

Su Lian Tan

ARSIS

Jamaica's Songs
U-Don Rock
River of the Trunk

Jamaica Kincaid &
John Elder
readers
Brenda Patterson
mezzo-soprano
Szilvia Schranz
soprano
David Bowlin
violin
Darrett Adkins
cello
Margo Garrett &
Donald Berman
piano





Jamaica's Songs, after the session. l. to r.: Bowlin, Adkins, Patterson, Eachus, Berman

Music by
SU LIAN TAN

- | | | |
|----|---|-------|
| 1 | <i>Jamaica's Songs</i> read by Jamaica Kincaid | 6:47 |
| | <i>Jamaica's Songs</i> | |
| 2 | 1. <i>mystery</i> | 6:17 |
| 3 | 2. <i>angry</i> | 2:18 |
| 4 | 3. <i>grave</i> | 4:57 |
| 5 | 4. <i>whisper</i> | 1:42 |
| 6 | 5. <i>grazioso</i> | 4:44 |
| 7 | 6. <i>lullaby</i> | 3:19 |
| 8 | 7. <i>stern</i> | 3:18 |
| 9 | 8. <i>terms</i> | 2:55 |
| | Brenda Patterson, mezo-soprano • David Bowlin, violin
Darrett Adkins, cello • Donald Berman, piano | |
| 10 | <i>U-Don Rock</i> for piano
Donald Berman, piano | 10:33 |
| 11 | <i>River of the Trunk</i> read by John Elder | 2:47 |
| | <i>River of the Trunk</i> | |
| 12 | 1. <i>Germinal</i> | 4:54 |
| 13 | 2. <i>Transit of Venus</i> | 4:32 |
| 14 | 3. <i>River</i> | 4:07 |
| | Szilvia Schranz, soprano • David Bowlin, violin
Darrett Adkins, cello • Margo Garrett, piano | |
| | Total CD Time: 63:12 | |

Jamaica's Songs

Jamaica's Songs, commissioned by Middlebury College, was premiered in 2000 as part of the College's bicentennial celebrations. Many musicians who have performed this cycle, as well as audience members, find a great solace in its expression. They have remarked, and often, that they find in these songs a channel for mixed emotions regarding their mothers, almost a way out of them. Strong negative feelings as well as longing and pure childlike love emanate from the text by Jamaica Kincaid. She wrote these songs for me the year her mother died and I felt it very necessary to help in her process of healing. My heart went out to her, as heard sometimes in the instrumental writing, this most gifted and powerful of writers. I have meandered in Jamaica's garden in Vermont with pleasure, as I have found the courage to grow in her company.

—Su Lian Tan

Jamaica's Songs

1. mystery

And so, Our Mother was before Order and our Mother is now dead and our Mother had been living in Chaos:

And when our Mother was dead, the three of us who had survived her being alive, were weighed down with grief and we were beside ourselves with sadness, for how were we to live without her:

And her life was without borders, and so there were no boundaries, and she moved from here to there, and made there nowhere and made nowhere memorable, and we were from her and then we were of her and so we were here and there and nowhere. But our Mother was before order and she managed the very winds themselves (or so it seemed to us), dispatching amusing gusts, which affected us as if we were in a storm, a storm that had taken place on another planet governed by rules not at all familiar on earth:

2. angry

When our mother died, we loved her not at all then and we had not loved her just before she died and we had not loved her just before even that and we had not loved our mother for

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a long time and we had not loved as if she was an enemy now dead, now long since dead, and we had not loved her as if she was at long last dead, as if she was dead and could no longer see the sun rise up to announce the beginning of a new day and settle steadily on the horizon to announce again the day's end:

3. grave

And did we love her, our Mother?

But then she was dead and lying in the cold vault at the undertakers and in the dark of the vault, and she was our Mother and she was dead: and from the outside, the vault of the undertakers was so much like the vault inside a bank in which would be stored not a body whose important contents were stored elsewhere, but things valuable in the world we now know, the world we now know, the world we at this very moment know, for we have to remind ourselves—that is, my brothers and I, the mere remnants of our Mother's life—each day as we step out of bed that we are not dead and instead are in the thing called, now:

4. whisper

And our mother was dead: and at the undertakers her body lay on a large aluminum tray, and she was still wearing the clothes she had been wearing at the moment she dropped dead, for she had dropped dead in the middle of something she had been doing, she had not become dead while lying in her bed peacefully:

And on that cold aluminum tray on which she lay, horizontal, her body stiff, so bilgy in her everyday clothes, like the contents of a not human stomach that could not be digested and so was on the plate again; and on the aluminum plate my mother's body looked not like a specimen in itself: and I was so weighed down with curiosity then looking at her dead and lying on the aluminum tray, not with grief, only with curiosity, for who was that being, that thing, lying on the aluminum tray and who looked like my mother, but only it was dead, for my mother was dead, our mother had died.

