ALL VOWS

Maya Beiser

DATES: OCT 14—17 at 7:30pm
LOCATION: BAM Fisher (Fishman Space)
RUN TIME: 1hr 40min (with intermission)

#ALLVOWS
#BAMNextWave
ALL VOWS

PROGRAM

BLACK DOG
Led Zeppelin (J. P. Jones, J. Page, R. Plant) *

SUMMERTIME
Janis Joplin (G. Gershwin, I. Gershwin) *

MOANIN’ AT MIDNIGHT
Howlin’ Wolf (C. Burnett, J. Taub) *

THREE PARTS WISDOM
Glenn Kotche

HELLHOUND
David T. Little

LITHIUM
Nirvana (K. Cobain) *

BACK IN BLACK
AC/DC (A. Young, M. Young, B. Johnson) *

*Arranged by Evan Ziporyn

---------Intermission---------

KOL NIDREI
Mohammed Fairouz

ALL VOWS
Michael Gordon

JUST ANCIENT LOOPS
Michael Harrison
ABOUT
ALL VOWS

AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The anger of the bow against the softening wood beneath...

A hint of raindrop in the tear duct fertile fourth string...

An instrument tuned at perfect pitch to the human range of emotion...

Riding the lightning... creasing the sky at oddly bent angles... positioned like a Sanskrit symbol around the curved flesh of her sound, the cellist snake strikes the quiet... vows it into submission...

Like Adam under the hand of Yahweh, the cellist's sound has little choice in its shape. It is willed so according to the precise intention of its maker. Not the note itself, but its emotional bend, the lived dream of a timbre first seen behind the closed eyes of the musician. See her, reaching into the history of prescribed notes to coerce an itinerant present into its sonic destiny. There is a flush of the ecstatic in this task, a glory and a falling; the cellist does apostle work here, uses the force of wind to erode the stone heart, to re-sculpt it in the image of her magic.

Honestly though, the spells and such at a Maya Beiser concert are cast well before the bow is raised. At Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, the artist premiered a program that freely pulls apart a consistent historical narrative, surrendering to the joy of pure sound above the safe haven of expected recitation. Hers is a rock legend prayer, a grunge-laced painkiller, race music running up toward freedom, a time-warping. The core of All Vows is its synthesis of inter-cultural inspirations toward the aim of both cognitive dissonance and listening bliss. The program itself takes its name from the words spoken in Aramaic to initiate Yom Kippur, kol nidrei, or as the entire opening passage might be translated:

All [personal] vows we are likely to make, all [personal] oaths and pledges we are likely to take between this Yom Kippur and the next Yom Kippur, we publicly renounce. Let them all be relinquished and abandoned, null and void, neither firm nor established. Let our [personal] vows, pledges, and oaths be considered neither vows nor pledges nor oaths.

And so it is that Beiser’s music is ardently, irrevocably, insconsolably present, and also in a posture of surrender to its own ephemerality. The music promises everything and absolves itself of the permanence of its utterance, a melancholy duality that echoes the romance of the seeker’s life. Echoing the seeking of the cellist’s firm hand against the flesh of a promising sound...

MARC BAMUTHI JOSEPH
Director of Performing Arts
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts
San Francisco, CA

NOTES FROM THE ARTIST

In All Vows, I explore the dichotomy and multifaceted interaction between the physical, external world we inhabit and the landscape of our mysterious inner selves. A humble, intensely personal lament, Kol Nidrei—translated to All Vows—is a prayer about human imperfection, about stumbling and making mistakes. The words of the prayer are meant for no one other than the person who utters them, but the melody of the prayer is aimed at everyone—the words divide, and the music unites. My show, All Vows, is an exploration of that idea; language, words, actions, can bridge or separate us—music, any music, is purely spiritual, as it has no obstacle in entering the soul. In juxtaposing the ancient prayer of the Kol Nidrei, with reimagined Classic Rock, I aim to show that tradition is not sacred. That if there is a heuristic value to the music, whether rock or ancient laments, breaking away from its original form will strengthen its inner emotional meaning, rather than detract from it.

