

Interpreting the Great American Songbook

Tom Birkner, voice
Paul Johnston, piano
Saturday, January 25, 2014
9:45 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.
Civic Center 401

Session Description

Vocalist Tom Birkner and pianist Paul Johnston will perform music from the American songbook and discuss its importance and interpretation. Inspired by the collaborations of Tony Bennett and Bill Evans, the program will include music by celebrated composers and lyricists including Harold Arlen, Irving Berlin, George and Ira Gershwin, Henry Mancini, Johnny Mercer, and Cole Porter. Vocalists and instrumentalists alike can learn a great deal about phrasing and interpretation by listening to great vocalists like Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Tony Bennett, and Frank Sinatra, among others. Hearing and playing this music can also help improvisers develop a melodic sensibility and become familiar with standard harmonic progressions. The program will also include performance of and discussion about newer music from artists including Stephen Sondheim, Joni Mitchell, and Paul McCartney.

Program

Accentuate the Positive (1944)	Harold Arlen / Johnny Mercer
Skylark (1941)	Hoagy Carmichael / Johnny Mercer
Anyone Can Whistle (1964)	Stephen Sondheim
Let's Do It (1928)	Cole Porter
I'm Putting All My Eggs in One Basket (1936)	Irving Berlin
Both Sides Now (1967)	Joni Mitchell
Blackbird (1968)	Paul McCartney
I Thought About You (1939)	Jimmy Van Heusen / Johnny Mercer
Sweet Lorraine (1928)	Cliff Burwell / Mitchell Parish
Days of Wine and Roses (1962)	Henry Mancini / Johnny Mercer
I've Got It Bad (and That Ain't Good) (1941)	Duke Ellington / Paul Webster
Lucky to Be Me (1944)	Leonard Bernstein / Betty Comden and Adolph Green
Young and Foolish (1955)	Albert Hague / Arnold Horwitt
When In Rome (I Do As the Romans Do) (1964)	Cy Coleman / Carolyn Leigh
Our Love Is Here to Stay (1938)	George Gershwin / Ira Gershwin
Nice Work If You Can Get It (1937)	George Gershwin / Ira Gershwin
When There's a Shine on Your Shoes (1932)	Howard Dietz / Arthur Schwartz

American Popular Song

Selected Composers

Harold Arlen, 1905-1986
Irving Berlin, 1888-1989
Eubie Blake, 1887-1983
Hoagy Carmichael, 1899-1981
Vernon Duke, 1903-1969
Duke Ellington, 1899-1974
Stephen Foster, 1826-1864
George Gershwin, 1898-1937
W. C. Handy, 1873-1958
Neal Hefti, 1922-2008
Jerome Kern, 1885-1945
Burton Lane, 1912-1997
Frank Loesser, 1910-1969
Henry Mancini, 1924-1994
Hugh Martin, 1914-2011
Joni Mitchell, 1943-
Cole Porter, 1891-1964
Richard Rodgers, 1902-1979
Arthur Schwartz, 1900-1984
Stephen Sondheim, 1930-
Jule Stein, 1905-1994
Billy Strayhorn, 1915-1967
James Taylor, 1948-

Jimmy Van Heusen, 1913-1990

Fats Waller, 1904-1943

Harry Warren, 1893-1981

Jimmy Webb, 1946-

Stevie Wonder, 1950-

Vincent Youmans, 1898-1946

American Popular Song

Selected Lyricists

Marilyn Bergman, 1929-

Alan Bergman, 1925-

Ralph Blane, 1914-1995

Irving Caesar, 1895-1996

Sammy Cahn, 1913-1993

Betty Comden, 1917-2006

Howard Dietz, 1896-1983

Dorothy Fields, 1905-1974

Ira Gershwin, 1896-1983

Adolph Green, 1914-2002

Oscar Hammerstein, 1895-1960

E. Y. Harburg, 1896-1981

Lorenz Hart, 1895-1943

Alan Lerner, 1918-1986

Johnny Mercer, 1909-1976

Mitchell Parrish, 1900-1993

*It is important to note that a number of the composers selected wrote both music and lyrics for their works; Irving Berlin, Sammy Cahn, Frank Loesser, Johnny Mercer, Joni Mitchell, Cole Porter, Stephen Sondheim, James Taylor, and Stevie Wonder, to name a few.

Selected Readings

Balliett, Whitney. *American Singers: 27 Portraits in Song*. Oxford University Press, 1988.

Ewen, David. *American Songwriters*. H.W. Wilson, 1987.

Furia, Phillip. *The Poets of Tin Pan Alley: A History of America's Great Lyricists*. Oxford University Press, 1992.

Green, Benny. *Let's Face the Music: The Golden Age of Popular Song*. Pavilion Books, 1989.

Hemming, Roy. *The Melody Lingers On: The Great Songwriters and Their Movie Musicals*. Newmarket Press, 1986.

Hyland, William G. *The Song Is Ended: Songwriters and American Music 1900-1950*. Oxford University Press, 1995.

Pleasants, Henry. *The Great American Popular Singers*. Simon and Shuster, 1974.

Torme, Mel. *My Singing Teachers: Reflections on Singing Popular Music*. Oxford University Press, 1994.

Wilder, Alec. *American Popular Song: The Great Innovators, 1900-1950*. Oxford University Press, 1990.

Zinsser, William. *Easy to Remember: The Great American Songwriters and Their Songs*. David R. Godine, 2000.

