

CHAN CENTRE
presents

SAT OCT 15 2022 / 8PM

Makaya McCraven





"McCraven has spent the past decade cementing his status as one of the most individual voices in jazz"

– The Guardian

Makaya McCraven

IN THESE TIMES

PROGRAM

PRE-SHOW TALK

7:15PM RBC Cinema

Nou Dadoun

OPENING ACT

8PM Chan Shun Concert Hall

Gordon Grdina's Haram

Gordon Grdina - *Guitar / Oud*

Jesse Zubot - *Violin*

Francois Houle - *Clarinet*

Chris Kelly - *Sax*

Kenton Loewen - *Drums*

Tim Gerwing - *Darbuke*

Emad Armouch - *Vocals / Ney*

Special Guest, Trevor Dunn - *Bass*

INTERMISSION

PERFORMANCE

Makaya McCraven - *Drums*

D'sean Jones - *Saxophone*

Junius Paul - *Bass*

Marquis Hill - *Trumpet*

Jeff Parker - *Guitar*

Jahari Stampley - *Piano*

Zara Zaharieva - *Violin*

Jasmine James - *Cello*

Kristina Priceman - *Violin*

Indira Edwards - *Viola*

Remember to tag us on social media!

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ʔi ʔə tə ńa ʃx"məθk"əyəmaʔɬ təməx"

The Chan Centre for the Performing Arts is situated
within the heart of Musqueam traditional territory



Canada

creativeBC



Makaya McCraven

Makaya McCraven is a prolific drummer, composer and producer. His newest album, *In These Times*, is the triumphant finale of a project 7+ years in the making. It's a preeminent addition to his already-acclaimed and extensive discography, and it's the album he's been trying to make since he started making records.

McCraven believes that the word "jazz" is "insufficient, at best, to describe the phenomenon we're dealing with." The artist, who has been aptly called a "cultural synthesizer", has a unique gift for collapsing space, destroying borders and blending past, present, and future into poly-textural arrangements of post-genre, jazz-rooted 21st century folk music. Profiled in *Vice*, *Rolling Stone*, the *Guardian*, and *NPR*, among other publications, he and the music he makes today are at the very vanguard of that phenomenon. According to the *New York Times*, "McCraven has quietly become one of the best arguments for jazz's vitality". The artist explained to *NPR* in 2019, "I don't think what I'm doing is necessarily that far off of the legacy of jazz that I grew up in ... I think one of the things that gives it strength is that people want to argue over it. That's a good sign. That means there's life here."

Born in Paris in the Autumn of 1983 to Hungarian singer and flutist Ágnes Zsigmondi and African-American expat jazz drummer Stephen McCraven, Makaya was raised in a vibrant, creative community in the Northampton, Massachusetts area, where his father often played with artists like saxophonist and ethnomusicologist Marion Brown, multi-instrumentalist Yusef Lateef, and saxophonist Archie Shepp, as well as a cadre of African Gnawa musicians. That scene, with its enticing blend of cultures, helped establish his philosophy around jazz as folk music. Meanwhile, his mother's music blended Eastern European folk traditions, concurrently shaping his conceptions about the role of music in building and reflecting communities.

"I'm really drawn to folk music. Music of aural tradition, music that is of the people where it's more of a collective experience of music and dance and culture that we all participate in and know as part of our being or as part of who we are." He sees his work as a continuation of those traditions, noting, "I like to teach the music to musicians by ear, and hope even when I bring in more challenging rhythms, or difficult time signatures, I am able to do it in a way that is of the body and of the people of the earth in a way that's not necessarily some intellectual experiment, but more something that's dealing with people."

While immersed as a youth in global folk traditions, he was also a child of the nineties, deeply influenced by sample-based hip-hop. He observed that jazz was sometimes perceived by his peers as "something that was old, corny, white... going to get you beat up." This directly countered his own experience with the music: "That was such a strange idea to me, because the guys I grew up around were cool, and [weren't] buttoned up like that."

