



Michael Wilson

Saturday, November 11, 2023, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Brad Mehldau Trio

Brad Mehldau, *piano*
Larry Grenadier, *bass*
Jeff Ballard, *drums*

*This program will be performed without intermission
and last approximately 90 minutes.*

All compositions will be announced from the stage.

This performance is made possible, in part, by Nadine Tang.

Grammy Award-winning jazz pianist Brad Mehldau has recorded and performed extensively since the early 1990s and his most consistent output over the years has taken place in the trio format. Starting in 1996, his group released a series of five records on Warner Bros. entitled *The Art of the Trio* (re-packaged and re-released as a five-disc box set by Nonesuch in 2011). During that same period, Mehldau also released a solo piano recording entitled *Elegiac Cycle* and a record called *Places* that included both solo piano and trio songs. *Elegiac Cycle* and *Places* might be called “concept” albums made up exclusively of original material with central themes that hover over the compositions. Other Mehldau recordings include *Largo*, a collaborative effort with the innovative musician and producer Jon Brion, and *Anything Goes*, a trio outing with bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jorge Rossy.

His first record for Nonesuch, *Brad Mehldau Live in Tokyo*, was released in September 2004. After 10 rewarding years with Rossy playing in Mehldau’s regular trio, drummer Jeff Ballard joined the group in 2005. The label released its first album from the Brad Mehldau Trio—*Day is Done*—on September 27, 2005. An exciting double live trio recording entitled *Brad Mehldau Trio Live* was released in March 2008 (Nonesuch). In March 2010, Nonesuch released a double-disc of original work entitled *Highway Rider*, the highly anticipated follow up to *Largo*. The album was Mehldau’s second collaboration with renowned producer Jon Brion and featured performances by Mehldau’s trio—drummer Jeff Ballard and bassist Larry Grenadier—as well as percussionist Matt Chamberlain, saxophonist Joshua Redman, and a chamber orchestra led by Dan Coleman. In 2011, Nonesuch released *Live in Marciac*, a two-CD release with a companion DVD of the 2006 performance, and *Modern Music*, a collaboration between pianists Brad Mehldau and Kevin Hays and

composer/arranger Patrick Zimmerli. In 2012, Nonesuch released an album of original songs from the Brad Mehldau Trio—*Ode*—the first from the trio since 2008’s live Village Vanguard disc and the first studio trio recording since 2005’s *Day is Done*. *Ode* went on to garner a Grammy nomination. Nonesuch released the Brad Mehldau Trio’s *Where Do You Start*, a companion disc to the critically acclaimed *Ode*, in the fall of 2012. Whereas *Ode* featured 11 songs composed by Mehldau, *Where Do You Start* was comprised of interpretations of 10 tunes by other composers, along with one Mehldau original. In 2013, Mehldau produced and performed on *Walking Shadows*, the acclaimed Nonesuch release from Joshua Redman. That year also saw a number of collaborative tours, including a duo tour with mandolin virtuoso Chris Thile, piano duets with Kevin Hays, and a new electric project with drummer Mark Guiliana entitled Mehliana. *Mehliana: Taming the Dragon*, the debut release by Mehliana, was released in early 2014. Mehldau’s monumental and ambitious *10 Years Solo Live* eight-LP vinyl box set was released to unanimous critical acclaim on in October 2015 (with CD and digital versions released in November). The set was culled from 19 live recordings made over a decade of the pianist’s European solo concerts and was divided into four thematic subsets of four sides each: Dark/Light, The Concert, Intermezzo/Rückblick, and E Minor/E Major. In 2016, Nonesuch Records released the Brad Mehldau Trio’s *Blues and Ballads*—the ensemble’s first new release since 2012’s *Where Do You Start*—and the celebrated debut album of the Joshua Redman/Brad Mehldau Duo, *Nearness*, featuring recordings from their 2011 European tour. Both albums have received universal praise from critics and audiences alike, and both earned a Grammy nomination for Mehldau. After several years of performing live, labelmates mandolinist/singer Chris Thile and

Mehldau released their debut: *Chris Thile & Brad Mehldau*. In 2018, Nonesuch Records released both *After Bach*, an album that paired improvisations on Bach and Mehldau's previously commissioned solo piece *Three Pieces After Bach*, and the highly anticipated Brad Mehldau Trio studio recording *Seymour Reads the Constitution!* The year 2019 saw the release of the critically and commercially acclaimed conceptual recording *Finding Gabriel*—an album of harmonically rich vocal layers paired with strings, synthesizers, rock drums, and improvisation—featuring a number of high profile guests including Ambrose Akinmusire, Kurt Elling, Becca Stevens, Gabriel Kahane, and Mark Guiliana. The release won Mehldau his first Grammy Award for Best Instrumental Jazz Album.

Mehldau's musical personality forms a dichotomy. He is, first and foremost, an improviser, and greatly cherishes the surprise and wonder that can occur from a spontaneous musical idea that is expressed directly, in real time. But he also has a deep fascination for the formal architecture of music, something that informs all his music. In his most inspired playing, the actual structure of his musical thought serves as an expressive device. As he plays, he listens to how ideas unwind, and the order in which they reveal themselves. Each tune has a strongly felt narrative arch, whether it expresses itself in a beginning, an end, or something left intentionally open-ended. The two sides of Mehldau's personality—the improviser and the formalist—play off each other, and the effect is often something like controlled chaos.

