Wind Ensemble
Presents

Maslanka
Symphony No. 10

World Premiere

Scott Hagen, conductor

Tuesday, April 3, 2018
Libby Gardner Concert Hall
Pre-Concert Discussion: 6:45 p.m.
Performance: 7:30 p.m.
Program
(Please hold applause until the end of each section and turn off all electronic devices that could disrupt the concert.)

First Light
David Maslanka
(1943-2017)

The Seeker
David Maslanka

Intermission

Symphony No. 10: The River of Time
I. Alison
   with Matthew Maslanka
II. Mother and Boy Watching the River of Time
III. David
IV. One Breath in Peace

Please join us immediately following the concert for a reception in
Thompson Chamber Music Hall
# Wind Ensemble Personnel

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<tr>
<td>Oboe</td>
<td>Haehyun Jung, Erika Qureshi*, Yolane Rodriguez, Robin Vorkink</td>
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<td>English Horn</td>
<td>Robin Vorkink</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bassoon</td>
<td>Hans Fronberg, Dylan Neff*, Kylie Lincoln*</td>
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<td>Contra Bassoon</td>
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<td>Maggie Burke</td>
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<td>Clarinet</td>
<td>Maggie Burke, Myroslava Hagen, Janelle Johnson, Samuel Noyce, Alex Sadler, Michal Tvrdik, Jairo Velazquez*, Erin Voellinger</td>
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<td>Cameron Carter, Max Ishihara, David Kidd, Timothy Kidder, Lisa Lamb, Erik Newland*, Jordan Wright</td>
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<td>Taylor Blackley, Sean Dulger, Korynn Fink, Bradley Sampson, Kaitlyn Seymour*, Amber Tuckness, Taylor Van Bibber</td>
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<td>Trombone</td>
<td>Shaun Hellige, Ammon Helms*, Alex Hunter*, Brian Keegan</td>
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<td>Michael Bigelow*, Matthew Maslanka, Garret Woll</td>
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<td>Timpani</td>
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<td>Percussion</td>
<td>Troy Irish, Nick Montoya, Cris Stiles, Olivia Torgersen, Monah Valentine, Brandon Williams*</td>
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<td>Piano</td>
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<td>String Bass</td>
<td>Hillary Fuller</td>
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<td>Harp</td>
<td>Melody Cribbs*</td>
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*principal player

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This performance and recording project are generously supported by the Thomas D. Dee II Endowment.

Special thanks to Michelle Addison, Robert Bedont, Doug Brown and Wind & Rhythm, Miguel Chuaqui, Adam Griffiths, Scott and Myroslava Hagen, Claudia Horton, Eric Laprade, Matthew Maslanka, Maslanka Press, Mark Morette and Mark Custom Recording Service, Anna Oldroyd, Vanessa Peral, Stephen Steele, and the outstanding students of the University of Utah Wind Ensemble for their commitment to Maslanka's music.
Program Notes

David Maslanka (1943-2017)
First Light (2016)

*First Light* has two characters. They are marked in the musical score as “unforgettable wounds - darkness,” and “perseverance - first light.” It has been my experience that no real change, no transformation occurs without crisis. We don't move if we don't have to. This is as true on the societal and environmental levels as it is on the personal. We are facing huge crises in our society and in our world, with every aspect of human darkness rising to the surface. It is my faith that we, with imagination, work, and perseverance, are at the edge of a profound transformation - a movement into light. -David Maslanka

David Maslanka (1943-2017)
The Seeker (2016)

In Buddhist tradition the bodhisattvas are the seekers after enlightenment. It can be said that we are all seekers on this path, the path of self-understanding, of the heart of compassion, of caring for the world. The bodhisattvas are put forward as models for our own seeking:

- **Avalokiteshvara:** the way of listening in order to relieve the suffering of the world.
- **Manjushri:** the way of being still and looking deeply into the heart of things and people.
- **Samantabhadra:** the way of acting with the eyes and heart of compassion.
- **Ksitigarbha:** the way of being present where there is darkness, suffering, oppression, and despair.
- **Sadāparibhūta:** the way of never disparaging or underestimating a living being.

