

Friday, November 16, 8pm, 2007
UMass Fine Arts Center Concert Hall

Unbroken Chain: The Grateful Dead in Music, Culture, and Memory
As part of a public symposium, November 16-18, UMass Amherst

American Beauty Project

featuring

Jim Lauderdale

Ollabelle

Catherine Russell,

Larry Campbell

Theresa Williams

Conceived by David Spelman
Producer and Artistic Director of the New York premier

Program will be announced from the stage

Unbroken Chain is presented by the UMass Amherst Graduate School, Department of History, Fine Arts Center, University Outreach AND University Reserach.

Sponsored by The Valley Advocate, 93.9 The River, WGBY TV57 and JR Lyman Co.

About the Program

"The American Beauty Project" is a special tribute concert to the Grateful Dead's most important and best-loved albums, *Working Man's Dead* and *American Beauty*. In January 2007, an all-star lineup of musicians that *Relix* magazine called "a dream team of performers" gave the premier of this concert in front of an over-flowing crowd at the World Financial Center's Winter Garden in New York City.

The New York Times' Jon Pareles wrote that the concert gave "New life to a Dead classic... and mirrored the eclecticism of the Dead," and a *Variety* review said that the event brought "a back-porch feel to the canyons of Gotham's financial district. The perf's real fire came courtesy of acts that like to tear open the original structures of the source material and reassemble the parts afresh - an approach well-suited to the honorees' legacy."

Now, a select group of those performers, including Ollabelle, Larry Campbell & Teresa Williams, Catherine Russell, and Jim Lauderdale are taking the show on the road.

Artist Bios

Jim Lauderdale is known as a fantastic singer & performer while at the same time building his reputation as a writer's writer, a reliable source of hit material for George Strait, George Jones, Vince Gill, Patty Loveless, the Dixie Chicks, and other headliners. In 2002, Lauderdale's collaboration with Ralph Stanley, *Lost in the Lonesome Pines*, garnered him a Grammy for Best Bluegrass Album of the Year, and he was presented with both the Americana Music Association's Artist of the Year Award and Song of the Year. In addition Jim has recorded *Headed for the Hills*, his epic collaboration in 2004 with Grateful Dead lyrical wizard Robert Hunter. Most recently he released two albums simultaneously: *Country Super Hits*, which captures the essence of classic honky-tonk and mainstream country, and *Bluegrass*, which delves again into Jim's original Bluegrass material.

A multitaled, democratic collective whose participants share vocal and songwriting duties, **Ollabelle** gains strength from its members' shared sense of mission, as well as their diverse musical and personal backgrounds. Although the group initially began as a casual sideline to the musicians' individual projects, it quickly evolved into a fulltime creative entity with an unmistakable life of its own. Where Ollabelle's gospel-steeped debut album emphasized distinctive adaptations of traditional material, *Riverside Battle Songs*—produced by veteran producer/multi-instrumentalist Larry Campbell, best known for his lengthy stint in Bob Dylan's band, and mixed by longtime admirer T Bone Burnett showcases the group's own compositions. Such memorable originals as "Heaven's Pearls," "Fall Back," "Dream the Fall," "Blue Northern Lights" and "Reach for Love" offer subtly riveting examples of the bandmates' vocal and instrumental interplay, mining an evocative palette of acoustic and electric textures to create singularly expressive music.

Larry Campbell is a totally self-taught musician and one of the most sought after session players in the country. He moves freely between rock, blues, country, folk and celtic as a multi-instrumentalist. He's played with B.B. King, Dolly Parton, Paul Simon, Willie Nelson, Sheryl Crow, Cyndi Lauper, k.d. Lang, Rosanne Cash, Elvis Costello, Emmylou Harris and Shawn Colvin among many others, but is probably best known for his eight year stint in Bob Dylan's band and appears on Dylan's Grammy Award winning *Love and Theft*. He is currently winning raves as a member of Phil Lesh and Friends and as a featured member of the Levon Helm Band. For his first instrumental solo release, *Rooftops*, Larry chose to pare down to one honest guitar to interpret traditional tunes, jigs, reels and a couple of his own compositions. As a producer, The Dixie Hummingbirds chose Larry to produce their 75th anniversary release, *Diamond Jubilation*, which also contains a couple of songs Larry penned himself. Other producer credits include

Willie Nelson singing *He Was a Friend of Mine* for the Grammy winning soundtrack to *Brokeback Mountain*, Ollabelle's latest release, *Riverside Battle Songs*, and the soon to be released cd of Marie Knight singing the songs of Rev. Gary Davis. Larry, along with Amy Helm, is currently producing her father, Levon Helm's exciting first solo effort in many years.

