



MIDDLEBURY
PERFORMING ARTS SERIES
P R E S E N T S

The Westerlies *Theo Bleckmann*

FRIDAY, APRIL 7, 2023
MAHANEY ARTS CENTER, ROBISON HALL



Theo Bleckmann and The Westerlies:

This Land

Theo Bleckmann, Voice & Live Electronic Processing

The Westerlies:

Riley Mulherkar, Trumpet · Chloe Rowlands, Trumpet

Andy Clausen, Trombone · Willem de Koch, Trombone

The Fiddle and the Drum

Joni Mitchell (b. 1943)
Arr. Theo Bleckmann (b. 1966)

Land

Andy Clausen (b. 1992)
Text by Agha Shahid Ali (1949–2001)

Two Good Men

Woody Guthrie (1912–1967)

Another Holiday

Theo Bleckmann

Tear the Fascists Down

Woody Guthrie

Look for the Union Label / Wade in the Water

Malcolm Dodds / Paula Green (1927–2015)
Traditional, Arr. Theo Bleckmann

The Jolly Baker

Woody Guthrie

Grandmar

Andy Clausen

In the Sweet By and By / The Preacher and the Slave

Joseph Webster (1819–1875) /
S. Fillmore Bennett (1836–1898) / Joe Hill (1879–1915) / Arr. Willem de Koch (b. 1992)

Das Bitten der Kinder

Bertholt Brecht (1898–1956) / Paul Dessau (1894–1979)
Arr. Riley Mulherkar (b. 1991)

Looking Out

Riley Mulherkar

Thoughts and Prayers

Phil Kline

A replay of this concert is available on demand until 7:30 PM ET on Sunday, April 9 at

<http://go.middlebury.edu/Westerlies-Theo/>

Many thanks to the Paul Nelson Performance Endowment and Rothrock Family Residency Fund.

About the Program

This Land

In June of 2018, Theo Bleckmann and The Westerlies worked in residence at Yellow Barn music center in Putney, Vermont, to pair songs of resistance with songs of refuge, seeking to balance music's integral role in protest movements with the power of songs to provide internal solace amidst external turmoil.

This balance is perhaps no better demonstrated than in the music of Joni Mitchell. Mitchell first recorded *The Fiddle and the Drum* on her 1969 album *Clouds*, and its anti-war message has been associated with a number of resistance movements since the 60's.

One of the original pieces in the program draws its inspiration from the world of poetry. Trombonist Andy Clausen's "Land" was composed while in residence at Yellow Barn in June 2018, and sets words from Agha Shahid Ali's poem of the same title. Exploring the complexities of life as an Indian-American immigrant, Agha's work colorfully illustrates the thematic and cultural poles of past and present; America and India, Islamic and American geography, American cities and former American Indian tribes.

Perhaps no voice is more associated with American protest songs than that of Woody Guthrie, and his voice is channeled through The Westerlies in many iterations. One of the songs, entitled "Tear the Fascists Down" was recorded in 1944 but never released until 2009, when master discs of Stinson Records were discovered in a Brooklyn apartment. While Guthrie was writing his songs, Bertolt Brecht was a prominent international voice of freedom. His poem "Bitten der Kinder" was written in 1951 and set to music by Paul Dessau, originally written to be sung by a children's choir but arranged here by Riley Mulherkar.

Amidst these voices of resistance, the original songs of refuge by members of the ensemble shine. "Another Holiday" by Theo Bleckmann, was written in June of 2016 shortly after the mass shooting at Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida. Says Bleckmann, "Unlike my often long and intensely critical editing processes when writing music, 'Another Holiday' seemed to appear almost fully formed. This is a not a protest song but a song about being without refuge, of being isolated from your family because of whom you love." Also bringing familial relationships into the program is Andy Clausen, who wrote "Grandmar" in November of 2017, shortly after the passing of his grandmother. Says Clausen, "the piece is a meditation on the challenges of loving someone with whom you have vehement political disagreements."

The theme of refuge is exemplified in "Wade in the Water," a well-known spiritual work song from the Underground Railroad. The meditative melody is a hymn of resistance and unification, originating from one of the (many) dark times in the African American struggle.

Theo Bleckmann arranges it here next to “Look for the Union Label,” a TV commercial song from the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (formerly the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and other unions). Composed by R&B Soul artist Malcolm Dodds to a lyric by advertising executive Paula Green, the melody seems to strongly reference Jerome Kern’s “Look for the Silver Lining.”

