5-7-2011

My Coma Dreams

Office of Arts + Cultural Programming
PEAK Performances at Montclair State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.montclair.edu/peak-performances-2010-2011

Part of the Theatre and Performance Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
Office of Arts + Cultural Programming and PEAK Performances at Montclair State University, "My Coma Dreams" (2011). 2010-2011 PEAK Explores the Answer: Experiments in Arts & Technology. 18.
https://digitalcommons.montclair.edu/peak-performances-2010-2011/18

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the PEAK Performances Programming History at Montclair State University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in 2010-2011 PEAK Explores the Answer: Experiments in Arts & Technology by an authorized administrator of Montclair State University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@montclair.edu.
The dreams that are the focus of this piece were retained by me for quite some time after I emerged from my two-month coma in early August 2008. Though I had been hospitalized for AIDS-related dementia earlier that year, the pneumonia that caused the coma was a violent yet common variety—not pneumocystis, an opportunistic infection associated with HIV. I rarely remember dreams, so the fact that I retained these so vividly and for so long was notable in itself. After I recovered my motor skills and was well enough to write them down, I lived with the dreams with the idea of doing a musical work based on them. But I wanted the listener to know the story of each dream without reading them in a program or simply seeing them on a screen—that would have reduced the music to silent-movie accompaniment. When I showed them to Herschel, he immediately saw the possibilities of a multimedia work with an innovative narrative. I am fortunate in having extra-ordinary collaborators for this project—and am grateful to be here to share these dreams and the resulting music with you.

—Fred Hersch

When Fred first approached me with these dreams, he was seeking no more than a little organizing help. His idea was to build an instrumental suite around his dreams, perhaps with one of them made into a song, and he sought my advice on order and so on. But when he showed me the dreams themselves (which he had written down in a few concise, lucid paragraphs), I was drawn to them in a way that still surprises me. I immediately felt that there was a bigger piece inherent in them, a piece that could preserve all their fascinating ambiguity, that could contain their unexpectedness and the highly specific and the universal. Most importantly, I felt there could be a work that might draw the listener deep into the imaginative musical worlds I knew Fred would create.

My search for that bigger piece quickly led me to interview Fred’s partner, Scott Morgan, and his doctor, Michael Lipari (both of whom I must thank for their generosity and patience), and our interviews kept putting me in mind of the vast gulf between their experiences of Fred’s coma and his own experiences while in coma. An appreciation of that unbridgeable gulf has resulted in My Coma Dreams.

Say “dream” and a natural first response is “what does it mean?”—but this is one question that Fred and I never asked each other. It was important to us to stay true to that initial concept of a dreamscape suite: the music is the dreams; the music will answer.

—Herschel Garfin

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Fred Hersch (Composer/Pianist) has been called “a master who plays his way” by The New York Times and has earned a place among the foremost jazz artists in the world today. He is widely recognized for his ability to steadfastly create a unique body of original works while reinventing the standard jazz repertoire—investing time-honored classics with keen insight, fresh ideas, and extraordinary technique. Hersch’s numerous accomplishments include a 2003 Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship for composition and three Grammy nominations. His last work for The Fred Hersch Ensemble, Leaves of Grass, was a setting of poetry by Walt Whitman for two voices and mixed ensemble. The tour worked extensively to great critical acclaim—including a soldout performance at Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall. Hersch has appeared on over 100 recordings, including more than two dozen albums as bandleader/solo pianist. He has just released Alone at the Vanguard (Palmetto), a solo date live from the legendary club. www.fredhersch.com

Herschel Garfin (Writer/Director) is active as a composer, librettist, and stage director. Garfin is an upright bassist and composer and librettist of the operatic adaptation of Tom Stoppard’s Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead, directed in workshop by Mark Morris (American Opera Projects). Garfin wrote the celebrated libretto for Robert Aldridge’s opera Elmer Gantry, which premiered in 2008 at Nashville Opera and at Peak Performances to critical acclaim (“An Operatic Masterpiece”—New York Times). A recording will be released this year on the Naxos label. As librettist, Garfin’s credits include Aldridge’s Parables and Robert S. Cohen’s Alzheimer’s Story and Edisons Inventors. Directing credits include Edisson Invents, Gantry workshops, and Ullmann’s ‘The Emperor of Atlantis. Garfin was composer/librettist for Mysteries (Mark Morris Dance Group, Mabou Mines), and American Steel (Alabama Symphony) and composed incidental music for Mr Peter Hall’s Titus and Cressida (TTNA). In November 2009 Titus New York wrote he has all the makings of a post-millenial Carole Lloyd […His] themes are deeply American and rooted in the social mores of the 1930s and ‘40s.” Garfin is known for his all-male musical composition and lectures in manuscript analysis at The Steinhardt School, New York University.

