

Liner Notes & the Translation to “Flokken og skuggen” (The Flock and the Shadow)

Bill Stevens Connections

The third year of my post retirement five-year plan involved the creation of a large, multi-movement suite that would allow each composition to stand alone, but collectively work as an extended sequential statement incorporating three smaller suites or movements within this framework. This became “The Connections Suite”.

As I thought about the three smaller suites or movements I began by looking for the connections of my music with other artistic disciplines. The first became a three movement Dance Suite (Music for Dance in Three Movements), followed by a three movement suite based on three paintings by the Norwegian artist, AK Dolven (Please Return) and in conclusion, I planned a five movement spoken word suite to eight poems selected from the 2003 collection, “Flokken og skuggen” (The Flock and the Shadow) by the Norwegian poet Eldrid Lunden.

I continued to incorporate in my music the devices that have been a part of my compositional identity for the last three plus decades most recently exemplified by my last album lema sabachthani in 2012; however now incorporating a more minimalist approach to Jazz modal harmony, focusing more on melody and the use of reduction in my compositional process leading to a continued study and application of folk melodies, harmonic grips and individual and group improvisational concepts. I also drew upon a study of European Jazz and the ECM sound to move my music in a new direction.

Music for Dance in Three Movements

In thinking through the Music for Dance, I had the idea of using this piece beyond the parameters of the Connections Suite. I wanted to use this as a gift to my wife, Laura, for our 25th wedding anniversary that we would be celebrating on June 9, 2018. Aside from composing the music, I knew that I would need a great deal of help from friends and colleagues if I were ever able to make this into a reality. The three compositions making up the Music for Dance are called Eternal, for that search we all undertake in trying to find a life partner or soul mate. Love Dance brings to mind that “I found someone” moment and Two as One speaks to the connection you have with that special someone where if it’s right you can maintain your own identity while becoming stronger together as you go through life.

Once the music was ready, I arranged the three movements into a connected suite keeping it at a 12 minute maximum for the choreography, although the compositions presented here are as singular pieces. I was fortunate to have Hyuna Park on piano, Luca Rosenfeld, upright bass and Gary Fogel, drums to record the piece at Douglass Recording in Brooklyn, NY with my long time collaborator, engineer Peter Karl. Next, I reached out to Andre Vasquez, the Production Manager at the Frank Sinatra

School of the Arts to see if there was a possibility of producing the work with students from the schools Dance, Film and Theatre Management departments. I commissioned Luba Ash to do the choreography and Dexter Buell to direct the production including the filming and editing and on December 9, 2017 the filming took place on the stage of the Tony Bennett Concert Hall. It was at this point that I knew it was about to become a reality and I am forever thankful for the efforts of so many. Not only did I have my anniversary gift for Laura, but I also had the first three compositions recorded for this new project.

Please Return - Three Compositions to the Works of AK Dolven

For the next suite, I knew that I wanted to once again create music to a series of artworks. Two occurrences took place back to back to lead me to discover the Norwegian artist AK Dolven. I was fortunate to have received an invitation to speak at a conference at the Norwegian Academy of Music in 2017. In preparing for this trip I began to research as much as possible on Oslo, as well as Norwegian food, the arts and history. I discovered AK Dolven through a retrospective book entitled, "Please Return", while coincidentally at this time, my brother-in-law, Brainard Carey, had just completed an interview with Ms. Dolven from her home in Lofoten, Norway that aired on Yale Public radio in New Haven, CT. In speaking with Brainard and in researching a historical perspective of her work, it became clear to me that this is where I would begin.

