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**Longtime Collaborators Dave Douglas and Uri Caine,
Record First Duo Album, *Present Joys*,
A Special Collection of Songs, Hymns & Improvisations
Inspired by The Sacred Harp & The Shape Note Tradition**



The tradition of **shape-note singing** has been passed down for centuries in tunebooks like *The Sacred Harp* and *Ye Olde New England Psalm-Tunes*, allowing groups of untrained and unrehearsed singers to participate in gorgeous four-part harmonies. A uniquely American art form that's deceptively simple, emotionally moving, and profoundly communal; it's no wonder these songs were so attractive as the source for a duo project by longtime friends and collaborators **Dave Douglas** and **Uri Caine**.

Present Joys, due to be released **July 22, 2014** on **Greenleaf Music**, brings Douglas and Caine together for an intimate but exploratory outing inspired by the *Sacred Harp* tradition. The pair take on five pieces from shape-note tunebooks as well as several new Douglas compositions undertaken in the same vein. These ten pieces engage Douglas' trumpet and Caine's piano in a captivating conversation full of memorable melodies and intricate digressions.

"I've always loved the *Sacred Harp* songs and started thinking about how to do them in the wake of *Be Still*," Douglas says, referring to the acclaimed 2012 debut of his new quintet comprising traditional hymns and folk tunes. "But with me, music is always about personalities and I love playing with Uri. He has his hands in so many different kinds of music that he's really flexible and able to go in a lot of different directions given different kinds of material. I knew that he would get right into it."

"The recordings of this music are inspiring because they are full of devotion, feeling and the joy of communal music making," says Caine. "These songs are moving in their simplicity and it is always fun to play together with Dave and to explore new repertoire and musical possibilities."

Douglas initially discovered shape-note singing in the late 1980s while touring with the **Bread and Puppet Theater**, the venerable socially-oriented puppet theater company. (That connection is revived on *Present Joys* in the vivid Masonite-cut artwork that graces the booklet, created by Bread and Puppet founder Peter Schumann.) But it was the process of dealing with the folk melodies of *Be Still*, many of them chosen by his mother to be played at her memorial service, that led him to revisit these songs. Where those

hymns proved fruitful material for his quintet along with the pristine vocals of Aoife O'Donovan, however, a smaller, instrumental approach seemed more appropriate here.

"First of all," Douglas explains, "the lyrics of the *Sacred Harp* music can be very biblical. You know, 'There's an angry God and I'd best be afraid of Him.' I don't really feel that way in my life! And in a way that is not really a part of the music. What I love though is the melodies and the peculiar harmonies and phrase lengths. That says it all for me."

In addition, Douglas was attracted by discovering a common ground between the non-specialist-oriented *Sacred Harp* songs and the chamber music sensibility at the foundation of his and Caine's wide-ranging approach to jazz. "Shape-note and psalm-tune singing comes from very early American composers and really hinges on non-academic ways of thinking about harmony and making multi-part vocal music. That intrigued me because sometimes what we do as improvisers is to go on instinct and intuition, making stuff that may not always be precisely explainable."

Paring down to the duo format allows for the unadorned beauty of these songs to shine through, but also makes its own unique demands on the instrumentalists, Caine says. "Playing duo is a special challenge, especially when accompanying a singer or horn player. The pianist is often responsible for keeping the groove happening as well as creating textures for the soloists. There is also a lot of freedom in playing duo as well as the chance to create a dialogue with another musician, which is a lot of fun with a musician like Dave."

Douglas recalls meeting Caine for the first time at a Greenwich Village jam session in 1984, but their rewarding collaboration really began while both were touring with Don Byron's project celebrating the music of clarinetist and composer Mickey Katz. The two continued to work together on each other's projects through the 1990s: Caine in Douglas' sextet and, for a decade, in the original version of his quintet; Douglas on a number of Caine's inventive reimaginings of classical masterworks. "It's been a long path," Douglas says of *Present Joys*, which represents a rare occasion for the two to play together given their hectic schedules. "In a way, it's a richer experience getting together now, like striking up a conversation with an old friend that you haven't seen for a while."

That conversation manifests in stunningly diverse ways throughout *Present Joys*, from the stately melancholy and transcendence of A.M. Cagle's "Soar Away" to the surprising transformation of the title track into a bop-flavored blues (including a winking quote of Charlie Parker's "Now's the Time"). "Bethel," reharmonized by Douglas for the occasion, is rendered as a harrowing dirge, while Caine's precise and warm harmonies starkly enrich Floyd M. Frederick's "Supplication." "Confidence" boasts a lovely melody and even in this re-imagining is every bit as heartfelt and spiritual as any of these songs.

Douglas' original compositions aim for similar levels of intimacy and direct communication without attempting a neo-primitive stance. "Ham Fist" was inspired by cooking dinner at home, with Caine's percussive strikes evoking the chopping and pounding sounds of a kitchen in action. "Seven Seas" swings with ease of a ship in motion, while "End To End" playfully strings together a series of deceptive climaxes.

The spell cast by these stirring duets is crystallized by the impeccable sound quality captured in Brooklyn's **The Loove** studio by **Tyler McDiarmid**. Caine describes the studio's Bösendorfer piano as "a great instrument with a wide array of sounds--a strong and imposing bass and a clear treble sound. There are a lot of different dynamics possible with the piano." Recorded at a high-resolution rate, the album is being released on vinyl as well as CD and download.

For Douglas, this is all a way to explore these timeless melodies in an ideal musical environment. *Present Joys* is a sparkling new addition to the already rich Greenleaf catalog. "The *Sacred Harp* tunes are very heartfelt pieces, and I had no intention to play them with any irony. I think the music is really beautiful and hopefully the way that we play them allows the tunes to ring through in a way that jazz listeners and *Sacred Harp* fans will appreciate and value."

**Dave Douglas & Uri Caine
Present Joys**

European Tour

April 26 - [Torino Jazz Festival](#), Torino, IT
April 27 - [Volkshaus Basel, Basel](#), CH
April 29 - [Teatro Lope de Vega](#), Sevilla, ES
April 30 - [Nochtspeicher](#), Hamburg, DE
May 1 - [Katowice JazzArt Festival](#), Katowice, PL
May 2 - [Leeds Grand Theatre](#), Leeds, UK
May 4 - [Bray Jazz Festival](#), Bray, IE
May 6 - [Pol Sud](#), Strasbourg, FR
May 7 - [Kulturzentrum Dieselstrasse](#), Esslingen, DE
May 8 - [Auditorium Parco della Musica](#), Rome, IT
May 9 - [Europa Jazz Festival](#), Le Mans, FR
May 11 - [Casino Estoril Auditorium](#), Estoril, PT

US Tour

July 25 - [Ars Nova Workshop](#), Philadelphia, PA
July 26 - [An Die Musik](#), Baltimore, MD

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