True to their Seattle roots, The Westerlies find another voice of resistance in Pacific Northwest history in Joe Hill, a Swedish-American immigrant and laborer who rose to prominence as an organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World. As Hill and other IWW organizers traveled to lumber and construction camps throughout the west, they would often encounter missionaries from the Salvation Army who were attempting to convert the local migrant workers to Christianity. One of the Salvation Army’s (referred to fondly by the IWW as the “Starvation Army”) most popular hymns was “In the Sweet By and By”; in response to the Salvation Army’s overtures to the migrant workers, Joe Hill, a gifted songwriter himself, wrote a parody version of “In the Sweet By and By” called “The Preacher and the Slave”. Trombonist Willem de Koch’s arrangement juxtaposes the two songs side-by-side, highlighting Hill’s witty, cynical lyrics.

Trumpeter Riley Mulherkar’s *Looking Out* features text from FDR’s Executive Order 9066, which authorized the Secretary of War to prescribe certain areas as military zones and cleared the way for the incarceration of 120,000 men, women, and children of Japanese ancestry.

The protest song is given a fresh, new take in the work of American composer Phil Kline. A veteran of New York’s downtown scene, Kline’s work has been hailed for its originality, beauty, subversive subtext, and wry humor. His song *Thoughts and Prayers* was written for Theo Bleckmann and The Westerlies during their June 2018 residency at Yellow Barn, and was inspired by the words of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School survivor and activist Emma Gonzalez.

Selected Texts

The Fiddle and the Drum

By Joni Mitchell

And so once again
My dear Johnny my dear friend
And so once again you are fightin' us all
And when I ask you why
You raise your sticks and cry, and I fall

Oh, my friend
How did you come
To trade the fiddle for the drum

You say I have turned
Like the enemies you've earned
But I can remember
All the good things you are
And so I ask you please
Can I help you find the peace and the star

Oh, my friend
What time is this
To trade the handshake for the fist

And so once again
Oh, America my friend
And so once again
You are fighting us all
And when we ask you why
You raise your sticks and cry and we fall

Oh, my friend
How did you come
To trade the fiddle for the drum

You say we have turned
Like the enemies you've earned
But we can remember
All the good things you are
And so we ask you please
Can we help you find the peace and the star

Oh my friend
We have all come
To fear the beating of your drum

Land

By Agha Shahid Ali, *For Christopher Merrill*

Swear by the olive in the God-kissed land—
There is no sugar in the promised land.

Why must the bars turn neon now when, Love,
I'm already drunk in your capitalist land?

If home is found on both sides of the globe,
home is of course here — and always a missed land.

The hour's come to redeem the pledge (not wholly?)
in Fate's "Long years ago we made a tryst" land.

Clearly, these men were here only to destroy,
a mosque now the dust of a prejudiced land.

Will the Doomsayers die, bitten with envy,
when springtime returns to our dismissed land?

The prisons fill with the cries of children.
Then how do you subsist, how do you persist, Land?

"Is my love nothing for I've borne no children?"
I'm with you, Sappho, in that anarchist land.

A hurricane is born when the wings flutter ...
Where will the butterfly, on my wrist, land?

You made me wait for one who wasn't even there
though summer had finished in that tourist land.

Do the blind hold temples close to their eyes
when we steal their gods for our atheist land?

Abandoned bride, Night throws down her jewels
so Rome — on our descent — is an amethyst land.

At the moment the heart turns terrorist,
are Shahid's arms broken, O Promised Land?

Look For The Union Label

By Paula Green

Look for the Union label
When you are buying that coat, dress or blouse.
Remember somewhere our union's sewing,
Our wages going to feed the kids, and run the house.

We work hard, but who's complaining?
Thanks to the I.L.G. we're paying our way!
So always look for the union label,
it says we're able to make it in the U.S.A.!

Wade in the Water

Traditional

Wade in the water
Wade in the water, children
Wade in the water
God's gonna trouble the water

Who's that young girl dressed in red?
Wade in the water
Must be the children that Moses led
And God's gonna trouble the water

Das Bitten Der Kinder

By Bertholt Brecht

Die Häuser sollen nicht brennen
Bomber soll man nicht kennen.
Die Nacht soll für den Schlaf sein.
Leben soll keine Straf sein.
Die Mütter sollen nicht weinen.
Keiner sollte töten einen.
Alle sollen was bauen
Da kann man allen trauen
Die Jungen sollen's erreichen.
Die Alten desgleichen.