As the 2016 election in the United States became front and center in all our lives and simply inescapable, the divisiveness of the campaign also became more prominent; however in looking at examples of Ms. Dolven's works I came across three paintings that gave me hope. The first being, "how to reach every corner", spoke to me on how the world is stronger when we reach out to one another, when we bring everyone together instead of creating divisions of us verses them. The second, "don't worry I'll lift the sky" spoke to my belief that as divided a country as the United States is at this moment, sanity would prevail in the election process which, I'm sorry to say actually failed to materialize. But out of every event, there can be feelings of hope as it is now on our shoulders, the people, in resistance, to push forward for peace and unity. Finally in the painting, "teenagers lifting the sky" I had a belief that eventually, in time, the next generation would have the foresight to correct my generation's mistakes and take us into a better future. Sadly, it is often horrific events that spark a movement and in the wake of the recent shooting at a Florida high school this prediction, this hope that it will be teenagers who will lead the way toward real change, lifting the sky, one step at a time.

Flokken og skuggen (The Flock and the Shadow) - the Poetry of Eldrid Lunden

As the concept of the Connections project began to take shape and through my research prior to my trip to Norway I was led to the discovery of the Norwegian poet Eldrid Lunden. I found a copy of her poetry through her 2003 book, "Flokken og

skuggen". While written in Norwegian, I had to find translations of the text in order to read and develop a comprehension of her writing. With the English translations, a series of the poems began to stand out to me, specifically as a New Yorker who had been through the horror of September 11th. Like many New Yorkers, I have had a difficult time coming to grips with my own feelings from that day. It wasn't until the summer of 2017 that I could even make my way to the 9/11 Memorial in Lower Manhattan to see the buildings imprint in the form of waterfalls. There was still no way I was able to go inside to see the exhibits.

Unlike many artists, I was not able to put into music and sound my feelings from that day. Instead at the time, I did write a composition that appears on my album, Full Circle from 2005 called, The Day After. On the day following the attacks, I saw my fellow New Yorkers in shock, but not broken. There was a resolve and a strength as we all realized that we were not alone in this and together, we would move forward.

In reading the poems of "Flokken og skuggen", I came across a series of eight poems that described, to me, the acts of 9/11, as well as the passage of time that really doesn't heal the wounds of that horrific day. But I also felt from her writing that the world, the universe was watching us in how we responded and this is where we failed leaving an emptiness that is ever present in the fact that the world changed that day, and in its aftermath, for all of us.

Eldrid Lunden uses the images of woods, a man and his dogs, bare trees and small animals to encapsulate a city numb, shocked and in despair, yet strong and vibrant at the same time. That morning, my students looking out from their classroom window towards the Hudson River noticed something, "turning slowly following its thought". She, as we all did, felt that, "This is out of place" and "instinctively look for something lush and green to fix my gaze upon". The series I chose moves through time - "November", there is more movement in the City now in the form of "the small animal suddenly scrambling to the top among the branches", but as we run through our daily rituals, something is amiss not just in New York, but in the world and it is difficult to distinguish the passing of time, as "Winter may set in". And yet, with so much death, life continues to start anew ("Spring light through the branches"). All around us, there is an understanding as time moves on that we are being watched ("The universe is watching us in great movement in their anonymity."). Based on our own actions, there is no approval or disapproval, only silence. Ultimately, we are left feeling empty and isolated. We know that this feeling will stay with us until we are willing and able to rise above our base fears and reach out with arms wide open to build bridges of peace and trust with mankind instead of looking to build walls.

* Please note that the titles attached to the five compositions of this suite are mine and not that of Ms. Lunden.

The Musicians

Throughout this five year plan, I have made the investment to look for specific musicians – their sound – to be the voices in my music. It has afforded me the opportunity to play with many diverse players all the while attempting to add my own voice to the mix. For the Connections Suite, there was a wide range of musical styles from beginning to end. The Dance suite was written for an acoustic quartet and had two open, ECM style compositions and a Jazz waltz. Please Return, based on the paintings of AK Dolven was written for a quintet adding an alto sax, electric bass and along with the piano, a Fender Rhodes keyboard. The compositions were straight 8th/rock in feel with another open style ECM tune. The Lunden suite added a guitarist with many of the compositions having a heavier rock feel.