The first half goes deep inside the music of Led Zeppelin, Nirvana, Janis Joplin, and Howlin’ Wolf to “uncover” and reveal the core of each song as a musical masterpiece—a totem of our collective consciousness forged by our shared, popular culture. Deconstructing the rock idiom, the cello takes on the part of both the lead singer and lead guitar, with many other layers created by my cello in the studio and regenerated live with electronic processing. These “uncovers” are the result of my collaboration with composer Evan Ziporyn, who created all the arrangements for me. Evan’s unique, complex, and masterful musical language, and the many sounds that we have created with this versatile instrument of mine, are the lens through which this music unveils.

Alongside these rock and blues masters, I am performing two new compositions, by Glenn Kotche and David T. Little—both inspired and influenced by this vernacular. Glenn writes: “My own musical life is a constant shift between my hermetic experiences as a composer and solo performer and the polar opposite of that experience as the drummer in a six-piece rock band that tours extensively. I love Maya’s approach to solo performance, using multi-tracked cellos, which enables her to shift between those two experiences. In playing with various ideas of how to approach my piece for her, I found myself gravitating towards a more layered and rhythmically complex sound. (I’ll always be a rhythmically obsessed drummer at my core!) I like to begin writing a piece on the drum kit when I can, so I began investigating possibilities for ‘Three Parts Wisdom,’ by taking some solo drum kit ideas that I was working on for myself and experimenting with adding pitches to the rhythms. I then layered and collaged these elements into something that rhythmically resonates with me and that will ideally fill a void in Maya’s repertoire.”

Describing his new piece for me David writes: “‘Hellhound’ was composed for cello virtuoso Maya Beiser for her project, All Vows. The title is a reference to legendary bluesman Robert Johnson’s 1937 song ‘Hellhound On My Trail,’ considered to be among
his greatest, which tells the story of a man pursued by demons, unable to rest. In the Johnson mythology, this song reinforces the famous tale of the crossroads, in which he reportedly sold his soul to the devil in exchange for musical abilities. ‘Hellhound’ is a meditation on the emotional elements of this story—the terror, the inability to stop, the soulless emptiness—and on the notion of having crossed a point of no return, pursued by demons, likely of one’s own making.”

In the second half of All Vows, I delve into our inherent desire for ritual and meaning, conceiving the concert experience as a spiritual journey. I begin with Arab-American composer Mohammed Fairouz’s interpretation of the Kol Nidrei—the ancient Jewish Yom Kippur prayer—in which the full text of the Kol Nidrei, sung in Aramaic, also engages echoes of ancient cantorial styles. Mohammed, a Muslim Arab-American and I, a Jewish Israeli-American, share a vision: We believe in the power of music to heal and unite. We believe that what connects us as humans is far greater than what tears us apart. My extensive collaboration with film artist Bill Morrison is reflected in the final large-scale work on the program. Morrison uses archival footage, chemical and animation to create a stunning visual tapestry that illustrates, in his words, “the implication of an unknowable future as reflected through a dissolving historical document.”

Michael Gordon’s All Vows (the literal translation of the Aramaic words), takes the Kol Nidrei prayer as its starting point, and reimagines it entirely. Gordon’s piece is a quiet meditation, a heartbreaking lament exhibiting his masterful ability to create full-blown expressivity with minimal and subtle means.

