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Family Dinner is commissioned
by the Ojai Music Festival,
with the generous support of
Elizabeth and Justus Schlichting

Saturday, June 11, 2022 | 8:00pm

Libbey Bowl

Little Jimmy + Family Dinner

Julia Bullock *soprano* | Anthony Roth Costanzo *countertenor* | Paul Appleby *tenor* | Davóne Tines *bass-baritone*
Emi Ferguson *flute* | Gleb Kanasevich *clarinet* | Clay Zeller-Townson *bassoon* | Miranda Cuckson *violin*
Keir GoGwilt *violin* | Carrie Frey *viola* | Coleman Itzkoff *cello* | Doug Balliett *double bass* | Jonny Allen *percussion*
Mari Yoshinaga *percussion* | Conor Hanick *piano*

Matthew Aucoin *conductor*

Andrew McINTOSH

Little Jimmy

Conor Hanick *piano* | Matthew Aucoin *piano*
Jonny Allen *percussion* | Mari Yoshinaga *percussion*

INTERMISSION

Matthew AUCOIN

Deep Water Trawling from *The No One's Rose*

Julia Bullock *soprano* | Anthony Roth Costanzo *countertenor*
Paul Appleby *tenor* | Davóne Tines *bass-baritone* | Emi Ferguson *flute*
Gleb Kanasevich *clarinet* | Clay Zeller-Townson *bassoon*
Miranda Cuckson *violin* | Keir GoGwilt *violin* | Carrie Frey *viola*
Coleman Itzkoff *cello* | Doug Balliett *double bass*
Jonny Allen *percussion* | Mari Yoshinaga *percussion* | Conor Hanick *piano*

Matthew Aucoin *conductor*

Matthew AUCOIN

Family Dinner World Premiere

Julia Bullock *soprano* | Paul Appleby *tenor* | Davóne Tines *bass-baritone*
Emi Ferguson *flute* | Gleb Kanasevich *clarinet* | Miranda Cuckson *violin*
Keir GoGwilt *violin* | Carrie Frey *viola* | Coleman Itzkoff *cello*
Doug Balliett *double bass* | Jonny Allen *percussion*
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Matthew Aucoin *conductor*

Andrew McINTOSH (b. 1985)
Little Jimmy (2020)

Matthew AUCOIN (b. 1990)
Deep Water Trawling from The No One's Rose (2021)
Family Dinner (2022)

Little Jimmy

Often, when I think of Southern California, I think of Andrew McIntosh's music. He is a true desert composer: Events within Andrew's music unfold in the mysterious, unpredictable way that they do in a desert ecosystem. At first encounter, this music may seem sparse, spiky, and strange, as deserts often do, but there's a lot of life hidden away, just out of view — inside a cactus, or far up in the sky, or buried in the ground. This is music that requires a certain patience, and a quietness of mind — for performers and listeners alike.

Little Jimmy, the piece we're playing at Ojai, is scored for two pianists and two percussionists, and Andrew is especially good at wringing the most astonishing, spark- or fire-like sounds out of percussion instruments. (Pianos, in Andrew's hands, are percussion instruments too.) There are flinty, staccato passages, as one might expect from a piece with this instrumentation, but there are also extended sections full of searingly powerful long notes, produced by all four performers bowing various instruments. These sections speak with a rib-shaking, planetary power.

—MATTHEW AUCOIN

Family Dinner

This world-premiere Ojai Festival commission by AMOC* co-founder Matthew Aucoin is, in the composer's words, "both a specific piece and a new form, one whose contents are likely to change with each performance." A cycle of mini-concertos featuring many of AMOC*'s artists, *Family Dinner* aims to capture the raucous, joyful energy of a multi-course dinner with beloved friends. The work's music ranges from introspective to riotously dancelike; it is also punctuated by spoken "toasts" composed by writers and thinkers who are collaborators of AMOC*'s artists

Bon Appétit

The courses comprising AMOC*'s feast of a program tonight underscore the inherent flexibility and collaborative spirit that are intrinsic to the company's identity. Over the span of the 2022 Ojai Music Festival, audiences have been experiencing AMOC* in ever-changing constellations of singers, instrumentalists, dancers, actors, and spoken-word artists. This evening's menu juxtaposes an unusual quartet formation of pianists and percussionists with new music by cofounder Matthew Aucoin featuring nearly the entire company.

The composer, violinist, and violist Andrew McIntosh has been living and teaching in Southern California for some years — "one of the best-kept secrets" in the new music scene here, according to Aucoin. McIntosh shares with AMOC* a simultaneous attraction to experimentalism and early music as a performer: He is a member of the Los Angeles-based contemporary music ensemble Wild Up and also plays Baroque violin.