Selected Discography

- Armstrong, Louis, and the Oscar Peterson Quartet. *Louis Armstrong Meets Oscar Peterson*, Verve: 825 713-2, 1957.
- Baker, Chet. *Chet Baker Sings*, World Pacific: WP 1826, 1952.
- Bennett, Tony, and Bill Evans. *The Tony Bennett-Bill Evans Album*, Fantasy: F9489, 1975.
- Bennett, Tony, and Bill Evans. *Together Again*, Improvisation: 7117, 1976.
- Cole, Nat King. *Nature Boy*, Capitol: DT2348, 1965.
- Fitzgerald, Ella, and Louis Armstrong with the Oscar Peterson Quartet. *Ella and Louis*, Verve: MGV-4003, 1956.
- Fitzgerald, Ella, and Louis Armstrong with the Oscar Peterson Quartet. *Ella and Louis Again*, Verve: 825374-2, 1957.
- Fitzgerald, Ella, and the Count Basie Orchestra. *Ella and Basie!*, Verve V6-4061, 1963.
- Fitzgerald, Ella, and Oscar Peterson. *Ella and Oscar*, Pablo 2310-759, 1975.
- Fitzgerald, Ella, and Pass, Joe. *Easy Living*, Pablo: 2310-921, 1986.
- Fitzgerald, Ella, and Ellington, Duke. *Ella and Duke at the Cote D'Azur*, Verve: V6-4072-2, 1967.
- Hartman, Johnny, and the John Coltrane Quartet. *John Coltrane And Johnny Hartman*, Impulse!: A40, 1963.
- Holiday, Billie. *Lady in Satin*, Columbia: CS048, 1958.
- Laine, Cleo. *Cleo Laine Sings Sondheim*, RCA Victor: 7702-1-RC, 1987.
- Lee, Peggy. *Basin Street East Proudly Presents Peggy Lee*, Capitol: 7243 8 32744 2 0, 1961.
- McRae, Carmen. *At the Great American Music Hall*, Blue Note: BN-LA709-H2, 1976.
- McRae, Carmen. *The Great American Songbook*, Atlantic: SD2-904, 1972.
- Mitchell, Joni. *Both Sides Now*, Reprise, 2000.
- Mitchell, Joni. *Travelogue*, Nonesuch: 79817-2, 2002.
- Sinatra, Frank, with Count Basie and the Orchestra. *Sinatra at the Sands*, Reprise: FS 1019, 1966.
- Torme, Mel. *The Torme Touch*, Bethlehem BCP 6042, 1956.
- Torme, Mel and the Marty Paich Orchestra. *Mel Torme Swings Shubert Alley*, Verve: 821581-2, 1960.
- Vaughan, Sarah. *In the Land of Hi-Fi*, Mercury: M6 36058, 1955.
- Vaughan, Sarah. *How Long Has This Been Going On?*, Pablo: 2310-821, 1978.
- Washington, Dinah. *What a Difference a Day Makes*, Mercury: ML-8006, 1959.
- Williams, Joe, and the Count Basie Orchestra. *Count Basie Swings Joe Williams Sings*, Verve: UMV-2591, 1956.
- Williams, Joe, and the Count Basie Orchestra. *The Greatest: Count Basie Plays, Joe Williams Sings Standards*, Verve: M6V-2016, 1956.
- Wilson, Nancy, and the Cannonball Adderley Quartet. *Nancy Wilson and Cannonball Adderley*, Capitol: ST 1657, 1962.
- Wilson, Nancy. *But Beautiful*, Capitol: SM-798, 1969.

Thomas Birkner serves as Director of Instrumental Music at Belleville West High School and teaches improvisation at Southwestern Illinois College. He taught previously at the University of Illinois, Parkland College, and Terre Haute South High School, and has served on the faculty of the Summer Jazz Camp at Eastern Illinois University for over 30 years. A graduate of Eastern Illinois University and the University of Illinois, Dr. Birkner has been recognized as an outstanding soloist by the International Trumpet Guild and the National Association of Teachers of Singing. He has maintained an active career as a founding member of the American Music Trio and the New Golden Rule Orchestra, a jazz repertory ensemble. His research has been published by the International Association of Jazz Educators, and he has recorded on Einstein Records, Opus One, and the Sea Breeze Jazz recording labels. He has performed at the Chicago Jazz Festival and Chicago's Orchestra Hall, as well as major jazz festivals in Italy, Sweden, and Denmark. He resides in Belleville, Illinois, with his wife Kathryn and children, John, Ryan, and Erin.

Paul Johnston, piano, is active as a teacher, performer, and composer. He is on the faculty at Eastern Illinois University, where he directs a jazz band, coaches combos, and teaches jazz piano, improvisation, and arranging. He is at home in a wide variety of musical styles and has performed with artists including Clark Terry, Benny Golson, Nancy Wilson, Monica Mancini, and Bernadette Peters. A native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, he studied at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and at Indiana University, where he completed a Master's Degree in jazz studies and a Performer Diploma in piano. Soloists, chamber groups, and jazz ensembles from across the country have performed his compositions and arrangements, and Alfred Music has published several of collections of his solo jazz piano arrangements. Paul taught for eight summers at the Interlochen Center for the Arts and is an alumnus of Ravinia's Steans Music Institute and the Henry Mancini Institute.