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eighth blackbird

\ˈätth ˈblak-, bərd\ *slang* (orig. and chiefly U.S.).

1. **verb.** to act with commitment and virtuosity; to zap, zip, sock.
2. **adjective.** having fearless (yet irreverent) qualities.
3. **noun.** a flock of songbirds, common in urban areas since 1996.

Tim Munro, *flutes*

Michael J. Maccaferri, *clarinets*

Yvonne Lam, *violin & viola*

Nicholas Photinos, *cello*

Matthew Duvall, *percussion*

Lisa Kaplan, *piano*

eighth blackbird combines the finesse of a string quartet, the energy of a rock band, and the audacity of a storefront theater company. The Chicago-based, two-time Grammy-winning “super-musicians” (*LA Times*) entertain and provoke audiences across the country and around the world.

In addition to its longstanding and fruitful relationships as Ensemble in Residence at the University of Richmond and the University of Chicago, in 2012 eighth blackbird commences a three-year, Mellon Foundation-funded term as Ensemble in Residence at Philadelphia’s Curtis Institute of Music. eighth blackbird will also lead extended, one-time residencies at the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Maryland. Other highlights of the ensemble’s busy 2012/13 season include debuts with the Kansas City Symphony,

the Lexington Philharmonic, and in Calgary, along with an extensive tour of Missouri and a three-city tour of the Netherlands.

This season will also feature eagerly anticipated premieres of new works by Aaron Jay Kernis (the ethereal *Pieces of Winter Sky*), The National’s Bryce Dessner (a piece inspired by early American folk music), Dutch composer Mayke Nas (a fascinating theatrical exploration), Steve Mackey (music from his Grammy-winning *Slide*, written for the group) and Australian composer Brett Dean (the searing, intense *Sextet*).

A decade-long relationship with Chicago’s Cedille Records has produced five acclaimed recordings, including *Meanwhile*, released in September 2012. The ensemble has won two Grammy Awards, for the recordings *strange imaginary animals* and *Lonely Motel: Music from Slide*.

eighth blackbird’s members hail from America’s Great Lakes, Keystone, Golden and Bay states, as well as Australia’s Sunshine State. There are four foodies, three beer snobs and one exercise junkie. The name “eighth blackbird” derives from the eighth stanza of Wallace Stevens’s evocative, aphoristic poem, *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird* (1917). eighth blackbird is managed by David Lieberman Artists.

Michael Maccaferri is a Rico Performing Artist and Clinician. Matthew Duvall proudly endorses Pearl Drums and Adams Musical Instruments, Vic Firth Sticks and Mallets, Zildjian Cymbals, and Black Swamp Percussion Accessories. Lisa Kaplan is a Steinway Artist.

www.eighthblackbird.org

<http://twitter.com/eighthblackbird>



The Program

Nico Muhly: *Doublespeak* (2012)

Philip Glass: *Knee Play 2* (from *Einstein on the Beach*) (1975)

Tom Johnson: *Counting Duets* (1982) for two performers

1. Pitches
2. Cycles
3. Slowing
4. Expanding

Aaron Jay Kernis: *Pieces of Winter Sky* (2012)

Co-commissioned by Hancher via Music Accord

Intermission

Derek Bermel: *Tied Shifts* (2004)

Written for eighth blackbird with funds from the Oscar M. Ruebhausen Commission of The Greenwall Foundation

1. Driving, relentless

György Ligeti: *Études* (1985-94) for solo piano, arranged for sextet (2012)

No. 4: Fanfares (arr. Lisa Kaplan)

No. 6: Automne à Varsovie ("Autumn in Warsaw") (arr. Tim Munro)

Andy Akiho: *erase* (2011)

Program Notes

Nico Muhly: *Doublespeak* (2012) for sextet

Born in Vermont in 1981 and raised in Providence, Rhode Island, New York-based composer Nico Muhly graduated from Columbia University with a degree in English literature. In 2004, he received a Masters in music from the Juilliard School, where he studied under Christopher Rouse and John Corigliano.

A former boy chorister, Muhly has composed extensively for choir, including commissions from the Clare College Choir and the Brooklyn Youth Chorus. His orchestral works have been premiered by the American Symphony Orchestra, the Aurora Orchestra, the Boston Pops, the New York Philharmonic, and the Chicago Symphony. Film credits include Muhly's scores for *Joshua* (2007) and Best Picture nominee *The Reader* (2008). Among his most frequent collaborators are his colleagues at Bedroom Community, an artist-run label inaugurated by the release of Muhly's first album, *Speaks Volumes* (2007). For 2011, the Metropolitan Opera and English National Opera commissioned *Two Boys*, Muhly's first full-scale opera, followed by *Dark Sisters*, co-commissioned by the Gotham Chamber Opera, Music-Theatre Group, and the Opera Company of Philadelphia.