*The Seeker* is subtitled “a symphonic movement.” It opens with a slow melody that feels like an Appalachian folk song. It transitions suddenly and sharply into the main body of the work, an energetic and exuberant romp at a very speedy tempo. The opening melody returns in the context of a chorale, my recomposition of *Christe, der du bidst der Tag und Licht* (Christ, you who are day and light) from the 371 four-part chorales of Bach. The movement concludes with a partial recap of the fast music, and a very brief coda. -David Maslanka

David Maslanka (1943-2017)
Matthew Maslanka (b.1982)
Symphony No. 10 (2018)

**On Composing and Symphony No. 10**
David Maslanka, May 2017

This is my practice and experience as I understand it. Walking has been extremely important in my concentration practice. Walking engages the whole body, and both halves of the brain. It is an integral part of my composing process.

When the mind is relatively clear and open it is possible simply to enjoy the mental vacation. In fact, I recommend this to people as a way of recharging the mind during the course of a busy day. Walking may not always be possible but five minutes of this practice sitting at your desk lets you bring a different energy and clarity to each engagement.
When the mind is open it is possible to ask a question or make a request such as “show me something I need to know about the person who asked me to compose” or, “show me something I need to know about the music I am starting to write.”

I have been asked more than a few times if my practice is lucid dreaming. As I understand it, lucid dreaming is the capacity to control or direct the movement of a sleep dream. My work with inner travel and dreaming is not like this. It is not controlling but allowing.

It is being fully present with an inner experience – a feeling, thought, musical idea, meditation image, dream memory, etc. – allowing, following, accepting but not controlling or judging. This is not loss of control but rather partnership. The heart of music appears on its own terms and in its own time. There is what I think I want the music to do and there is what the music wants to do. The heart cannot be commanded, cannot be arrived at purely by intellectual choice. This is not passive waiting for inspiration; quite the contrary. The work is regular and purposeful.

With these ideas in mind I want to describe some of the process of Symphony No. 10. With each symphony comes an increasing sense of weight, that each has to be “important,” has to somehow match up to the history of symphonies. These are personal, emotional ideas, and not the least bit helpful in the writing of a new piece. This kind of thinking arose first with Symphony No. 5. “No. 5” has been a marking point of consequence for composers of the past. It took significant work to release the “oh my God” and worry elements, and then to let my own work become itself. Symphony No. 9 was worse. This is the serious bugaboo point for people writing symphonies in the western music tradition. “No. 9s” are historically the crowning achievement, and then … death. My No. 9 was written in 2011 and I did not die. Getting past all the history of ninth symphonies was a lot worse problem than for No. 5. No. 10 was freer in a way – not the same load of historical baggage – but the need to be “important” was just as intense. The work began as always with meditation: “show me something I need to know about the piece I am going to write.” Here is the first image that came:

The Holy Mother takes me sliding down a rocky mountain slope, all loose small rocks. It’s a wild stony country, very little vegetation, many beautiful colors in large rock formations, brilliant sun. We find a large pool nestled among tall vertical rock faces. The water is turquoise blue. We go into the pool and swim/flow downward, rising again toward a circle of light. At the surface is a “divine” place of craggy multicolored rock faces. A voice speaks my name and says, “you are ready, receive what wants to come through…We are here. You go and do.”

And the second from a few days later:

I am met by the Holy Mother in the guise of an 18-year-old Swiss farm girl – blonde, pretty, traditional dress. I am shown various views of the earth and the oceans. The earth is clean, the oceans are clean. Humans have come into balance with the earth and are happy. The farm girl shows me a farm full of milk cows. The world is still technological but we are living an agrarian life, I am shown a large beautiful auditorium where music is being made. The girl thanks me for what I have done to make this new world possible. This is an odd thought for me to accept.
Then came the usual problem of composing. “I” desired to write an important piece. In my vague imagination it was like one of the big symphonies of Dimitri Shostakovich, my favorite modern symphonist. But my inner compass kept dragging me away from that, and pulling back to the humble world of the chorales. A pattern began to emerge of a chorale and a response, the response being the evolution of a radically simple, intimate, and beautiful melody. This process kept repeating itself until half a dozen of these melodic pairings began to emerge – all simple, beautiful, personal, not “important”. At each step I continually questioned whether this was the symphony that needed to be: “Really? Seriously? This is what you want me to do?” – yes. Finding the structural line for the whole piece was extremely difficult. At a certain point, I sensed that a large movement wanted to happen, but it existed only as a hard little node that had begun to rise to consciousness.

