

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a vibrant red, draped dress and a matching necklace, is captured in a dynamic pose. She is looking off to the side with an expressive face, her right arm extended forward. The background is dark, with a textured, red, crystalline structure visible behind her.

# **Welcome to** NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY

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Department of Contemporary Musical Arts  
presents

Aoife O'Donovan

Artist-in-Residence

*Prodigal Daughter—Americana Revisited*

Produced by  
Eden MacAdam-Somer with Lautaro Mantilla and Anthony Coleman

Wednesday, February 15, 2023  
7:30 p.m.  
NEC's Jordan Hall

## PROGRAM

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### **Aoife O'Donovan**

#### ***The King of All Birds***

Aoife O'Donovan, voice, electric guitar

*CMA Chamber Ensemble*

Itay Dayan, bass clarinet

Aiden Coleman, trombone

Carson McHaney, Hannah O'Brien, violin

Katie Purcell, viola

Karl Henry, cello

Jamie Eliot, electric bass

Carles Pereira Romero, drums

Eden MacAdam-Somer, director

### **Emily Mitchell**

#### ***Dawn***

Emily Mitchell, voice, guitar

Clayton Hancock, violin

### **Crooked Still**

Text by Wendell Berry

#### ***The Peace of Wild Things/Dayblind***

Serena Bixby, voice

Kaitlyn Knudsvig, violin

Karl Henry, cello

G Korth-Rockwell, banjo

Jamie Eliot, double bass

**Aoife O'Donovan**

***Jupiter***

Delfina Cheb Terrab, voice  
Solomon Caldwell, double bass  
Carles Pereira Romero, drums

**Donovan Woods  
Aoife O'Donovan**

***Iowa***

Kaia Berman Peters, voice, accordion  
G Korth-Rockwell, voice, guitar

**Edward Sun**  
arr. Edward Sun, Kevin Crawley

***All On Me***

Edward Sun, voice, guitar  
Emily Mitchell, voice, electric guitar  
Mitsuru Yonezaki, Caroline Smoak, violin  
Kevin Crawley, Phillip Rawlinson, viola  
Giulia Haible, cello  
Jamie Eliot, double bass

**Traditional American**

***Lulu Gal***

*CMA Bluegrass Ensemble*  
Sarah Matsushima, voice  
Carson McHaney, violin  
Thatcher Harrison, guitar, voice  
G Korth-Rockwell, banjo  
Giulia Haible, cello, voice  
Jamie Eliot, double bass  
Greg Liszt, director

**Giulia Haible**

*Alive*

Giulia Haible, voice, piano  
Kaitlyn Knudsvig, violin, voice  
Karl Henry, cello, voice

**Woody Guthrie/Grant Beale**

*This Land is Your Land*

Roman Barten Sherman, voice  
Michele Zimmerman, violin  
Yoon Kim, ajaeng  
Avi Randall, viola  
Karl Henry, cello  
Solomon Caldwell, double bass  
Jiangcheng Jeff Guan, woodblock

**Avi Randall**

*Time Flies By*

Avi Randall, voice, mountain dulcimer  
Tejas Nair, esraj

**Aoife O'Donovan**  
arr. Jeremy Kittel

*Bull Frogs Croon Suite*

Night Fishing  
Darkness  
Valentine

Aoife O'Donovan, voice, guitar  
Carson McHaney, violin  
G Korth-Rockwell, mandolin  
Katie Purcell, viola  
Solomon Caldwell, double bass

GRAMMY Award-winning artist **Aoife O'Donovan** operates in a thrilling musical world beyond genre. Deemed “a vocalist of unerring instinct” by the *New York Times*, she has released three critically-acclaimed and boundary-blurring solo albums including her most recent record, 2022’s boldly orchestrated and literarily crafted *Age Of Apathy*. Recorded and written over the course of Winter and Spring 2021 with acclaimed producer Joe Henry, *Age Of Apathy* is “stunning” (*Rolling Stone*) and “taps into the propulsion of prime Joni Mitchell” (*Pitchfork*). *Age of Apathy* is nominated for multiple awards, including a GRAMMY nomination for Best Folk Album and two GRAMMY nominations for *Prodigal Daughter* featuring Allison Russell. Elsewhere, the song *B61* was awarded 2022 Song Of The Year by Folk Alliance International.