Michael Harrison’s Just Ancient Loops (subtitled Views of Heaven at 24 Frames per Second), is a 25-minute epic piece that unveils every aspect of the cello—from its most glorious and mysterious harmonics to earthy, rhythmic pizzicatos—all utilizing “just intonation,” an ancient tuning system in which the distances between notes are based upon whole number ratios. The title refers to (a) the ancient and contemporary forms of “just” intonation tuning used in the work, (b) the ancient musical modes used throughout, and (c) the “looping” process used as a compositional technique. Morrison’s film explores the many spiritual beliefs and views of the heavens, an ancient philosophical concept of the “Music of the Spheres,” that regards proportions in the movements of celestial bodies as a form of music. The film is composed of three interconnected movements. Section one opens with shots from the observatory at the Vatican and ends with an extended sequence of rare eclipse footage. Section two, based on research by Walter Murch, relates orbits to harmonics; computer-generated imagery (CGI) and data from NASA is used to create a harmonic visualization of the four moons of Jupiter. Section three, compiled from deteriorating archival footage, begins with an evolution sequence, including Adam and Eve, and ends with rare footage from a 1907 French film, Life and Passion of Christ.

Who’s Who

MAYA BEISER

Cello, Electronics, Vocals

Renowned cellist Maya Beiser “has etched a bold career path that marries classical to rock, starched collars to casual dress, and tradition to unorthodoxy,” reports AllMusic.com. Throughout her adventurous and versatile career she has reimagined the concert experience, commissioning and performing hundreds of new works written for her by today’s leading composers. The Boston Globe declares, “with virtuoso chops, rock-star charisma, and an appetite for pushing her instrument to the edge of avant-garde adventurousness, Maya Beiser is the post-modern diva of the cello.”

Raised in the Galilee Mountains in Israel, surrounded by the music and rituals of Jews, Muslims, and Christians, while studying classical cello repertoire, Beiser has dedicated her work to reinventing solo cello performance in the mainstream classical arena. A featured performer on the world’s most prestigious stages including Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, BAM, London’s South Bank Centre, Sydney Opera House, Kennedy Center, LA’s Royce Hall, and the Beijing Festival, she has collaborated with artists across a wide range of musical styles, including Brian Eno, Philip Glass, Steve Reich, Tan Dun, Evan Ziporyn, and Carter Burwell, among many others. Beiser’s 2011 TEDTalk has been watched by nearly one million people and translated into 32 languages. Her critically acclaimed multimedia productions, including World To Come, Almost Human, Provenance, Elsewhere: A CelloOpera, and All Vows, have consistently been chosen for top critics’ best of the year lists.

Beiser’s latest production, All Vows, premiered at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in 2014 and has since been on tour in the US including performances in Washington, DC, Dallas, and Chicago. This season both BAM and SPA Houston will present it. All Vows features the music from Beiser’s newest album Uncovered plus works by Michael Gordon and Michael Harrison, both with original film by Bill Morrison, as well as music by Glenn Kotche, David T. Little, and Mohammed Fairouz. Other highlights of the current season include featured solo performances as part of the Barbican’s Sound Unbound festival in London, two new cello concerti premieres, Mohammed Fairouz’s cello concerto with the Detroit Symphony and Mark-Anthony Turnage’s cello concerto with the Swedish Chamber orchestra, as well as two multimedia solo production collaborations with David Lang and Julia Wolfe. Beiser’s upcoming album, TranceClassical, is scheduled for release in early 2016.

Highlights of Beiser’s recent US tours include performances at the
White and the Huntsman). Maya Beiser was a founding member of the Bang on a Can All-Stars and is a graduate of Yale University. She makes her home in New York. mayabeiser.com