Mehldau has performed around the world at a steady pace since the mid-1990s, with his trio and as a solo pianist. His performances convey a wide range of expression. There is often an intellectual rigor to the continuous process of abstraction that may take place on a given tune, and a certain density of information. That could be

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followed by a stripped down, emotionally direct ballad. Mehldau favors juxtaposing extremes. He has attracted a sizeable following over the years, one that has grown to expect singular, intense experiences from his performances.

In addition to his trio and solo projects, Mehldau has worked with a number of great jazz musicians, including a rewarding gig with saxophonist Joshua Redman's band for two years, recordings and concerts with Pat Metheny, Charlie Haden and Lee Konitz, and recording as a sideman with the likes of Michael Brecker, Wayne Shorter, John Scofield, and Charles Lloyd. For more than a decade, he has collaborated with several musicians and peers whom he respects greatly, including the guitarists Peter Bernstein and Kurt Rosenwinkel and tenor saxophonist Mark Turner. Mehldau also has played on a number of recordings outside of the jazz idiom, like on Willie Nelson's *Teatro* and singer-songwriter Joe Henry's

Scar. His music has appeared in several movies, including Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* and Wim Wender's *Million Dollar Hotel*. He also composed an original soundtrack for the French film *Ma Femme est une Actrice*. Mehldau composed two new works commissioned by Carnegie Hall for voice and piano, *The Blue Estuaries* and *The Book of Hours: Love Poems to God*, which were performed in the spring of 2005 with the acclaimed classical soprano, Renée Fleming. These songs were recorded with Fleming and released in 2006 on the *Love Sublime* record; simultaneously, Nonesuch released an album of Mehldau's jazz compositions for trio entitled *House on Hill*.

A 2008 Carnegie Hall commission for a cycle of seven love songs for Swedish mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter premiered in 2010. *Love Songs*, a double album that paired the newly commissioned song cycle with a selection of French, American, English, and Swedish songs that Mehldau and von Otter performed together, was released in late 2010 (on the Naïve label) to unanimous praise. In 2013, Mehldau premiered and performed *Variations on a Melancholy Theme*, a large format orchestral piece that was performed with both the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and the Britten Sinfonia. Commissioned by Carnegie Hall, the Royal Conservatory of Music, the Na-

BRAD MEHLDAU DISCOGRAPHY

As a Leader/Solo:

- Your Mother Should Know* (2023)
- Jacob's Ladder* (2022)
- Variations on a Melancholy Theme* (2021)
- Suite: April 2020* (2020)
- Finding Gabriel* (2020)
- Seymour Reads The Constitution!* (2018)
- After Bach* (2018)
- Blues And Ballads* (2016)
- Ten Years Solo Live* (2015)
- Where Do You Start* (2012)
- Ode* (2012)
- Live in Marciac* (2011)
- Highway Rider* (2010)
- Trio Live* (2008)
- House on Hill* (2006)
- Day Is Done* (2005)
- Live In Tokyo* (2004)
- Anything Goes* (2004)
- Largo* (2002)
- Art of the Trio V –Progressions* (2001)
- Places* (2000)
- Art of the Trio IV – Back at the Vanguard* (1999)
- Elegiac Cycle /"Solo Piano Music"* (1999)
- Art of the Trio III – Songs* (1998)
- Art of the Trio II – Live at the Vanguard* (1998)
- Art of the Trio* (1997)
- Introducing Brad Mehldau* (1995)

As a Co-Leader:

- LongGone* (2022)
- RoundAgain* (2020)
- Chris Thile & Brad Mehldau* (2017)
- Joshua Redman/Brad Mehldau Duo – Nearness* (2016)
- Mehliana: Taming the Dragon* (2013)
- Modern Music* (2011)
- Konitz/Mehldau/Haden/Motian – Live at Birdland* (2010)
- Anne Sofie Von Otter and Brad Mehldau – Love Songs* (2010)
- Metheny Mehldau Quartet* (2007)
- Brad Mehldau and Renée Fleming – Love Sublime* (2006)
- Metheny Mehldau* (2006)
- Charlie Haden & Brad Mehldau – Long Ago & Far Away* (2018)

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tional Concert Hall, and Wigmore Hall with the support of Andre Hoffmann (president of the Fondation Hoffmann) in 2015, Mehldau's *Three Pieces After Bach* were inspired by selections from Johann Sebastian Bach's seminal work, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. In 2018, Mehldau premiered his Piano Concerto at the Philharmonie de Paris, commissioned by L'Orchestre national d'Île-de-France and Festival Jazz à la Villette Paris, L'Auditori de Barcelona, National Forum of Music, Wroclaw, Poland (Jazztopad Festival), the Barbican Centre London and Britten Sinfonia, and Philharmonie Luxembourg and Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association, Gustavo Dudamel Artistic Director. In 2019, Mehldau premiered his song cycle *The Folly of Desire* with tenor Ian Bostridge. The work was commissioned by the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Wigmore Hall, Stanford Live at Stanford University, and Carnegie Hall.