A savvy and generous collaborator, Aoife is one third of the group I’m With Her with bandmates Sara Watkins and Sarah Jarosz. The trio’s debut album *See You Around* was hailed as “willfully open-hearted” by NPR Music. I’m With Her earned an Americana Music Association Award in 2019 for Duo/Group of the Year, and a GRAMMY-award in 2020 for Best American Roots Song.

O'Donovan spent the preceding decade as co-founder and front woman of the string band, Crooked Still and is the featured vocalist on The Goat Rodeo Sessions - the group with Yo-Yo Ma, Stuart Duncan, Edgar Meyer, and Chris Thile. She has appeared as a featured vocalist with over a dozen symphonies including the National Symphony Orchestra, written for Alison Krauss, performed with jazz trumpeter Dave Douglas, and spent a decade as a regular contributor to the radio variety shows “Live From Here” and “A Prairie Home Companion.”

### **Donovan    *The King of All Birds***

Look out, look out  
Here I come now, fists out  
I'm a fighter bird  
I'm a Harrier hawk, a wild flock  
I keep time by the city clock  
When the moon is steady, I'll find you  
I'm not lucky and I'm not scared  
There could be goldmine anywhere

Anyone that I might want in this world  
They're asleep in the arms of another girl  
Who will they be when the lights come up?  
Everyone that I ever loved in my life  
Now calls somebody else their wife  
Who am I to you?

*(The text continues on the following page. Please turn the page quietly.)*

Get up, get up  
Get it together and climb on up  
To the top of the tree  
I'm an owl now, a lonely owl  
Who, who, where, what, why, when?  
How the hell did I get this far without you  
Pull my feathers one by one  
Put 'em in your pocket when I'm gone

Anyone that I might want in this world  
They're asleep in the arms of another girl  
Who will they be when the lights come up?  
Everyone that I ever loved in my life  
Now calls somebody else their wife  
Who am I to you?

Who am I to you? Am I just anyone?  
Am I the only one?  
Who am I to you? Am I just anyone?  
Am I the only one?

Come on, come on  
Put me back together, let me soldier on  
I'm the King of it all  
I'm a little wren, I'm happiest when  
I hitch a ride on the wing of a friend  
Looking down on everything then  
When the road gets weary love  
Remember who I'm dreaming of

### **Mitchell    *Dawn***

This song is about turning from brokenness and coming into the light with full confidence in the grace and love of the Father.

Soarin' away  
I'm in pieces yet  
Unafraid of my brokenness  
Carryin' on  
To the sunlit morn  
Where the dawn will reveal  
All the tears of the night

I'm gonna fall  
I'm gonna fall

Turn from it all  
Down on my knees, I'll fall

Surely now  
In the light of the morn  
The sound of Your voice is bright  
Dark is as day  
Love has cast out  
Every fear of my brokenness

I'm gonna fall  
I'm gonna fall  
Turn from it all  
Down on my knees, I'll fall

Your loving hand, it leads as a Father  
I'm washed in the water  
On the bank of the river  
And I'm falling  
Into Your arms  
Can You carry me?

I'm gonna walk  
I'm gonna walk  
Give You my all  
I'm gonna walk  
With You

**Crooked Still**    *The Peace of Wild Things/Dayblind*

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

*Wendell Berry*



**O'Donovan**    *Jupiter*

Write me a letter  
Write it by hand  
Tell me everything you wanna do before the end  
I think we'll make it another seventy years  
At a hundred and one the only color we'll see is clear

This future's blacker than a black hole  
And I know it's hard to get a read on when's the right time to fold  
If you keep on keeping on and keep your eyes fixed on the road  
You'll make it, oh

'Til we are star stuff  
Steady in a coal mine sky  
Wherever you go I go  
I hit Jupiter and hang a right  
It's a slow ride, it's a slow ride

Earth's shifting  
Temperatures rise  
But I'll never forget the way your skin tastes in July  
It tastes like peaches, tastes like firelight  
When the park stops burning we can saddle up our bikes