McIntosh was among the six composers who contributed to *Hopscotch*, the "mobile opera in 24 cars" produced by The Industry and director Yuval Sharon around various Los Angeles neighborhoods in 2015. Along with another opera (*Bonnie and Clyde*), he has composed solo and chamber works and pieces for such unusual ensembles as a group of 33 violins with only E and A strings (*the difference between one and two*). *Little*

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BON APPÉTIT

Jimmy dates from 2020 and is named after a backpacking campsite on Mt. Islip in the Angeles National Forest. The world premiere was given last August at the TIME:SPANS Festival in New York City.

Little Jimmy combines abstraction with sounds of California nature captured on field recordings taken on April 23, 2020, at or near the campsite in the San Gabriel Mountains. "At the time, the forest was under several feet of snow, just beginning to melt and emerge from winter conditions," writes McIntosh. The recordings appear in the second and sixth movements of the six-movement work, which are titled Positive/Negative 1 (I); *Little Jimmy* at the End of Winter (II); Positive/Negative 2 (III); Heart (IV); Positive/Negative 3 (V); and *Little Jimmy*, Half an Hour Later, or, there is a place within you that has never been wounded (VI).

The *Little Jimmy* campsite has been closed since the Bobcat Fire devastated the area in late August 2020. McIntosh

had not intended to address the issues of climate change or wildfires when he recorded the natural sounds he encountered in April to use in his work-in-progress. But the Bobcat Fire burned the very trees that had been preserved on the recordings.

Little Jimmy is no mere evocation of an atmosphere or sound world; it invites us *into* the space McIntosh has designed through the interplay of two pianists and two percussionists playing an assortment of tuned and untuned instruments. The pianists also use piano bows made of rosined fishing line, plus sandpaper blocks, stones, and a small glass. With the added layer of the field recordings, McIntosh introduces a haunting reminder of what has been lost that seems to reverse the proverbial thought experiment: "If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?" The sounds have stopped existing in the forest as a result of the fire, yet they continue to reverberate in ways that move us in

the new context created by McIntosh's composition.

It was also last August that AMOC*'s largest collaborative project to date, *The No One's Rose*, received its premiere (as part of a commission by the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra & Chorale with Stanford Live). A characteristically undefinable hybrid of opera, dance, poetry, and theater directed by Zack Winokur and choreographed by Bobbi Jene Smith, it features a score by Matthew Aucoin in which allusions are incorporated ranging across a spectrum from Orlando di Lasso and J.S. Bach to Sam Cooke and Paul Simon. The impetus behind *The No One's Rose* was to fashion a contemporary response to the cantatas of Bach by exploring themes of traumatic loss, uncertainty, and survival that weave together company members' personal stories with the words of various poets such as Paul Celan, the source of the title — an artist "who witnessed the unbearable and translated it into experience again," as Aucoin puts it.

Another key presence is the Pulitzer Prize-winning American poet Jorie Graham, one of Aucoin's mentors when he studied poetry as an undergraduate at Harvard. (Aucoin has remarked that her poetry workshops taught him "as much about music as any musician.") *Deep Water Trawling*, published in Graham's 2017 collection *Fast*, also addresses the issue of humanity's impact on nature and the climate, presenting the perspective of the ocean from beneath in response to the problematic practice of fishing with a trawl net.

Aucoin's fascination with the sounds of early music is a kind of corollary of the lost sounds of the trees in *Little Jimmy* — survivors of the past that absorb new meanings in a contemporary context. He has described the Baroque contrabassoon that he uses in his setting of the text as "a terrifying, deep-sea monster."

The Baroque era had its *Tafelmusik* to be played at feasts and banquets. *Family Dinner*, fresh out of the oven, is inspired by the mood of the large group dinners the members of AMOC* customarily enjoy together during their residencies in August, when they rehearse together at an old ballet camp in Stamford, Vermont. A sense of collective ownership and shared fluency in each other's disciplines are central to AMOC*'s philosophy. *Family Dinner* puts this ideal into practice, realizing through performance the shared group spirit of these occasions — which, Aucoin points out, tend to be "sprawling, messy, celebratory."

The basic formal idea is straightforward enough: Aucoin has written a series of "mini-concertos" to highlight AMOC* members. These are linked together through spoken toasts (prefaced by musical "toast calls") that Aucoin

commissioned from like-minded associates, writers, and thinkers, from the playwright Sarah Ruhl (author of *Eurydice*, which she adapted into a libretto for Aucoin's operatic setting) to the poet Arthur Sze. They were given a broad brief: "Write a toast to someone or something you love and are grateful for or a call to action."

Beginning with an ensemble "summons" ("We call you to our table"), the musical component of *Family Dinner* consists, in general, of three types of movements, explains Aucoin: "dialogue movements, songful outpourings, and raucous dances. These are all musical embodiments of things that happen over dinner, from rapid-fire arguments to drunken confessions." Poetry, music, dance, and friendship — what could be a finer recipe?

—THOMAS MAY

This concert is approximately 108 minutes.