Mehldau was appointed as curator of an annual four-concert jazz series at London's prestigious Wigmore Hall during its 2009–10 and 2010–11 seasons, with Mehldau appearing in at least two of the four annual concerts. In late January 2010, Carnegie Hall announced the 2010–11 season-long residency by Mehldau as holder of the Richard and Barbara Debs Composer's Chair at Carnegie Hall—the first time a jazz artist has held this position since it was established in 1995. Previous holders include Louis Andriessen (2009–2010), Elliott Carter (2008–2009), and John Adams (2003–2007).

Larry Grenadier

As one of the most admired and accomplished bassists working in jazz today, Larry Grenadier has been praised as “a deeply intuitive” musician by the *New York Times* and as an instrumentalist with a “fluid sense of melody” by *Bass Player Magazine*. Grenadier has created an expansive body of work

in collaboration with many of the genre's most inventive, influential musicians—from early days playing with sax icons Joe Henderson and Stan Getz to what has been decades performing alongside pianist Brad Mehldau. He's had extended experiences working with the likes of Paul Motian and Pat Metheny and co-leads both the cooperative trio Fly (with Mark Turner and Jeff Ballard) and the quartet Hudson (with John Scofield, John Medeski and Jack DeJohnette). Over a performing and recording career that now spans three decades, it has been not only Grenadier's instrumental virtuosity and instantly recognizable tone that have made him such an in-demand collaborator but also his uncommon artistic sensitivity, imagination, and curiosity.

In February 2019, ECM Records released Grenadier's first solo bass album. Titled *The Gleaners*, it presents a brace of originals by the bassist alongside pieces by George Gershwin, John Coltrane, and Paul Motian, as well as a pair of pieces written especially for Grenadier by guitarist and fellow ECM artist Wolfgang Muthspiel. Grenadier also includes an instrumental interpretation of a song by his wife, and frequent collaborator, the singer-songwriter Rebecca Martin. “The process for making this record began with a look inward, an excavation into the core elements of who I am as a bass player. It was a search for a center of sound and timbre, for the threads of harmony and rhythm that formulate the crux of a musical identity,” says Grenadier.

Of his performance style, Grenadier has observed: “I'm hyper-aware of the balance between a studied approach to music and a more primal, instinctual understanding of the way music works. Having access to technique is useful in being able to communicate and express yourself musically. But music is about intuition and emotion. Compassion, strength, flexibility, and stamina are all important qualities in playing music. But the most important thing is the ability to

listen.” Despite his veteran status, “playing music is still a learning experience for me. I’m always working on the technical aspects of my playing, but at the same time, I know that what happens on stage between musicians isn’t about that. The level of telepathy and intuition that exists in music, especially in jazz, is a constant reminder of what we’re capable of, both inside and outside of music.”

Jeff Ballard

As a child, Jeff Ballard would lie in bed and listen to the music his father would play: Count Basie, Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Sérgio Mendes, Oscar Peterson, and Milton Nascimento. “I remember feeling the power of a Basie big band shout chorus, which would then suddenly disappear into some quiet dancing riff,” said Ballard, a native of Santa Cruz, California. “It was the swing in it that excited me the most. I also remember how it felt traveling through sounds of the jungle in a Milton Nascimento record. The drums, percussion, and voice would sound as if they either came from the earth or were made of water. And I was so happy to hear the joy of Ella and Louis singing and playing together. I think that early exposure has made me part of what I am today, especially in regard to my love for sound.”

At the age of 25, Ballard began an educational journey no college could match. He went on the road for eight months annually from 1988 to 1990 with Ray Charles, backing one of music’s biggest stars, perfecting

his time feels and tempos from playing with Charles nightly on the bandstand. In 1990, Ballard moved to New York and jumped into the transformative scene that was developing there at the time. He began collaborating with Kurt Rosenwinkel, Brad Mehldau, Mark Turner, Joshua Redman, and Ben Allison, among others—artists who were mixing jazz tradition with their own influences, ranging from Middle Eastern rhythms to electronica and modern hip hop.

Ballard also has performed and toured with Eddie Harris, Bobby Hutcherson, Buddy Montgomery, Lou Donaldson, Mike Stern, Joshua Redman, Pat Metheny, and Danilo Pérez. He joined Chick Corea in 1999 and continued to play with the legendary keyboardist up until his death in 2021. His present work continues with the Brad Mehldau Trio, as co-leader of collective group Fly (featuring Mark Turner, Ballard, and Larry Grenadier) and with his own groups, the Jeff Ballard Trio and Jeff Ballard Fairgrounds. On January 25th, 2019, Jeff Ballard Fairgrounds released its debut album, *Fairgrounds*, on Edition Records. The music is filled with wide-open improvisations and originals touching on the blues, rock and roll, electronica, and RB. It can have the funkier grooves or a meditative minimalistic space, or it can go all the way over and outside to the unexpected world of free jazz, thus confirming Ballard as one of the most stylistically diverse drummers on the contemporary scene.