There are times in composing when the music feels like it doesn’t want to give itself up. I can sense the potential power of the ideas but there is serious resistance to finding the full expression. This happens when an idea is particularly powerful. A wrestling match is required. I have often thought that one of my best qualities as a composer is simple persistence. I am willing to do the wrestling match, however long and demanding, until the music is right.

Ideas come in different ways and with different qualities, depending on the stage of the composition. First ideas are often extremely simple, a few pitches and a few simple rhythms. I have called these “dumb” ideas because on the surface they seem absolutely banal. And yet, at the outset of a new pieces, these are the ideas that have shown up. They come with a sense of energy and urgency. They are the first hints, the root points of bigger structures that are forming deeper in the mind. There is a temptation to throw these ideas away because they are embarrassingly simple; they are not complex or “interesting,” but they are the radically simple configurations that hint at a powerful heart center. Something big is at work.

Sometimes music unfolds quickly and easily from these ideas, but as often as not I have to come back to them repeatedly until the potential they hold flowers into something powerful. This persistent revisiting is what I describe as the wrestling match. The process can be intensely frustrating. In the course of nearly every piece I will say to my wife “I am going to burn this and get a real job.” I am fascinated with the power of the utterly simple. There is a simple core quality at the heart of every good composition. The lesson over time for me has been to receive whatever ideas come, to throw nothing away, to write patiently and persistently until each idea shows its full reason for being.

The word “interesting” has been badly used relative to new music. It is an evasive and emotionally protected word. For me the truly interesting thing has been the understanding that music appears out of a matrix, a single point. It does not start with a conscious thought process, at least not for me. It is profoundly interesting to be at that point between conscious and unconscious minds, to see the new continually emerge from a single point and to be consciously prepared to help that energy find its form as notated music.

This is the absolute center of composing for me: opening the conscious mind to receive impulses from the unconscious, the other side, and trusting in the partnership.
Completing Symphony No. 10  
Matthew Maslanka, March 2018

Dad started out by saying that he didn’t want anyone to finish the piece if he died first. I’m not really sure what made him change his mind, but I have a guess. Dad had a profound love for me and an unshakeable faith in my creative spirit. He always hoped that I would open fully into my heart center and live in true freedom without being controlled by fear. He saw potential for that openness in my largely-undeveloped natural talent for composition. He left me an astonishing gift and challenge with this symphony. I think he would have been riveted with fascination to see what I would do.

The process of completing the symphony was the most difficult work I’ve ever done. It required that I live in and process intense emotion over an extended period of time. I had to inhabit my father’s mind space to understand what his cryptic scribbles meant. I needed to feel the true course of the piece and guide its energies. I drew on everything I ever learned about dad, his music, and music in general: all the pieces of his I repeatedly listened to while growing up; all of his scores that I laboriously copied note by note; all our extended philosophical discussions; every composition lesson with him and with the professors in college; every orchestration and music theory class; every time I watched dad coach a group. This project felt very much like the final exam for this first part of my life. It asked the questions: “did you pay attention? How much did you absorb? Can you overcome your own self-imposed limitations?”

When I got dad’s sketches for Symphony 10 shortly after his death in August of 2017, my first reaction was to not look at them. It took a long time to even engage with the music. There were certainly enough things going on to occupy my attention. The memorial service for my mother and father was held at the family home in Missoula, Montana on September 3. I had scores and parts to prepare for a large Nashville recording session the following week, a job that I convinced myself was important to carry out rather than pass it to a colleague. I spent much of August preparing for the session, setting up the nonprofit David Maslanka Foundation with my brother and sister, and helping with the memorial. Right after the memorial, I met with the consortium heads of the Symphony 10 and 11 project: Stephen Steele, Scott Hagen, and Onsby Rose. We agreed to consolidate the consortium into one project and that I would complete the symphony for a late-March 2018 premiere.

