**Chamber Music @ AEIVA**

**Thursday November 17, 2016**

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

from *Four Walt Whitman Songs* Text: Walt Whitman (1819-1892) Music: Kurt Weill (1900-1950)

O Captain! My Captain!

Beat! Beat! Drums

Dirge for Two Veterans

Patrick Evans, baritone

Chris Steele, piano

Trio No. 2 in E minor, Op. 67 Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

I. Andante

II. Allegro con brio

III. Largo

IV. Allegretto

Pei-Ju Wu, violin

Laura Usiskin, cello

Yakov Kasman, piano

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

**Program notes**

Although neither Whitman’s poetry nor Weill’s music have much to do with Azaceta’s neo-expressionism stylistically, to paraphrase the British WW I poet and soldier Wilfred Owen, “[Their] subject is war, and the pity of war.”

Whitman, the gay American 19th-Century poet, chronicled the horrors of the American Civil War as a journalist. Hearing that his younger brother George was listed among the wounded at the Battle of Fredricksburg, Whitman left Brooklyn to find and attend to him. He had only a slight wound, but this experience led Whitman to become a near daily volunteer, tending to the wounded, visiting them in hospitals, and sitting at the bedsides of the dying.

Weill, a German Jewish composer who fled Germany in 1933, was acclaimed for his works of music theatre, including *The Threepenny Opera, The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahaggony, and Lady in the Dark,* as well as the ballet *The Seven Deadly Sins,* when he confided in Ira Gershwin that he would like to return to composing Lieder (or Art Songs) in early 1941. He did not begin that project in earnest until after the bombing of Pear Harbor in December of that year, when he turned to an edition of Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* that had been given to him some years earlier.

He set the three poems we present tonight for baritone and piano, returning to the project in 1947 after his only trip back to Europe to add a fourth -“Come Up from the Fields, Father,” setting it for the tenor voice. The songs were recorded, with Weill’s participation, adjusting the baritone keys upward, by tenor William Horne and pianist Adam Garner. There is no evidence, however, of a live public performance in Weill’s lifetime.

I.

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,

The ship has weather’d every rack, the prize we sought is won,

The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,

While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;

                         But O heart! heart! heart!

                            O the bleeding drops of red,

                               Where on the deck my Captain lies,

                                  Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;

Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,

For you bouquets and ribbon’d wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding,

For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;

                         Here Captain! dear father!

                            This arm beneath your head!

                               It is some dream that on the deck,

                                 You’ve fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,

My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,

The ship is anchor’d safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,

From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;

                         Exult O shores, and ring O bells!

                            But I with mournful tread,

                               Walk the deck my Captain lies,

                                  Fallen cold and dead.

II.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!

Through the windows—through doors—burst like a ruthless force,

Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,

Into the school where the scholar is studying,

Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he have now with his bride,

Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field or gathering his grain,

So fierce you whirr and pound you drums—so shrill you bugles blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!

Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels in the streets;

Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses? no sleepers must sleep in those beds,

No bargainers’ bargains by day—no brokers or speculators—would they continue?

Would the talkers be talking? would the singer attempt to sing?

Would the lawyer rise in the court to state his case before the judge?

Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—you bugles wilder blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!

Make no parley—stop for no expostulation,

Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer,

Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,

Let not the child’s voice be heard, nor the mother’s entreaties,

Make even the trestles to shake the dead where they lie awaiting the hearses,

So strong you thump O terrible drums—so loud you bugles blow.

III.

The last sunbeam

Lightly falls from the finish'd Sabbath,

On the pavement here, and there beyond it is looking,

Down a new-made double grave.

LO, the moon ascending,

Up from the east the silvery round moon,

Beautiful over the house-tops, ghastly, phantom moon,

Immense and silent moon.

I see a sad procession,

And I hear the sound of coming full-key'd bugles,

All the channels of the city streets they're flooding,

As with voices and with tears.

I hear the great drums pounding,

And the small drums steady whirring,

And every blow of the great convulsive drums,

Strikes me through and through.

For the son is brought with the father,

(In the foremost ranks of the fierce assault they fell,

Two veterans son and father dropt together,

And the double grave awaits them.)

