



Advance Program Notes

Jenny Scheinman

Kannapolis: A Moving Portrait

Friday, October 27, 2017, 7:30 PM

These Advance Program Notes are provided online for our patrons who like to read about performances ahead of time. Printed programs will be provided to patrons at the performances. Programs are subject to change.

Kannapolis: A Moving Portrait

Music by **Jenny Scheinman**

Film by **Finn Taylor**

All footage shot by **H. Lee Waters** between 1936-1942

Kannapolis: A Moving Portrait was commissioned by Duke Performances at Duke University. The piece premiered at Duke's Reynolds Industries Theater on Friday, March 20, 2015.

The Musicians

Jenny Scheinman, composer, arranger, violin, and vocals

Robbie Fulks, guitar, banjo, and vocals

Robbie Gjersoe, resonator guitar, baritone electric guitar, and vocals

The Filmmakers

Finn Taylor, film director

Rick LeCompte, film editor

Trevor Jolly, sound designer

Representation: **Sue Bernstein**, Bernstein Artists

Management: **Elizabeth Penta**, Emcee Artist Management

The Songs in Order of Appearance

Esmé Ethereal
Thirteen Days
Broken Pipeline
City of Looms
Bark, George
The Littlest Prisoner
I'll Trade You Money for Wine
Delinquent Bill

Just a Lie
Up on Shenanigan
Sacrifice
Esmé
Bit of Honey
The Mill
Deck Saw
While It's Dark in Here
Thirteen Days

All music and lyrics by Jenny Scheinman except *I'll Trade You Money for Wine* (Robbie Fulks), *Just a Lie* (Si Kahn), and *The Mill* (Joe Glaser/Beth Weil).

This performance is supported in part by a gift from Don and Libby Drapeau.

About Kannapolis: A Moving Portrait

H. Lee Waters (1902-1997) was a journeyman portrait photographer in Lexington, North Carolina, whose business fell on hard times during the Great Depression. He came up with another plan to make a living: make regular people into movie stars! He got hold of a movie camera and traveled to towns throughout the Piedmont region. He would film as many people as possible in public places, then return several weeks later to show the footage in the towns' movie theatres. People flocked to see themselves on the silver screen.

Waters had several regular setups: people streaming out of workplaces, children running toward the camera, playground games, dancing, and close portraits. He also used several simple camera tricks such as fast and slow motion, reverse motion, and split screen to enliven the material. Of the process, Waters explained, "In the year 1936 when I started making *Movies of Local People* we were in the midst of the depression. Regular people didn't have a salary to justify spending money on entertainment, but it came to my mind that they would like to see themselves on the screen like movie stars out of Hollywood." His hare-brained venture was successful, and between 1936 and 1942 he worked tirelessly to create 118 movies, compiling one of the most comprehensive documents that we have of American life at that time.

In December 2009 Aaron Greenwald, executive director of Duke Performances, sent me a DVD containing a few of Waters' films (archived at the Rubenstein Library, Duke University) and proposed that I put together a performance based on his work. The first film I watched was shot in Kannapolis, North Carolina, on a clear day in the fall of 1941, a few months before the U.S. entered WWII. There was much about the footage that was unfamiliar to me—the era, the region, the look of the world before the age of cellphones—but there was a palpable joy and strength in the film that reached out from the past and grabbed me. It was like seeing ghosts in perfect focus.

I wrote and collected over three hours of music for the film, including fiddle tunes, narrative songs, labor songs, and lyrics. With the guidance of director Finn Taylor, I then narrowed that down to only the material that clicked with the footage and underscored main themes—labor, community, dancing, film, industry, and childhood. Then Taylor and editor Rick LeCompte combed through Waters' catalog and re-edited the strongest material into an hour-long film, using my music as the foundation.

Taylor writes, "Waters' method was to record myriad moments throughout the community. The sum of these gives a panorama of a town at a specific time in history. In our re-edited treatment, we slow shots down to let the viewer linger on a furtive glance. We also repeat certain faces, revisit sequences, and juxtapose them against contrasting images."

