

## FILM AT REDCAT PRESENTS

**Mon Sept 20 | 8:30 PM**

Jack H. Skirball Series

In-theater and virtual screening

Theater tickets \$12/9 members; virtual: \$10/8 members

To get tickets, visit: [Bill Morrison](#)

### ***Bill Morrison***

### ***The Village Detective: a song cycle***

REDCAT is proud to present a sneak peek of acclaimed director Bill Morrison's latest work, *The Village Detective: a song cycle*, due to be released later this year. Featuring a hypnotic score by Pulitzer and Grammy Award winner David Lang, *The Village Detective: a song cycle* tells of a 1969 Soviet film found in a fisherman's net off the coast of Iceland. The film, starring Mikhail Zharov, offers a portal into a cinematic history that has endured on celluloid, allowing Morrison to weave the actor's professional career with the inner workings of populist Soviet cinema. From the director of *Dawson City: Frozen Time*, Morrison's documentary is not to be missed.

#### **In person via Zoom: Bill Morrison**

"With all of the beautiful decayed visuals that we can expect from a Morrison film, *The Village Detective* sees his practice evolve into something that sees the celluloid he uses as an object of interest... Fantastic." - *Flip Screen*

"a fascinating journey through the artistic life of film and stage actor Mikhail Ivanovich Zharov (1899-1981), icon and star of an entire era of Russian cinema." - *Letterboxd*

"For Bill Morrison... the sunken print becomes an avenue for exploring how Zharov's presence in over 70 motion pictures can help us to understand the machinations of Soviet cinema... The sunken print itself is played back in lengthy sequences where David Lang's accordion-performed score evokes both the film's storyline and the quality of taking in the film's deep reticulation and water damage." - *Senses of Cinema*

## ***The Village Detective: a song cycle***

(81 min, 2021, USA)

A film by Bill Morrison

Original music composed by David Lang

"I cross the field"

Music and words by David Lang

Shara Nova, vocals

Frode Andersen, accordion

In July 2016, four reels of *Derevenskiy Detektiv* (*The Village Detective*, directed by Ivan Lukinsky, 1969), a Soviet film starring Mikhail Zharov (1899-1981), were found in a fisherman's net trawling the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean, 20 miles off the Icelandic coast. In this many layered documentary hybrid, the recovered footage is interwoven with interviews and clips from Zharov's lengthy filmography to reflect the ways in which life and art can intersect, and how history can endure, and resurface transformed, on celluloid.

### **Director's Statement**

In July of 2016 I got an email from the Icelandic composer Jóhann Jóhannsson, who had heard that a commercial fisherman in Iceland had recently found four reels of a Soviet film in his net. The reels were recovered 20 miles off the west coast of Iceland: at the bottom, and in the middle of, the Atlantic Ocean, not far from where the continental plates meet, meaning they were found just at the geological division between East and West. The film, *Derevenskiy Detektiv* (1969), was not a lost, rare, or even, to my mind, a particularly good film. It is well-known to Russians of a certain age, and it is still shown on television in Russia with some regularity. I noted that its star, Mikhail Zharov (1899 – 1981), had had an extraordinarily long and productive career in both film and in theater.

The next year I traveled to Iceland and to Moscow. In Iceland I interviewed the fisherman Gisli Gylfason and the archivist Erlendur Sveinsson who had recovered the film. And in Moscow I interviewed the curator Peter Bagrov, who led me on a deep dive into Zharov's filmography.

The storyline in *Derevenskiy Detektiv* involves a missing accordion. The club manager arrives at the district police officer Fyodor Ivanovich Aniskin's office to report a theft: "Of course Cinema has the most mass reach compared to the other arts," he begins. "But Music is meant to educate men, not only aesthetically, but also, if it's possible to say, politically as well. Song helps us build and work. The accordion was stolen."

Tragically Jóhann died in February 2018 at the age of 48 and I began to think about the film I was making as being about mortality and immortality. It's about what one leaves behind, and how that reflects the world in which you lived in...

With that in mind, I approached my friend and frequent collaborator David Lang with this project, *The Village Detective: a song cycle*. David was inspired by the fact that, after having sat on the bottom of the middle of the Atlantic Ocean for nearly 50 years, this film had new stories to tell. We arrived at the idea of a soundtrack for a single accordion - a single set of lungs diving into the ocean to retrieve this story and breathe life back into an archaic film. The extraordinary music David wrote perfectly captures this, and the beautiful, tragic and inexorable drift of time.

## **Bios**

**Bill Morrison** was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1965, and currently lives in New York. He attended Cooper Union, where he studied painting and animation (the latter under Robert Breer's mentorship). After college, he worked with New York's Ridge Theater, making short film backdrops for their avant-garde productions.

Morrison is mostly known for his use of rare archival footage in which forgotten film imagery is reframed as part of our collective mythology. His films have premiered at the New York, Rotterdam, Sundance, and Venice film festivals, and multimedia work at major performance venues around the globe such as BAM, the Barbican, Carnegie, and Walt Disney Concert Hall. A number of his films have been acquired in the permanent collection of The Museum of Modern Art, which, in 2014 organized a mid-career retrospective of his work.

Morrison has been commissioned to create films for numerous composers, including John Adams, Laurie Anderson, Gavin Bryars, Dave Douglas, Richard Einhorn, Bill Frisell, Michael Gordon, Henryk Gorecki, Vijay

Iyer, Jóhann Jóhannsson, David Lang, Harry Partch, Steve Reich and Julia Wolfe.

His found footage opus *Decasia* (2002) was the first film of the 21st century to be selected to the Library of Congress' National Film Registry. *The Great Flood* (2013), was recognized with the Smithsonian Ingenuity Award of 2014 for historical scholarship. *Dawson City: Frozen Time* (2016) was included on over 100 critics' lists of the best films of the year, and on numerous lists ranking the best films of the decade, including those of the Associated Press, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Vanity Fair*. Morrison was a recipient of the Herb Alpert Award in the Arts, and received fellowships from Creative Capital, the Guggenheim Foundation, the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, and the NEA, among others awards.

For more information, please visit: <http://billmorrisonfilm.com>

One of America's most performed composer, **David Lang** was born in Los Angeles and is currently living in New York City. Co-founder in 1987 of the musical collective Bang on a Can with Julia Wolfe and Michael Gordon, he was awarded the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for Music for *The Little Match Girl Passion*. He was nominated for an Academy Award for "Simple Song #3" from the film *Youth* by Paolo Sorrentino.

His opera *prisoner of the state* (with libretto by Lang) was co-commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, Rotterdam's de Doelen Concert Hall, London's Barbican Centre, Barcelona's l'Auditori, Bochum Symphony Orchestra, and Bruges's Concertgebouw, and premiered June 2019 in New York, conducted by Jaap van Zweden. *prisoner of the state* received its UK premiere in January 2020 with the BBC Symphony, European premieres are rescheduled for 2022-2023.

Having studied at Stanford University and the University of Iowa with Martin Jenni, Henri Lazarof, Lou Harrison, Richard Havig, Jacob Druckman, Hans Werner Henze, and Martin Bresnick, he earned a Doctorate of Musical Arts at Yale University in 1980, and in 2008 joined the Yale School of Music composition faculty.

For more information, please visit: <https://davidlangmusic.com/>

*The Jack H. Skirball Series is organized by Bérénice Reynaud and Eduardo Thomas and funded in part by the Ostrovsky Family Fund..*