

A native of South Dakota, **Jason Heath** began playing with the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra and Sioux City Symphony Orchestra at the age of fifteen. He completed his B.M. and M.M. in Double Bass Performance at Northwestern University in Chicago under the tutelage of Michael Hovnanian of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. During his graduate studies Jason performed as principal bass of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago.

Jason serves as co-principal bass of the IRIS Chamber Orchestra in Memphis, Tennessee, assistant principal bass of the Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra and as a section bass member of the Elgin Symphony. He has also performed with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Chicago Opera Theater, and the Lake Forest Symphony. Jason has toured internationally with the American-Russian Young Artists Orchestra, Pacific Music Festival, and Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival, and he has also performed with the Spoleto USA Festival, Britt Music Festival, and Des Moines Metro Opera. He has appeared on several recordings for the Naxos, Chandos, and Arabeqvue labels.

Jason is the bass instructor for the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, where he maintains a teaching studio, coaches chamber music, and organizes the Whitewater Winter Bassfest, an annual bass symposium for Wisconsin and Illinois students. He is also a frequent recitalist, clinician, and guest soloist in Wisconsin and Illinois.



Department of Music
Tuesday, June 6, 2006 at 7:30 p.m.

Northeastern Illinois University
Fine Arts Center Recital Hall

Tribute to Serge Koussevitzky (1874–1951)

Featuring guest artists

Jason Heath, doublebass
Irina Feoktistova, piano

Program

Sonata in G minor..... Henry Eccles (1671–1742)
I. Largo
II. Allegro con spirito
III. Adagio
IV. Vivace

Valse Miniature Serge Koussevitzky (1874–1951)

Intermezzo Reinhold Gliere (1876–1956)

Intermission

Sonata for Double Bass and Piano Paul Hindemith (1895–1963)
I. Allegretto
II. Scherzo
III. Molto Adagio
IV. Allegretto Grazioso

Meditation from “Thais” Jules Massenet (1842–1912)

Sonata in G minor by Henry Eccles

English composer and violinist Henry Eccles was born in 1671 and died in 1742. He spent much of his career as a court musician in England. Later in life he moved to Paris and became a court musician for Louis XIV. His Sonata in G minor is the most widely played of his music. Originally composed for violin, this sonata is popular on many different instruments. Gary Karr played this sonata on his first solo album using the “Amati” bass you are hearing tonight.

Valse Miniature by Serge Koussevitzky

Former Boston Symphony Orchestra conductor Serge Koussevitzky began his career in Russia as a double bass virtuoso. He wrote a small number of pieces for the double bass, including his own Concerto (Op. 3) and a set of four short pieces, including the Valse Miniature.

Koussevitzky had acquired the “Amati” bass at this point, and in all likelihood wrote this piece on the bass you are hearing tonight. Gary Karr has recorded and performed this work numerous times on this bass.

Intermezzo by Reinhold Gliere

Russian composer and conductor Reinhold Gliere had a very close musical relationship with Serge Koussevitzky. There is even evidence that Gliere may have written Koussevitzky’s Concerto for him. Koussevitzky championed Gliere’s music both as a conductor and bassist. Koussevitzky conducted the premiere of many of Gliere’s works, and Gliere in turn dedicated some of his compositions to Koussevitzky. This Intermezzo was written in 1908 (part of Gliere’s Op. 32) and dedicated to Serge Koussevitzky. Gary Karr recorded this work and performed it extensively on the bass you are hearing tonight.

Sonata for Double Bass and Piano by Paul Hindemith

Paul Hindemith was born near Frankfurt in 1895. He died in Frankfurt in 1963. He studied as a violinist and composer, and is considered one of the more important composers of the 20th century. His Sonata for Bass is part of a series of pieces Hindemith called Gebrauchsmusik (translated as utility music or functional music). Hindemith wanted to expand the repertoire of less popular instruments with these pieces, and thus wrote sonatas for double bass, French horn, tuba, and other instruments that are not so frequently in the solo spotlight. He wrote this sonata in 1949. It was recorded by Gary Karr on the “Amati” bass featured on this recital.

Meditation from “Thais” by Jules Massenet

Massenet was born in France in 1842. He was one of the best-respected French composers of his day. He served as a professor of composition at the Paris Conservatoire. “Meditation from Thais” is a very popular excerpt from Massenet’s opera *Thais*, and it is the one piece on this recital not associated with Koussevitzky or Gary Karr. Although he recorded other Massenet opera excerpts, Gary Karr did not record this. One can certainly imagine him having done so, however, as this piece is in a very vocal style and works very well on the “Amati” bass.

About the Karr-Koussevitzky “Amati” Bass

Gary Karr had acquired the Amati bass (the bass that this recital is being played on) at a special party after his Carnegie Hall debut by Olga Koussevitzky, widow of bass virtuoso and famed conductor Serge Koussevitzky. She gave Karr her late husband’s bass in 1961 after telling Karr that she had seen the spirit of her late husband embrace Karr onstage as he performed. Before he became a conductor, Koussevitzky had been a virtuoso bass player.

Koussevitzky is said to have purchased the instrument from a French dealer in 1901 for \$3,000. Nothing is known of its history before 1901, but it is reputed to have been made in 1611. Karr made all of his albums and played virtually all of his public performances on this magnificent instrument. He recently donated this famous instrument to the International Society of Bassists.

Gary Karr influenced countless bass players (myself included) to go into music with his performances on this bass. The first solo bass performance I ever saw was Gary Karr with the South Dakota Symphony orchestra with I was 15 years old. I was mesmerized by this performance and knew that I wanted to become a bass player. I had the opportunity to go backstage before the concert and hear my teacher (Charles Kreitzer, former principal bass of the South Dakota Symphony), rehearsing a duet with Gary Karr. I remember the tone of this great bass and how amazed I was at what Gary Karr could do on this instrument. That was the last time that I have seen this bass until just before this recital.

Most sources claim that the “Amati” bass was made in 1611 by the Amati brothers, Antonio and Girolamo, of Cremona, Italy. If this is true, it would only known double bass made by the Amati brothers. In 2004 this bass was carefully inspected and evaluated independently by four experts in bass design and style, and all agreed that inconsistencies in style suggest that the bass was constructed after 1611. The wood appears to date to 1761 at the earliest. Also, many attributes of this bass suggest a French origin. All of these facts suggest that this bass was not made by the Amati brothers. Nevertheless, it is a fantastic bass that has inspired countless bassists over the last few decades, and I feel very fortunate to have an opportunity to play this recital on it.

Jason Heath
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