5. grazioso

And the sadness of that sight, our mother's body being lowered into the ground, being lowered into the eternity that is so pervasive and so complete that all things living long violate and shatter it, we were weighed down with grief and our grief made us dead also and our grief

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settled on us as if it were a natural clothing we did not know we needed and grief settled on us as if it was clothes especially made and fitted for us and our grief seemed as natural to us as our skin itself, and the sadness of that sight, our mother being laid into the ground dead, never to be regarded as alive again, made us feel as if we were dead also for it was so new to us to be alive while our mother was not:

6. lullaby

And our Mother was dead, we could see that this was so, but we could not forget that while she was alive she would appear in our dreams, sometimes as a knotted serpent, sometimes as a tiger with wings, sometimes as a large bird equipped with claws and fangs, sometimes as a fish with a hidden mouth, sometimes as a great runner who had no legs, sometimes as a mountain at the bottom of the sea, and most frightening of all, sometimes she would appear as just our mother, with a nice face and a smile on her lips and her lips were just where her lips ought to be and her arms outstretched to hold us and press us into her bosoms forever and even forever beyond that:

7. stern

And our mother died while in motion and only death itself could bring an end to that torrent, that whirlwind, that avalanche of hatred and love all mixed up and inextricable, so blind, so blind, so blindly mixed up until it had come to be its own form of life and nothing could eradicate it and nothing could modify it, and nothing known could make it understandable and only death could bring it to a stand-still and only death could make its powers cease growing:

8. terms

And her life (this, our Mother's), had been like a sea and we (her four children) had been a boat on it, and her life had been like a boat on an ever unstable sea and we were the passengers in it and her life had been only like itself, her life, and we were only incidents in it and we remained incidents in it and we were four incidents in it and our Mother died but by then we were three incidents in it, her life, one incident had been removed; our Mother died and the sea on which we had been a boat in which we had been passengers, it all came to a rest and within that rest was much turbulence.

—Jamaica Kincaid

U-Don Rock

This piece for Don Berman is only the beginning of our collaboration. I love dedicating pieces to specific performers, as it is a chance to document their special talents as well as persuasions, and even quirks! Don asked for this piece after he heard *Moo Shu Rap Wrap*, which I wrote for the Meridian Arts Ensemble. So how does one incorporate pop and rap styles into everything else that one loves about the piano and its repertoire? *U-Don Rock* is my first attempt! As in *Moo Shu*, I give the performer freedom to improvise, in this case, I asked Don to go for Scriabin-like passages. I also took the liberty of composing sections with a strong Asian influence. Although we hadn't talked about his personal history, Don later divulged that I had captured some of his past and pop-pianist yearnings of his youth. Toward the middle, I incorporated an Ives-like passage of music as a tribute to Don's fantastic interpretation of that composer's piano music.

River of the Trunk

When I read some of John Elder's writing after knowing him as a friend and colleague, I felt a familiar stirring. It was the same one as when spring comes after a harsh winter, the sensuality of seasons changing. I know that composers and poets have historically felt a similar pleasure and this has excited them into making art. So of course, I followed through, asking John for some texts to compose songs with. This piece, an ode to nature, was composed for the Cabrini Quartet, featuring Christine Schadeberg, so it had to capture the beauty of her voice, full of lovely lightness and depth as well.

The violence of natural forces gives way to delicate beauty in the first song. We wrote this piece the year of the transit of Venus, so the counterpoint and the romantic sensibility are in celebration of this rare phenomenon, and of love, too! When March comes in Vermont, the sky often is heavy with a grey pall and we long for spring. When the sap begins to flow from the maple trees, we realize that it begins the renewal, quietly but joyously.