Eventually he discovered bridges between jazz and hip-hop, including classic jazz records being sampled by hip-hop producers such as Pete Rock, and began to devote energy to “reappropriate this music to be what it is, what it means to me, and what it means for my people.”

After cutting his teeth in the Western Massachusetts music scene, co-founding a jazz-hip hop band called Cold Duck Complex that ultimately opened for The Pharcyde, Digable Planets, and the Wu-Tang Clan, he and his partner (now wife, comparative race studies scholar Nitasha Tamar Sharma) moved to Chicago in 2006. McCraven soon found himself immersed in both the creative and straight-ahead jazz scenes, proving his versatility, and along the way finding a community that mirrored the pulsating scene that birthed him artistically. Within five years’ time, he’d established a name for himself, gigging alongside scene stalwarts like Willie Pickens, Marquis Hill and Jeff Parker.

He first connected with the founders of Chicago’s International Anthem label in late 2011, and across 2012-2013 they hosted and recorded a series of improvised jazz nights featuring his combo at The Bedford, a club situated in what was once an old basement bank vault. McCraven took 48 hours of recordings and sculpted beguiling hip-hop beats, not unlike how Teo Macero looped and assembled Miles Davis’s *On the Corner* from improvised magic. At the time, McCraven thought of the project, which became the 2015 double LP release *In The Moment*, as an opportunity to connect and to “find a young audience in this music. It just felt like the right time and a place where I could really connect with people.” That notion proved prophetic: JazzTimes called the album “one of the year’s most mesmerizing releases,” the record was an “Album of the Week” pick by taste-making DJ Gilles Peterson on BBC 6Music, and it was chosen for “Best of 2015” lists by PopMatters, NPR, and the Los Angeles Times.

McCraven continued to hone his process of live improvisation and sampling with *Highly Rare* in 2017 (crafted from a live set recorded at Danny’s Tavern in Chicago), 2018’s *Where We Come From* (CHICAGOxLONDON Mixtape), which was built from recordings of a showcase at London’s Total Refreshment Centre, and *Universal Beings* (also released in 2018). *Universal Beings*, consisting of augmented live sessions in Chicago and New York, in addition to pop-up studio sessions in London and Los Angeles, concretely reflects his borderless multinational ethos. The work featured varying configurations of international players, including Nubya Garcia and Shabaka Hutchings from London, Junius Paul and Tomeka Reid of Chicago, Anna Butterss and Miguel Atwood-Ferguson from Los Angeles, and Brandee Younger and Dezron Douglas from New York.

The title of the album was culled from a sampled passage on the track “Brighter Days Beginning,” in which percussionist Carlos Niño offers, “We’re universal beings,” a theme of borderlessness that resonated deeply with McCraven, who grew up in a multicultural household and community. “I’m not beholden to this border or this city,” McCraven told Vice in 2018, “What is a place? Other than the people. It’s just dirt, you know?” The resulting album was called “radiant” and “hypnotic” by Pitchfork.

In 2019, McCraven both delivered a triumphant Jazz Night in America

performance at South Shore Cultural Center in Chicago, and mounted a multimedia performance of an early iteration of what became his new album *In These Times*, at the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis .

In the meantime, he remixed Gil Scott-Heron's final album (2010's *I'm New Here*) for 2020's *We're New Again: A Reimagining* by Makaya McCraven, issued Universal Beings E+F Sides (also in 2020, and delved into the venerable Blue Note Records catalog in 2021 for *Deciphering the Message*, each project also employing new improvisations and sampling, helping to further cement his "beat scientist" moniker. Concurrently, the seeds for 2022's *In These Times* were budding, and their nurseries were stages around the globe. McCraven explains, "As I've been touring, I've been performing music off of the record *In These Times*... When *In the Moment* took off and I started touring a lot, we would go on the road and 50% of the music was just my concept and my compositions."