The composer writes:

Doublespeak was written for eighth blackbird for the MusicNOW Festival in Cincinnati, in honor of Philip Glass's 75th birthday. My mission in writing the piece was twofold: first, to write the most fun piece possible for eighth blackbird, at just the right length. The second was to in some way tip my hat to Philip Glass, whom I admire broadly and deeply. eighth blackbird have played so much fast, loosely repetitive music over the years; I wanted to refine this kind of material into its purest, most delicious form and point back to the 1970s, when classical music perfected obsessive repetition.

The piece begins by applying an additive process to a small cell on the solo violin. This is the defining gesture of the piece, and is subject to much variation. Occasionally, the busy textures give way to drones played by the soprano recorder, under which we begin to hear chords from Philip's insanely beautiful *Music in Twelve Parts* (1971-1974). The piece unfolds in similar episodes: fast music offset by slow, melancholic memories of the music of the late 1960s and 1970s (aren't those the intervals from *Violin Phase*? Was that a cell from *In C*?). Toward the end of the piece, the language of *Music in Twelve Parts* becomes more dominant and gradually overtakes all of the busy material, and the piece ends in a stylized dream-state.

Philip Glass: *Knee Play 2* (from *Einstein on the Beach*) (1975) for solo violin and two narrators

Einstein on the Beach is the first of a trilogy of operas by Philip Glass about men who changed the world through the power of their ideas. All three operas are non-narrative in form, and each has a subtext: science in *Einstein*, politics in *Satyagraha* (1980), and religion in *Akhmat* (1983).

The five *Knee Play* sections in *Einstein* act as interludes between sections of the opera, and also begin and end the work. *Einstein* features an important role for a violin soloist, and indeed *Knee Play 2* is a thrillingly virtuosic work for solo violin, with two narrators reciting a text by American poet Christopher Knowles. An excerpt from the spoken text is below:

Would it get some wind for the sailboat. And it could get those for it is.

It could get the railroad for these workers. It could be a balloon.

It could be Franky, it could be very fresh and clean, it could be.

It could get some gasoline shortest one.

And these are the days my friends and these are the days my friends.

Could it get some wind for the sailboat. And it could get those for it is.

It could get the railroad for these workers. It could be a balloon.

It could be Franky, it could be very fresh and clean, it could be.

It could get some gasoline shortest one.

And these are the days my friends and these are the days my friends...

Tom Johnson: *Counting Duets* (1982) for two performers

1. *Pitches*
2. *Cycles*
3. *Slowing*
4. *Expanding*

From Johnson's notes:

These days our devices do much of our counting for us, but we continue to do a lot of counting. Soldiers count the cadence as they march; agricultural surveyors count blades of grass; farmers count sheep; astronomers counts galaxies; lab technicians counts red blood cells; we all count money. The census counts us.

The formalistic, religious, arithmetic, psychological, linguistic, and musical implications of counting interest me a great deal, and since I have a special love for patterns and numbers anyway, I have focused much of my work in this direction. There must be countless ways of counting. And come to think of it, "countlessness" is another fascinating subject. Or is it the same subject?

Tom Johnson, born in Colorado in 1939, is obsessed with simple forms, limited scales, and reduced materials, but this dry and dour-sounding list doesn't capture the light, satirical nature of many of his best-known works. In *Bedtime Stories*, a solo clarinetist provides sometimes apt, sometimes snarkily misleading musical commentary on simple, numerically-obsessed story narrations. *Narayana's Cows* is a musical translation of the work of a 14th century Indian mathematician, Narayana. The text begins, "A cow produces one calf every year. Beginning in its fourth year, each calf produces one calf at the beginning

of each year. How many cows and calves are there altogether after 20 years?" *Failing: a very difficult piece for solo string bass* challenges a bassist to give live commentary on the difficulties of playing this "very difficult piece."

