



THEO BLECKMANN

BERLIN: SONGS OF LOVE AND WAR, PEACE AND EXILE

PHILADELPHIA PREMIERE | PENN LIVE ARTS DEBUT

VOCALS Theo Bleckmann

DAEDALUS QUARTET

VIOLINS Min-Young Kim, Matilda Kaul

VIOLA Jessica Thompson

CELLO Thomas Kraines

PIANO Dan Tepfer

SATURDAY, **MARCH 11** @ 8 PM

Annenberg Center, Harold Prince Theatre/Livestream Event

There will be no intermission.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

"Europe was created by history. America by philosophy." – Margaret Thatcher (b. 1925)

This concert program, *Berlin: Songs of Love and War, Peace and Exile*, is a journey into war-torn Berlin. German-born American, Theo Bleckmann, sings of Berlin in its heyday and of its imminent demise.

Songs of Love and War, Peace and Exile, penned by Hanns Eisler, Kurt Weill, Bertold Brecht and others, including Bleckmann's haunting rendition of "Lilli Marleen," is delivered with moving tenderness and care. Bleckmann and his ensemble breathe delicate life into these classic, almost haiku-like songs, reminding us of the immediacy and relevance of their personal and political implications today.

Bleckmann describes his program this way: "The repertoire of Kurt Weill, Hans Eisler, Paul Dessau. Composers from the Weimar Period, or mostly songs from the Weimar Period, and also from the Second World War, that were written in exile. Some of this repertoire that I'm performing is very well known. But there are other songs that are so unknown and hardly ever performed. Oftentimes, these songs are put into the context of theatre or cabaret. They're not treated as concert art songs." He says he approaches this repertoire rather differently from other performers. "Certain songs are quite dark and quite political. And what I was doing with this project was to try to bring some tenderness and vulnerability to these songs because as I grew up with these songs, they were often, or most always, performed with a sense of loud urgency. That is one way of singing them and one way of performing them and interpreting this music, but I wanted to see if there was anything more personal and more delicate in these songs that I could excavate." He wants to make the songs a personal experience for himself and the listener. "I try to sing with as much emotion as I can, but also leave space for the person that's listening to have a space in what I'm doing. So, I'm not imposing, or not only giving you what I'm feeling, but there is space to interpret or feel what you want to feel in this music, or what you see in these songs."

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Theo Bleckmann (Vocals)

"a vocalist of inventive instinct and assiduous musicality"—Nate Chinen, *The New York Times*

A jazz singer and new music composer of eclectic tastes and prodigious gifts, two-time Grammy® Award-nominee Theo Bleckmann makes music that is accessibly sophisticated, unsentimentally emotional and seriously playful, leading his work to be described as "from another planet," (*The New York Times*) "magical, futuristic," (*AllAboutJazz*) "limitless," (*Philadelphia City Paper*) "transcendent," (*Village Voice*) and "brilliant." (*New York Magazine*)

Bleckmann, who has been residing in New York City since 1989, has released a series of gorgeous and irreverent albums, including his highly acclaimed *Hello Earth - the Music of Kate Bush*. In recent years, he has appeared as a special guest on recordings by Ambrose Akinmusire for Blue Note Records and Julia Hülsmann's trio for ECM. In 2017, ECM released Bleckmann's recording with his *Elegy* Quintet, produced by Manfred Eicher. In their album review of *Elegy*, the *Wall Street Journal* called Bleckmann "a jazz vocalist for the 21st century." He released *This Land* in collaboration with celebrated bass quartet The Westerlies.

Bleckmann has collaborated with musicians, artists, actors and composers, including Laurie Anderson, Uri Caine, Philip Glass, Ann Hamilton, Sheila Jordan, Frances McDormand, Ben Monder, Michael Tilson Thomas, Kenny Wheeler, John Zorn, the Bang on a Can All-Stars and, most prominently, Meredith Monk, with whom Bleckmann worked as a core ensemble member for over 15 years. He has been interviewed by Terry Gross on NPR's *Fresh Air* and appeared on the *Late Show with David Letterman* with Laurie Anderson. In 2015, Bleckmann premiered his commission for the American Composers Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, and in 2016, brought the premieres of two new works to the New York and Los Angeles Philharmonics.

Bleckmann has been a regular presence in "Best of" polls, from *DownBeat*, *Rhapsody* and WQXR. In 2010, he received the prestigious JAZZ ECHO award in his native Germany, and in 2019, was voted Jazz Vocalist of the Year in the El Intruso Jazz Poll in Argentina.

The Daedalus Quartet

Praised by *The New Yorker* as "a fresh and vital young participant in what is a golden age of American string quartets," the Daedalus Quartet has established itself as a leader among the new generation of string ensembles. Since winning the top prize in the Banff International String Quartet Competition in 2001, the Daedalus Quartet has impressed critics and listeners alike with the security, technical finish, interpretive unity and sheer gusto of its performances. The *New York Times* has praised the Daedalus Quartet's "insightful and vibrant" Haydn, the "impressive intensity" of its Beethoven, its "luminous" Berg and the "riveting focus" of its Dutilleux. The *Washington Post*, in turn, has acclaimed its performance of Mendelssohn for "rockets of blistering virtuosity," while the *Houston Chronicle* has described the "silvery beauty" of its Schubert and the "magic that hushed the audience" when the group played Ravel, *The Boston Globe* the "finesse and fury" of its Shostakovich, *The Toronto Globe and Mail* the "thrilling revelation" of its Hindemith, and the *Cincinnati Enquirer* the "tremendous emotional power" of its Brahms.