When I got back home to New York after the Nashville session, I collapsed. My emotional, intellectual, and physical bandwidth had been taxed far beyond its capacity. I spent the rest of September and October in my apartment on the couch. I barely responded to messages or did much beyond eating and sleeping. Through it all, though, I knew that I had to finish the symphony. I flew back to Missoula in November to start work in earnest. I lived in dad’s studio and slept on my parents’ bed.

My parents’ death was the first major loss that I ever suffered. I had little framework for understanding or processing the emotions. It was simply overwhelming. As the onslaught of feelings started to subside, I started experiencing pockets of grief. For a time, even seeing dad’s handwriting was enough to set me off. A small list of similar experiences: the first time I played a Bach chorale on his piano; seeing his note in the score on the day my mother died; hiking his accustomed trail at Blue Mountain.

Immersed in the environment, I started looking at the sketches, working to understand their intent. What emerged from the sketches was the shape of the work ahead. The first movement was completed; it was fully orchestrated. The second movement was half-orchestrated but fully and concretely sketched, with good orchestration notes. The fourth movement was fully sketched, but was fairly vague in a number of places that would require interpretation.
The true challenge would be the third movement. Dad wrote in his notes that he “sensed that a large movement wanted to happen, but it existed only as a hard little node that had begun to rise to consciousness.” He wrote those words in April or May of 2017, before my mom was diagnosed with her final illness. I overheard dad talking to mom as she declined in June: he had cracked the third movement; he understood what the path forward was. The clipboard my sister handed me in August held seven pages of dad’s fair copy of the third movement. [Technical sidebar: “fair copy” is a finished piano reduction or short score of a large ensemble work, often with orchestration notes, ready to be orchestrated. It is the next step in composition after making rough sketches.] Much of the movement was crossed out and there were many half-realized ideas quickly sketched on extra staves. As I studied the rest of the symphony, it became very clear that the third movement was the structural and emotional core of the piece.

It was at this moment that the realization of what exactly needed to happen slammed home. I had about three months to do the following: discover what dad meant about the path forward on the third movement, reverse engineer his (extremely limited) sketch and divine what his intent may have been, take his sketch fragments and put them into a coherent shape; build a movement that at once worked in its own right and also as the central statement of the symphony, orchestrate the third movement, orchestrate the rest of the second movement, make judgment calls about ambiguities in the fourth movement, orchestrate the fourth movement, and prepare scores and parts for rehearsals. I had no idea how long the discovery and writing process would require, but my experience with preparing scores and parts told me that every extra day I could give the production team would make the rehearsals and performance better.

So I got to work. My highest priority was the structure of the third movement. I made my own handwritten fair copy of his so that I could have a clear picture of the state of the work. I wrote out the music as it flowed through his fair copy, skipping the crossed-out sections and marginal notes. What emerged was a very strong opening: chorale, first theme area, development, and breakdown. His fair copy sketch stopped there.

I did a thorough exploration of the marginal sketches included in the pages. A small snippet was marked, “The Song at the Heart of it All.” I felt confident that this was what dad was referring to when he said he had cracked the movement. The end page of the sketch had what looked like climactic material and perhaps a small denouement. The word “recap” was written at the end of the first theme area and there was a single line with “end?” circled next to it.

Armed with this, I put together a treatment of the movement. I wrote new material based on the denouement to start building into the Song at the Heart, moved into the climactic material, recapitulated the first theme area, and closed with the end snippet.

It was unsatisfactory. The shape was lumpy and it didn’t feel right. I started taking many walks. Dad’s emphasis on walking as a part of the compositional process proved invaluable. This was the first time in my life that I had truly intellectually-insoluble problems. Thinking my way out of this problem would leave me with music that was stiff and wrong. Walking in his way, with focus on the breath and a cleared mind, allowed the shape of the music to organically assemble itself. Dad described this process as a partnership: not ceding control to the unconscious, but allowing it to work alongside the deliberative mind.