To the virgin ear, Kannapolis evokes some sort of iconic city, perhaps the home of a forgotten superhero or the cradle of some parallel civilization. It was called the "City of Looms," home to Cannon Mills, once the largest employer of textile workers in the country. Its workers were laid off in 2003—the biggest layoff in North Carolina history—and its factory buildings were demolished in 2006. As we wove together the various elements of the project—Waters' footage with my music, the past with the present, footage from numerous sources of varying types and quality, black and white people, the southeast with my northwest—we used the image of the loom as the organizing principle.

These are America's home movies. They contain a clue to our nature, an imprint of our ancestry. They were shot before Americans had sophisticated understanding of film, and capture truthfulness that one is hard-pressed to find in this day and age, now that we are immersed in a world of social media, video, and photography. These people can dance. Girls catapult each other off seesaws and teenage boys hang on each others' arms. Toothless men play resonator guitars on street corners, and toddlers push strollers through empty fields. They remind us of our resilience and of our immense capacity for joy even in the hardest of times.

—Jenny Scheinman

About the Musicians

JENNY SCHEINMAN

Jenny Scheinman is a violinist, fiddler, singer, and composer. She grew up on a homestead in Northern California, studied at Oberlin Conservatory, graduated with a degree in English literature from UC Berkeley, and has been performing since she was a teenager. She has worked extensively with Bill Frisell, Bruce Cockburn, Ani DiFranco, Norah Jones, Madeleine Peyroux, Nels Cline, Rodney Crowell, Myra Melford, Robbie Fulks, and Mark Ribot, and has also garnered numerous high-profile arranging credits with Lucinda Williams, Simone Dinnerstein and Tift Merritt, Bono, Lou Reed, and Sean Lennon. She has taken the #1 Rising Star Violinist title in the *Downbeat* Magazine Critics Poll and has been listed as one of their Top 10 Overall Violinists for over a decade. In the spring of 2014 Sony Masterworks released *The Littlest Prisoner*, her eighth solo album, featuring 10 original songs with and without words and the magnificent playing of guitarist Bill Frisell and drummer Brian Blade.

ROBBIE FULKS

Robbie Fulks is a country (liberally defined) singer, writer, and musician who has released 12 records on major and independent labels. Radio appearances include NPR's *Fresh Air*, *Mountain Stage*, and *World Cafe*; PRI's *A Prairie Home Companion*; and WSM's *Grand Ole Opry*. TV credits include *Austin City Limits*, the *Today Show*, *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, *Last Call With Carson Daly*, and *30 Rock*. His writings on music and life have appeared in *GQ*, *Blender*, the *Chicago Reader*, and two of Da Capo's annual Best Music Writing series. Artists he has produced include George Jones, Mavis Staples, Dallas Wayne, and (forthcoming) Anat Cohen. His songs have been recorded by Sam Bush, Kelly Hogan, Andrew Bird, Rosie Flores, Colleen McHugh, Silkworm, John Cowan, Mollie O'Brien, and Old 97s. As an instrumentalist, he has accompanied Liz Carroll, Dr. John, Linda Gail Lewis, Otis Clay, Michael Shannon, and even the great Jenny Scheinman.

ROBBIE GJERSOE

Robbie Gjersoe is a multi-instrumentalist, composer, songwriter, and occasional engineer and producer who has worked on a variety of musical projects wide-ranging in style and content for the last 30 years. He plays guitar, bottleneck slide, resonator, dobro, baritone ukulele, mandolin, nylon string, cavaquinho, viole, 12-string, lap steel, pedal steel, and bass. With Screen Door Music, which he co-created, he has composed and performed soundtracks for many films, including *Grand Champion*, *Robbing Peter*, and *Vanishing of the Bees*. His music was used in the movie *The Hot Flashes* and the TV show *The Mentalist*.