BILL MORRISON
Filmmaker

Acclaimed as “one of the most adventurous American filmmakers” by Variety, Bill Morrison’s films often combine archival film material set to contemporary music. He has collaborated with some of the most influential composers of our time, including John Adams, Laurie Anderson, Gavin Bryars, Dave Douglas, Richard Einhorn, Philip Glass, Michael Gordon, Henryk Górecki, Bill Frisell, Vijay Iyer, Jóhann Jóhannsson, David Lang, Julia Wolfe, and Steve Reich, among many others. Decasia (67 min, 2002), a collaboration with the composer Michael Gordon, was selected to the US Library of Congress’ 2013 National Film Registry, becoming the most modern film named to the list that preserves works of “great cultural, historic or aesthetic significance to the nation’s cinematic heritage.” Morrison’s films are also in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, Walker Art Center, and the EYE Film Institute. He is a Guggenheim fellow and has received the Alpert Award for the Arts, an NEA Creativity Grant, Creative Capital Grant, and a fellowship from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts. His theatrical projection design has been recognized with two Bessie awards and an Obie award. In 2013, Morrison was honored with retrospective programs in four different countries: the Walker Art Museum, Minneapolis; the Vila Do Conde Short Film Festival, Portugal; the Adelaide Film Festival, Australia; and the Aarhus Film Festival, Denmark. In 2014, The Great Flood opened theatrically, and The Miners Hymns toured with live musical performances in the US and UK. Morrison had a mid-career retrospective at MOMA in NYC (Oct—Nov, 2014).

ZACHARY ALFORD
Drums

Zachary Alford is a New York-based drummer whose career began in the downtown music scene of the late 1970s. In his career in rock and pop, he has worked and performed with luminaries James Chance, Defunkt alumni Vernon Reid, Melvin Gibbs and Kelvyn Bell, Bob Quine, Ivan Julian (Richard Hell), and the B-52s. Following the success of the B-52s 1989—90 Cosmic World Tour, he went on to work with Bruce Springsteen (1992—94), David Bowie (1995—98, 2011), Gwen Stefani (2005—07), and Kelly Clarkson (2006). As well as many highly successful international artists, including Steve Hillage (UK, 1998), Hotei Tomoyasu (Japan, 1998—2014), Zucchero (Italy, 2001—02), Rafael Haroche (France, 2008—10), and Manolo Garcia (Spain, 2014). Aside from a touring career spanning nearly three decades, Alford has also been an active session drummer whose recording credits include albums with Billy Joel, Suzanne Vega, the Manic Street Preachers, Suzanna Hoffs, Jeffery Gaines, David Torn, Gail Anne Dorsey, Maggie’s Dream, David Bowie, Bruce Springsteen, the B-52s, and many more.
with Bischoff’s future release *Cistern*, an ambient orchestral album which was recorded with a live orchestra in a church in Hudson, NY.

**EVAN ZIPORYN**  
Composer, Arranger

Evan Ziporyn has composed for the Silk Road Ensemble, the American Composers Orchestra, Brooklyn Rider, Sō Percussion, Maya Beiser, Wu Man, Sentieri Selvaggi, and Bang on a Can. He studied at Eastman, Yale, and UC Berkeley with Joseph Schwantner, Martin Bresnick, and Gerard Grisey. He is the inaugural director of MIT’s new Center for Art, Science, and Technology, where he has taught since 1990. His work is informed by his 30-plus year involvement with traditional gamelan. He received a Fulbright in 1987, founded Gamelan Galak Tika in 1993, and has written a series of groundbreaking compositions for gamelan and western instruments. These include three evening-length works: *ShadowBang* (2001); *Oedipus Rex* (2004, Robert Woodruff, director); and 2009’s *A House in Bali* (2009), which was featured at BAM’s Next Wave in October, 2010. Awards include a USA Artist Fellowship, the Goddard Lieberson Prize from the American Academy, Massachusetts Cultural Council Fellowship, the MIT György Kepes Prize, and commissions from Carnegie Hall, Kronos Quartet, Rockefeller Multi-Arts Program, and Meet the Composer. He co-founded the Bang on a Can All-Stars in 1992, performing with the group for 20 years. He has also recorded with Paul Simon, Steve Reich Ensemble (sharing in their 1998 Grammy), and Matthew Shipp, and he currently performs with Iva Bittová and Gyan Riley as the Evyian Trio.