For the Dance suite, I was fortunate to have Hyuna Park on piano, Luca Rosenfeld on upright bass and on drums, Gary Fogel. They are masters of Jazz modal harmony, swinging in a loose, ECM style time feel and in establishing a mood or setting based on the harmony and melodic content. They are master storytellers.

For the remainder of the album I looked for musicians who were strong at setting and maintaining a groove. I looked for some younger players to bring their energy and 21st century sensibilities to the music. It was especially important to find the right drummer and my search was an easy one, Misia Vessio. Misia can play with strength when needed, but is also a deep listener allowing her to play in a melodically subtle context. Luca Rosenfeld returns to play both upright and electric bass on Please Return while Evan Lawrence was tabbed to play electric bass on the Lunden suite. Both players bring a strong sound concept, great time feel and the ability to listen and add what the music is asking for, not trying to force anything into the composition. To round out the rhythm section I reached out to two established players. Both bring a strong sense of history, which brought context to my compositions, a sort of bridging of the past with the present moment. Harry Miller played keyboards on both the Dolven and Lunden suites. Harry is a master who allows the music to guide him, never overplaying, just inserting what is absolutely needed in that moment. The Lunden suite additionally called for a guitarist with a strong sense of history and knowledge of '60's Rock and '70's Jazz/Fusion, as well as the ability to meld these worlds with a Jazz sensibility, but also to abandon these elements allowing for a kind of freedom to occur as well and Sean Moran filled the bill to perfection.

I believed that the music was asking for the voice of an alto sax as the second horn and the player I reached out to was Jordan Young. Jordan has a beautiful sound and is a player who takes his time, developing his ideas from a simmer to a boil. There was one more color within the Lunden suite I felt that the music, in certain areas, was asking for. This color was a voice to add to the soundscapes to create an ethereal setting within the compositions. I looked to Rosdeli Marte to be that voice and in

those areas, as I knew she would, she brought in a tonal palette in much the same way as an artist works the canvas.

The final piece of the puzzle was to now find someone who would be able to recite the spoken word narration of the Lunden poems. I felt strongly that the narration of the poetry had to be in the original Norwegian for it to have its greatest impact. I went to the Norwegian Seamen's Church in New York City to see if they might be able to assist me in finding a female voice to recite the poetry. It was there that I met Anja-Christin Nielsen, a trumpet player herself from Norway. We sat that afternoon while I explained the concept of the project. Her voice had the quality that I was seeking and I was incredibly fortunate to have her agree to join the project to do the spoken word narration of the poetry.

Around 2001/2002, I met sound engineer Peter Karl through a recording session set up by Gary Fogel to perform his complex, beautiful compositions. Peter simply set a relaxed environment in the studio in which to play all the while taking care of the business of recording in a professional manner. It meant that we were able to just focus on the music and nothing else while he captured the sound. What more can you ask for, right? In 2003, I recorded my first New York based album with Peter, *Dedication*, as well as my two follow up cd's, *Full Circle* (2005) and *lema sabachthani* (2012) along with numerous other sessions with Gary, Standard Time, assorted big bands and small groups. I am thrilled that once again, Peter Karl is the engineer on my latest venture, *Connections*.

Wabi Sabi

For those that know my story and for those who may not, in February 2005 I inexplicably woke that day not feeling the left side of my face. Unable to form an embouchure to play the trumpet I continued to attempt to work through it over the next several months. I found that I could not play the melody of a 32 bar standard tune. Finding little if no improvement I sought out assistance from a master teacher, Laurie Frink. Over the next several years to her untimely and unexpected death, she was able to supply me with the tools to regain some of what I had lost. Over a decade later, although somewhat improved, I still have no way of knowing if I will be able to produce a sound from one moment to the next. Psychologically, this has been difficult to deal with and needless to say has sapped much of my confidence as a player.