Aaron Jay Kernis: *Pieces of Winter Sky* (2012) for sextet

The composer writes:

Pieces of Winter Sky evokes the still, lingering, misty, gray winter sky - hovering, immobile. There is occasionally turbulence on the surface but underlying lyricism is at its core. Rather than affecting a narrative arc or clear dramatic progression, *Pieces of Winter Sky* is a sequence of short episodes, some closely related and connected in sequence, others strongly contrasting and sharply juxtaposed. Fragments of bird song, most notably the song of the Winter Wren (heard in slow motion), are played by the clarinet, beginning a middle section which features soloists from the ensemble - clarinet, cello, violin and piano. Flute/piccolo is often highlighted, and percussion provides an ongoing shimmer. The soundworld of *Pieces of Winter Sky* is unified by the resonant, sustained sounds of bowing - bowed piano, crotales, vibraphone, cymbals, and, in some performances, bowed glockenspiel. Schubert's aching, unyielding song cycle, *Winterreise* ("Winter Journey") echoes from the distant past - like faint, spiritual radio waves....

One of the youngest composers ever to be awarded the Pulitzer Prize, Aaron Jay Kernis (b. 1960, Philadelphia) is among the most esteemed musical figures of his generation. His music is featured prominently on orchestral, chamber, and recital programs worldwide. He has won numerous awards in addition to the 1998 Pulitzer Prize, including the 2002 Grawemeyer Award, the 2012 Nemmers Prize from Northwestern University, a Rome Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and Grammy Award nominations, among others. Kernis serves as Director of the Minnesota Orchestra's Composer Institute, a program that gives young composers the opportunity to hear their works played by one of the world's great orchestras. He teaches composition at Yale School of Music and was recently appointed to membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Pieces of Winter Sky was generously commissioned by Music Accord for eighth blackbird.

Derek Bermel: *Tied Shifts* (2004) for sextet

1. *Driving, relentless*

Derek Bermel's (b. 1967, New York) compositions draw from a rich variety of musical genres, including classical, jazz, pop, rock, blues, folk, and gospel. Bermel, who is also a virtuoso clarinetist, is currently serving as Artist-in-Residence at the Institute for Advanced Study, Composer-in-Residence with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, and Creative Adviser to the American Composers Orchestra at Carnegie Hall.

Bermel studied ethnomusicology and orchestration in Jerusalem with André Hajdu, later traveling to Bulgaria to study Thracian folk style with Nikola Iliev, to Brazil to learn caxixi with Julio Góes, and to Ghana to study Lobi xylophone with Ngmen Baaru.

About *Tied Shifts*, the composer writes:

In August of 2001 I traveled to Plovdiv, Bulgaria, to spend a month working with the great Bulgarian folk clarinetist Nikola Iliev. Fascinated by the melodies in odd meters executed at lightning speeds, I desired to gain firsthand knowledge of the Thracian folk style by learning to play the songs from a master musician. In transcribing melodies with compound meters --5/8, 7/8, 9/8 (sometimes), 11/8, 13/8, 15/8, and combinations thereof -- I was particularly struck by the practice of tying melodic notes over a barline, resulting in an obscuring of the meter.

I would like to thank eighth blackbird, for whom this piece was commissioned, and especially their pianist Lisa Kaplan, who initiated the collaboration. Thanks also to the Oscar M. Ruebhausen Commission from the Greenwall Foundation, Yaddo, and to Barbara Eliason, Daniel Nass, and Maggie Heskin, who provided invaluable assistance along the way.

György Ligeti: Études (1985-94) for solo piano, arranged for sextet (2012)

No. 4: Fanfares (arr. Lisa Kaplan)

No. 6: Automne à Varsovie ("Autumn in Warsaw") (arr. Tim Munro)

Born in Romania and trained in Hungary, György Ligeti (1923-2006) suffered under the restrictions of post-war communism and fled to Austria at the age of 30. The music Ligeti wrote in the following two decades has a dark, uneasy nature; it shrouds listeners in creeping, dense clouds, or assaults them with maniacally ticking clocks. When he began to write the solo piano *Études* in the mid-1980s, Ligeti's music had changed immeasurably and reflected new musical passions: the vivid, unique music of sub-Saharan African cultures, the rhythmic complexity of Conlon Nancarrow's *Studies for Player Piano*, and the harmonic freedom of jazz pianists, especially Thelonious Monk and Bill Evans. The *Études* also draw inspiration from the keyboard music of Scarlatti, Chopin, Schumann, and Debussy.

Étude No. 4 ("Fanfares") pits spinning, virtuoso, scale-like patterns (derived from Middle Eastern music) against irregular, fanfare-like flourishes. According to Richard Steinitz, Étude No. 6 ("Autumn in Warsaw") "embodies anxieties stemming from the political unrest in Poland during the early 1980s (hence the dedication 'to my Polish friends,' and the work's Chopinesque character)." Although Ligeti, who wrote nothing for eighth blackbird's unique instrumentation, wrote these *Études* with the limitations and strengths of the piano in mind, eighth blackbird believes the works can live a different life and win new converts in an arrangement for sextet.