**GLENN KOTCHE**  
Composer

The Chicago-based percussionist and composer Glenn Kotche, has been heralded as one of the most exciting, creative, and promising composers and performers in modern music. His eclectic works have focused on the creative use of rhythm and space, navigating the territory between the academic and the primal, the consonant and the dissonant. Kotche’s various stints with groups and ensembles have resulted in participation in over 90 albums to date, including three recorded solo works, the most recent of which, *Mobile* (Nonesuch Records, 2006), was released to critical acclaim from such publications as *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*. In addition to his work as a composer and solo percussionist, Kotche is member of the groundbreaking American rock band Wilco, with whom he has played since 2001. The first album recorded after Kotche joined the group, *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, was recently called by *Rolling Stone* magazine the third best album of the decade. Follow-up albums include the Grammy-winning *A Ghost is Born* and the Grammy-nominated records *Sky Blue Sky*, *Wilco (The Album)*, and *The Whole Love*. Kotche has received international attention for his “unfailing taste, technique and discipline” (*Chicago Tribune*), and has been commissioned to write pieces for Kronos Quartet, Yo-Yo Ma’s Silk Road Ensemble, Bang on a Can All-Stars, and Sō Percussion. In addition to collaborating with renowned contemporary music sextet Eighth Blackbird, Kotche’s compositions have been performed at venues as wide-ranging as Highland Park’s Ravinia, Carnegie Hall’s Zankel Hall, Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center, and Teatro Castro Alves in Salvador, Brasil. In 2006, Kotche was the headlining performer at the inaugural concert for New York’s Wordless Music, and was an artist-in-residence at SoundRes in Lecce, Italy. He will be premiering the evening-length work *iliimaq* written for him by John Luther Adams this fall.

**MOHAMMED FAIROUZ**  
Composer

Mohammed Fairouz, born in 1985, is one of the most frequently performed, commissioned, and recorded composers of his generation. Hailed by *The New York Times* as “an important new artistic voice” and by *BBC World News* as “one of the most talented composers of his generation,” Fairouz integrates Middle-Eastern modes into Western structures to deeply expressive effect. His output encompasses virtually all genres, including opera, symphonies, ensemble works, chamber and solo pieces, choral settings, and more than a dozen song cycles. Commissions have come from Rachel Barton Pine, the Detroit and Alabama Symphony Orchestras, Borromeo String Quartet, Imani Winds, New York Festival of Song, Da Capo Chamber Players, Cantus, and many others. Recent premieres include his first opera, *Sumeida’s Song*, and his fourth symphony, *In the Shadow of No Towers*, both greeted with critical acclaim. Fairouz was chosen to be a featured artist on the television series *Collaboration Culture*, which aired globally on BBC World Service TV (viewership approximately 70 million). He has been heard in interviews on nationally syndicated shows such as NPR’s *All Things Considered*, *BBC/PRI’s The World*, and *The Bob Edwards Show*. Recordings are available on the Naxos, Innova, Bridge, Dorian Sono Luminus, Cedille, Albany, GM/Living Archive, and GPR labels. His principal teachers in composition have included György Ligeti, Gunther Schuller, and Richard Danielpour, with studies at the Curtis Institute and New England Conservatory.

**MICHAEL GORDON**  
Composer

Over the past 25 years, Michael Gordon has produced a strikingly diverse body of work, ranging from large scale pieces for high energy ensembles to major orchestral commissions to works conceived specifically for the recording studio. Transcending categorization, his music represents the collision of mysterious introspection and brutal directness. Gordon’s orchestral works include *Beijing Harmony*, commissioned by the Beijing National Centre for the Performing Arts; *Rewriting Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony*, a radical reworking of the original, commissioned by the 2006 Beethoven Festival in Bonn and premiered by Jonathon Nott and the Bamberg
Symphony; and Sunshine of Your Love, written for over 100 instruments divided into four microtonally tuned groups. Gordon’s string orchestra piece Weather was commissioned by the Siemens Foundation Kultur Program, and after its tour was recorded and released on Nonesuch to great critical and popular success. His interest in exploring various sound textures has led him to create chamber works that distort traditional classical instruments with electronic effects and guitar pedals, including Potassium for the Kronos Quartet and Industry for cellist Maya Beiser. Also for Kronos, The Sad Park (2006) uses the voices of child witnesses to the tragedy of September 11th as its subject. Gordon’s monumental, 52-minute Trance, originally written for the UK-based group Icebreaker, debuted in 1997 and was recently performed twice in New York City by the ensemble Signal. Gordon has been commissioned by Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, Stuttgart Ballet, New World Symphony, National Centre for the Performing Arts Beijing, the BBC Proms, BAM, Settembre Musica, Holland Music Festival, Dresden Festival, and the Sydney 2000 Olympic Arts Festival, among others. His music has been performed at the Kennedy Center, Théâtre De La Ville, Barbican Centre, Oper Bonn, Kölner Philharmonie, and the Southbank Centre.

