**Chamber Music @ AEIVA**

**Thursday November 2, 2017**

**5:00 Reception, 5:30 Concert**

My Good Lord Done Been Here arr. Hall Johnson

Witness (1888-1970)

Ride on, King Jesus!

Paul Mosteller, baritone

Yakov Kasman, piano

Silent Woods, Op. 63 Antonin Dvoràk.

(1841-1904)

Laura Usiskin, cello

Chris Steele, piano

Only I Never Saw Another Butterfly Lori Laitman

The Butterfly (b. 1955)

Yes, That’s the Way Things Are

Birdsong

The Garden

Man Proposes, God Disposes

The Old House

Kristine Hurst-Wajszczuk, soprano

Denise Gainey, clarinet

Sonatina in G Major, Op. 100 Antonin Dvoràk.

Allegro Risoluto (1841-1904)

Larghetto

Allegro

Sarah Nordlund Dennis, violin

Chris Steele, piano

*Special thanks to AEIVA, UAB Department of Music, and the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences for making this event possible*

**Program notes**

**Hall Johnson,** the son of an African Methodist Episcopal minister, supported himself as a professional violinist and music teacher. He founded several choirs, including the Hall Johnson Negro Choir, which recorded, toured, and performed on Broadway and in films between 1925 and 1943. A highly-educated musician (including studies at Penn, Juilliard, and USC), Johnson is remembered for his compositions and for his writings on the history and performance practice of spirituals. The three spirituals on this evening’s program are representative of Johnson’s concert arrangements for solo voice. They feature creative piano accompaniments to carefully-notated vocal lines that seek to capture the details of traditional spiritual singing. In the composer’s own words, the spiritual “traverses every shade of emotion without spilling over in any direction… In its darkest expressions there is always a hope, and in its gayest measures a constant reminder. Born out of the heart-cries of a captive people who still did not forget how to laugh, this music covers an amazing range of mood.”

**Antonin Dvoràk**, like many composers from his time, took great inspiration from the regional songs, styles, and characteristics surrounding him, particularly from his native Bohemia. In “From the Bohemian Forest,” a six-movement work for piano four-hands, Dvoràk based each movement on an aspect of the treasured region Sumava in South Bohemia, now in the Czech Republic. “Silent Woods” is the fifth movement from that collection and was so beloved by the composer that he created a version for cello and orchestra as well as cello and piano.

Between 1892-95, Dvoràk lived in the United States, where he continued his tradition of incorporating regional music in his compositions, in this case those from Native American and African-American traditions. His Sonatina for Violin and Piano was written in 1893 and is no exception. The first movement has an unmistakably “American” spirit, with a bold opening and subsequent lyricism. The Larghetto has been nicknamed “Indian Lament” and presents a plaintive melody. The final Allegro features delightful syncopations and three unique themes.

**Lori Laitman**composed *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* in late 1995; it was premiered in January 1996 by Lauren Wagner, soprano, and Gary Louie, saxophone at Johns Hopkins University. The cycle was later arranged for clarinet, as performed tonight. The texts are taken from a collection of poems written by children from the Terezin (Theresienstadt) Concentration Camp.  This camp, originally a city named after Joseph II built northwest of Prague and named after his mother, was used during World War II “to protect Jews from the vagaries and stresses of the war.” A Nazi propaganda film was made to show this mythic, idyllic city to which Jews were taken from the Czech Lands and eight other countries.

In Hitler’s quest to stave off any uprisings or objections around the so-called civilized world, notable musicians, writers, artists, and leaders were sent there for “safer” keeping. This ruse worked for a very long time, to the great detriment of the nearly two hundred thousand men, women and children who passed through its gates as a way station to the east and probable death. Of the vast majority of Czech Jews who were taken to Terezin, 97,297 died: 15,000 of them were children.

The composer writes:

Each of the six poems I chose has very different imagery, allowing for a variety of musical styles. “The Butterfly” opens the cycle with a cantorial-style [clarinet] part, conjuring up images of a fluttering butterfly. The vocal line is set independently, while the [clarinet] hauntingly comments on the text. The poem was written by Pavel Friedmann, who was born on January 7, 1921, deported to Terezin on April 26, 1942, and died in Auschwitz on September 29, 1944. To me, despite the tremendous sadness of the text, the message of the poem is one of undying spirit.

“Yes, That’s the way things are” was written by three children—Kosek, Lowy, and Bachner, whose initials combine to form the name Koleba.  A very ironic text, it is set ironically. Harmonic surprises are wrapped into a quasi-folk-song with a quirky, but descriptive [clarinet] accompaniment.  Miroslav Kosek was born on March 10, 1932 at Horelice in Bohemia and was sent to Terezin on February 15, 1942. He died on October 19, 1944 at Auschwitz. Hanus Lowy was born in Ostrava on June 29, 1931, deported to Terzin on September 30, 1942, and died in Auschwitz on October 4, 1944. There is no information on Bachner.