Andy Akiho: *erase* (2011) for sextet

Andy Akiho (b. 1979) is an eclectic composer and performer whose interests run from steel pan to traditional classical music. Akiho's compositions have been heard at major venues throughout New York City. Akiho's debut album, *No One To Know One*, featured innovative steel pan compositions and was recently released on innova Records. As a percussionist, Akiho has performed with numerous professional ensembles, and his immersion in various genres has given him a unique approach to his primary instrument: the steel pan. A graduate of the University of South Carolina, the Manhattan School of Music, and the Yale School of Music, Akiho is currently a PhD candidate at Princeton University.

erase is a full-tilt, machine-like virtuoso assault. Akiho has turned the piano and vibraphone into one strange, new super-instrument by having the performers use non-traditional techniques. Rubber bands, credit cards, and dowel rods are all used to create this unique soundworld. Andy Akiho's *erase* won first prize in the 2011 Finale National Composition Contest, a program of the American Composers Forum in partnership with MakeMusic, Inc. and eighth blackbird. ♦

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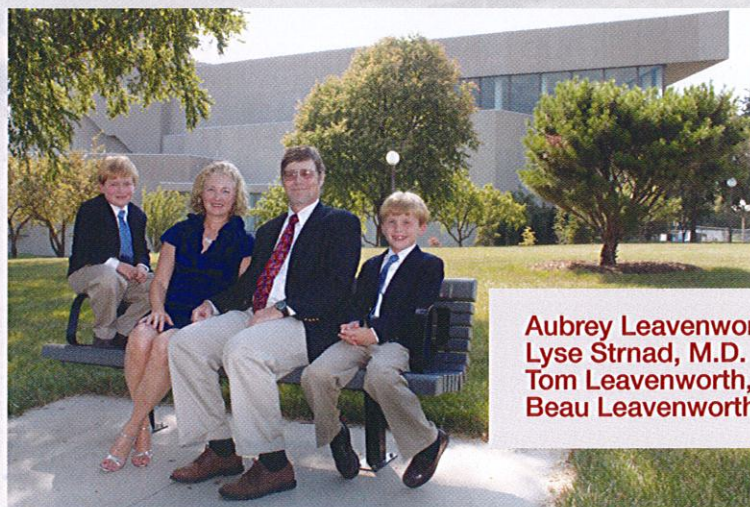
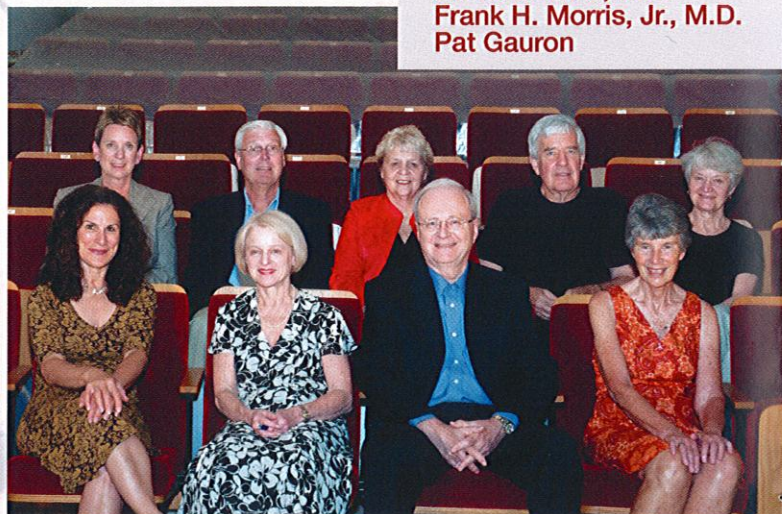
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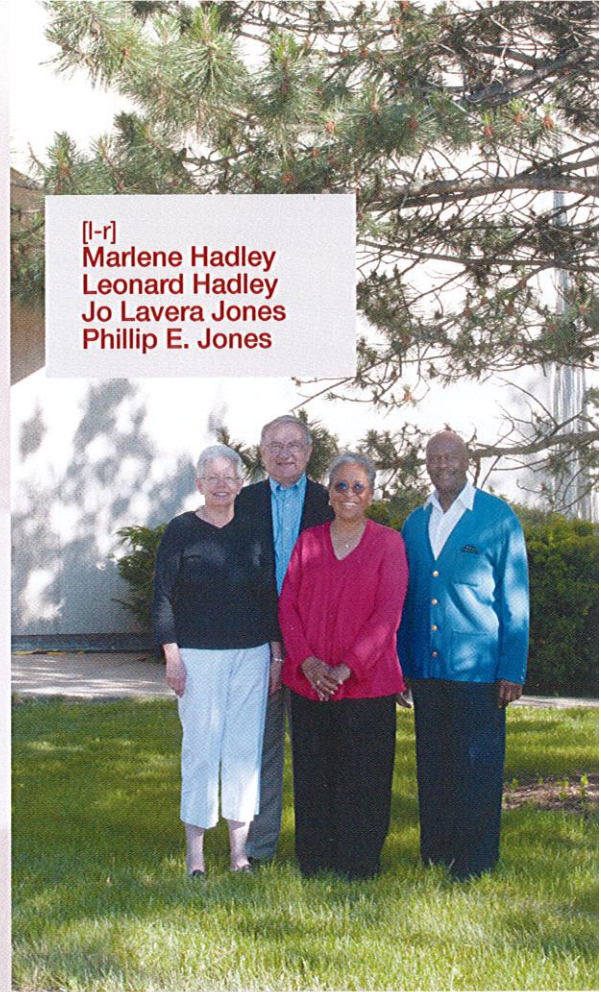