I gradually found a flow that seemed to work, but it never quite settled. One day in January, though, I was working at his piano and saw a familiar chorale staring up at me from an unfamiliar page. Excited, I paged through the stack of paper and discovered his working rough sketch for the new elements in the third movement. Most crucially, I had more rhythmic and harmonic context for the Song at the Heart. There was even a broadly-drawn section with the Song at its peak.
I quickly incorporated the new material into my treatment of the movement. After the breakdown at the end of his fair copy sketch, I wrote a transition based on the development into a second theme area suggested by the rough sketch. This built into a full-throated full-ensemble statement of the Song at the Heart and into a massive sequence of block chords. I gradually released the tension into a restatement of the Song in the solo euphonium.

This moment was the most personal and the most powerful for me. I'm a euphonium player. Putting the Song in this voice felt like me singing it to him, saying goodbye.

I brought back the first theme area as a recap and closed it hard, slamming it harmonically shut in as final and definite a way as I knew how. The material marked “end?” formed a very light coda to undercut the huge ending a bit and set up the next movement. I was happy with this and started orchestrating it.

I knew that I would need to delegate a large part of this project. Basically, anything that someone else could do, I should farm out. I got my good friend and excellent copyist Patrick Morgan to start copying the first movement and the completed half of the second movement. [A small technical sidebar: “copying” in this case means the process of entering the notes and markings into notation software. Once entered, scores and parts are edited for readability and laid out for the conductor and performers.] As good as Patrick is, though, I knew I would need a lot of people on this job. There was a fat stack of paper to be produced and proofread and I needed as much time as possible to complete the composing and orchestrating. I called Matt Franko and his colleagues at Black Ribbon Pro to handle that part of the work.

I was under the gun to have the completed score and parts ready by March 5 for a planned March 21 premiere. By the middle of February, the first and second movement were well on their way. Orchestrating the end of the second movement went very quickly and I got that off to the copyists. I knew that I needed to give myself more time to finish the orchestration on the third movement. I asked Tyler Harrison, a very fine composer and one of dad's former students, to do a pass on the fourth movement's orchestration for me.

I had gone through and resolved most of the fourth movement's ambiguities before I passed it off to Tyler, but there were still several items to resolve. It was surprising to me that certain things in dad's sketch that seemed so clear to me would be so opaque to another. I then realized that I had been immersed in this world for months. I had gotten to the point of being able to immediately interpret dad's every stray mark. Tyler did a great job that only required light adjustment to bring it home.

By the beginning of March we were getting down to the wire. The first and second movements were copied and proofed and the 4th movement was being copied. All that was left was my orchestration of the third movement.

Working feverishly, I completed the orchestration on March 4th. I sent copies to three trusted friends: Tyler Harrison, orchestrator Michael Feingold, and composer Jeremy Howard Beck. They all came back quickly with very useful and very different comments. Tyler, as dad's student, pointed out areas that could have more a characteristically Maslanka orchestration and provided an invaluable sounding board for some of the more idiosyncratic choices I made. Michael highlighted ways to increase punch and sparkle, especially with harp effects. The most penetrating question, though, came from Jeremy.

Jeremy observed that the recap closed so hard that the fourth movement became superfluous and anticlimactic. He asked, “what does the recap mean to you?” As I tried to answer him, its true purpose became clear.
The Song at the Heart of it All, sung by the solo euphonium, was the place in the movement where my heart was open. I had battled through hell to get there, but once there, it was a pure expression of love. This was a terrifying and painful thing, even as it was luminous and transcendent. I felt the unconscious deep need to protect myself from this vulnerability. To that end, the recap served as a safety blanket. It said, “everything is ok. We’ve done the hard bit, now we can have a reward.” The ending closed so hard that it was almost like sticking fingers in my ears and closing my eyes. I needed to not feel the pain of loss and crushing grief that the Song evoked.

Once I knew that the recap was a defensive measure, I couldn’t let it move forward as it was. This left me with the last dilemma: how do I express the truth of my reaction to dad’s death within this music? Ideally, how do I express that truth as quickly as possible? I was already pushing my deadline further that people were comfortable with.

