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**American Modern Ensemble Presents
Vocal Music of Robert Paterson –
Six Works for Voice & Piano, Including Three World Premieres
Thursday, April 26, 2018, at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall**



Marnie Breckenridge, Blythe Gaiassert, Alok Kumar, Wes Mason



David Neal, Geoffrey Burleson, Blair McMillen, Robert Paterson

The upcoming April 26 concert by American Modern Ensemble represents two firsts: it is the ensemble's first concert at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall (or any of the Carnegie halls) in its 13-year history, and it is the first program devoted completely to the vocal works of composer and AME founder Robert Paterson (and the second all-Paterson program). About the program, which features six works for voice and piano, including three world premieres, Paterson says, "The texts are wildly diverse, and include poems constructed from reCAPTCHA texts (those

texts you type online to prove that you're human), songs about the life of baseball catcher Mike Piazza, online dating, and settings of poems by W. H. Auden, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Richard Wilbur, William Carlos Williams, Sara Teasdale, David Cote (my collaborator on the opera *Three Way*), and others."

The works to be performed are *In Real Life* (text by David Cote), *Batter's Box*, (text by Kenny Berkowitz and Bridget Meeds) and *Crossing the Hudson* (text by Mark Campbell), and three world premieres: *Night Songs* (settings of poems by W. H. Auden, Michael Collier, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Dana Gioia, and Ted Kooser), *CAPTCHA* (premiere of a version for mezzo soprano and piano), and *Spring Songs* (settings of poems by Edna St. Vincent Millay, Richard Wilbur, Ann Stanford, William Carlos Williams, and Sara Teasdale).

The program's performers are Marnie Breckenridge, soprano; Blythe Gaissert, mezzo-soprano; Alok Kumar, tenor; Wes Mason, baritone; David Neal, bass-baritone; Geoffrey Burlison, piano; and Blair McMillen, piano.

In Real Life (2016) is a song cycle for soprano and piano that explores the humor and heartbreak of the modern ritual of online dating. Five women fill out their dating-site profiles, opening a window into their worlds. The text is by David Cote, who wrote the libretto for Paterson's opera *Three Way*. (Marnie Breckenridge & Blair McMillen)

Night Songs (2016-17, world premiere) is a song cycle consisting of settings of poems by different poets that reflect on various aspects of nighttime. The cycle is structured as a somewhat linear timeline, as if the songs are meditations by a single individual, and sets texts by F. Scott Fitzgerald, W. H. Auden, Michael Collier, Dana Gioia, and Ted Kooser. (David Neal & Geoffrey Burlison)

CAPTCHA (2012-13, 2018, world premiere of version for mezzo-soprano and piano) - The term CAPTCHA (for Completely Automated Public Turing Test To Tell Computers and Humans Apart) was coined in 2000 by scientists at Carnegie Mellon University. A CAPTCHA is a program that protects websites against bots by generating and grading tests that only humans can pass. Paterson says, "I initially wrote one song entitled CAPTCHA, but later decided to compose an entire song cycle that incorporates the original song. Each song uses a few key words (the few that are actually real words and phrases) as a springboard. I attempt to phonetically interpret the other words and phrases that don't make sense, infusing emotion where none exists. Ultimately, my goal is to create an emotionally moving experience, despite the nonsensical nature of the words." (Blythe Gaissert & Blair McMillen)

Batter's Box (2005) is Paterson's second song cycle written in collaboration with Bridget Meeds, a poet, and Kenny Berkowitz, a journalist. He says, "The text is loosely based on the life of baseball giant Mike Piazza of the New York Mets. Each movement represents a different phase of the game, and Piazza's thoughts of his father tie everything together. However, overall, I interpret this cycle as being less about Piazza the individual and more about the all-American baseball player." (Alok Kumar & Blair McMillen)

Crossing the Hudson (2016) – Paterson says, “When setting text to music, it is very fulfilling to have an opportunity to work with living writers, and especially a great writer such as Mark Campbell, one of America’s most celebrated librettists. The mission of the Five Borough Songbook project, which commissioned the work, is to have composers and text writers create short pieces about New York City, so we decided to create a song about two people who cross each other on different Staten Island Ferries.” (Marnie Breckenridge, Wes Mason & Geoffrey Burleson)

Spring Songs (2018, world premiere) is a song cycle setting texts by Edna St. Vincent Millay, Richard Wilbur, Ann Stanford, William Carlos Williams, and Sara Teasdale. It is to be one of four cycles that will eventually collectively be called *The Four Seasons*. (Alok Kumar & Geoffrey Burleson)

