

# Autumn Song



## A Song Cycle

Poetry set to music in a dramatic setting  
by a jazz-influenced American composer

from the poems of **RAINER MARIA RILKE** and **TENNESSEE WILLIAMS**

Music by **GEORGE MAURER**  
Compiled and directed by **JEF HALL-FLAVIN**



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## Autumn Song

Renowned poetry bathed in glorious new music makes for an unforgettable theatrical event.

Minneapolis-based composer-pianist **George Maurer** conducts his celebrated five-piece jazz ensemble in an emotional song cycle of Maurer's original settings of poetry by Tennessee Williams and the great German poet Rainer Maria Rilke, who was a lifelong inspiration to Williams.



Two singers embody the two great poets in a musical conversation of deeply moving new melodies infused with a unique blend of art song, jazz and gospel.

***When there is poetry,  
there is Orpheus singing.***

- Rainer Maria Rilke, *Sonnets to Orpheus*, I,v



## A Musical Conversation

What would a meeting sound like between Rainer Maria Rilke and Tennessee Williams, if the two iconic writers ever met?

That is the question composer George Maurer asked himself as he created *Autumn Song*, a theatrical composition compiled and directed by Jef Hall-Flavin. It uses bold new music to create a unique artistic interplay between 19th century German poet Rilke and 20th century American playwright Williams, using only the indelible words in their poems.

*Autumn Song* begins in 1940 with a young Tennessee Williams struggling with writer's block and suffering the cruel pain of unrequited love in Provincetown. He turns to a book of Rainer Maria Rilke for insight, and through Rilke's poems, Williams begins to understand his own situation.

By the final song, Rilke helps Williams find inspiration to write, conquer his fears and begin his journey to become an established playwright.

Maurer sets the words of the world-renowned writers to soaring jazz, gospel and art song that liberate the heartbroken Williams as he sees himself in Rilke's writings.

***And when the world no longer knows your name***

***Say to the silent earth: I'm flowing***

***Speak to the rushing water and say: I AM***

- Rainer Maria Rilke, *Sonnets to Orpheus* I.xxix



## About the Music

*Autumn Song* is sophisticated and layered with meaning, yet musically accessible, making the show enjoyable for everyone from poetry and theater aficionados to casual music fans.

Much of the music comes from “For the Sake of a Single Poem,” a song cycle of 13 Rilke poems for which Maurer composed music and completed in 2009. The music is Maurer’s interpretation of Rilke’s poetry, which he has spent a decade researching and creating.

Moved by Rilke’s work, composer George Maurer has gone so far as to take two trips to Prague, Rilke’s birthplace, to immerse himself in the settings where he wrote many of his poems. Maurer feels he has captured the essence of each poem and found a way to use sound to draw the words off of the page into another sensory experience through music.

In 2009, the director of the Provincetown Tennessee Williams Theater Festival, Jef Hall-Flavin, heard the music for the first time in Minneapolis and introduced Maurer to the idea of combining it with Tennessee Williams poetry. The result is *Autumn Song*, a musically mature, dramatically satisfying evening.

## The Ensemble



This song cycle was written with **Dieter Bierbrauer** (left) in mind. He has performed various versions of the Rilke pieces since 2009. An accomplished, commanding baritone, Mr. Bierbrauer enjoys a flourishing music and theater career in Minneapolis and New York.



The Tennessee Williams character is played by **Jared Oxborough** (left). After a critically acclaimed Minneapolis portrayal of Judas in *Jesus Christ Superstar*, Mr. Oxborough enhances *Autumn Song* with his beautiful lyric baritone.

Saxophone powerhouse **Rich Manek** (right) brings more than 15 years of collaboration with pianist **George Maurer** to the stage. They are joined by cellist **Diane Tremaine** and percussionist **Pete Hennig**.

The ensemble wouldn’t be complete without longtime George Maurer Group member **Jeff Engholm** (right) on bass and vocals.

Photos by Josh Andrus [joshandrus.com](http://joshandrus.com)





**George Maurer** is best known as one of Minnesota’s premier jazz pianists and his work as performer, arranger and composer has taken him all over the world. He has performed with Eric Clapton, shared the stage with Dick Clark, has written original scores for ballet, film, jazz ensemble and symphony, among many other accomplishments. He is currently on tour as the music director and symphonic arranger for the Midtown Men, starring the four former leads from Broadway’s Tony-awarded “Jersey Boys” cast. Rilke has been an inspiration for Mr. Maurer since he was a teenager.



**Jef Hall-Flavin** is a director of classic plays, as well as new works and musicals, including three world-premiere plays by Tennessee Williams. His work has been seen in New Zealand and across the United States at the Shakespeare Theatre Company in Washington, DC, and the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, among many others. He is currently the executive director of the Provincetown Tennessee Williams Theater Festival.



## About the Production

Suitable for theaters of all sizes, cabarets, concert halls, schools, gymnasiums and churches, the production is 1 hour and 15 minutes and travels with seven performers and three production staff. A full tech rider is available upon request.

*Autumn Song* was first produced by the Minneapolis-based George Maurer Group and presented in Provincetown, Massachusetts, by the Provincetown Tennessee Williams Theater Festival in September 2012.

# Autumn Song

Poetry by RAINER MARIA RILKE and TENNESSEE WILLIAMS  
 Music by GEORGE MAURER  
 Directed by JEF HALL-FLAVIN

Lighting by CHUCK NORWOOD  
 Costumes by CLARE BRAUCH  
 Sound by SCOTT MALCHOW  
 Pianist GEORGE MAURER

DIETER BIERBRAUER as Rilke  
 JARED OXBOROUGH as Williams  
 Bass and Vocals - JEFF ENGHOLM  
 Cello - DIANE TREMAINE  
 Woodwinds - RICH MANIK  
 Percussion - PETE HENNIG

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### Production Contact

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