The solution was as surprisingly simple as it was devastating in effect. The first theme area, once safe and triumphant, would now be interrupted by the plaintive unresolved call of the euphonium as the ensemble grew increasingly dissonant and wrenching. My pain and loss was not resolved and would not be easily covered over. The movement ended with the euphonium keening alone and abruptly cut off.

After a long pause, the fourth movement’s quiet chorale opening would be the most welcome balm to a soul shredded raw with grief.

I must offer my deepest thanks to Jeremy for his insight in this matter.

I delivered the final score on the morning of March 7th after an intense all-night effort. The professionals at Black Ribbon Pro turned the 14-minute, note-dense movement around in less than two days so that rehearsals could go forward as scheduled. They have my gratitude for their incredible work.

This project asked me the questions: “did you pay attention? How much did you absorb? Can you overcome your own self-imposed limitations?” I have never been tested in this way before. What I learned was that, yes, I did pay attention and that I absorbed an enormous amount. And yes, I can overcome my own self-imposed limitations – with a little help from my friends.

The first movement of the symphony is named after my mother, Alison, and has violent textures juxtaposed with a simple, sweet song. The second movement is a nearly-direct transcription of a euphonium sonata dad wrote for me. The third movement, whatever dad intended, became my response to my parents’ deaths.

The fourth movement is the deliberate breath of peace.

Every morning before starting work, dad would play a Bach chorale from the 371 Collected Chorales. He would sing through each voice (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass). In this way, he came to understand the subtle intricacies of these extraordinary miniatures. The Bach chorales contain the whole of western music packed into a handful of bars. They are like mandalas or fractals: the closer you look, the more there is.

I have closed the symphony with the piano alone playing the last phrase of a chorale while singing the melody. I hope you will hear dad’s voice in it.
Meet the Composers

David Maslanka was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts in 1943. He attended the Oberlin College Conservatory where he studied composition with Joseph Wood. He spent a year at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria, and did masters and doctoral study in composition at Michigan State University where his principal teacher was H. Owen Reed.

Maslanka’s music for winds has become especially well known. Among his more than 150 works are over 50 pieces for wind ensemble, including eight symphonies, seventeen concertos, a Mass, and many concert pieces, His chamber music includes four wind quintets, five saxophone quartets, and many works for solo instrument and piano. In addition, he has written a variety of orchestral and choral pieces.

David Maslanka’s composition are published by Maslanka Press, Carl Fischer, Kjos Music, Marimba Productions, and OU Percussion Press. They have been recorded on Albany, Reference Recordings, BIS (Sweden), Naxos, Cambria, CRI, Mark, Novisse, AUR, Cafua (Japan), Brain Music (Japan), Barking Dong, and Klavier labels. He served on the faculties of the State University of New York at Geneseo, Sarah Lawrence College, New York University, and Kingsborough Community College of the City University of New York, and was the freelance composer in Missoula, Montana from 1990 until his death in 2017.

Matthew Maslanka is David Maslanka’s second son and the primary caretaker of David’s music. Born in New York City in 1982, he grew up listening to his father composing at the piano. From the age of 10, Matthew started helping out by making photocopies of scores and dubbing cassette tapes for David to send to conductors interested in the music. At 12, Matthew discovered the delights of computer engraving music and studied the craft from David. By 14, Matthew was skilled enough to handle the preparation of his father’s music and proceeded to engrave virtually every work from that point forward. In this way, he built up a deep understanding of the underpinnings of David’s writing and long-term development as a composer. He frequently accompanied David on his trips to work with ensembles and observed his working process closely. Matthew enjoyed a particularly close personal and professional relationship with David.

In 2012, Matthew founded Maslanka Press to publish his father’s works. Dedicated to producing beautiful, affordable new editions, promoting David’s music, and supporting performers, educators, and enthusiasts, Maslanka Press now publishes more than 70 works worldwide. Following David’s passing in 2017, he started the David Maslanka Foundation with his brother Stephen and sister Kathryn to preserve and promote David’s music and life.
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- April 6, 4:30 p.m.
- Dumke Recital Hall

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- April 10

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