

**Community:
One SONG at
a Time**

Herman Hesse wrote that “making music together is the best way for two people to become friends. There is none easier.” This idea inspires Timothy Shaw, mastermind behind **SONG**, a new performance space located in the first floor of the historic Calkins House at the corner of East 11th and Patterson. The Calkins House was built in 1899 and today houses the offices of Eugene Alternative Realtors on the second floor, with a private residence on the third floor currently occupied by Shaw.

The first floor of the home, built in the Queen Anne style, is currently unused. Shaw and Eugene Alternative Realtors owner David Koester hope to remedy this by hosting live performances in the space. With **SONG**, Shaw attempts to replicate the intimate atmosphere of house concerts while breaking down the “fourth wall” between musician and audience. After performances there are song circles, in which audience members (who are encouraged to bring their own instruments to shows) will be allowed to play music with the performers. Shaw envisions this accomplishing one of music’s most basic functions: building community.

SONG is not limited to a particular art form or style of performance. The venue hosts everything from book clubs to poetry readings, from photography exhibits to multimedia installations. However, Shaw hopes to see the space used primarily for live music – keeping the “quality of the music high” while maintaining an open and inviting place for a broad cross section of Eugene’s creative community. If this experiment is successful, Shaw and Koester may one day add a more commercial application to the space, such as a coffeehouse. For now there is no cover for events at **SONG**, but donations are gladly accepted.

For more information about **SONG**, go to www.facebook.com/songcenter or inquire about using the space at song@songcenter.info – William Kennedy

Songs in the Key of Sad

The first time I noticed – as in really, *really* noticed – **Gillian Welch**’s music was on a particularly stoned and sleepy Sunday in Seattle a few years back. After pouring the morning’s first cup of coffee, I flicked on NPR, planted myself at the kitchen nook and started thumbing absent-mindedly through a backlog of piled-up *New Yorkers*. My head started drifting, not back toward sleep but not exactly awake either, everything falling forward into a kind of waking dream. I realized the music feathering out the radio was casting some kind of spell; the song was a haunting, harrowing lullaby at once ethereal and earthen, full of Old Testament ashes and dust, like a cemetery afloat in dawn’s fog. Either this was one seriously heavy-duty edition of Garrison Keillor’s *Prairie Home Companion*, or I had huffed way too much of the kootchie-hoo before breakfast. Intimate and impassioned, the vocals were chillingly beautiful, a gentle sonic etching against walls of hurt. But what finally grabbed me – what scared the hell out of me, actually – was the guitar playing, which was guttural and pummeling, gracefully clawing its way into some nether dimension where notes and emotions become one. The song was “Time (the Revelator),” and the performers were Gillian Welch and David Rawlings.



Likely most folks recognize Welch from her offerings on the bestselling soundtrack for the Coen brothers’ 2000 film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, which included Welch and Alison Krauss pairing up for a lovely version of the gospel song “I’ll Fly Away.” But for serious fans of Welch and Rawlings’ music – which, with its deep roots in bluegrass and Appalachian folk, might best be described as American Gothic – the waiting period since the release of 2003’s summery *Soul Journey* developed into a somewhat worrisome dry season, if not a downright drought. Rumors, pushed release dates, trouble in the studio, combined with Welch’s admission of writer’s block, have stretched the better part of a decade. Time, certainly a revelator, is also a bitch, but then again, if a gestation period of eight years is exactly what was needed for Welch and Rawlings to reap their new album, so be it.

The Harrow & The Harvest is vintage Welch – spare, spooky instrumentation and lapidary songwriting, everything boiled down in a cauldron of true grit to its most refined essence, without a wasted note or unnecessary breath. Welch, a superlative storyteller with a voice full of ragged beauty and scarred wisdom, is completely on her game here, and Rawlings’ playing is more emotive than ever. This is a dark and harrowing album, a cycle of songs written in the key of sad and harkening to a history of dustbowls and early death. But *The Harrow & The Harvest* is no throwback; Welch’s style often evokes the sharecropper misery photographed by Walker Evans during the Great Depression, but her hangman’s tales are timeless, speaking to the here and now. “Maggie Johnson bought the farm, put a needle in her arm,” Welch croons on “The Way It Goes,” her voice resigned yet defiant, as though she’s ready to stare down death itself. Because when Gillian Welch sings into the abyss, what echoes back is the voice of survival.

Gillian Welch and Dave Rawlings play at 8pm Sunday, July 10, at McDonald Theatre; \$25. – Rick Levin

Ancient Technology & the Electro-Innovator

Jamie Janover is a not just a master of the ancient hammered dulcimer. He is an all-around innovative musical ambassador. Well known for his recent live shows with female vocalist impressario Lynx, in whose company Janover supplied heavy drum beats, hammered dulcimer and just the right amount of whomp from the electro-thump-MDMA-laced burner scene, the able Janover has gone solo and will be rocking Oregon Country Fair with his blend of crunchy beat-blasting alchemical tunes.



A descendent of the acclaimed Colorado-based trio known as Zilla, whose eventual dissipation spawned the well-proportioned musical powerhouse groups Eoto and Vibesquad, Janover is a road warrior unwilling to gas out. To watch him in concert is to watch the continuation of a scene that has grabbed the entire country by the throat – dubstep and electro-hop, having usurped the throne once presided over by underground conscious hip hop, would have been nothing more than a brief flash in the synaptic port were it not for the application of live instrumentation the likes of which Janover brings to the table. Groups such as Beats Antique and those who want so badly to imitate it represent this melding of live instruments and the modern DJ/laptop show. Janover goes one step further by creating devices that unite these two mediums and more, such as the miniature amplified drum kit he calls “mini-kit,” or the “RealmsMobile” – a fully-functional festival cruising tricycle with attached “mini-kit” that allows him to be mobile while playing his instruments and obliterating your eardrums and brain cells in the most tantalizing of ways.

Janover possesses the innovative spark and guttural perseverance required of the true modern musician. To see him in action is to witness the real thing, still going.

Janover plays 2:30 pm Sunday, July 10, on the Shady Grove Stage at Oregon Country Fair. – Dante Zuñiga-West

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