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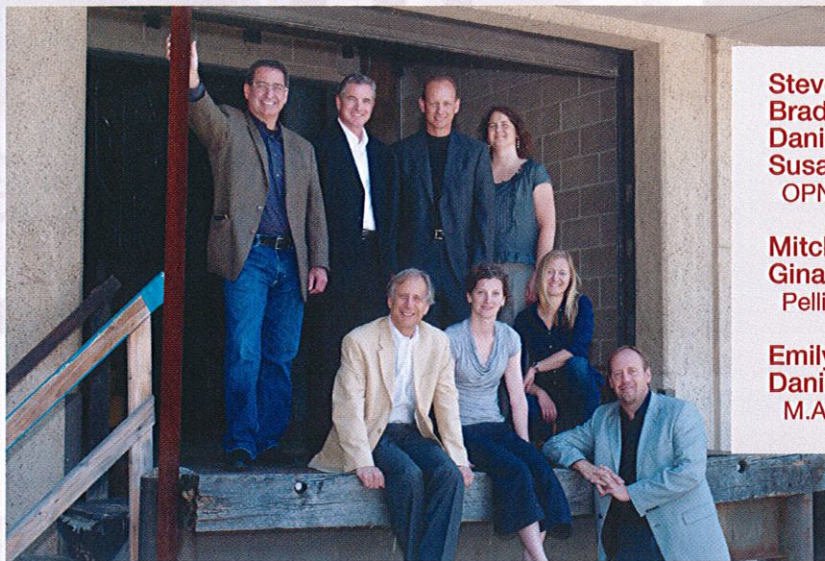
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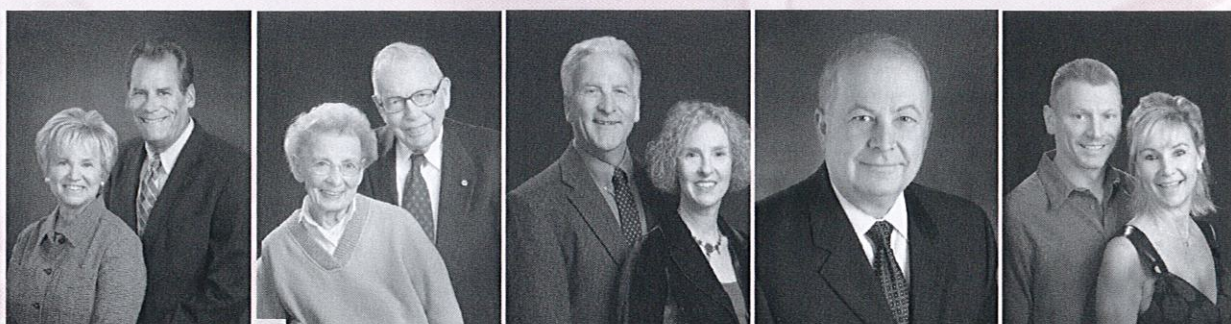
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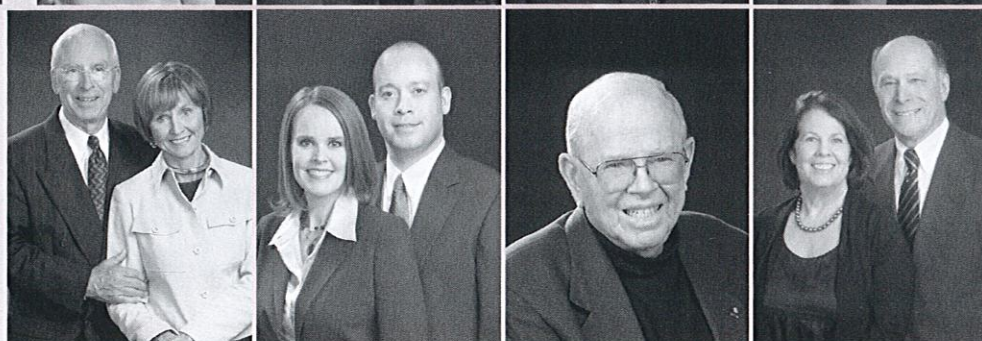
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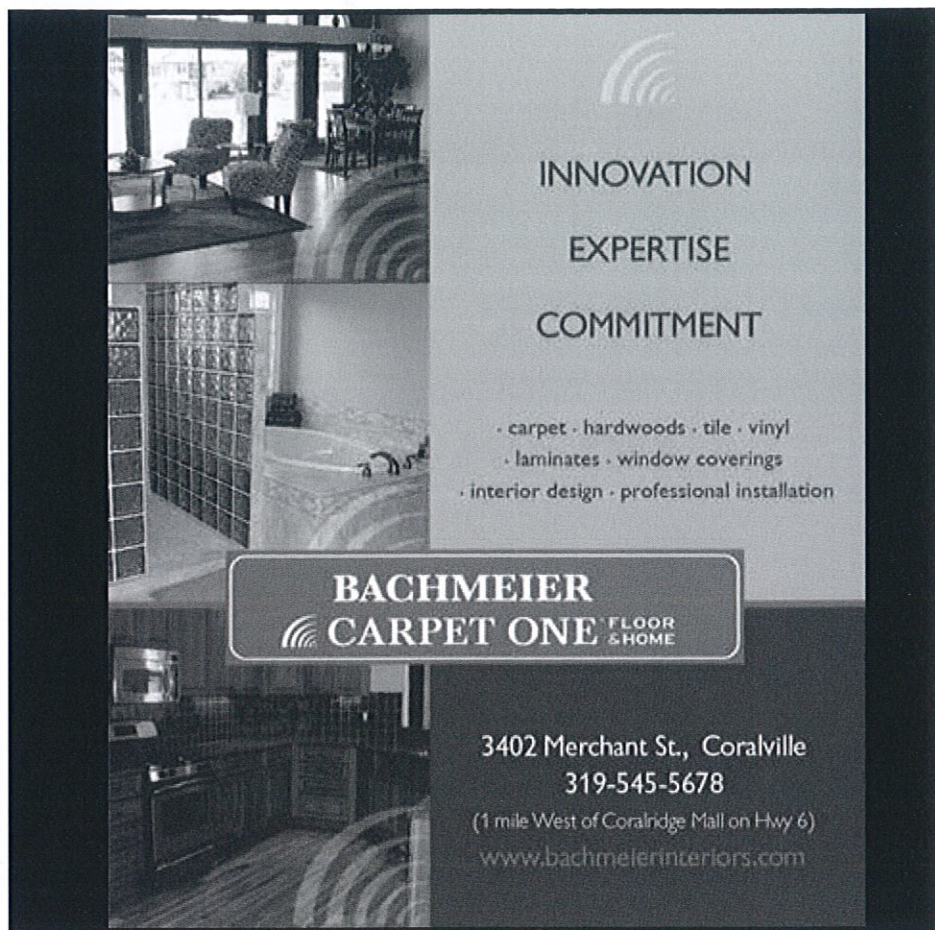
