



Delbert Anderson and Mali Obomsawin

Music

FEB 24, 2024
8:30 PM

REDCAT
Roy and Edna Disney
CalArts Theater

CaLARTS
California Institute of the Arts

We gratefully acknowledge that we operate on the traditional lands of the Tongva, Tataviam, and Chumash peoples—including the Gabrieleño, Fernandefño, and Ventureño; members of the Takic and Chumashan language families; and other Indigenous peoples who made their homes in and around the area we now call Los Angeles. We honor their ancestors past, present, and future, and recognize their continued existence and contributions to our society.

Delbert Anderson and Mali Obomsawin

Welcome to the Land: DENNIS GARCIA (Fernandeño Tataviam, Chumash, Tongva)

Mali Obomsawin Quartet

Sweet Tooth by Mali Obomsawin

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MALI OBOMSAWIN (bass, vocals)

MAGDALENA ABREGO (guitar)

ALLISON BURIK (bass clarinet, alto saxophone)

EVAN WOODLE (drums)

Video content for this concert was filmed and directed by Lokotah Sanborn (Penobscot Nation).

MVMT 1

The first movement of *Sweet Tooth* looks to Obomsawin's ancestral village of Odanak, where she is an enrolled citizen.

Odana (Traditional, Odanak First Nation, circa 1730. Arr by Mali Obomsawin)

A traditional Abenaki ballad from as early as 1730, this song belongs to the community at Odanak First Nation and tells the story of being displaced from ancestral homelands in the Lake Champlain region. Renowned Canadian filmmaker and musician Alanis Obomsawin (a relative) recorded "Odana" on her seminal 1988 album *Bush Lady*, which she learned from her grandfather who is credited for writing down the lyrics.

Lineage (Mali Obomsawin, 2018)

A composition from Mali Obomsawin that evokes over 12,000 years of time that passed before the arrival of Europeans on Wabanaki shores. Though these millennia are often used to define Native cultures pre-European colonization, the real story is that the Wabanaki have always been open to new ideas, hungry for new technology, and great keepers of their own knowledge.

MVMT 2

The second movement of *Sweet Tooth* juxtaposes two conflicting ideologies: the fire and brimstone of the Jesuit priests, and the spiritual practices of Wabanaki culture.

Wawasint8da (Catholic Hymn)

Wawasint8da translates to “religious song,” and adapts a peculiar hymn from the Jesuits that sings of “The Harrowing of Hell.” Describing an obscure belief that Jesus traveled to hell, preaching for lost souls, the hymn was translated from Latin into the Wabanaki language as a way to indoctrinate the people. This hymn was recorded by ethnologist Gordon Day in the 1950s from the singing of Ambroise O’Bomsawin. In Day’s recording, O’Bomsawin describes his hymn book (kept at Odanak) dated 1625 – and describes the context of the book in the original Algonquian-focused mission at Sillery (modern day Quebec). Music played a pivotal role, both politically and spiritually, in Wabanaki society, but also in their colonization.

Pedegwajois (Mali Obomsawin, 2021)

An ancient story from the Wabanakis, taken from another of Day’s field recordings, told by Odanak’s Théophile Panadis. It tells of the passage of traditional teachings from one generation to the next, and lives in opposition to the violence and otherworldliness of the Christian hymn that precedes it. The story describes an event occurring in the Lake Champlain region.

MVMT 3

Movement three builds on Obomsawin’s original compositions, highlighting the album’s themes of adaptation under colonialism and the deceitful seduction of assimilation. “This movement is for the living, because we are faced with questions as First Nations,” Obomsawin says, “like ‘How do we define our own communities in ways that are actually reflective of our values? How do we continue to protect ourselves from colonization?’”

Fractions (Obomsawin, 2021)

A woozy confusion of borders, bloodlines, and values, this piece explores disorientation and displacement over time.

Blood Quantum (Nəwewəčəskawikəpəwihtawə) (Obomsawin, 2021)

A direct address to violent and misogynistic policies in North America written to tear Indigenous communities apart. This composition includes a Penobscot language chant written by Obomsawin and relatives from Penobscot Nation (Lokotah Sanborn, translation credit to Carol Dana) celebrating the matriarchs of Indigenous communities that have stood their ground and continue to hold their communities together. As Obomsawin says, “Many Wabanaki communities are matrifocal, so womens’ leadership is and was a key part of our survival.”

“I stand to face him, I face him defiantly, unflinchingly, I confront him.

We remember our matriarchs

We remember our grandmothers.”