Now nearer blow the bugles,

And the drums strike more convulsive,

And the daylight o'er the pavement quite has faded,

And the strong dead-march enwraps me.

In the eastern sky up-buoying,

The sorrowful vast phantom moves illumin'd,

('Tis some mother's large transparent face,

In heaven brighter growing.)

O strong dead-march you please me!

O moon immense with your silvery face you soothe me!

O my soldiers twain! O my veterans passing to burial!

What I have I also give you.

The moon gives you light,

And the bugles and the drums give you music,

And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,

My heart gives you love.

By World War Two, Dmitri Shostakovich had become one of the most eminent, revered composers in the Soviet Union. Maintaining this reputation was no small feat; he had to tread lightly to keep in the good graces of dictator Joseph Stalin while attempting to express his own musical voice. He wrote his Piano Trio No. 2 in 1944 in memory of colleague and friend Ivan Sollertinsky who had recently passed away. The work has sections of profound grief and pathos, notably in the opening of the first movement and the mournful third movement. It is in the last movement where Shostakovich evinces the raging war around him, with a Jewish-sounding dance theme first presented in the piano and later repeated in the strings. While Shostakovich would have not said so publically for fear of condemnation, one can surmise that the movement is a tribute to and commentary on the immense suffering experienced by the Jewish people during the horrible war.

**Biographies**

**Patrick Evans** is a native of Birmingham who returned home after 27 years away to join the UAB Department of Music Faculty as Professor and Chair in July of 2015. He was Associate Professor in the Practice of Sacred Music at the Yale University Institute of Sacred Music and was Director of Music for the daily ecumenical worship in Marquand Chapel at Yale Divinity School. He was chair of the voice area and director of the opera program at the University of Delaware, where he was a tenured Associate Professor from 1994-2004. As an administrator, he served as Director of Admission for the School of Music at DePauw University, and as Interim Executive Director for More Light Presbyterians, a national non-profit working for justice for LGBTQ people in the Presbyterian Church (USA).  
  
As a baritone, Dr. Evans has performed in opera, oratorio, and recital performances throughout the United States and abroad, including the Tanglewood Festival, Cleveland Art Song Festival, and the Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo, Japan.  
  
In demand as a lecturer, practitioner, and clinician in the field of sacred music, he is Visiting Artist at Broadway Presbyterian Church in New York City, a post he has held since 2001. He has served as Artist-in-Residence at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, and is a member of the North American Academy of Liturgy.

**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.

**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 of Dvoràk and Takemitsu with the Montgomery Symphony Orchestra. 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 resides in Birmingham, where she is Adjunct Professor at the University of Alabama-Birmingham and Birmingham-Southern College. Usiskin 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.

Violinist **Pei-Ju Wu**, a native of Taipei, Taiwan, has established a performance career as an active chamber and orchestral musician. She joined the first violin section of the Alabama Symphony Orchestra in 2013 and is a member of the Des Moines Metro Opera. Prior to moving to Birmingham, Pei-Ju was a member of the San Antonio Symphony, and performed frequently with the Houston Grand Opera, Fort Worth Symphony and Dallas Chamber Symphony. She was the former concertmaster of the Woodlands Symphony and Opera in the Heights. Interested in many genres of music, Pei-Ju toured with the Star Wars in Concert orchestra during its 2010 North America tour and performed with Peter Gabriel's New Blood North America tour.

In 2010, Pei-Ju co-founded Quartus Chamber Players, a Houston-based chamber music ensemble that focused on collaborating with local artists and educational outreach through music. During its 4-year operation, Quartus reached over 2,000 students with its educational program and brought numerous chamber music concerts of varied ensemble settings to the audience of Houston. She was a member of the Hall Ensemble while living in Fort Worth, Texas, and performed frequently with other Texas chamber music groups, such as Aperio, Music of the Americas, Virtuoso String Quartet, Mount Vernon Music and Ensemble 75.

Pei-Ju studied with Kathleen Winkler, Roman Totenberg, Shirley Givens and Rodney Friend, and received her degrees from Boston University and Rice University. She was an adjunct instructor at the Texas Wesleyan University and currently teaches at STEP Birmingham in Birmingham, Alabama.