The author of “Birdsong” is unknown. The poem is preserved in manuscript. Again in this poem, the author is able to rise above the living conditions and focus on the loveliness of life. The voice and [clarinet] are equal partners in this song, and the main stanzas are separated by a series of interludes where the voice and [clarinet] combine in a wordless duo.

The feelings of hope manifested in the earlier songs dies in “The Garden.” It was written by Franta Bass, who was born in Brno on September 4, 1930. He was sent to Terezin on December 2, 1941, and died in Auschwitz on October 28, 1944. The simple tune in the voice is accompanied by a weaving [clarinet] part with subtle rhythmic changes. The melody builds to a climax, then abruptly comes to a close, mirroring the text’s image.

“Man Proposes, God Disposes” was written by the three children who signed their names Koleba. The text is a commentary on what used to be, and what is. The voice is dramatically set over a rhythmic accompaniment in two sections, following the structure of the poem. Vocal glissandi descriptively end each section.

“The Old House,” also written by Franta Bass, ends the cycle. The poem conveys barren images, and the musical setting reflects this. The [clarinet] repeatedly plays one note, like a bell tolling, while the voice lyrically and hauntingly decries the sadness, futility, and desolation of the situation. The cycle draws to a close with the voice alone.

**The Butterfly**

The last, the very last,

So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow.

Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing

against a white stone…

Such, such a yellow

Is carried lightly ‘way up high.

It went away I'm sure because it wished to

kiss the world goodbye.

For seven weeks I've lived in here,

Penned up inside this ghetto

But I have found what I love here.

The dandelions call to me

And the white chestnut candles in the court.

Only I never saw another butterfly.

That butterfly was the last one.

Butterflies don't live in here,

In the ghetto.

**Yes, That’s the Way Things Are**

In Terezin in the so-called park

A queer old granddad sits

Somewhere there in the so-called park

He wears a beard down to his lap

And on his head, a little cap

Somewhere in the so-called park

There in the so-called park.

Hard crusts he crumbles in his gums,

He’s only got one single tooth

My poor old man with working gums

Instead of soft rolls, lentil soup

There in the so-called park.

My poor old grey-beard,

There in the so-called park.

**Birdsong**

He doesn’t know the world at all

Who stays in his nest and doesn’t go out.

He doesn’t know what birds know best,

Nor what I want to sing about.

That the world is full of loveliness

When dewdrops sparkle on the grass

And earth’s a-flood with morning light.

A blackbird sings upon a bush to greet the dawning after night.

Then I know fine it is to live,

Try to open up your heart to beauty,

Go to the woods someday

And weave a wrath of memory there,

Then if the tears obscure your way,

You’ll know how wonderful it is to be alive.

**The Garden**

A little garden,

Fragrant and full of roses

The path is narrow and a little boy walks along it

A little boy

A sweet boy

Like that growing blossom

When the blossom comes to bloom,

The little boy will be no more.

**Man Proposes, God Disposes**

Who was helpless back in Prague, and who was rich before

He’s a poor soul here in Terezin

His body’s bruised and sore.

Who was toughened up before

He’ll survive these days,

But who was used to servants

Will sink into his grave.

**The Old House**

Deserted here, the old house stands in silence, asleep.

The old house used to be so nice, standing there before.

Now it is deserted

Rotting in silence

What a waste of houses

What a waste of hours

Rotting in silence.

**Biographies**

**Denise A. Gainey** is a Backun Artist/Clinician and an Educational Recording Artist for Carl Fischer Music, serves as the Alabama State Chair for the International Clarinet Association, and was recently elected Secretary of the ICA. Gainey is an active clinician and performer throughout the Southeast. Gainey has compiled and edited a collection of clarinet solos, *Solos for Clarinet*, published by Carl Fischer in 2001, and is currently writing a book on master teacher Kalmen Opperman. Gainey’s major teachers include Kalmen Opperman, James Gillespie, Frank Kowalsky, and Fred Ormand. She is a Full Professor at the University of Alabama-Birmingham as well as Coordinator of Music Education and Coordinator of Graduate Studies in Music

Soprano **Kristine Hurst-Wajszczuk** was featured in the title role of the 2015 production *Dido & Aeneas*with Bourbon Baroque, Louisville’s period instrument ensemble, and recently appeared in Cavalli’s *Erismena*with the Amherst Early Music Festival. Other engagements include the Boulder Bach Festival, the Alabama Symphony, the Tuscaloosa Symphony, and three appearances with Opera Birmingham in 2017. She performed for composer Bill Mayer’s 70th birthday celebration concert in Carnegie’s Weill Recital Hall in the role of Madeline in the composer’s *The Eve of St. Agnes.* In 2002, she was a regional finalist in the National Association of Teachers of Singing Artist Award competition; in 2006, she appeared on a Wisconsin Public’s Radio broadcast of *Live from the Chazen Museum.*

