



74TH SEASON OF CONCERTS

MAY 22, 2016 • NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART



PROGRAM

4:30 • East Building Auditorium

Kannapolis: A Moving Portrait

Music by Jenny Scheinman

Film by Finn Taylor

All footage shot by H. Lee Waters between 1936 and 1942

The Musicians

Jenny Scheinman, composer, arranger, violin, vocals

Robbie Fulks, guitar, banjo, vocals

Robbie Gjersoe, resonator guitar, baritone electric guitar, vocals

The Filmmakers

Finn Taylor, film director

Rick LeCompte, film editor

Trevor Jolly, sound designer

Songs

"Esme 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"

"Esme"

"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)

The Musicians

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 the University of California, 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, Tift Merritt, Bono, Lou Reed, and Sean Lennon. She has taken the Rising Star Violinist title in the *Downbeat Magazine* Critics Poll and has been listed as one of their Top Ten Overall Violinists for more than a decade. In the spring of 2014, Sony Masterworks released *The Littlest Prisoner*, her eighth solo album, featuring ten original songs with and without words and the magnificent playing of guitarist Bill Frisell and drummer Brian Blade.

Robbie Fulks is a country (liberally defined) singer, writer, and musician who has released twelve 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 DaCapo'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 Jenny Scheinman.

Robbie Gjersoe is a multi-instrumentalist, composer, songwriter, and occasional engineer and producer who has worked on a variety of musical projects for the last thirty years. He plays guitar, bottleneck slide, resonator, dobro, baritone ukulele, mandolin, nylon string, cavaquinho, viole, twelve-string, lap steel, pedal steel, and bass. With Screen Door Music, which he cocreated, 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*.

The Filmmakers

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

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. His work on independent feature films includes *Dream with the Fishes*, *Haiku Tunnel*, *Cherish*, and *The Darwin Awards*, all of which 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 the PBS series *Truly California*. His latest feature, *Sold*, is based on the novel by Patricia McCormick.

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 Motion Picture Sound Editors (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), *Highlander: Endgame* (Doug T. Aarniokoski/Miramax — Dimension). He was also sound editor for *Monster’s Ball* (Marc Forster/Lionsgate Films) and *E.T. The Extra Terrestrial* (Steven Spielberg/Amblin Entertainment).

Program Notes

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 various towns’ movie theaters. 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 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 hair-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 of 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 United States entered World War II. 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 more than 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 reedited 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 reedited 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 other's 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.

Program notes provided by Jenny Scheinman

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.

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

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