

From many, more

Michael Jones, percussion

Saturday, November 20, 2021 - 5:00 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

A Moment or Two (2021)

Erika Bell

Lullaby (2011)

Nicholas Deyoe

Intermission

American Dream (2017)

Scott Wollschleger

Matthew Kline, bass
Shaoai Ashley Zhang, piano

My conception of American culture is one that has come about in the last 20 years, and only in any mature sense in the last 10. During this time, and I'm sure many older than me would claim even before, our culture has been one marked by increasing doubt in the possibility of a sense of unity – unity of history, of identity, of purpose. The mythologies that have for a long time served as a common thread for some (certainly not all) have seemed to unravel to a state of polarity. The question seems not to be about how to inhabit the same country, but how to inhabit the same world.

In some ways the American Dream is one that has always been aspirational and steeped in anxiety. It makes promises to those outside it of a better life – be it a freer one, a more materially secure one, or one free from violence. Those within it, however, know these things to be contingent and imperfect. They are aspirations to a reality that is not there – a dream. Still, this concept of an *American Dream* – of a common desire for a national *something* – is shared by cultural insiders and outsiders alike. It's a desire that not only persists despite its failed manifestations, but one that finds purchase here and there in small ways. For every story of someone falling through the cracks, there is one of success; of love and comfort found in times and places that elsewhere would have been impossible. How are we to make sense of a cultural subconscious that is so selective and inscrutable? What happens to this subconscious as our lived experiences seem to drift further and further apart?

This program is a reflection on the anxiety of American plurality, and how the dreams of this polarity often antagonize each other. It is not a celebration of failure or an ironic, tongue-in-cheek ribbing of those that have these dreams, however. In fact, I believe that like it or not we all have our own versions of the American Dream, and that there is something beautiful in fighting, striving, and aspiring to realize them. Anne Leilehua Lanzilotti writes: “As the American Dream evolves with time, it becomes a combination of all our individual, potentially conflicting narratives. Can these come together to create one ‘dream’ or do they break down through this incongruity?”

This program and the works on it are about both of these processes – coming together and breaking down at the same – and how we comfort and assure ourselves and each other as we experience them.

- Michael Jones

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