If this city  
Should underwater go  
I will gather up sticks and I will build my love a boat  
Float down the river - float gently down the stream  
Pinch me til I bleed, I want to see how hard I'm dreaming

**O'Donovan**    *Iowa*

I am waiting for this book to get good  
I do not have your patience  
So I'm driving up to Chicago  
I'm getting weird looks at gas stations

I did not bring a winter coat  
I do not have your foresight  
A holistic practitioner told me once  
It's why I will not live a long life

I am trying to remember where I gave up  
If it was not in Iowa

Iowa  
Somewhere in the middle of the middle of the Great Plains I saw  
A little girl waving her hand out of the window of a car  
Saying goodbye to her ma

Iowa  
Where the tall grass prairie used to ripple like the ocean in the breeze  
And the hummingbirds still suckled from the flowers in the trees  
It'd bring you to your knees

I can imagine my whole life  
Sweet and never-ending  
In every house I float by  
But they'd never let me blend in

I called a taxi in Des Moines  
I met him at the corner  
When I asked about his army coat  
He said he would not tell a foreigner

I am waiting for this book to get good  
And you won't meet me halfway  
So I'm driving up to Chicago  
I am sorry to keep you waiting

### **Sun    *All On Me***

When one doubts a sacred belief, the dimmest night creeps in - a mighty warrior puts down their sword and flees your world without leaving anything...similarly, one's soul may be ripped apart in a relationship, leaving one feeling "like it was all on me."

Foolish optimism in a deep-end life  
Drives a wedge between wrong and right  
Now I say a votive prayer  
Surrendering to all my failure

Wandering around the forest in the moonlight  
resembles a study of beauteous tragic  
I'm encased in a fine glaze of ice  
While the cold bites deep at the tide

*(The text continues on the following page. Please turn the page quietly.)*

Just laugh and concede it, my favorite one  
You're the splattering rain hitting my world for once  
With such force that I put my swords away  
But I'm begging you to stay  
Entwined in a whiskey haze

A thousand suns shine in a boundless sky  
Cut tingling scars in my body and soul alive  
Who dares to carry conviction  
Now that we are all half broken

Wandering around the forest in the moonlight  
resembles a study of beauteous tragic  
I tried to hold my secret tight  
And bury it out of sight

Just laugh and concede it, my favorite one  
You know the ropes - and you bound my heart for once  
With such strength that I gave all of me to you  
You know I was your man  
I was your man

Packed up the baggage, captive to your message  
You're under my skin, you possess all my senses  
A snowy reverie in this frozen pile of dust  
I grow small as I lay down, keep thinking of  
All the things you did to me, and I just can't stop wondering  
What a mortifying scene  
Ending up so silently  
Like it was all on me

Wandering around the forest in the moonlight  
Resembles a study of beauteous tragic  
I throw away all of the memory  
Let it float and drift with the tide

### **Haible   *Alive***

I'm always tired when I wake up  
And the sun always fails to cheer me up  
My friends are happy but they  
No longer fill my cup

Why do the seasons feel the same  
When I sit around waiting for them to change  
I tell myself to stick a-  
Round but I'm just going more insane

Take me on a long car ride  
To the West Coast ocean side  
We can see the changing tides  
And feel alive

I don't care if it's a lie  
If you don't love me I won't mind  
I'm okay with this goodbye  
If I can feel alive

Time is a fleeting cloud above  
And it moves too fast for the speed of love  
Days turn into minutes and they  
Can only slow down when we unplug

Take a walk through the wilderness  
See that forests are nothing but a beautiful mess  
Like a bird I have built a tangled nest  
And one day it will fall to the ground to rest

### **Guthrie    *This Land Is Your Land***

Interpreting traditional songs carries with it the burden of confronting the cultural significance that a piece carries. Originally a scathing critique of capitalism, and privatization, *This Land is Your Land*, written by Woody Guthrie in 1940 was shortly after co-opted, propagandized, and sung by schoolchildren across the country with defanged lyrics. It was my goal to reinstate these often forgotten verses in order to highlight their relevance 83 years later. The main theme I interpreted in my reading of Guthrie's lyrics was entropy, a decay of possibility, and opportunity, which I was taught in school were guiding principles of the American experiment. I interpreted this entropic process through two principles of physics, the second law of thermodynamics, and the Poincaré recurrence theorem, I interpreted these mathematical principles through Xenakis' stochastic performance practices and vocabulary creating emergent moments of structure which rise organically from the choices of the performers.

