

PROGRAM NOTES

To Hope! A Celebration

by Dave Brubeck

commissioned by Ed Murray of the Catholic publication *Our Sunday Visitor*

Eclectic is the easiest description that comes to mind in describing Dave Brubeck, for he flits without a care from his jazz homebase to the religious European vocal tradition, from pop idioms to global folk music, from the most challenging counterpoint and dissonance to the simplest diatonic chords, from meticulously written-out orchestration to freewheeling stretches of jazz improvisation. All of this could easily get out of hand; yet Brubeck's music always has a strong personal signature - mainly his distinctive use of polytonality and often complex rhythms - that ties all his influences together. Not only that, there is a symbolic purpose at work, an attempt to unify many different cultures under the common umbrella of faith. And most endearingly, these works appeal directly to the emotions in a guileless way, masking all of the sophisticated craft that went into them.

The listener does not have to share Brubeck's religious faith to be moved by the Mass' deep emotion and optimism. As any sensitive classical composer would, Brubeck reacts directly to the text, evoking musical textures and images that ride on the meanings and rhythms of the words and can be interpreted on different levels. For example, Brubeck's musical director, Russell Gloyd calls *The Peace of Jerusalem* a "travelogue", one that reflects Jerusalem's busy street life and underlying tension even as the words speak of the uneasy search for peace. Here, in a throwback to *The Gates of Justice*, Brubeck uses scraping rhythms, Hebraic modes, and parallel fifths to create a sound as old as the stones, evoking all three major religions that are jammed together in this one spot. Later, Brubeck's jazz trio takes off on a funky improvisation based entirely upon the rhythm of the words of the title. Brubeck is at his most compassionate in *The Desert and the Parched Land*, where he gives a disarmingly gorgeous melody to the female cantor and meditates on that thought himself with a simple, devotional, improvised piano solo. There is uninhibited joy in *All My Hope* to a degree rarely attempted in these cynical times, capped by a swinging, ecstatic jazz waltz for the Quartet.

This music of Brubeck reflects the trusting and sweet nature that has somehow stayed intact even after more than half a century in the rough-and-tumble music business, bolstered by a loving family and an unshakable faith.

From album notes by Richard

S. Ginell

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Born on 6 December 1920 in Concord, California, jazz legend **DAVE BRUBECK** is equally distinguished as composer and pianist. Studies at the College of the Pacific and with Milhaud at Mills College led to the founding, with fellow students, of the experimental Jazz Workshop Ensemble which recorded in 1949 as the Dave Brubeck Octet. Later, in 1958, the combination of Brubeck with drummer Joe Morello, double bassist Eugene Wright, and alto saxophonist Paul Desmond quickly achieved an overwhelming popular success as the Dave Brubeck Quartet. The Quartet's experimentation with time signatures unusual to jazz produced works like *Blue Rondo à*

la Turk and *Take Five*, introducing millions of enthusiastic young listeners to unexplored regions of jazz. The group recorded and performed together continuously through 1967.

As composer, Brubeck has written and, in some cases, recorded several large-scale works including two ballets, a musical, an oratorio, four cantatas, a Mass, works for jazz combo and orchestra, and many solo piano pieces. In the last 20 years, he has organized several new quartets and continued to appear at the Newport, Monterey, Concord, and Kool Jazz Festivals. Brubeck performed at the White House in 1964 and 1981 and at the 1988 Moscow summit honoring the Gorbachevs. He is the recipient of four honorary degrees, the BMI Jazz Pioneer Award, and the 1988 American Eagle Award presented by the National Music Council. He was recently honored with the title of Jazz Master by the National Endowment for the Arts, and in 1995, during a White House ceremony, the President of the United States awarded Dave the Presidential Medal of the Arts.

*“As long as the music attracts dedicated young musicians like **ERIC MINTEL**, jazz will continue to thrive and progress as a voice of freedom.” - Dave Brubeck*

A White House performance by invitation, several Kennedy Center performances, collaborations with symphony orchestras and choral groups, educational presentations to students, and performances at jazz festivals, cultural centers and concert halls throughout the country – the energetic, lyrical, entertaining, and always swinging music of **ERIC MINTEL** and the Eric Mintel Quartet touches the soul.

Currently residing in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, with wife Darby and daughter Tess, pianist and composer Eric Mintel was born in 1967 and could be found at age three sitting at the piano creating his own melodies. Music, both classical and jazz, were always part of the Mintel household and by 14, Eric had discovered the music of Dave Brubeck, playing Brubeck's rhythmically demanding compositions like *Blue Rondo à la Turk*, *Take Five*, and others. In 1993 he formed the Eric Mintel Quartet and began performing original compositions and new interpretations of the American song book. In the years since its formation, the quartet – Eric Mintel, piano, Jeremy Barberian, drums, Neil Wetzell, alto sax, and Dave Antonow, bass – has introduced many communities throughout the country to its unique style of jazz.

In 1998, by invitation of President Bill Clinton, the quartet performed at the White House and also has performed nine times at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. and in jazz festivals such as the Greater Hartford Festival of Jazz in Connecticut and the Mellon Jazz Festival in Philadelphia. It was the only jazz group to perform for American and Japanese dignitaries at the National Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, D.C. in 2001 and also has performed in the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia, Cheney Hall in Connecticut, the Strand Capital Theater in Pennsylvania, and Chandler Music Hall in Vermont.

Eric has released five jazz albums: *Lullaby* (1998), *Silent Night* (2000), *Live!* (2001), *Hopscotch* (2002), and *Dynamo* (2004). *Hopscotch*, with liner notes written by jazz icon Dave Brubeck, was charted in the top 100 jazz albums of the year at WRTI 90.1 FM in Philadelphia.