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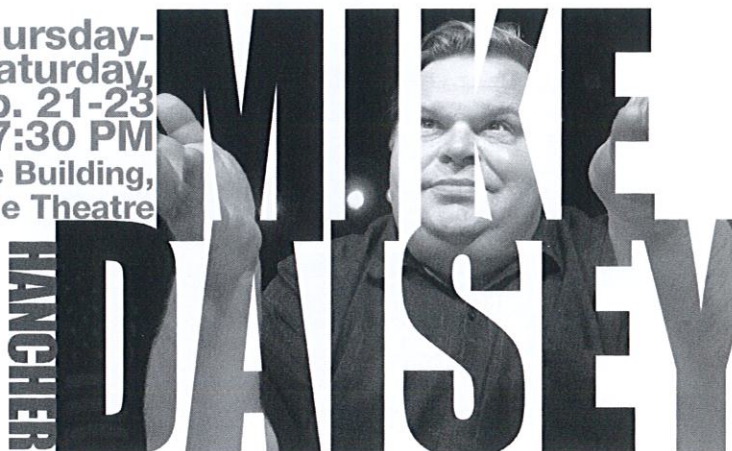
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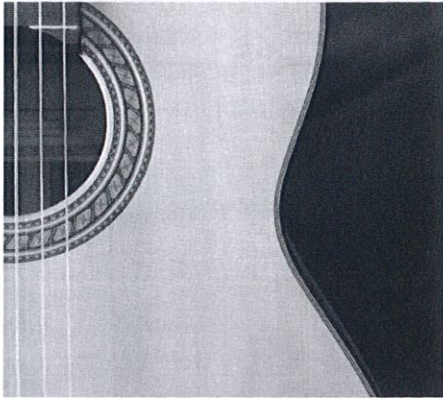
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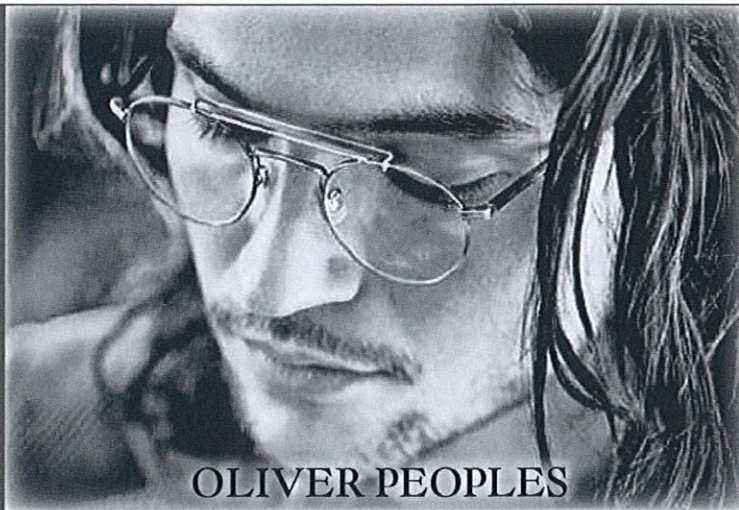
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Harlem Gospel Choir