- Grant Beale

As I went walking that ribbon of highway  
I saw above me that endless skyway,  
I saw below me that golden valley,  
This land was made for you and me.

I roamed and I rambled, and I followed my footsteps  
To the sparking sands of her diamond deserts,  
All around me a voice was sounding,  
This land was made for you and me.

In the square of the city, in the shadow of the steeple,  
By the relief office I saw my people,  
As they stood there hungry,  
I stood there whistling,  
This land was made for you and me.

Was a big high wall there that tried to stop me,  
Was a great big sign that said, "Private Property,"  
But on the other side, it didn't say nothing,  
That side was made for you and me.

*(This verse is attributed to Pete Seeger)*  
*Maybe you've been working as hard as you're able,*  
*But you've just got crumbs from the rich man's table,*  
*And maybe you're thinking, was it truth or fable,*  
*That this land was made for you and me.*

This land is your land, This land is my land,  
From California to the New York Island,  
From the Redwood Forest to the Gulf Stream waters,  
This land was made for you and me.

### **Randall    *Time Flies By***

i walked into his room  
deep in his work discovering life  
he said that he'd change the world  
one day at a time but time will fly by

i sat with him and looked at his notes  
and looked at his face filled with wonder  
he said that he'd found the key  
a way to slow time when time flies by

on the table alone in a glass bowl  
there was a small animal  
it looked up at us with a look in its eye  
and told us our time that time will fly by

i said please come out of this room  
your friends miss you your family does too  
you've studied for so long alone  
aren't you concerned that time will fly by?

he said his animal can speak  
but not with his words he's learning so much  
yet his pet shows signs of a sadness  
the sadness of time of time that flies by

and all alone in its glass bowl  
the creature curled up and cried  
it's lost from its home it misses his friends  
it knows that their time oh their time will fly by

the days turned to months turned to years  
and everyone he knew moved away or died  
he only knew his own little life  
he didn't seem to care when their time flew by

his only friend was locked in that bowl  
a friend who was trapped and had no choice  
a friend who grew old alone with nothing to do  
as his time flew by

one day i found a letter  
from my long lost friend  
it said that he'd gone to travel the stars  
to find his friend a new home to live

he said he'd never come back to earth  
for everyone he knew is long dead  
he said that his friend is all he has left  
he'll live with his guilt  
till his time has long gone

**O'Donovan    *Bull Frogs Croon Suite***

*Night Fishing*

The water is a glaze  
Like loneliness at ease with itself  
I cast and close my eyes for the whirl out across the water  
The line striking the surface  
And sinking

I like waiting  
For it to settle on the bottom  
Then I jig it up a little  
I imagine  
The lure in utter dark  
I play it lightly. Fish rise  
Just shy of the surface  
They play their glints  
Off the moon on the water  
I see too my own loneliness

It's not too big  
And it breathes easily  
Soon, it may pretend it's rain  
Soon, it may pretend it's rain

Rain blurs the water  
There is nothing wrong  
With rain  
I take a deep breath and I cast  
And cast

*The Darkness*

Say you are out for a walk  
And somewhere through the trees  
You walk out of everything in your head

Or off by a window in thought  
And what you look out to  
A crease of trees perhaps you don't see at all  
But what you are thinking there in the trees

As you open like this through a window

Or walk and walk into a gazing  
Then say darkness falls

Darkness farther back than the cave you felt into  
Farther back than violence to animals

Darkness farther back than water you dove into  
Hands in front of your face  
To feel your way down and know  
This darkness did not begin did not gather

Then something backing off it seems as you come in  
Re-renters you and crosses you over  
The sleep of the living and the dead

*Valentine*

Big frogs croak  
Baby frogs slither;  
I'd rather go broke  
Than not be with her

Bull frogs croon  
Slugs wiggle wider;  
I'd live in ruin  
To lie down beside her



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