Delbert Anderson Quartet

To'Tah (Between Waters)

Em Dee (Miles Davis Tribute) by Anderson/Muller

Losing My Mind (From the Album: *Kindred Spirits: A Navajo and South African Story*)

Heart Passage (The Arch, Aztec New Mexico)

Narbona (Chuska Mountains)

Iron Horse Gallup (Amtrak Train in Gallup New Mexico)

Groove Warrior (Chant) by Anderson/Muller

Inner Outer (Ebola Blues)

Dear Don (Diné Ballad) by Anderson/Muller

Opener (Aka Closer)

—

DELBERT ANDERSON (trumpet)

ROBERT MULLER (keyboard)

EVEN SUITER (bass)

KHALILL BROWN (drums)

All pieces composed by Diné trumpet artist Delbert Anderson. Anderson would like to thank his family, landscapes, history, experiences and culture for their inspiration. Hózhó (Beauty & Balance) formed the Delbert Anderson Quartet by combining different personal identities and cultural backgrounds. K'é (Family Values) keeps the Anderson Quartet together as one unit practicing the values of kindness, generosity and peacefulness. Special thanks to Evan Suiter for his time and musicianship.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

As the recent documentary, *RUMBLE: The Indians Who Rocked the World* made clear: Indigenous musicians were integral to the genesis of multiple American musical genres, including jazz (Indigenous Pop, 2016). While the history of American music is being reevaluated and rewritten, Delbert Anderson and Mali Obomsawin occupy the cutting edge of jazz today, bringing fresh perspectives and invigorating a tradition that was never meant to become predictable or static. Although their recordings, performances and compositions certainly reflect their respective Native identities, Anderson and Obomsawin also transcend the label of “Native jazz artist,” building upon the legacies of Native artists such as Mildred Bailey and Jim Pepper while taking the jazz genre to new and unexpected places.

—Chad S. Hamill/čnaq'yimi (Spokane Tribe)

Director of Indigenous Arts and Senior Advisor to the President on Indigenous Affairs

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The Delbert Anderson Quartet, led by Navajo (Diné) Jazz Trumpeter **Delbert Anderson**, is both a leader and innovator in today's contemporary Jazz scene. A Diné culture bearer, Anderson reimagines traditional Diné melodies once sung in Diné social circles called "spinning songs," through the language of jazz and funk. The quartet at REDCAT, comprised of **Robert Muller** (keyboard), **Even Suiter** (bass), and **Khalil Brown** (drums), collaborates to provide safe havens for Diné melodies to connect with new pathways for expression. Their compositions are guided by the time immemorial Diné principles of Hózhó-harmony, beauty and balance with self, other and nature and K'é or kinship. The Delbert Anderson Quartet creates across genres and cultures while creating a signature sound rooted in tradition. Essential to their work, the quartet maintains the mission to create cross-cultural safe spaces through their performances as well outreach, education, and wellness workshops, promoting personal expression and community cohesion.

Mali Obomsawin performs pieces from her debut album *Sweet Tooth* and new works featuring **Allison Burik** (reeds), **Magdalena Abrego** (guitar), and **Evan Woodle** (drums). A bassist, singer and composer from Odanak First Nation, Mali is one of GRAMMY.com's top ten new jazz artists to watch this year. Her touring XTET delivers a gripping and dynamic live show, which seamlessly melds chorale-like spirituals, folk melodies, and post-Albert Ayler free jazz to create a musical world all of their own. *Sweet Tooth*'s success has brought Obomsawin's touring ensemble to major jazz festivals across the US and Canada, and landed her a triple-feature in the hit FX series *Reservation Dogs*' soundtrack. "Telling Indigenous stories through the language of jazz is not a new phenomenon," Obomsawin explains. "My people have had to innovate endlessly to get our stories heard - learning to express ourselves in French, English, Abenaki... but sometimes words fail us, and we must use sound. *Sweet Tooth* is a testament to this." *Sweet Tooth* is a celebration of Indigenous innovation, and an ingeniously envisioned debut for this composer-bandleader.

Delbert Anderson and Mali Obomsawin is supported by CalArts Indigenous Arts & Expression and the Office of the President.

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UPCOMING AT REDCAT

Lionel Popkin: *Reorient the Orient*

March 9 - 10

Part performance event, durational installation, and social agitation, *Reorient the Orient* is renowned choreographer and performer Lionel Popkin's response to the dubious history of interculturalism. Seeking to expand the discourse on how brown South Asian bodies inhabit contemporary art and performance spaces, Popkin draws from his nearly 30-year archive of dance-making. In REDCAT's theater and gallery, dancers, videos, archival materials, rugs, sculptures, neon yellow wiffle balls, and the headpiece from an elephant costume invite audiences to make their way, choosing where to be and what to see.



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