February 21
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February 23
The Magistrate
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March 3
Robert Earl Keen

March 10
Gaelic Storm

March 11
Janis Ian

March 16
Tracy Morgan

March 28
Ralphie May

March 30
People
National Theatre Live

April 3 - 7
Mission Creek Festival

April 15
Billy Bragg

April 17
**California Guitar Trio &
Montreal Guitar Trio**

April 19
**Eileen Ivers
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May 8
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May 11
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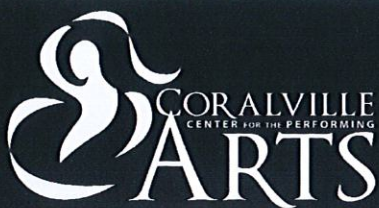
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Upcoming Events Include:

Some Like It Hot, with
concert by Silver Swing
Feb 17

Doctors in Concert: A Benefit
for the UI Children's Hospital
Feb 22

Grease, presented by
Regina High School
Feb 28 - Mar 3

Oscar & Ella Listen to Jazz:
A Musical Intro by Dan Knight
Apr 13

The Corridor Sings Broadway:
A Benefit for CCPA & CCACC
Apr 19-20

The Kandinsky Suite & Mural
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Apr 21

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HOMECOMING

Saturday, November 10, 2012 - Paramount Theatre
Sunday, November 11, 2012 - Iowa Memorial Union

THE NUTCRACKER

Featuring Ballet Quad Cities
Saturday, December 1 & Sunday, December 2, 2012
Paramount Theatre

HOLIDAY SPECTACULAR

Saturday, December 15 & Sunday, December 16, 2012
Paramount Theatre

LA BOHÈME

Presented by The Cedar Rapids Opera Theatre
Friday, January 18 & Sunday, January 20, 2013 - Paramount Theatre

STAR-CROSSED LOVERS

Saturday, February 9, 2013 - Paramount Theatre
Sunday, February 10, 2013 - West High School

BRAHMS' THIRD

Saturday, March 9, 2013 - Paramount Theatre
Sunday, March 10, 2013 - West High School

