

APPARITIONS

11:30 AM

SUNDAY 12 OCTOBER 2025

REARDON THEATRE



John ZORN (b. 1953)

Road Runner

James Crabb, *Classical Accordion*

George CRUMB (1929 – 2022)

Apparition

Judith Dodsworth, *Soprano*

Peter de Jager, *Piano*

1. *The Night in Silence Under Many a Star*
Vocalise 1: Summer Sounds
2. *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd*
3. *Dark Mother Always Gliding Near with Soft Feet*
Vocalise 2: Invocation to the Dark Angel
4. *Approach Strong Deliveress!*
Vocalise 3: Death Carol ("Song of the Nightbird")
5. *Come Lovely and Soothing Death*
6. *The Night in Silence Under Many a Star*

Astor PIAZZOLLA (1921 – 1992)

Le Grand Tango (arr. Crabb)

Timo-Veikko Valve, *Cello*

James Crabb, *Classical Accordion*

John ZORN (born 1953)

Road Runner

Hailed for his radical, genre-defying approach to music, John Zorn is an American avant-garde composer, conductor, saxophonist, arranger and producer. Active since the late 1970s, Zorn's music draws inspiration from jazz, rock, classical, Jewish traditional music, film scores, hardcore, metal, surf, ambient and world music. His achievements have been recognised with a MacArthur Fellowship, the William Schuman Prize from Columbia University, and honorary doctorates from institutions including Ghent University, the SUNY Purchase College and the New England Conservatory. Whether writing chamber music, composing for films or curating performance spaces, Zorn is a relentless innovator whose fearless musical vision continuously reshapes contemporary sound.

Inspired by the Berio *Sequenzas*, the cartoon scores of Carl Stalling, and, of course, the eponymous character from *Looney Tunes*, *Road Runner* is a manic miniature for solo accordion written in 1986. Like a mischievous TV changing its channels at random, *Road Runner* is a high-octane pastiche where the music constantly jumps about every few seconds. Zorn playfully splices together a mishmash of styles and fragments – a bit of tango here, a snippet of Beethoven there – with frequent non sequiturs breaking up any sense of linearity.

The sheet music itself is littered with cartoon cut-outs of Road Runner and Wile E. Coyote, onomatopoeic comic-book bubbles ("Twang!" "Womp!"), and surreal instructions like "dense insanity for 3 seconds". This substantial improvisatory element means the music can be about as wild and technically virtuosic as the player dares. At heart, *Road Runner* revels in the kind of controlled chaos that have made the original *Looney Tunes* and *Merrie Melodies* so unforgettable.

George CRUMB (1929 – 2022)

Apparition

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Alongside the likes of John Cage and Milton Babbitt, George Crumb ranks as one of the most important experimental and avant-garde American composers of the mid-20th century to the present day – a visionary sculptor of sound, whose music shimmers between the ancient and the futuristic, the intimate and the cosmic, heaven and hell. Crumb is particularly well known for his frequent use of electric and amplified instruments, as well as so-called “extended techniques” – unorthodox, non-traditional ways of singing or playing an instrument to create special sounds and sonic effects.

Among his most powerful and haunting works, *Apparition* is a 1979 song cycle based on texts from Walt Whitman’s great elegiac poem “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d”, written during the period of national mourning that followed the assassination of Abraham Lincoln in 1865. However, almost all of the lines that Crumb uses are taken from a section of the poem subtitled “Death Carol”, a brief pause in the elegy where a hermit thrush sings a sort of ecstatic paean to death itself. It contains some of Whitman’s most inspired and provocative writing on this timeless subject.

Crumb complements and deepens Whitman’s metaphorical poetry through six concise, highly atmospheric songs, punctuated by three wordless vocalises in which the singer embodies a sort of voice of nature. Rather than the terrifying reaper of souls, here death is more of a mysterious force, variously serene and reverential (“Dark mother always gliding”), even blissful (“Come lovely and soothing death”), but also stark and primal (“Vocalise 2: Invocation”). By reprising the opening song at the end of the piece, Crumb affirms Whitman’s conception of death not as an ending, but a return – circular, continuous, and part of an eternal cycle.

Astor PIAZZOLLA (1921 – 1992)

***Le Grand Tango* (arr. Crabb)**

Tempo di Tango – Meno mosso. Libero e cantabile – Più mosso – Giocosso

Legendary tango composer, bandleader and virtuoso of the bandoneon (button accordion), Astor Piazzolla is renowned for his trailblazing reinvention of the tango, combining elements of classical, jazz, rock, electronica, and Argentine folk music. Despite the outrage of purists and conservatives in his homeland, Piazzolla brought tango to the world stage, and from the dance hall to the concert hall.

One of his most popular works, *Le Grand Tango* is essentially a tango concerto for cello, originally written for the great Mstislav Rostropovich in 1982. Cast as a single movement in three parts, it struts onto the stage with defiant bravado, eventually giving way to a passionately lyrical middle section, and finally ending in a frenzy of ecstatic virtuosity. With its seamless fusion of tango, jazz and classical elements, it stands as a marvellous example of Piazzolla’s revolutionary *nuevo tango* style. Today, we hear James Crabb’s brilliant arrangement for cello and classical accordion.

GEORGE CRUMB
Apparitions – Lyrics

Text from “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d” by Walt Whitman (1819 – 1892)

1. The night in silence under many a star,

The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose voice I know,
And the soul turning to thee O vast and well-veil’d death,
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.

(Vocalise 1: Summer Sounds)

2. When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom’d,

I mourn’d, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.

3. Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,

Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come unfalteringly.

(Vocalise 2: Invocation)

4. Approach strong deliveress!

When it is so, when thou hast taken them, I joyously sing the dead,
Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death.

(Vocalise 3: Death Carol (“Song of the Nightbird”))

5. Come lovely and soothing death,

Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later delicate death.

6. The night in silence under many a star,

The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose voice I know,
And the soul turning to thee O vast and well-veil’d death,
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.