



NEW YORK • WASHINGTON DC

Banjo pioneer Jake Schepps explores the world of contemporary classical music on *Entwined*

On his fourth studio recording, the intrepid Boulder-based banjoist asks what happens when classical composers write for the bluegrass stringband combo of banjo, mandolin, guitar, violin and bass. Marc Mellits, Matt McBane, Matt Flinner and Gyan Riley provide a kaleidoscopic array of colorful answers, full of atmospheric melodies and mixed-meter grooves. *Entwined* will be released in early 2015 with a North American tour set to coincide.

From the vantage point of the adventurous banjo player and arranger Jake Schepps as well as his fellow travelers in the vibrant new acoustic scene (David Grisman, Punch Brothers, Darol Anger), the horizon for stringband music is infinite. On his latest album, *Entwined*, the stringband instrumentation of banjo, mandolin, guitar, violin and bass—canonized as the quintessential bluegrass combo when Earl Scruggs teamed up with Bill Monroe in 1945—is rewired, rebooted and re-contextualized by a trio of composers hailing from the contemporary classical world (Marc Mellits, Matt McBane, and Gyan Riley) with mandolinist-composer Matt Flinner helping to bridge the genre gap with a monumental new four-movement work rooted in the worldly new acoustic aesthetic. The album, which is being released on Schepps's Fine Mighty Records imprint, will be released in early 2015.

Entwined builds on Schepps's faithful, Appalachia-tinged arrangements of Béla Bartók's music for stringband that appeared on his 2011 recording *An Evening in the Village: The Music of Béla Bartók*, which was praised for its "grace and understated subtlety [...] within the texturally complex arrangements" (*Driftwood Magazine*) and as "honest, heartfelt and uncommonly intelligent" (*Pop Matters*).

On *Entwined*, Schepps reached out to several composers whose music he found particularly compelling including Matt McBane, Brooklyn-based composer and leader of the post-classical band Build; Marc Mellits, self-described miniaturist known for his intricate, driving compositions; and Gyan Riley, polymath composer and guitarist out of Brooklyn. He also asked his frequent collaborator, the renowned mandolinist Matt Flinner, to write something for the project. "The idea was to take somebody from within my world to write a long-form piece, to show what these classical composers bring to the table compared to what a great composer within the stringband world does," says Schepps. "Everybody wrote pieces to their personalities and I think that this variety really makes a big statement about how much potential there is

with the string band for playing new music.”

The disc opens with Marc Mellits’s set of eight miniatures, *Flatiron*, swings wildly from the reckless to the serene, with exuberant chopping fiddle effects and breathless rhythms that dance on the edge of a cliff giving way to gorgeous violin melodies that luxuriate in stillness.

Matt McBane’s work *Drawn*, a five-movement exploration of the common ground between post-minimalism and modern string band music where banjo rolls collide with minimalist arpeggios, extended techniques approximate electronic textures, and traditional strumming is stretched out to create cinematic expanses of space. The overall effect is one of pushing the typically rural bluegrass instrumentation across a threshold into the hi-tech machine age.

Matt Flinner, the celebrated mandolinist and composer, brings a deep understanding of the idiomatic nuances of the stringband instruments on *Migrations*, his most ambitious work to date. Flinner, who plays on all the pieces of the disc, starts with old-time bluegrass modal harmony and melody, passing them through a non-linear, classically-inspired development that forges a path into exciting new musical territories. Meandering melodies hook into angular dissonances and rhythmically complex grooves, creating an unforgettable journey over a sonic topography full of contrasts.

Gyan Riley’s *Stumble Smooth*, which Schepps refers to as “the burliest piece of music I’ve ever worked on in my life,” closes things out with a stark accelerating percussion intro that builds slowly into a fevered interplay of free jazz, bluegrass, gypsy music and jagged modernism.

The Jake Schepps Quintet is an impressive roster of players that includes some of the most heralded acoustic musicians of our time. Each member has a long history of forging paths and pushing traditional boundaries in string band music. Mandolinist **Matt Flinner** has made a career out of playing acoustic music in new ways. His trio began doing Music du Jour tours in 2006, in which each member of the group writes a new composition the day of the show, and all three new pieces are performed on that evening’s concert. Brooklyn-based guitarist **Ross Martin** has established a reputation as one of the most exciting jazz and bluegrass musicians in the country. He also plays in and composes for the Matt Flinner Trio. Violinist **Ryan Drickey** is armed with a master's degree in performance from University of Colorado, as well as a RockyGrass Fiddle championship. Ryan recently returned from a year on a Fulbright scholarship studying traditional Swedish folk music. Bassist **Eric Thorin**, with a degree in Jazz Studies, is as at home in jazz, bluegrass, and honky-tonk as he is with a bow. Together with Schepps, they are

your guides into the brave new world of music, where borders are a thing of the past and the possibilities are endless.

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About Jake

Hailing from Boulder, Colorado, banjo pioneer **Jake Schepps** consistently and confidently “has the excitement of true originality” (AllMusic.com). While his nimble touch and deep sensitivity to the five-string banjo’s idiomatic qualities are deeply rooted in traditional and progressive bluegrass styles, it’s his insatiable curiosity and open spirit that have brought him to the exciting frontier of new acoustic music, alongside Punch Brothers, mandolin master David Grisman, and violinist Darol Anger.

A champion of the myriad possibilities of the stringband, Schepps has made a name for himself as an ingenious arranger and performer of decidedly non-bluegrass material, a reputation that has evolved and deepened over the course of three critically-acclaimed albums – the jazz-inflected *Ten Thousand Leaves* (2007), *An Evening in the Village: The Music of Béla Bartok* (2011) and *Entwined*, a collection of stringband music by contemporary classical composers due out in early 2015.

For more information on Jake Schepps and his quintet, including music samples, tour dates, press kits and more, go to www.jakeschepps.com.