—Su Lian Tan

River of the Trunk

1. Germinal

Under the gray crust of snow,
frozen in the chaff of fallen years,
wet leaf-meal clotting into soil,
the O-horizon's deep black sky
spangled with frozen stars,
something moves at last.
And a maple key,
dreaming where it lit
on two stiff wings,
veined like the wings
of a dragonfly,
two hundred nights ago
stirs in its sleep,
opening at the touch of water,
giving everything
for one pale root
to slide into the loosening world,
for a tender stem and two round
leaves.

2. Transit of Venus

When the planetary speck
comes near the sun,
a human watcher sees
a bridge of fire
flare out and that
grand circle rup-
ture like the maple
trees winged disk
in spring.

And when that small
black wanderer
enters the hot
interior, the
smooth circumference
flexes in,
giving way again.

River of the Trunk (continued)

3. River

Standing in the dark
mountains and
peering through a
thick smoked pane,
an observer sees
celestial calm
return as
Venus glides for
minutes past
that broad face.

And when the
other edge
is reached, the
sun is suddenly
whipsawed again,
discomposed by
consternation
or delight.

March again.
The near ridge blocks the sun by three.
Cold cruises up the valley
like a mile of ice.
High maple twigs, patina of
the graying sky,
budded and slender, furred with frost,
suck in the sap, their only chance
to make it through this night.
They hold their breath, engorged.
Morning sun will shine forever
before the twigs can give it up.
Released at last, sap trickles down
a thousand springs
into the river of the trunk.
Still half-filled with ice,
lidded buckets tick on every tree.

SU LIAN TAN was born in Malaysia in 1964. One of the most sought-after composers and flutists, Su Lian Tan made her first recordings as a flutist by age fourteen. By age seventeen, she was both a Fellow and Licentiate of the Trinity College, London. She has appeared with orchestras and ensembles worldwide, and her performances and performances of her music have been featured on radio's Morning Pro Musica, Dutch public radio, CBC radio, and many more. She has performed at Lincoln Center with many ensembles.

Numerous ensembles have commissioned her, including the Grammy-winning Takacs String Quartet, Meridian Arts Ensemble, Vermont Symphony Orchestra, and the New Juilliard Ensemble. *Moo Shu Rap Wrap*, written for the Meridian Arts Ensemble, has been toured throughout the U.S., Europe, and South America and recorded. Additionally, Ms. Tan has performed with them in Amsterdam, The Hague, Germany, and at the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival. Recent commissions and performances include a second quartet for the Takacs, a chamber opera composed with poet Anne Babson, the premiere of a work for Donald Berman/Dinosaur Annex and also a work for celebrated mime Yass Hakoshima and the Da Capo Chamber Players. Her work has been featured at the Ravinia Festival, Caramoor Festival, Summergarden at MOMA, Lincoln Center, and Le Poisson Rouge, among others.

As Professor of Music and former Chairman of the Music Department at Middlebury College, she is known for her unique musical perspective and connecting to her students through the exploration of all

kinds of music. In addition to teaching composition, she also coaches, conducts, and coordinates both student and professional concerts.

Su Lian Tan has garnered numerous distinctions, including grants from Meet the Composer, American Music Center, and the Argosy Foundation, awards from ASCAP, an Irving Berlin Scholarship award, Naumberg Fellowship, and a Vermont Music Teachers Association award. In addition to being the Chair of the Editorial Committee of Vox Nova Media for the Lotte Lehmann Foundation, she has been guest lecturer at the Princeton Institute for Advanced Study, Dartmouth College, University of Colorado School of Music, among others. She holds a Ph.D and M.M. from Princeton University, a M.M from the Juilliard School, and a B.A from Bennington College.



BRENDA PATTERSON, described by the New York Times as “a voice you want to hear and, even more, an artist you want to follow,” recently made her Metropolitan Opera debut (“an impressive showing” —Operacast) as a Wood Sprite in Dvorak’s

Rusalka. In residence for three seasons (2005-8) at the Hamburg State Opera in Germany, she sang such roles there as Idamante, Dorabella, Niklausse, Annio, Hänsel, Cherubino, and Rosina, among many others.

A Juilliard graduate (and recipient of the Taranow Prize in Voice), she was the 2004 Winner of the Alice Tully Vocal Arts Debut Recital Competition in New York.

She has participated in most of the major American music festivals, and has sung roles with Glimmerglass Opera, Berkshire Opera, and others. She is also a regular guest at the Charlottesville Chamber Music Festival and the Greenwich Music Festival.