An active recitalist dedicated to performing works by living composers, celebrated composer Lori Laitman composed *The Secret Exit* for her and clarinetist Denise Gainey, which will receive its world premiere and recording in 2018. The soprano also appeared with the Birmingham Art Music Alliance (BAMA) in a premiere of songs by Craig Biondi. Additional American premieres include theatre songs by composer Zeke Hecker, songs by Steven Mercurio, and performances and recordings of music by David Hogg. Recitals have taken her throughout the United States and Italy. Upcoming engagements include recitals throughout the southeastern United States and Belgium.

A specialist in the lute songs of John Dowland, her solo CD of Dowland lute songs was released in 2008 by Centaur. She has performed and lectured throughout North America on the socio-political intrigue surrounding the songs. An avid student of several languages, she has won several grants to study at the Middlebury College *German for Singers* program and for private study in Vienna, Austria. In 2010, she was a fellow at the Early Music Vancouver “Compleat Singer Programme.” In 2013-14, she was a Fulbright finalist, and was invited to teach at the Konservatorium Wien Privatuniversität (the Vienna Conservatory, now known as Musik und Kunst, Privatuniversität der Stadt Wien).

Dr. Hurst-Wajszczuk is Associate Professor of Voice and Director of Opera at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. For more information, please visit www.kristinehurst.com.

**Yakov Kasman’s** debut in America in 1997 as Silver Medalist in the Tenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in Fort Worth was the culmination of several competition triumphs and tours in Europe and the Middle East, including top prizes at the 1991 Valentino Bucchi Competition in Rome, the 1991 London World Piano Competition, the 1992 Arthur Rubinstein International Competition in Tel Aviv, and the 1995 International Prokofiev Competition at St. Petersburg.   
  
Since his American debut, he has given concerts in the North and South Americas, Europe, Asia, and Middle East, including recitals in New York City, Boston, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Cleveland, St. Louis, Kansas City, St. Paul, Atlanta, and Birmingham. He has appeared as soloist with more than 70 orchestras including the Buffalo, Oregon, Pacific, Syracuse, Memphis, Miami, Ft. Worth, Nashville, and Alabama symphonies, Athens State Orchestra, the Orchestre de Lille and Orchestre Philharmonique de Montpellier in France, the Singapore Symphony, the National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan, Orquestra Simfonica de Baleares (Spain), Daejeon Philharmonic Orchestra (South Korea) and the Moscow Philharmonia Orchestra.   
  
Dr. Kasman has 15 studio CD recordings on the Calliope label. His two CD set of the recordings of the complete sonatas of Prokofiev was awarded the "Grand Prix de la Nouvelle Academie du Disque" in France in 1996. The International Piano Quarterly magazine recommended his CD of Moussorgsky’s "Pictures at an Exhibition" as one of 14 equally ranked best in a survey of recordings over the past 75 years. His recording of Shostakovich’s Concerto No. 1, and Schnittke’s Concerto for Piano and Strings, released in 2000, received the "Choc du monde de la musique" award in France, is rated highest for artistry and sound quality by Classics Today.com, and referred to as "superlative" in the American Record Guide. His recording of All-Tchaikovsky CD featuring "The Seasons" and Grand Sonata in G-Major was rated 10/10 by ClassicsTodayFrance.com in December 2005.   
  
Dr. Kasman is active as a teacher and adjudicator. He served as a jury member at the Busoni International Piano Competition (Bolzano), International Piano Competition "Grand Prix Animato" in Paris, France, International Piano Competition in Memory of Vladimir Horowitz in Kiev, Ukraine, the Corpus Christi International Competition, "Merzlyakovka invites friends" All-Russian Piano Competition in Moscow, Kalinnikov International Piano Competition in Orel, Russia, International Competition for Young Pianists in S. Prokofiev's Native Land in Donetsk, Ukraine, International Chopin Piano Competition in China and for four years has judged the Rocky Mountain Amateur Piano Competition in Colorado Springs. He has been guest artist and faculty at the Piano Texas International Academy and Festival in Fort Worth, at the Summer Keyboard Institute SKI/Colorado, at Busan International Music Academy in South Korea, and for several years at the International Summer Music Academy in Kiev, Ukraine. Recent engagements include performances with National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, "Kiev Soloists" Chamber Orchestra, Dayton Philharmonic, Louisiana Philharmonic, Buffalo Philharmonic, KBS Orchestra in Seoul, Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony in Canada and a performance with Orchestre Lamoureux at the Theatre de Champs Elysees in Paris, France, duo piano recitals with Aleksandra Kasman in United States and internationally, as well as masterclasses in Japan.   
  