And then I found Wabi Sabi. Wabi Sabi is a Japanese aesthetic. Wabi Sabi is a beauty of things imperfect, impermanent and incomplete. It is a beauty of things modest and humble, of things unconventional. In my study of Wabi Sabi, I found this to be a definition of my sound, a sort of fragile beauty. It is also an acceptance, as I transfer the teachings into musical practice, an acceptance of the moment, being right here, right now. Living in the present with no expectations. This state of mind has led me to embrace my sound and my ability to play at that given moment through a state of spirituality and emotional well being. I no longer fight myself. On

this album you will hear various moments of my playing. It encompasses who I am as a person, as a musician.

Wabi Sabi has also taught me to listen for the silence, to leave space. The idea that from silence, sound enters and returns to silence. John Cage referred to it as a painter preparing their brush to move toward the canvas, to breath, exhale through the stroke and on the next inhalation, to lift off the canvass.

Sound out of silence, no expectations, in full acceptance.

Dedications

Please allow me a moment to thank so many for making this project a reality...

Jordan Young, alto sax
Sean Moran, guitar
Hyuna Park, piano
Harry Miller, piano & keyboards
Luca Rosenfeld, upright & electric bass
Evan Lawrence, electric bass
Gary Fogel, drums
Misia Vessio, drums
Rosdeli Marte, voice
Anja-Christin Nielsen, spoken word narration on "Flokken og skuggen"

Peter Karl, engineer
Douglass Recording
Brooklyn, NY

Music for Dance in Three Movements - recorded March 3, 2017

1. Eternal
2. Love Dance
3. Two as One

Featuring:
Bill Stevens, flugelhorn
Hyuna Park, piano
Luca Rosenfeld, upright bass
Gary Fogel, drums

Luba Ash, choreographer

Dancers
Samantha Bajor

Alex Haskins

Producer - Dexter Buell

Camera 1: Chris Jost

Camera 2: Justin A. Rodriguez

Camera 3: Ansel Combs

Production Manager & Lighting Designer - Andre Vasquez

Frank Sinatra School of the Arts

Tony Bennett Concert Hall

Gideon Frankel, Principal

Assistant Lighting Designer - Thomas Jenkeleit

Assistant Projection Designer - Sarah Leal

Laura Salzberg, visual art

Written for Laura Salzberg for our 25th wedding anniversary (June 9, 1993 - June 9, 2018)

AK Dolven - Please Return - recorded April 21, 2018

4.



how to reach every corner

2012

Oil on aluminum

125 x 250 cm

5.



don't worry I'll lift the sky
2012
Oil on aluminum
125 x 250 cm

6.



teenagers lifting the sky
2014
Oil on aluminum
125 x 500 cm

AK Dolven (b. 1953, Oslo) Lives and works in London and Lofoten, Norway.
Dolven's practice involves a variety of media; painting, photography, performance,

installation, film and sound. Recurring themes in her extensive production are the representation of natural forces and their deep resonance with human sensibilities. Her work alternates between the monumental and the minimal, the universal and the intimate, resonating with concepts and structures beyond the confines of any particular piece. Interpersonal relations and interactions are central to her practice, and many of her performance-based works involve collaborations with other artists.

Featuring:

Bill Stevens, trumpet & flugelhorn
Jordan Young, alto sax
Harry Miller, piano & keyboards
Luca Rosenfeld, upright & electric bass
Misia Vessio, drums

Eldrid Lunden - Flokken og skuggen (The Flock and the Shadow). 2003 - recorded February 3 & 24. 2018

7. Shadow and Light
8. Between Earth and Sky
9. Out of Silence
10. Continuity and Change
11. Through Dreams, Through Time

The poetic work of Eldrid Lunden is some of the most important, not only in Norway, but also in a Nordic context. Her status as a writer has been strengthened by her position as director of Creative Studies at Bo in Telemark, Norway's first academic writing academy, established on her initiative in the 1980's. Her influence on the younger generation of writers is enormous, not only as a poet, but also as a mentor and experienced reader.

Translations - Flokken og skuggen:

1.