Recent projects have included a solo show with the Gotham Chamber Opera and the Armitage Gone! dance troupe entitled *Ariadne Unhinged*, which Opera Today described as “electric,” and a return to the Orchestra of St. Luke’s Cantatas in Context Series, for which the New York Sun praised her as “a treasure among musicians”.



SZILVIA SCHRANZ was born in Budapest, Hungary into a family of musicians that had worked for generations in the Hungarian National Opera and Hungarian Festival Orchestra. At the age of 10 her family relocated in Boulder, Colorado where her father’s string quartet, the Grammy-winning Takács Quartet, were appointed as musicians-in-residence at the University of Colorado School of Music.

Ms. Schranz schooled in Boulder and later studied voice at the University of Colorado. She won First Prize in the school’s prestigious Anderson Vocal Competition and received a full scholarship to the Aspen Music Festival, receiving the B. A. degree in music in 1998

After graduating from the University of Colorado, Ms. Schranz performed at the Denver Center for Performing Arts. She then went to further her studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London receiving a post-graduate diploma in vocal training in 1999, and at the Manhattan School of Music in New York City, earning the Master’s degree in 2003.

Today Ms. Schranz is captivating audiences across America and Europe with a voice that’s been called “breathhtakingly perfect” and “expressive and pure”. She resides with her husband in Manhattan and continues to expand her career as a solo and opera singer.



Violinist **DAVID BOWLIN** is active as a soloist, chamber musician, and teacher, and is an accomplished performer of a broad range of repertoire both old and new. A first-prize winner at the 2003 Washington International Competition and the 2007 Samuel



Baron Prize from Stony Brook University, David is a founding member of the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), and a former member of the Da Capo Chamber Players, with whom he has toured extensively in the US and former Soviet Union.

In addition to David's extensive chamber music performances, he has performed and recorded with members of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and toured with Musicians from Marlboro. Recording credits include works of Stravinsky, Webern, George Crumb, Chinary Ung, Huang Ruo, Richard Wernick, Dai Fujikura, Ursula Mamlok, and Brian Fennelly. He is also artistic director of Chamber Music Quad-

Cities, an organization that brings chamber music performances to the community in eastern Iowa and western Illinois where David is a native.

In 2007 David was appointed Assistant Professor of Violin at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, having taught previously at The Juilliard School. David is a member of the Oberlin Trio with Oberlin Conservatory faculty members Haewon Song and Amir Eldan.

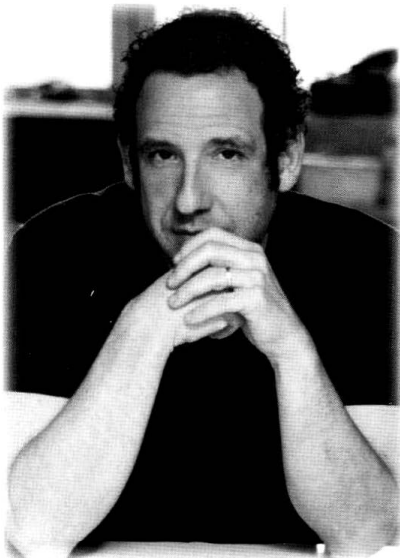
Performances by cellist **DARRETT ADKINS** have been called "heroic," "stunning," "intensely involving" (New York Times) and "fiery" (Boston Globe). This "adventurous champion of contemporary music" (Strings Magazine) has given many important first performances of new works including the first New York performance and recording of Luciano Berio's *Sequenza XIV* (Naxos), the first American Performance of Donatoni's concerto "*un ruisseau sur l'escalier*," the world premier of Andrew Mead's Cello Concerto, and during his tenure with the Flux Quartet, the first complete performance of Morton Feldman's *String Quartet No. 2*, lasting 6 continuous hours (later recorded and released by Mode Records).

No stranger to the standard repertoire, Mr. Adkins has performed concertos with the Orchestra of St. Luke's, the Tokyo Philharmonic, Cleveland's Red {an orchestra}, the Prime Orchestra and the Suwon Philharmonic (Korea), the Orchestre National de UFF (Brazil), and the North Carolina and New Hampshire Symphony Orchestras, among others. Recently, he was a guest of the Juilliard String Quartet recording Jay Greenberg's *String Quintet* (Sony Masterworks). He also gave the first concert performance of Greenberg's Quintet with the Chiara Quartet.