Prior to coming to United States, Kasman was on faculty at the Music College of the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory in his native Russia. Dr. Kasman is actively involved in local, state, and national music teachers organizations as guest artist, teacher and adjudicator. His students are winners of regional, national and international competitions.

**Paul Mosteller** is a native of Philadelphia, and was a scholarship student of Beverley Johnson at The Juilliard School in New York City. He is a recipient of several vocal honors, including awards from the Kosciuszko Foundation and the Metropolitan Opera National Council. He made his European debut at the Handel Festival in Halle, Germany, and was also baritone soloist in concerts in Austria, including a performance of Mahler’s *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* with orchestra conducted by Thomas Fulton of the Metropolitan Opera. He has sung with such diverse organizations as the Concerto Soloists of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Singers, St. Thomas Choir of Men and Boys, Oratorio Singers of Charlotte, Alabama Symphony Orchestra, Birmingham Art Music Alliance, United States Tennis Association, Birmingham City Stages, Opera Birmingham, Alabama Operaworks, and UAB Opera.

Paul Mosteller is Associate Professor of Music at UAB, where he has taught voice since 1988. He is Associate Chair of the Department of Music, Choirmaster and Organist of Birmingham’s Temple Emanu-El, and Organist of Mountain Brook Baptist Church. He earned his D.M.A. at the University of Iowa, M.Mus. at The Juilliard School, and B.S. in Music Education at West Chester University.

**Sarah Nordlund Dennis** grew up in Birmingham, AL, studying violin with Jeffrey Flaniken and Patrick Rafferty. She entered the University of Alabama early and graduated Summa Cum Laude with honors at age nineteen. She went on to study with Paul Kantor at the Aspen Music Festival and Cleveland Institute of Music, earning a Master's Degree in Violin Performance. In 2004, Nordlund Dennis won a position with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, where she performed for two years. After a year performing and teaching in New York City, Nordlund Dennis joined the Alabama Symphony in 2007.

Nordlund Dennis has collaborated with faculty of the University of Alabama and Cleveland Institute of Music including Dr. Bruce Murray and Paul Kantor in chamber concerts. She served on the faculty of Lutheran Summer Music from 2009-2013, where she performed with the Omega Quartet. She is a founding member of Birmingham-based Cahaba River Strings, and she has been part of the Amion Quartet and now the newly formed Birmingham Art Music Alliance Players performing new music in Birmingham. She began violin at age three in a Suzuki program in Rochester, NY, and has gone on to pursue Suzuki teacher training herself.  She has taught with the Suzuki Talent Education Program in Birmingham since 2012. In the last few years, her family has grown to include son Peter and daughter Augusta.

**Chris Steele** held previous positions at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts as Staff Pianist, at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) as both Lecturer of Music Theory and Ear Training, and as Faculty Fellow for the UNCG Grogan College Music Learning Community. At UNCG he studied with Andrew Harley and James Douglass and held assistantships in both accompanying and music theory/ear training. At The Florida State University, he studied with Carolyn Bridger.

An active performer, Steele is a member of the UAB Chamber Trio and has collaborated with members of the Alabama Symphony Orchestra and the Greensboro Symphony Orchestra. As a proponent of new music, he is a member of the Birmingham Art Music Alliance, and has performed at the Society of Composers Region IV Conference and the Mid-South Chapter of the National Association of Composers Concert. He has also presented lecture-recitals on the late compositional style of Gabriel Fauré, including at UNCG’s biennial Focus on Piano Literature Symposium.

Cellist **Laura Usiskin** has performed throughout North America and Europe in such venues as Alice Tully Hall, Palazzo Chigi Saracini (Italy), Weill Hall, Barge Music, and many others. Notable performances include the complete solo suites of J.S. Bach in Los Angeles and Connecticut and concertos performances with the Montgomery Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Iowa, and Yale’s New Music New Haven. With a penchant for music both old and new, she worked as a Baroque cellist through the Yale Baroque Ensemble and has premiered dozens of works as well as commissioned works in her name. In 2011, Usiskin founded the Montgomery Music Project, an El Sistema strings program for students in Montgomery, Alabama. The program has given intensive string instruction to more than 250 low-income children across three counties. Usiskin has held orchestral positions with the New Haven Symphony, Jacksonville Symphony, and currently serves as Principal Cello of Orchestra Iowa. She also performs regularly as a founding member of the New York-based Arté Trio. Usiskin is on faculty at the University of Alabama-Birmingham, Birmingham-Southern College, and STEP Birmingham. She graduated *cum laude* with a Bachelor of Arts in Neuroscience and Behavior from Columbia University, Master of Music from The Juilliard School, and Doctor of Musical Arts from the Yale School of Music, where she was awarded the Aldo Parisot Prize.