CINDERELLA

Featuring Ballet Quad Cities
Saturday, April 13 & Sunday, April 14, 2013 - Paramount Theatre

AMERICAN GOTHIC

Saturday, May 4, 2013 - Paramount Theatre
Sunday, May 5, 2013 - West High School

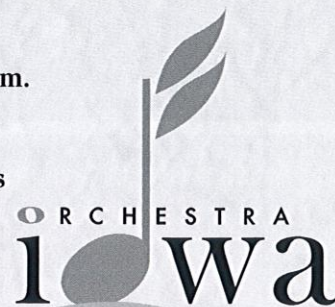
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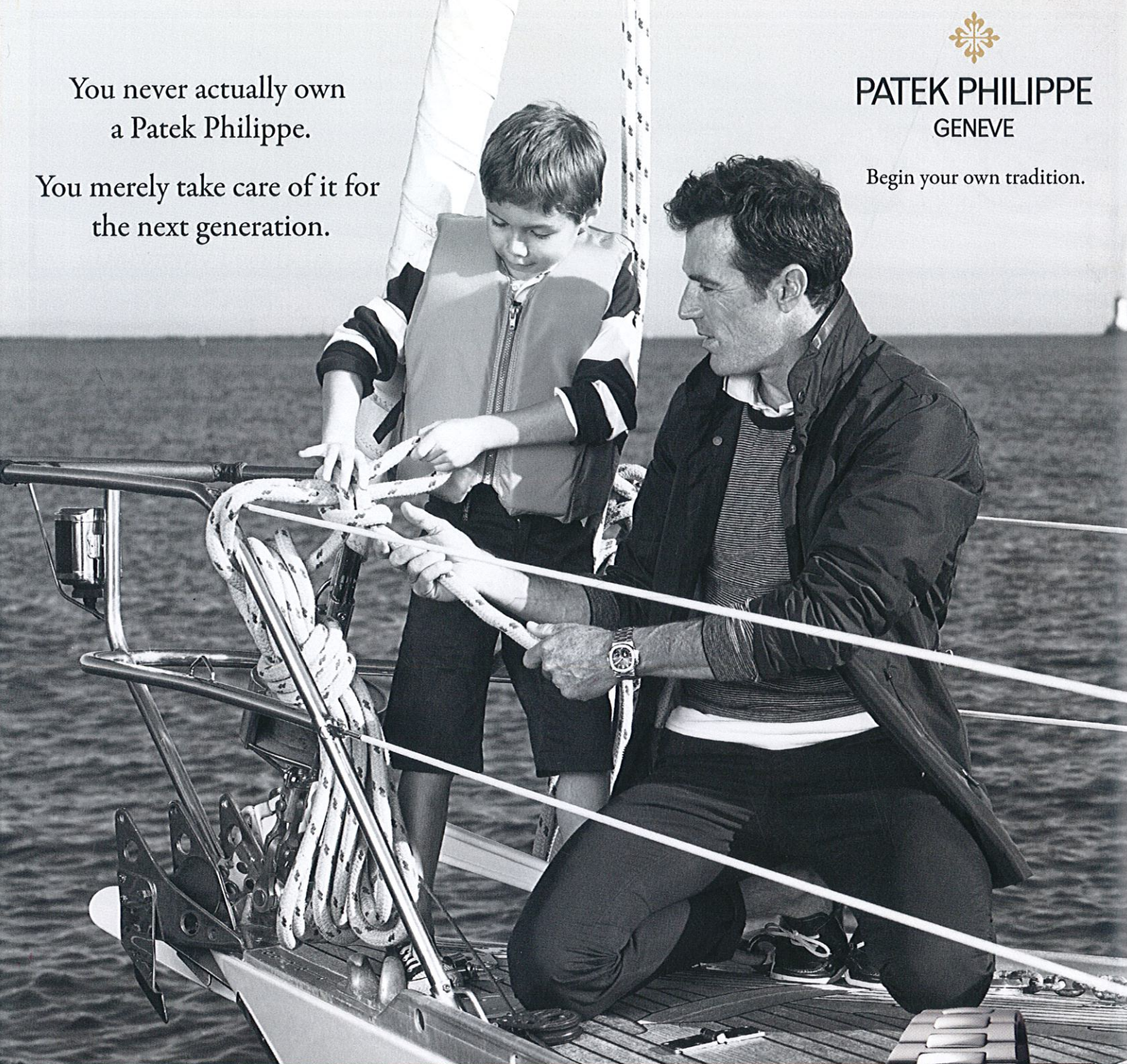
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