

MICHAEL HERRING QUARTET

A Very Large Gap

This is my first time writing liner notes, something I have decided to undertake after recent positive experiences sharing the stories behind my music at live shows. This album, **A Very Large Gap**, is my musical attempt to close the “gaps” between us. The title song is a sad story, but one I am compelled to tell following an intense personal experience which led me to consider bridging these distances an essential part of our humanity. In 2007 and 2009 I toured with Jah Youssouf, a musician from Mali, West Africa. It was a tour full of musical growth and culture shocks, not least of which was that Jah spoke no English and we had to work hard to understand each other in French, all of our second language. It was the beginning of some very important friendships for me, and a challenging and moving experience learning to play and communicate with Jah. Then in spring 2014, while I was living in New York supported by a grant, I got the news that Jah’s wife and one of his daughters had died of Typhoid Fever.

The gap between us couldn't have seemed bigger: My friend had lost two family members to a disease for which there is both a vaccine and a treatment; he had lost them to poverty. This album is dedicated to reconciling these disparities – rebalancing inequities, and building bridges between cultures.

Outside of music, my personal practice for overcoming these gaps is Vipassana Meditation. I believe that, as we see ourselves and the world around us clearly, these gaps will inevitably close.

I have been writing some songs which I have been calling (tongue-in-cheek-ly) "New Buddhist Hymns".

With Both Feet On The Ground (written on an airplane) and **Fearless and Kind** (my friend, musician and meditator Ilusha Tsinadze's very sound life motto) are both these, and speak to the need for grounding, and right action.

Impermanence (Changes) is a pun combining Buddhism and jazz. While at a meditation retreat I had the idea of expressing impermanence as a changing song, which made me think of "rhythm changes" - a standard chord progression in jazz.

Further Than The Future falls into this category too.

Quantum is a piece with a similar goal to **Impermanence** - changing between two (rhythmic) states to push and pull the music around.

While admitting to my bad jazz puns, **Blues Bird (White-Throated Sparrow)**, combines the song of the white-throated sparrow, which sings a swinging blues lick, with a bird-blues (a Charlie Parker blues). I began writing it in Algonquin Park.

Seedy Underbelly Button are just words that sound good together.


Treefology is a dedication to Trevor Hogg, inspired by the Lee Konitz/Warne Marsh school that he loves, and also the two part interlocking Charlie Parker lines that I love.

Midden is an archaeological shell/garbage pile that are often found on the Gulf Islands in BC where I grew up. I like the idea that the garbage of the past is today's treasure.


Tzac is supposed to sound like a Hebrew word, as it's inspired by the music of John Zorn's Masada book, but the word is actually a tribute to one of the most important homes of creative music in Toronto – the Tranzac Club.

Roadhouse, Mass. mixes the sacred and profane. I wrote it for my friend, improviser Myk Freedman, who was living in rural Massachusetts and, while looking for places to play, ended up going to backwoods roadhouse blues jams.

Moanin' by Charles Mingus was an inspiration in forming this band, a perfect fit with its uplifting music, that I also think blends the sacred and the profane.



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Jeremy Darby
at Canterbury
Music Studio

mixed and
mastered by
Rueben Ghose

art and design by
Howie Shia

© © 2016 all
compositions by
Michael Herring (SOCAN)
except 'Moanin' by
Charles Mingus

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David French tenor & baritone saxophones (left channel)
Chris Gale tenor & baritone saxophones (right channel)
Michael Herring double bass Nick Fraser drums



Treefology

Midden

Impermanence (Changes)

With Both Feet On The Ground

Moanin' (by Charles Mingus)

Fearless And Kind

Seedy Underbelly Button

Roadhouse, Mass.

Blues Bird (White Throated Sparrow)

Further Than The Future

Quantum

Tzac

A Very Large Gap



made in
canada

