ETHNOMUSICOLOGY VISITING ARTIST CONCERT: BENJAMIN HUNTER AND STUDENTS: AFRICAN AMERICAN ROOTS MUSIC

Saturday, December 11, 2021 - 7:30pm
Brechemin Auditorium
FREE
ArtsUW Covid-19 Safety Protocols

Autumn Quarter Ethnomusicology Visiting Artist Benjamin Hunter and students present an end-of-quarter performance. With special guest Joe Seamons, Pacific Northwest-based multi-instrumentalist and educator.

Masks are required in all indoor spaces on the UW campus. Capacity in Brechemin Auditorium is limited to 100. Proof of vaccination or negative COVID-19 test (within 72 hours of the performance) required. Details of these protocols available here.

PROGRAM

DETAIL

African American Roots Music
Benjamin Hunter and students, with special guest Joe Seamons

Tonight's performance features Benjamin Hunter, Visiting Artist in Ethnomusicology for Autumn quarter 2021, along with his students and his longtime musical partner Joe Seamons. They will present their arrangements and versions of some of the music they have engaged with this quarter.

Students in Ben's class (Musen 389/589) were invited to explore the formative influence of African American music in this country, both through playing music and talking about it. The class covered genres of music dating from the first days that enslaved Africans first set foot in this country all the way to the early decades of the 20th century, including spirituals, work songs, fiddle/banjo tunes, minstrelsy, marching band, ragtime, vaudeville, Tin Pan Alley, jugband/stringband, blues, and jazz. Students also learned about the social and political currents that propelled this music, and were in turn shaped by it, across diverse regions, communities and eras. More than a history class, it was a chance to consider African American roots music as a living legacy that is embedded in rock ‘n roll, funk, R&B, hip hop, pop, punk, soul, and electronica, as well as in our poetry, literature, fashion, food, speech and design. Emanating from communities of the African diaspora, this music has found a home in a larger context of humanity; it is part and parcel of our American musical liturgy.

STUDENT PERFORMERS
Julia Aguilar Jerez, Arshia Ashari, Lucinda Axtelle, Joel Bergstrom, Kimani Bishop, Mayah Bosley, Sam
ARTIST BIOS

Benjamin Hunter is a musician, educator and activist based in Seattle whose work explores the intersections of art, community, policy, and culture. His primary instrument is the violin, on which he is as comfortable playing classical as he is blues and jazz. Living Blues magazine wrote, “An unbridled freedom and genre emancipation is evident in Ben Hunter’s music, yet the deep blues are a cornerstone of his style”. Benjamin is the founder and director of Community Arts Create, co-founder of the Hillman City Collaboratory, co-founder of Black & Tan Hall, sits on the Seattle Music Commission, and is a teaching artist for local organizations as well as festivals around the world. In 2018, Benjamin composed the music for the critically acclaimed production, Black Bois. He was a 2020/2021 Artist-in-Residence at On The Boards, and a 2020 Artist Trust Fellowship Awards recipient. Most recently he became Artistic Director for the Northwest Folklife Festival.

Joe Seamons is a Pacific Northwest-based musician and educator dedicated to helping people connect with their heritage through music and storytelling. Born and raised in Northwestern Oregon, he has made a career of interpreting the songs and stories of local sawmill, logging, and fishing communities. He serves as board chair of the Maxville Heritage Interpretive Centers, and as director of The Rhapsody Project, which works with youth in Seattle to explore their histories through the lens of American blues and folk songs. He is also executive producer for a Smithsonian Folkways album entitled, "Roll, Columbia: Woody Guthrie’s 26 Northwest Songs,” which features his band, Timberbound.

Ben and Joe are partners in a quest to give life to voices that have often been silenced in American culture. Through story-telling and music they work to vividly illustrate how the past is alive in the present. Together they won the International Blues Challenge in 2016, and they have recorded and performed with other folk music luminaries, including National Heritage Fellow Phil Wiggins. In 2019, the duo was recognized by the Ethnic Heritage Council with the Gordon Ekvall Tracie Memorial Award for their stewardship of the traditional cultural arts in the Pacific Northwest.