The danger suddenly disappeared. My

Shadow came back into my body

2.

Bin Laden, Bin Laden, Bin Laden ... buzzing in the silent September woods

The small sound icing through is not a new mobile phone.

It's a bird, I think, and notice my head turning slowly following its thought

Bin laden, bin Laden, bin Laden ... summer det I
den stille septemberskogen

den vesle lyden som isar
igjennom er lkkje ein ny type mobiltelefon. Det er

ein fugl, tenker ego g merkar hovudet snu seg
langsam etter sin tanke

3.

The picture of a gray unmoving man with two unusually low slung and long dogs
appears in the autumn field

This is out of place, I think and instinctively look for something lush and green to fix
my gaze on.

My eyes glide over the golden treetops on the hill, while I beg Van Gogh's birds to
stay away and not turn up live above the field to demolest the text entirely ...
entirely?

Bildet a vein gra, urorleg mann med
to uvanleg og lange kjem til syne
i haustakeren

Dette er malplassert, tenker eg og leitar uvilkarleg
etter noe frogig gront a feste blikket pa. Blikket glir
over dei gylne trekronene pa bakkekammen, mens
eg ber van Goghs fuglar om a halde seg borte
og ikkje dukke opp over akeren live og
demolesterere teksten fullstendig ... fullstendig?

4.

November

Damp glare the bare trees. And the small animal suddenly scrambling to the top among the branches

November

Fuktig moylys

Det nakne treet. Og det vesle dyret
som plutseleg fer til topps
mellom greinene

5.

Something is shining inexplicably. Between unblossomed shadows rustling along the paths. In the cool eye that moves the eye. We have long suspected this. That we at some time will reach a point where we cannot quite distinguish the contemporary from everything that is contemporary. Winter may set it.

Noe skin uforklarleg. Mellom avblmostea skuggar som raslar langs stiane. I det kjolege auget som rorer auget. Og vi har lenge ant det. At vi ein gong skal na eit punkt der vi ikkje riktig maktar a skilje det samtidige fra alt some r samtidig. Vintern kan komme

6.

Nature is anonymous.

Birth and death are names unsecured in the last life

Naturen er ein anonym

Fodsel og dod er namnlause i vare liv

7.

The universe watching us in great movement in their anonymity.

Spring light through the branches, suddenly and completely, without meaning we hear not anything than this.

Det universelle ser på oss med stor bevegelse
i sin anonymitet

Varlyset igjennom greinene, plutselig og heilt
utan betydning

Vi har ikkje noe anna enn dette

8.

Emptiness
is something we can only talk about
from somewhere outside the emptiness
emptiness does not exist
in its natural
condition

In the atmosphere emptiness will
immediately
be invaded by what surrounds it

If we think this sounds abstract
we can set up an emptiness
on the lawn and see
what happens

Tomheit
er noe vi berre kan snake om
fra ein stad utanfor tomheita
Tomheit finst ikkje
i naturleg
tilstand

I atmosfaeren vil tomrommet
oyeblikkeleg

invaderast av det som ligg omkring

Syns vi dette hoyrest abstract ut
kan vi opprette eit tomrom
pa plenen og sja
kva som skjer

Featuring:

Bill Stevens - trumpet, flugelhorn & electric trumpet
Jordan Young, alto sax
Sean Moran, guitar
Harry Miller, piano & keyboards
Evan Lawrence, electric bass
Misia Vessio, drums
Rosdeli Marte, voice
Anja-Christin Nielsen, spoken word narration

Engineer: Peter Karl - Douglass Recording, Brooklyn, NY

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For Music: Soundcloud, Spotify, BandCamp, Reverbnation, CD Baby, iTunes,
Amazon

Laura Salzberg & Miles Stevens who complete my life.

Bill Stevens plays Trumpets by Martin and mouthpieces by Giardinelli's and Greg
Black Mouthpieces

Electric trumpet effect furnished by Vox Pedals