Mr. Adkins serves on the cello and chamber music faculties of The Juilliard School, the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, and the Aspen Music Festival and School.



American pianist **DONALD BERMAN** is recognized as one of the chief exponents of new works by living composers, overlooked music by 20th century masters, and recitals that link classical and modern repertoires. He has established an extensive discography in the works of major American composers, including Ives, Ruggles,



including Ives, Ruggles, Kernis, Levering, Wheeler, Boykan, and many others. Mr. Berman's acclaimed 2-volume *The Unknown* represents the only extant recording of the complete short piano works of Charles Ives. On *The Uncovered Ruggles* Mr. Berman offers premiere recordings of unpublished sketches, transcriptions, and realizations of Ruggles' music by John Kirkpatrick. His most recent recordings, *American in Rome*, and, with soprano Susan Narucki, *The Light That Is Felt* (songs by Charles Ives) were named CD of the month by *BBC Magazine*.

Donald Berman has performed to critical acclaim at major venues in the United States, Europe, and the Middle East. As an educator Mr. Berman has presented recitals, lectures, and masterclasses in Israel, Italy, and throughout the United States. He teaches at Tufts University

and directs the New England Conservatory Summer Piano Institute.

A prizewinner of the 1991 Schubert International Competition, Mr. Berman studied with Leonard Shure, John Kirkpatrick, George Barth, and Mildred Victor. He lives with his wife and two children in New York City.

Pianist **MARGO GARRETT** is well known to audiences for her frequent performances in chamber, sonata, and vocal recitals. She has had long performing relationships with a large roster of internationally known artists. Her recordings can be found on the Albany, CRI, Deutsche Grammophon, Musical Heritage Society, Nonesuch, and Sony Classical labels. Active for many years in the world of contemporary music, she has premiered more than 30 works.



Ms. Garrett is a dedicated leader among educators of collaborative pianists. She returned in 2000 to The Juilliard School collaborative piano faculty, which she headed from 1985 to 1992. From 1992 to 2004, she was the first holder of the Ethel Alice Hitchcock Chair in Accompanying and Coaching at the University of Minnesota's School of Music. At the Tanglewood Music Center she directed the vocal fellowship program for the last six of her 19 years of teaching there. As co-director of the Cape and Islands Music Festival, Ms. Garrett was awarded ASCAP's Most Creative Programming Award. From 1999 through 2006, Ms. Garrett was the faculty chair of the Steans Institute for Young Artist's vocal and chamber music programs at Chicago Symphony's Ravinia Festival.

In recent seasons Ms. Garrett was in residence at the Conservatory of Music in Munich, and served on the panel of judges for the 15th International Robert Schumann Vocal Competition in Zwickau, Germany.

JAMAICA KINCAID is the author of three novels, *Annie John* (1985), *Lucy* (1990), *The Autobiography of My Mother* (1996), *My Brother* (1997), a collection of Short Stories, *At the Bottom of the River* (1983), and a collection of essays, *A Small Place*. Early on she wrote a series of articles for *Ingenue* magazine, and until 1995 she was a staff writer for *The New Yorker*. Her work frequently explores issue about colonialism and slavery and her personal anger associated with it. She has taught at Bennington College and Harvard University, and she is now a Professor of Literature at Claremont McKenna College in California where she continues to garden and to write about gardening.

JOHN ELDER's most recent books are *Reading the Mountains of Home* (1998), and *The Frog Run* (2002). He is currently writing *Pilgrimage to Vallombrosa*, on the 19th-century environmental writer George Perkins Marsh, and he has just started another, *In Hardwood Groves*. He frequently publishes essays in periodicals such as *Orion*, *Wild Earth*, *New Literary History*, and *Vermont Life*. He continues to be Professor of Literature at Middlebury College in Vermont.

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River of the Trunk and *U-Don Rock* were recorded on February 4, 2008, and *Jamaica's Songs* were recorded September 2, 2008 by Paul Eachus in Warner Concert Hall at Oberlin Conservatory of Music, Oberlin, Ohio. Editing and mastering was by Paul Eachus. We wish to thank David Stull, Dean of Oberlin College Conservatory of Music for making Warner Hall available for this recording.



River of the Trunk session. l. to r.: Bowlin, Schranz, Adkins, Garrett
Back Cover: l. to r.: Schranz, Adkins, Garrett