Pleas of the Children

Transl. Theo Bleckmann

Houses should not be burning
One should not know about bombers
The night should be for sleeping
Living should not be punishment
Mothers should not cry
Nobody should kill anyone
Everyone should build something
Then you can trust everybody
The youth should be able to achieve something
And so should the old.

In the Sweet By and By

By S. Fillmore Bennett

In the sweet by and by
we shall meet on that beautiful shore
In the sweet by and by
we shall meet on that. beautiful shore.

The Preacher and The Slave

By Joe Hill

Long haired preachers come out ev'ry night
Try to tell you what's wrong and what's right
But when asked about something to eat
They will answer with voices so sweet

You will eat you will eat by and by
In the glorious land in the sky way up high
work and pray
live on hay
You'll get pie in the sky when ya die

And the starvation army they play
And they sing and they clap and they pray
'Til they get all your coin on the drum
Then they tell you when you're on the bum

You will eat you will eat by and by
In the glorious land in the sky way up high
work and pray
live on hay
You'll get pie in the sky when ya die

Holy rollers and jumpers come out
And they holler and jump and they shout
But when eat-ting time comes 'round they say
You will eat on that glorious day

You will eat you will eat by and by
In the glorious land in the sky way up high
work and pray

live on hay
You'll get pie in the sky when ya die

If you fight hard for children and wife
Try to get something good in this life
You're a sinner and bad man they tell
When you die you will sure go to Hell

You will eat you will eat by and by
In the glorious land in the sky way up high
work and pray
live on hay
You'll get pie in the sky when ya die

Working men of all countries unite
Together we'll stand and we'll fight
When the world and its wealth we have gained
To the grafters we'll sing this refrain

You will eat you will eat by and by
When you've learned how to cook and to fry
Chop some wood do ya good
And you'll eat in the sweet by and by

Artist Biographies

Theo Bleckmann is a GRAMMY® nominated jazz singer and new music composer of eclectic tastes and prodigious gifts. He has released numerous critically acclaimed recordings on the ECM and Winter & Winter labels and collaborated with a remarkable roster of contemporary musicians and composers including Laurie Anderson, Philip Glass, Michael Tilson Thomas, John Zorn, the Bang on a Can All-stars, and, most prominently, Meredith Monk, with whom Bleckmann worked as a core ensemble member for fifteen years.

theobleckmann.com



The Westerlies, “an arty quartet...mixing ideas from jazz, new classical, and Appalachian folk” (New York Times) are a New York-based brass quartet comprised of childhood friends from Seattle: **Riley Mulherkar** and **Chloe Rowlands** on trumpet, and **Andy Clausen** and **Willem de Koch** on trombone. From Carnegie Hall to Coachella, The Westerlies navigate a wide array of venues and projects with the precision of a string quartet, the audacity of a rock band, and the charm of a family sing-along.



Formed in 2011, the self-described “accidental brass quartet” takes its name from the prevailing winds that travel from the West to the East. “Skilled interpreters who are also adept improvisers” (NPR’s Fresh Air), The Westerlies explore jazz, roots, and chamber music influences to create the rarest of hybrids: music that is both “folk-like and composerly, lovely and intellectually rigorous” (NPR Music).

The ensemble has produced numerous critically acclaimed albums of genre-defying music. 2022 saw the release of the Songbook Vol. 2 and Live at TOURISTS on Westerlies Records, the ensemble’s in-house record label. The previous year was a prolific year for the ensemble, with the release of Fireside Brass: A Westerlies Holiday (Westerlies Records), Songbook Vol. 1 (Westerlies Records), and Bricolage (Westerlies Records), a collaborative album of improvisations with pianist/composer Conrad Tao. Sought-after collaborators, The Westerlies are also featured on recordings by Fleet Foxes (Nonesuch), Big Red Machine (Jagjaguwar), Vieux Farka Touré (Six Degrees Records), Common (Lakeshore) and Dave Douglas (Greenleaf).

www.westerliesmusic.com

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Middlebury College sits on land which has served as a site of meeting and exchange among indigenous peoples since time immemorial. The Western Abenaki are the traditional caretakers of these Vermont lands and waters, which they call Ndakinna, or "homeland."

We remember their connection to this region and the hardships they continue to endure.

We give thanks for the opportunity to share in the bounty of this place and to protect it.