American soprano [Marnie Breckenridge](#)’s contemporary roles include Mother in *Dog Days* by David T. Little, Sierva Maria in Peter Eötvös’s *Love and Other Demons*, and La Princesse in Philip Glass’ *Orpheé*, among others. This season, mezzo-soprano [Blythe Gaissert](#) was involved in two world premieres: she created the role of Walker Loats in Mikael Karlsson’s one woman opera *The Echo Drift* as a part of the 2018 Prototype Festival, and she sang Hester Prynne in the world premiere of Eric Sawyer’s *The Scarlet Professor*. Last season, tenor [Alok Kumar](#) made his Royal Opera House and London Philharmonic Orchestra debuts creating the role of Chyavana in the world premiere of Ravi Shankar’s opera *Sukanya*. Baritone [Wes Mason](#) was in the world premiere cast of Robert Paterson’s opera *Three Way* last season; other notable recent roles include Hannah Before in *As One* and Reinaldo Arenas in the world premiere of *Before Night Falls*. This spring, bass-baritone [David Neal](#) also premieres *Swan’s Inlet*, by Mark Alan Taggart and Ann McCutchan with the Center for Contemporary Opera.

In addition to AME, pianist [Geoffrey Burleson](#) is also a member of Boston Musica Viva and the Tribeca New Music Festival, as well as IMPetus, a dynamic trio featuring vocalist Maria Tegzes, and guitarist Dave "Knife" Fabris. [Blair McMillen](#) is pianist for the Naumburg Award-winning Da Capo Chamber Players and the six-piano Grand Band, in addition to AME, and he is the co-founder and co-director of the Rite of Summer Music Festival.

Robert Paterson writes music that is acclaimed for its elegance, wit, structural integrity, and wonderful sense of color. Paterson was awarded Composer of The Year from the Classical Recording Foundation, at Carnegie's Weill Hall in 2011. His music has been on the Grammy® ballot yearly, and his music was named “Best of 2012” on National Public Radio. *Three Way*, his opera with librettist David Cote, called “an excellent comic opera” by Opera News, premiered in 2017, and the recording was released later in the year. His works have been performed by the Louisville Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Austin Symphony, Vermont Symphony, among others. Paterson gives master classes at universities, including the Curtis Institute of Music, Aspen Music Festival, New York University, and the Cleveland Institute of Music. Paterson is the Artistic Director of the American Modern Ensemble and of the [Mostly Modern Festival](#), which launches in June 2018, and resides in NYC with his wife, Victoria, and their son, Dylan. www.robertpaterson.com.

American Modern Ensemble

Since its founding in 2005, American Modern Ensemble has premiered and performed over 250 works by over 175 living composers, has received acclaim from The New York Times, The New Yorker, and Sequenza21, among others, and has performed to capacity crowds at venues including Merkin Hall, Lincoln Center, the Rubin Museum, Dixon Place, and National Sawdust.

AME is committed to bridging the gap between audiences and creators, and aims to provide the most welcoming environment possible in which audiences can get to know the creators and performers. To date, over 95% of the composers whose works are being performed have attended the concerts, including John Luther Adams, John Corigliano, Sebastian Currier, David Del Tredici, Ben Johnston, Aaron Jay Kernis, Libby Larsen, Steven Mackey, Ingram Marshall, Paul Moravec, Christopher Rouse, Steven Stucky, Joan Tower, Chen Yi, and many others.

AME frequently collaborates with festivals and presenters such as the Cutting Edge New Music Festival, Prototype Opera Festival, American Opera Projects, and the Dance Theater of Harlem. Since 2015, AME has been proud to have an ongoing “In-Situ” partnership with National Sawdust in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. www.americanmodernensemble.org

Thursday, April 26, 2018, at 8:00 pm
Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall

AMERICAN MODERN ENSEMBLE:
VOCAL MUSIC OF ROBERT PATERSON

Marnie Breckenridge, soprano
Blythe Gaissert, mezzo-soprano
Alok Kumar, tenor
Wes Mason, baritone
David Neal, bass-baritone
Geoffrey Burleson, piano
Blair McMillen, piano

All-Paterson program:

Batter's Box

***CAPTCHA* (World premiere, version for mezzo-soprano and piano)**

Crossing The Hudson

***Night Songs* (World premiere)**

***Spring Songs* (World premiere)**

***In Real Life* (New York premiere, piano/vocal version)**

Tickets: \$40

<https://www.carnegiehall.org/Calendar/2018/04/26/AMERICAN-MODERN-ENSEMBLE-0800PM>

March 21, 2018