Sarah Wickliffe (Animation and Graphic Design) is a visual artist, animator, and graphic designer currently living in New York City. She is the only daughter of saw vocalists, Roanna Viro and recording engineer, Paul Wickliffe and has been painting since she could hold a brush. Wickliffe studied art at Pratt Institute, then transferred to NYU Tisch School of Film and TV where she earned her BFA in Fine Art with skill set to animation. Her film thesis, Art Desire, was the recipient of NYU’s Richard Protovon Award and the Gold Student Academy Award for Animation and was screened at many festivals. She graduated NYU at the top of her class in 2006 and has been working in the New York animation industry ever since. Most recently she has worked as a motion graphics artist for The Onion News Network. She has also worked as a director, storyboard artist, and lead animator for children’s television. www.wickpix.com

Eamon Farrell (Video Systems Design) is a director and video designer based in New York. He has worked extensively with Lee Breuer and Mabou Mines as an assistant director and video designer. He has also worked as a designer or projectionist for Robert Wilson, the Wooster Group, Robert Woodruff, Merce Cunningham Dance Company, Classic Stage Company, the Playwrights’ Center in Minneapolis, and the Herodion Theater and the Megaron in Athens, Greece. Farrell’s own multimedia theater company, Anonymous Ensemble, has presented work in the UK, Germany, Australia, Norway, and Greece. Mabou Mines’ AnéCé’s upcoming project is a multimedia opera based on the life of Alan Turing, to be presented by the National Opera of Greece in Athens in June 2011. www.anonymousemsemble.org

Aaron Copp (Lighting Design) has designed tours for Natalie Merchant, Yo-Yo Ma, ABBA, Philip Glass, and Laurie Anderson; Mike Birbiglia’s My Girlfriends Boyfriend at the Barrow Street Theatre; Imaginary Cities for 50 Percussion at BAM; two new works for choreographer Jonah Bokar and one for Béla Bátork and Bokar and one for Béla by Merce Cunningham. He was also awarded a San Diego Theater Critics Award for Bokar Stop, directed by Dan Hardy at the Globe. Copp has an MFA from Yale and a BA from SUNY-Binghamton.

Michael Winther (Speaker/Singer) has performed on Broadway in 33 Variations, Mamma Mia, The Crucible, 1776, Artist Descending a Staircase, and Damn Yankees. OFF-Broadway credits include Songs from an Unmade Bed (New York Theatre Workshop; Drama Desk nomination). Radiant Baby (NYSPF/Public), and Holgoed (LCT). Recent regional credits include Piaf Tidings (Old Globe), Band Geeks! (Goodspeed), Grey Gardens (TheatreWorks/Alto Palo, Most Wanted (La Jolla Playhouse), Follies (George Street), The Boys from Syracuse (Baltimore Centerstage), and The People’s Temple (Guthrie/Perseverance). Other regional credits include Yale Rep, McCarter Theatre, Barrington Stage, Syracuse Stage, Ford’s Theatre, Pasadena Playhouse, Sundance Theatre Lab, and New York Stage and Film. Winther’s recent concert appearances include The Songs of Fred Hersch, Hear & Now! (Lincoln Center’s American Songbook); What Makes It Great? with Rob Kapilow (Lincoln Center; Cerritos Center); The Songs of James Taylor (Merkin Hall); New Love Songs (Metropolitan Room); New Voices (Symphony Space); and Broadways Cabaret Series and Broadway by the Year (Town Hall). He has appeared in film and on TV in Leverage, Meet Dave, Jumper, The Break Up, Mr. & Mrs. Smith, and Law & Order. Winther is a graduate of Williams College.

Gregg Kallor (Conductor) made his New York concert debut as pianist and composer in Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall in March 2007, presented by the Abbey Whiteside Foundation. Harris Goldsmith wrote: “It took but a few impeccably shaped phrases to make it plain that Kallor is a remarkably well-trained technician and a master of stylish phrasing as well . . . This superb recital debut truly established a new, important voice in our musical annals.” Kallor’s most recent Carnegie Hall concert, in April 2011, featured the world premiere of his new composition, A Single Noon—a nine-movement suite for solo piano that combines classical and jazz influences and improvisation. Kallor also played music by Bita Bartok, Anne Clift (St. Vincent), Chick Corea, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Ira Stravinsky, and Louise Talma. Kallor’s next concert, scheduled for release in late 2011, will feature A Single Noon and a mix of classical and jazz pieces. GreggKallor.com

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks from Fred to Linda and Stuart Nelson for their generous support of this project; Robert Rund for believing in it from day one; the Department of Music and Performing Arts, NYU Steinhardt and William Wesbrooks; Tim Hansen; Roxanna Wallstizki; Mark: Heimerding and Hadi and Lev Garfin; Vivian Chiu at Steinway & Sons; Riche'O Barshay, Shane Endley; Samuel Adams; Dr. Michael Ligouri for being a miracle worker; the entire staff of St. Vincent’s Hospital ICU; my family: Bruce Lestevon; Gregg Kallor; Sarah Wickliffe, Aaron Copp, and Eamonn Farrell for going above and beyond; Michael Winther for his help in shaping the words and music of the piece; and especially to Herschel Garfin for his enthusiasm, patience, commitment, dedication, and extraordinary vision.

www.peakperfs.org/insite

Deepen your Peak Performances experience at Insite, our interactive blog. Visit www.peakperfs.org/insite.
Peak Performances @ Montclair presents:

World Premiere!