About the Filmmakers

FINN TAYLOR

All three of the feature films Finn Taylor wrote and directed premiered and were sold to distributors at the world-renowned Sundance Film Festival. *Variety*, in its 50th Anniversary edition, selected Taylor for its prestigious list of "The Top 20 Creatives to Watch." Taylor wrote and directed *The Darwin Awards*, starring Winona Ryder and Joseph Fiennes; *Cherish*, starring Robin Tunney and Tim Blake Nelson, which was selected for the Dramatic competition in the 2002 Sundance Film Festival and bought and distributed by Fineline Features and Canal Plus; and *Dream With the Fishes*, starring David Arquette, Brad Hunt, Kathryn Erbe, and Cathy Moriarity, which was selected for American Spectrum in the 1997 Sundance Film Festival and bought and distributed by Sony Picture Classics and Lakeshore Entertainment. Taylor co-wrote *Pontiac Moon*, produced by Paramount Pictures in 1994, starring Ted Danson and Mary Steenburgen. Taylor was on the funding committee for the Kenneth Rainin Foundation in 2012, funding films such as *Fruitvale Station*.

RICK LECOMPTE

Editor Rick LeCompte works professionally in the San Francisco Bay area and in Los Angeles. He worked on NBC's documentary miniseries *Ocean Quest*, produced by Guber/Peters and directed by Al Giddings. Independent feature films include *Dream with the Fishes*, *Haiku Tunnel*, *Cherish*, and *The Darwin Awards*, all premiered at the Sundance Film Festival before playing theatrically worldwide. The feature length documentary *The Loss of Nameless Things* was an official selection at AFI Silverdocs Festival and was broadcast by PBS on Independent Lens. The documentary *This Dust of Words* was broadcast on PBS' *Truly California* series. His latest feature, *Sold*, is based on the novel by Patricia McCormick.

TREVOR JOLLY

Trevor Jolly is a motion picture sound designer, sound supervisor, and film editor. He worked on major feature films, including the Academy Award-winning *American Beauty* and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. A frequent award-winner, including MPSE awards and numerous MPSE nominations, Jolly has also been recognized with an Emmy nomination for his sound supervision on the TV series *Lost*. Select film credits include sound supervisor for *Youth in Revolt* (Miguel Arteta/Weinstein Productions), *Resurrecting the Champ* (Rod Lurie/Phoenix Productions); *Pathfinder* (Marcus Nispel/21st Century Fox); *Hairy Tale* (Harry Basil/Warner Bros-Franchise); *The Whole Ten Yards* (Howard Deutch/Warner Bros-Franchise); *Halloween: Resurrection* (Rick Rosenthal/Miramax-Dimension Films); and *Highlander: Endgame* (Doug T. Aarniokoski/ Miramax-Dimension). He was also sound editor for *Monster's Ball* (Marc Forster/Lions Gate Films) and *E.T. the Extra Terrestrial* (Steven Spielberg/Amblin Entertainment).

Credits

Kannapolis: A Moving Portrait was commissioned and developed by Duke Performances and is the first in a series of works entitled *From the Archives*. Waters' archive is provided by the Archive of Documentary Arts at Duke University's David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Made possible, in part, with an award from the National Endowment for the Arts; a grant from the Mary Duke Biddle Foundation; a grant from New Music USA; a Visiting Artist Grant from the Council for the Arts, Office of the Provost, Duke University; support from the Archive of Documentary Arts at the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Duke University; and a gift from Neil D. Karbank.

Special thanks to the family of H. Lee Waters for providing access to his spectacular films.

Engagement Events

Thursday, October 26, 2017

CLASS VISIT: INTRODUCTION TO APPALACHIAN STUDIES

During her visit to Blacksburg, Jenny Scheinman participated in a dialogue with students in an Introduction to Appalachian Studies class. The visit was hosted by Jordan Laney, Ph.D. candidate in the Alliance for Social, Political, Ethical, and Cultural Thought (ASPECT) and faculty instructor in the Department of Religion and Culture.