MICHAEL HARRISON
Composer

Composer and pianist Michael Harrison, has been called “an American maverick” by Philip Glass. Through his expertise in “just intonation” tunings, Indian ragas, and rhythmic cycles, he has created “a new harmonic world…of vibrant sound” (The New York Times). With a uniquely personal style, his music is both forward looking and deeply rooted in different forms of traditional music. This perspective, alongside a simple and elegant gift for melody, makes him a composer who can reach audiences of many kinds. Time Loops, a collaboration with cello innovator Maya Beiser, is the second CD of Harrison’s works for Bang on a Can’s Cantaloupe Music label. The feature work, Just Ancient Loops, builds up to 20 layers of pre-recorded cellos and was premiered by Beiser at the Bang on a Can Marathon. Revelation, Harrison’s first recording for Cantaloupe Music, was chosen by The New York Times, The Boston Globe, and Time Out New York as one of the best classical recordings of the year.

DAVE COOK
Sound Design

Dave Cook was the chief engineer at Dreamland Studios, a place built in a 110-year-old church. During his 10 years at Dreamland, he was instrumental in making it a world class recording facility, engineering records for such artists as the B-52s, 10,000 Maniacs, Graham Parker, the Mighty Mighty Bosstones, Suzanne Vega, Joe Henry, and many others. He has collaborated with artists Juliana Hatfield, Willie Nelson, Morphine, Buckwheat Zydeco, Laurie Anderson, Anoushka, Ravi Shankar, and many more. He was the chief broadcast engineer for a series of small live radio concerts for Boston stations WFNX and WBCN, featuring Lenny Kravitz, David Bowie, Alanis Morissette, Radiohead, Barenaked Ladies, and many others. Cook has been working with Maya Beiser as sound designer and engineer on all her major touring projects for the last 10 years.

AARON COPP
Lighting Design

Aaron C Copp’s most recent projects include designs for Natalie Merchant’s 2014 US tour, Sinead O’Connor’s Gospel Sessions at Lincoln Center, Mike Birbiglia’s My Girlfriend’s Boyfriend (off-Broadway, tour, and DVD release), a new concert DVD by Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble at Tanglewood, Where We Live by So Percussion at BAM, and The Goat Rodeo Sessions US tour with Yo-Yo Ma and Chris Thile. Copp has designed for the Old Globe, Kennedy Center, Dallas Theater Center, and other major theaters around the country. He has worked extensively in the dance world, receiving in 2008 his second Bessie award for Jonah Bokaert’s The Invention of Minus One. He had a long association with Merce Cunningham, designing such pieces as Ground Level Overlay, Windows, and Biped, for which he also won a Bessie. Copp received an MFA from the Yale School of Drama and a BA from SUNY-Binghamton.

BRIAN BEASLEY
Projection Design

Brian Beasley’s eclectic career in projection has taken him from regional theater, Broadway, dance, and rock ‘n’ roll to U2’s 2002 Super Bowl halftime show. More recently, he was the associate projection designer for All My Sons on Broadway, projection designer for Jazz at Lincoln Center’s Jazz & Art 2010, and has had the pleasure of working on such varied productions as Fela!, A Little Night Music, and Sondheim on Sondheim. Beasley has also worked with the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Ballet, and New York City Opera.
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