Since its founding, the Daedalus Quartet has performed in many of the world's leading musical venues, including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center (Great Performers series), the Library of Congress, the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C. and Boston's Gardner Museum, as well as on major series in Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, Winnipeg and Vancouver. Abroad, the ensemble has been heard in such famed locations as the Musikverein in Vienna, the Mozarteum in Salzburg, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Cité de la Musique in Paris and leading venues in Japan.

The Daedalus Quartet has won plaudits for its adventurous exploration of contemporary music, most notably the compositions of Elliott Carter, George Perle, György Kurtág and György Ligeti. Among the works the ensemble has premiered are Huck Hodge's *The Topography of Desire*, commissioned by the Fromm Foundation; David Horne's *Flight from the Labyrinth*, commissioned for the Quartet by the Caramoor Festival; Lawrence Dillon's *String Quartet No. 4*, commissioned by the Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts; and Fred Lerdahl's *Third String Quartet*, commissioned by Chamber Music America, as well as Lerdahl's *Chaconne*, commissioned by New Music USA.

The Quartet has also collaborated with some of the world's finest instrumentalists including pianists Marc-André Hamelin, Simone Dinnerstein, Awadagin Pratt, Joyce Yang, Soyeon Kate Lee and Benjamin Hochman; clarinetists Paquito D'Rivera, Ricardo Morales, Romie deGuise-Langlois and Alexander Fiterstein; jazz bassist John Patitucci; and violists Roger Tapping, Nokuthula Ngwenyama and Donald Weilerstein.

To date, the Quartet has forged associations with some of America's leading classical music and educational institutions: Carnegie Hall, through its European Concert Hall Organization (ECHO) Rising Stars program, and Lincoln Center, which appointed the Daedalus Quartet as the Chamber Music Society Two (now the Bowers Program) quartet for 2005-07. The Daedalus Quartet has served as Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Pennsylvania since 2006. In 2007, the Quartet was awarded Lincoln Center's Martin E. Segal Award. The Quartet won Chamber Music America's Guarneri String Quartet Award, which funded a three-year residency in Suffolk County, Long Island from 2007-2010.

The Quartet's debut recording, music of Stravinsky, Sibelius and Ravel, was released by Bridge Records in 2006, and was praised by *Strad Magazine* for the Quartet's "exemplary intonation and balance." It has been followed by numerous recordings, including the music of Joan Tower, Lawrence Dillon, Ursula Mamlok, Fred Lerdahl, Vivian Fung, Kai-Young Chan and Brian Buch.

In the 21/22 season, Daedalus made a welcome return to the live stage, performing the music of Vijay Iyer, Amy Beach and James Primosch as well as the premiere of work by Kinan Abou-afach.

Dan Tepfer (Piano)

One of his generation's extraordinary talents, Tepfer has earned an international reputation as a pianist-composer of wide-ranging ambition, individuality, and drive—one "who refuses to set himself limits" (France's *Télérama*). The New York City-based Tepfer, born in 1982 in Paris to American parents, has recorded and performed around the world with some of the leading lights in jazz and classical music, from Lee Konitz to Renée Fleming, and released 10 albums of his own in solo, duo and trio formats.

Tepfer earned global acclaim for his 2011 release, *Goldberg Variations / Variations*, a disc that sees him performing J.S. Bach's masterpiece as well as improvising upon it to "elegant, thoughtful and thrilling" effect. (*New York Magazine*) Tepfer's newest video album, *Natural Machines*, stands as one of his most ingeniously forward-minded yet, finding him exploring in real time the intersection between science and art, coding and improvisation, digital algorithms and the rhythms of the heart. *The New York Times* has called him "a deeply rational improviser drawn to the unknown."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, his belief that music brings people together in times of crisis led him to dive headstrong into live streaming, performing close to 200 online concerts from his home for a devoted community of listeners. As part of this effort, he pioneered ultra-low-latency audio technology enabling him to perform live through the internet with musicians in separate locations, culminating in the development of his own app, FarPlay.

Tepfer has composed for various ensembles beyond jazz. His piano quintet, *Solar Spiral*, premiered in 2016 at Chicago's Ravinia Festival, with Tepfer performing alongside the Avalon String Quartet. Tepfer has received commissions from the Prague Castle Guard Orchestra for two works: the suite *Algorithmic Transform* (2015) and a concerto for symphonic wind band and improvising piano, *The View from Orohena* (2010). In 2019, Tepfer unveiled his jazz-trio arrangement of Stravinsky's Baroque-channeling *Pulcinella*.

Tepfer's honors include first prizes at the 2006 Montreux Jazz Festival Solo Piano Competition, the 2006 East Coast Jazz Festival Competition and the 2007 American Pianists Association Jazz Piano Competition, as well as fellowships from the American Academy of Arts and Letters (2014), the MacDowell Colony (2016) and the Foundation BNP-Paribas (2018).