessant noise, the experimental chemistry of food, the ravings of lost hysterical men, I can act with clarity and meaning. I am deliberate, sometimes even calculating, seldom employing histrionics, except as a test of the reactions of others. I read much, exercise, talk to guards and inmates, feeling for the inevitable direction of my life.’”

Will Oldham: Songs (to be announced from the stage), arrangements by Lisa Kaplan

Singer-songwriter Will Oldham’s music has been linked to Americana, folk, roots, country, punk, and indie rock, and Will himself has been described as an “Appalachian post-punk solipsist” with a voice that is “a fragile sort-of warble frittering around haunted melodies in the American folk or country tradition.” Now primarily known as Bonnie Prince Billy, the name he has used for most of his musical output since 1998, Will’s explanation of his numerous monikers—including Palace Brothers, Palace Songs, Palace Music, and others—offers an insight into his performance ethos: “I thought it would be better if there was sort of an implied character. Somebody that people could live with. If they had the record in their house, they could feel 100 percent comfortable about living with that person. I just mean that when they hear the voice, they’re allowed to disassociate it from the life—the lives—of the singer. Hopefully, people identify the songs with themselves, and not with the singer.”

Tonight’s selection of songs will be announced from the stage and are all original tunes composed by Will Oldham.

ABOUT 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*).

Eighth Blackbird first gained wide recognition in 1998 as winners of the Concert Artists Guild Competition. Over the course of two decades, the group 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 2009 Pulitzer Prize. A long-term relationship with Chicago’s Cedille Records has produced eight acclaimed recordings and four Grammy Awards for Best Small Ensemble/Chamber Music Performance, most recently in 2016 for *Filament*. They were named Musical America’s 2017 Ensemble of the Year, and in 2016 were the inaugural recipients of Chamber Music America’s Visionary Award and the prestigious MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.

Eighth Blackbird’s 2017-18 season marks debuts in Turin, Milan, Budapest, with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Cincinnati Ballet, tours through 11 states, and the release of *Olagón*, a new album featuring music by Dan Trueman, poetry by Paul Muldoon, and sean nós singer Iarla O’Lionáird. Eighth Blackbird celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2016 with tours of music from *Filament* and *Hand Eye*, as well as keynote 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.
Eighth Blackbird’s mission—moving music forward through innovative performance, advocating for new music by living composers, and creating 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 2009 Ojai Music Festival, has held residencies at the Curtis Institute of Music and at the University of Chicago, 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: a living installation with open rehearsals, performances, guest artists, and public talks. In 2017, Eighth Blackbird launched its boldest initiative yet with the creation of Blackbird Creative Laboratory, a tuition-free, two-week summer workshop and performance festival for performers and composers in Ojai, CA.

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’s 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, Hazard Chase and Paola Castellano.
Art in Action

“Art in Action is somewhere between an academic symposium and the vibrancy of an eagerly awaiting coloring book. This is where we explore in public to release the energetic potential of sharing ideas together.” —Kristy Edmunds

Art in Action, our free public engagement program, offers a wide range of experiential art activities around the ideas emanating from the work of artists on our season. Through workshops, lectures, master classes, films, salons and art-making forums, Art in Action provides a platform for our UCLA and Los Angeles communities to exchange ideas and participate in shared cultural experiences.

This season, we’re continuing two ongoing initiatives and introducing a third. Writing the Landscape returns with new takes on the Poetry Bureau and special activities with our library partners, exploring how the impulse to make something results in an altered landscape, or new view. Hearing Beyond Listening devises ways to “listen better,” with artist-curated playlists, personalized music maps, intimate salons, and the now popular, CAP Listening Lab. A new series of programs, Facing the Blank Page, takes direct inspiration from this season’s the theater is a blank page. Activities throughout the season will investigate how we transmit traces of ourselves through the written word, movement, sound and imagery. cap.ucla.edu/ArtInAction

Design for Sharing

“Design for Sharing enriches and supports learning, social awareness and responsible cultural arts citizenship creating a new generation of artists and audiences.” —Kristy Edmunds

Design for Sharing (DFS) is our free K-12 arts education program that provides public school students from across the Los Angeles metro area access to the performing arts, both at UCLA and in their own classrooms. The arts provide a gateway for students to explore shared ideas across communities and culture—sparking their curiosity and imagination. Since 1969, Design for Sharing has provided performances, workshops and school residencies to almost a million public school students, offering a diverse array of music, contemporary dance, and innovative theater. cap.ucla.edu/dfs

This season, the following CAP artists will participate in Design for Sharing programs:

Dancenorth/Lucy Guerin Inc
AteNine
ONIX Ensamble
Kronos Quartet
Gabriel Kahane
João Donato
Antonio Sanchez & Migration
Kyle Abraham/Abraham.In.Motion
House Rules

PHOTOGRAPHY
Photography, video and the use of any recording equipment is strictly prohibited at all times during performances at all UCLA campus performance venues and at The Theatre at Ace Hotel. Any/all press photography must be approved in writing in advance by the Center for the Art of Performance representative. For press inquiries and to make a request to cover an event, visit cap.ucla.edu/press

CAMERAS & SMART PHONES
The use of cameras, smart phones, cell phones and recording equipment of any kind is strictly prohibited at all times during performances at all UCLA campus performance venues and at The Theatre at Ace Hotel. All devices must be silenced before the start of the performance. Please be considerate to those around you and refrain from texting, emailing or surfing the web during performances.

LATE SEATING
Late seating will be subject to company approval and will occur only at a suitable time at the discretion of the house staff. Latecomers may not be able to be seated in their assigned seats to avoid disruption or distractions during the performance. Some events have no late seating by request of the artist, and refunds on parking and tickets for latecomers will not be accommodated.

Please check the event detail page of our website for late seating policies for specific performances or opt in to our email database by signing up for our newsletter and pre-show emails with helpful information about pre-show activities, parking, late seating, running time, nearby dining opportunities and more at cap.ucla.edu/enews

PLEASE NOTE: Occasionally when our shows at The Theatre at Ace Hotel are not sold out, we will invite the audience to move in closer to the stage to fill in empty seats to create a more intimate atmosphere for both the audience and artists. Patrons ALWAYS have access to their ticketed seats if anyone else is sitting in them, regardless of whether or not we have invited people to move in. So please be aware that there is a possibility that you may have to change seats again if you move into a seat that is not your ticketed seat.

CHILDREN
Children over age 5 are welcome to most events and, regardless of age, must have a ticket. Infants on laps are not permitted. Inquire when purchasing tickets of age appropriateness for specific events and check out website for specific performance information.

ACCESSIBILITY
The Theatre at Ace Hotel offers ADA accessible seats and restrooms. You can buy ADA seating on our ticketing site or by calling AXS at 888-9-AXS-TIX (888-929-7849). When buying tickets over the phone, please let the ticket agent know if you require accessible seating, and s/he will issue you an ADA seat.

In addition to wheelchair spaces, The Theatre at Ace Hotel is equipped with select aisle seats that have folding armrests on the aisle side to make transfer easier for those with mobility limitations. For such seating, please request a “transfer seat.”

If you need accessible seating the night of the event and don’t have a special ticket, we’ll do our best to accommodate you once you arrive at the theater.

Assisted listening devices are available. If desired please ask our house staff.

BELIEVING IS SEEING
ACE HOTEL DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES
A beacon to downtown with a neighborhood bistro, Nest GfB, a rooftop bar called Upstairs and The Theatre, our sparkling art palace next door. acehotel.com/losangeles 328 S Broadway

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