Friday, October 27, 2017

LOBBY DISPLAY: LIFE IN BLACKSBURG, 1930-1949

What did everyday life look like in Blacksburg in the 1930s and '40s? Visitors had the opportunity to experience photographs and artifacts from the period. Presented in partnership with the Blacksburg Museum & Cultural Foundation and Virginia Tech Libraries Special Collections

Special thanks to Rhonda Morgan; Erika Meitner; Marc Brodsky; Blacksburg Museum and Cultural Foundation; Special Collections, University Libraries; Anthony Wright de Hernandez; Hilary Harrison; Jordan Laney; and Emily Satterwhite

For Virginia Tech Students

The Division of Student Affairs invites you to engage in the Aspirations for Student Learning to do more, be more, and aspire to be your best self.

Aspirations for Student Learning

Commit to unwavering **CURIOSITY**

Pursue **SELF-UNDERSTANDING** and **INTEGRITY**

Practice **CIVILITY**

Prepare for a life of **COURAGEOUS LEADERSHIP**

Embrace **UT PROSIM** (That I May Serve) as a way of life

One way to work toward these aspirational goals is to engage in Keystone Happenings. Keystone Happenings highlight the Aspirations for Student Learning, provide opportunities for learning, and challenge students to reflect. Search "keystone" on GobblerConnect at gobblerconnect.vt.edu/events to discover these opportunities.

Keystone Happening Reflections for Kannapolis: A Moving Portrait

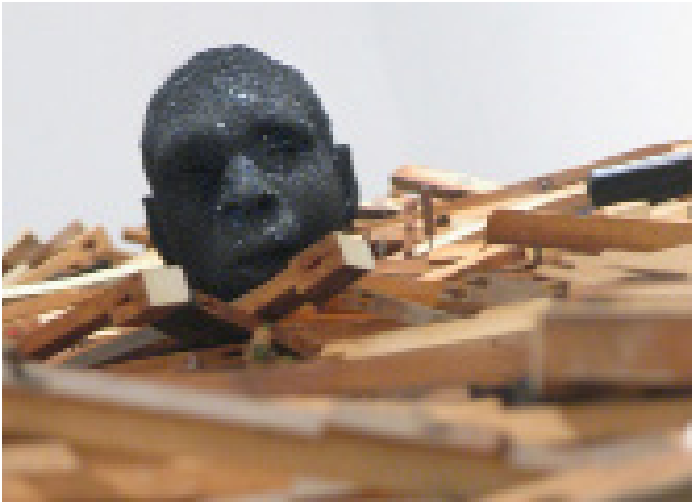
How does *Kannapolis: A Moving Portrait* illustrate community? What does the footage and music reveal about the artists' interests in community life?

For more resources for educators, students, and lifelong learners to help you dig deeper and engage with this performance and our other season performances, view our Learning Guide at artscenter.vt.edu/experiences.

Additional Resources

Learn more about present-day achievements in Appalachian communities at Save Our Towns, a monthly internet video series offered by Virginia Tech's Outreach and International Affairs to guide and inspire leaders throughout Appalachia who are working hard to create prosperity in their towns. For more information, please visit saveourtowns.outreach.vt.edu.

In the Galleries



RADCLIFFE BAILEY

September 14-December 9, 2017

Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery and Sherwood Payne Quillen '71 Reception Gallery

Painter, sculptor, and mixed media artist Radcliffe Bailey (American, based in Atlanta, Georgia) layers found objects, materials, and potent imagery to explore connections between past and present, personal experience and collective memory. In this installation, Bailey references historical and ancestral communities and migrations, including enslaved African peoples escaping through Virginia's Great Dismal Swamp, while examining concepts of identity race, culture, and the mnemonic power of objects.

For more information on this artist, please visit jackshainman.com/artists.

GALLERY HOURS

Monday-Friday, 10 AM-5:30 PM

Saturday, 10 AM-4 PM

To arrange a group tour or class visit, please contact Meggin Hicklin, exhibitions program manager, at megh79@vt.edu or 540-213-0840.

Pictured:

Windward Coast—West Coast Slave Trade, 2009-2011 (detail)

Piano keys, plaster bust, and glitter

Shown here in black and white

Dimensions variable

©Radcliffe Bailey

Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York