Teresa Williams had the good fortune to be born into a musical family and prime music geography: the 7th generation West Tennessee farm was circled by Muscle Shoals, Tupelo, Memphis, Nashville, and Kentucky's Bluegrass. Soaking up that music, working the same cotton fields as her ancestors, with a father who didn't tolerate phoniness in life, much less in music, she earned her straight ahead delivery as a child singer at "revivals" and "singings with dinner on the ground". Making the leap to NYC, maneuvering extreme culture shock, she sang lead with various groups, worked as a session singer and with favorite singers Bonnie Bramlett, Buddy and Julie Miller, Emmylou Harris, Peter Wolf and currently with Levon Helm. She created the role of Sara Carter, lead singer of the Original Carter Family, in *Keep on the Sunny Side* and portrayed Sara in the BBC documentary, *Lost Highway*, and the PBS documentary, *The Carter Family: Will the Circle Be Unbroken*.

[Catherine Russell's performance and recording credits read like a who's who of trendsetters in recent popular musical culture, including David Bowie, Jackson Browne, Paul Simon, Steely Dan, Cyndi Lauper, Michael Feinstein, Rosanne Cash, Dr. John, and Madonna, among others. A native New Yorker, Catherine has an enviable jazz pedigree. She is the daughter of jazz legends, Luis Russell \(long-time bandleader for Louis Armstrong\) and bassist/vocalist Carlene Ray. Not surprisingly, considering her roots, Catherine is a one of a kind vocalist. Her singing encompasses jazz balladry, bordello blues, dance hall swing, jump blues, country, soul, and pop. Catherine Russell embodies the deepest heart of American Music in a single voice. "Hear the real thing," says legendary critic Nat Hentoff. "The most exciting debut album I've heard in a long time." writes Will Friedwald, of her debut album, *Cat*. Released in the spring of 2006 to rave reviews, *Cat* includes a version of the Grateful Dead's "New Speedway Boogie", placing the song and songwriters Jerry Garcia and Robert Hunter in the context of The Great American Songbook. Catherine has appeared nationally on The Tavis Smiley Show-PBS TV, JazzSet on NPR, and Mountain Stage Radio Show.](#)

Producer & Artistic Director David Spelman has been making and producing music for more than fifteen years as a global impresario, busker, flack, and patron of the arts. As Artistic Director of the biannual New York Guitar Festival (b. 1999), David has earned plaudits from the Wall Street Journal, New York Times and websites that only guitarists bother to read. David has produced epic tribute concerts to Bruce Springsteen and Bob Dylan (Bruce showed, Bob didn't), oversees the Wall-To-Wall Guitar Festival at the University of Illinois' Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, and will get to taste many Australian wines at their sources as the Artistic Advisor of the annual Adelaide International Guitar Festival, launching in November 2007. David has trained in conservatories, luthieri shops, and the Prague Metro (the lattermost was the most lucrative). A former owner of a New York-based publicity firm, David did not author this bio. First Dead show attended: Capital Centre, Landover, MD, November 8, 1979.

The Beautification of the Grateful Dead

Country and rock music danced together long before The Band's first album or the Byrds' *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* or the Grateful Dead's *Workingman's Dead*. After all, the fusion of country singing and blues picking was part of the atmosphere at Memphis Recording (aka Sun Studios) when Elvis Presley recorded "That's Alright Mama" in 1954, or the next year in Chicago, when Chuck Berry and Johnnie Johnson – to my mind – created rock and roll with "Maybellene."