My Coma Dreams

Music by Fred Hersch
Written and Directed by Herschel Garfein
Animation and Graphic Design by Sarah Wickliffe
Video Systems Design by Eamon Farrell
Lighting Design by Aaron Copp

Speaker/Singer Michael Winther (Fred, Scott, and others)

The Fred Hersch Ensemble
Ralph Alessi, trumpet/flugelhorn
Mike Christianson, trombone
Steven Luqueynne, oboe, clarinet, alto sax, bass clarinet
Adam Kolker, flute, clarinet, tenor sax
Joyce Hammann, violin
Laura Seaton, violin
Ron Lawrence, viola
dave Eggar, cello
John Hébert, bass
John Hollenbeck, drums/percussion

Fred Hersch, piano
Gregg Kallor, conductor

My Coma Dreams is dedicated, with love, to Scott Morgan.

Commissioned by Peak Performances @ Montclair State (NJ), funded with the generous support of Linda and Stuart Nelson through Premiere Commission, Inc., in honor of Fred Hersch.

Supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Piano by Steinway & Sons

Fred Hersch appears by arrangement with Robert Rund Creative Consulting (R2C2), Lambertville, New Jersey.

Duration: 1 hour 15 minutes, no intermission.

In consideration of both audience and performers, please turn off all electronic devices. The taking of photographs or videos and the use of recording equipment are not permitted. No food or drink is permitted inside the theater.

For a full list of donors, visit http://www.montclair.edu/peakperf/donors.html


dedicated, with love, to Scott Morgan.

My Coma Dreams is dedicated, with love, to Scott Morgan.

Commissioned by Peak Performances @ Montclair State (NJ), funded with the generous support of Linda and Stuart Nelson through Premiere Commission, Inc., in honor of Fred Hersch.

Supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Piano by Steinway & Sons

Fred Hersch appears by arrangement with Robert Rund Creative Consulting (R2C2), Lambertville, New Jersey.

Duration: 1 hour 15 minutes, no intermission.

In consideration of both audience and performers, please turn off all electronic devices. The taking of photographs or videos and the use of recording equipment are not permitted. No food or drink is permitted inside the theater.

For a full list of donors, visit http://www.montclair.edu/peakperf/donors.html

Staff

Alexander Kasser Theater
Founders
Mary Mochary
I Michael Kasser
Alexandra and Seth Bergman
Matthew Mochary
Commissioned by Peak Performances @ Montclair State (NJ), funded with the generous support of Linda and Stuart Nelson through Premiere Commission, Inc., in honor of Fred Hersch.

My Coma Dreams is dedicated, with love, to Scott Morgan.

Commissioned by Peak Performances @ Montclair State (NJ), funded with the generous support of Linda and Stuart Nelson through Premiere Commission, Inc., in honor of Fred Hersch.

Supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Piano by Steinway & Sons

Fred Hersch appears by arrangement with Robert Rund Creative Consulting (R2C2), Lambertville, New Jersey.

Duration: 1 hour 15 minutes, no intermission.

In consideration of both audience and performers, please turn off all electronic devices. The taking of photographs or videos and the use of recording equipment are not permitted. No food or drink is permitted inside the theater.

For a full list of donors, visit http://www.montclair.edu/peakperf/donors.html


dedicated, with love, to Scott Morgan.

My Coma Dreams is dedicated, with love, to Scott Morgan.

Commissioned by Peak Performances @ Montclair State (NJ), funded with the generous support of Linda and Stuart Nelson through Premiere Commission, Inc., in honor of Fred Hersch.

Supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Piano by Steinway & Sons

Fred Hersch appears by arrangement with Robert Rund Creative Consulting (R2C2), Lambertville, New Jersey.

Duration: 1 hour 15 minutes, no intermission.

In consideration of both audience and performers, please turn off all electronic devices. The taking of photographs or videos and the use of recording equipment are not permitted. No food or drink is permitted inside the theater.

For a full list of donors, visit http://www.montclair.edu/peakperf/donors.html

Major Donors

Benefactors
Anne Allen
Bank of America
John and Cynthia Barnes
Grass Lynx Associates
Joan Hall
The Hiler Group
Audrey V Leaf
The Professional Insurance Company of America
Schering-Plough Research Institute
Washington Bank
Josh and Judy Weston

For a full list of donors, visit http://www.montclair.edu/peakperf/donors.html

2011–12 PEAK PERFORMANCES SEASON ANNOUNCEMENT
Visit www.peakperfs.org after July 1, 2011 for details

The 2010/11 season is made possible in part by funds from:
Association of Performing Arts Presenters
The National Endowment for the Arts
The New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts
Discover Jersey Arts
Alison and James T. Cirenza
The Honorable Mary Mochary

This program is printed on recycled paper. Please recycle.

To view our complete season and for more information, visit www.peakperfs.org.

Join us on Facebook: text “fanpeakperfs” to FBOOK (32665)!