In These Times, a collection of polytemporal compositions inspired as much by broader cultural struggles as McCraven's personal experience as a product of a multinational, working class musician community, is the recording that McCraven has been trying to create for 7+ years, as it's been slowly cooking in the background while his other works were released. He began recording *In These Times* seven years ago, but "for whatever reason, *Universal Beings* just came to fruition much quicker. It just took more time for this to mature into everything it's become. With the success of *Universal Beings* and the *Universal Beings* concerts that we did (with Red Bull) in Chicago at South Shore Cultural Center and le poisson rouge in New York, I had an opportunity to realize the record not as a collection of four sides of trios and quartets, but I turned that record as a performance into a 10 to 12-person concert, and that experience ended up evolving my approach to *In These Times*."

In These Times encompasses all he's lived through, as well as his lineage, while also pushing the music forward. Music critic Passion of the Weiss suggested that "McCraven's work, both with younger players and the sounds of older recordings, is part of a necessary conversation about the next evolution of the Black improvised music known colloquially as 'jazz.' He's found the threads connecting the past with the present, and is either wrapping them with new colors and textures, or he's plucking them gleefully like the strings of a grand instrument." McCraven concurs: "To me, that is the tradition that I want to try to take part in. Being well-rooted, but walking into the future, is really what all of the leaders in this music have done that I admire. And I think that resonates with people. Something that's like how we know it, but is evolving... It's just where I am at, where we're at, and the evolution of that, and that's what I'm trying to be."

Gordon Grdina's Haram



Juno Award-winner Gordon Grdina formed Haram in 2008 as a large ensemble vehicle to interpret classic Arabic repertoire. The group started with Iraqi folk music and the great era of Egyptian radio music in which Oum Kalthoum and Farid Al Atrash reigned. It has since expanded to incorporate the classic Sudanese and Persian repertoire. These pieces are lovingly reinterpreted with an ensemble half studied in the tradition and half in avant-garde improvisation. This blend of traditions is what gives Haram its unique sound.

Through improvisation and arrangement the band keeps alive the spirit and Tarab inherent within the compositions. These time-tested pieces are blown wide open by the ensemble mixing elements of noise, electronic soundscape, and free improvisation. The music has developed to the state of effortless cohesion mixed with wild abandon conjuring up a sense of respect and homage while being explosively self-expressive. Haram is a powerhouse ensemble playing a repertoire that has been revered by millions.

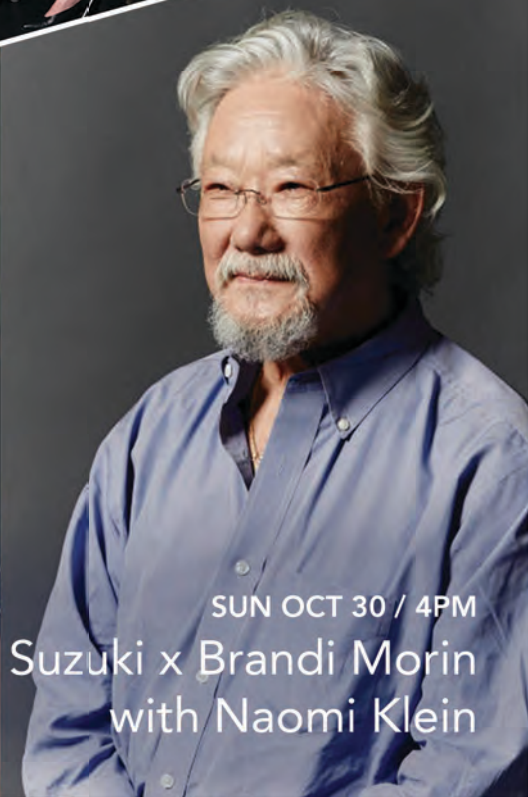
Nou Dadoun



Nou Dadoun is a jazz radio host (The A-Trane since 1986), researcher and journalist with interests in creative music, jazz, musical communities and related social history, South African jazz, Women in Jazz, and multi-disciplinary arts in general. He has a Ph.D. in computer science from UBC and works as a senior software engineer in research and development of computer security technologies. This is his fifth Chan Centre pre-concert talk.

CHAN CENTRE
presents

SAT OCT 29 / 8 PM
Oswaldo Golijov's
Falling Out of Time



SUN OCT 30 / 4PM
David Suzuki x Brandi Morin
with Naomi Klein