Country was also part of the Grateful Dead's musical heritage – very little American music *wasn't* part of their heritage – via Jerry Garcia's profound immersion in "old-timey" music and bluegrass in his early '60s apprentice days. But the combination of LSD, electric instruments, and the power and glory of Coltrane-inspired improvisation had meant they mostly played very loud blues-based music from their garage-band beginnings in 1965 well into 1969.

The acoustic sound and folk/country tunes of *Workingman's Dead*, released in June 1970, would

come as quite a shock to many fans, and to the critics as a harbinger of some sort of conscious movement (along with The Band, Dylan and the Byrds) toward country. But as usual with the Grateful Dead, the album's origins were serendipitous and synchronistic, involving no plan or program. Instead, their swerve to include country songs in their work began quite accidentally when their lyricist Robert Hunter moved in with the Garcia family in January, 1969.

At that point, Grateful Dead music was described as "living thunder" and could go 30 minutes without a vocal. Hunter had already contributed a number of lyrics to the band's psychedelic anthems, including "Dark Star" and "St. Stephen". February of that year would see the introduction of the elegant, mystical "Mountains of the Moon" – a minuet, Hunter said, and surely not a rock song – and "Dupree's Diamond Blues."

But as the rains stopped and spring came in, Hunter and Garcia's songwriting relationship, enriched by simple propinquity, flowered. Garcia would sit on the couch picking out a new tune over breakfast coffee, and Hunter might have lyrics in front of him before lunch. Not necessarily in any conscious way, their mutual understanding of each other's work process grew ever more sophisticated, and the songs revealed the growth.

The cosmic journeys of experimental improvisation which had become identified with the Grateful Dead (captured perfectly in Live/Dead, recorded primarily in February 1969) were debilitating. Brilliantly as the band was playing at that time, they slowly began to recognize that they needed to expand their repertoire or risk implosion. Since the new songs emerging from Hunter and Garcia were clearly the most creatively exciting thing happening within the band, their fellow musicians embraced them.

Several factors gave these new songs a country sound. Hunter had been in a number of Garcia's folk/bluegrass groups in the early '60s; the style was certainly central to his ethos. But Garcia's April visit to a music store in Boulder, Colorado, was essential. He spotted a pedal steel guitar, sat down and fooled with it, and achieved some sort of understanding of it. He turned to the clerk and said, "I want to buy this fucking thing, but can you send it to me in tune? I'll never remember this tuning."

Amazingly enough, it arrived intact. He began to practice, and the easiest way to do that was to back up his old friend John Dawson, who'd written a number of fine country songs and was playing them – along with country classics – in a Palo Alto, California, coffeehouse on Wednesday nights.

And so in June the Grateful Dead gave birth to the first song that would appear on Workingman's Dead, "Dire Wolf." Over the course of the year, "Cumberland Blues" (so very perfect a miner's lament that one miner was sure the filthy hippie Dead had stolen it), "High Time," "Casey Jones," and "Uncle John's Band" would join it. It is highly evocative that the anthemic "Uncle John's Band" would debut two nights before the disaster at Altamont.

In March 1970, they went into the studio to record Workingman's Dead. Hugely in debt to their record company, they were forced to be simple and economize, thinking consciously of Buck Owens' Bakersfield sound. The simplicity served the music perfectly, and the result was a classic, although not the departure many thought it was. They'd enlarged their vision, not changed it.

The creative richness of the Hunter-Garcia partnership continued to flourish, and more great songs emerged – "Candyman" in April 1970, "Attics of My Life" in May, "Sugar Magnolia" in June, "Ripple" and "Truckin'" in August. In that period they found themselves with some extra time and returned to the studio to record American Beauty. Thanks to producer Stephen Barncard's gorgeous handling of their vocals, it sounded even better than Workingman's, and it became a touchstone of the era.

By following only their own creative impulses, the band had evolved into an ensemble capable of playing almost anything, and into composers who'd fused an extraordinary span of American music into an archetype. For the next 25 years, they would be, quite simply, the Dead.

Dennis McNally is the author of a biography of Jack Kerouac, Desolate Angel, which led to his being the Dead's official biographer and its publicist since 1984. His work on the band, A Long Strange Trip/The Inside History of the Grateful Dead, was published in 2002. McNally earned a Ph.D. in history at UMass in 1979.