

presents...

**ULYSSES OWENS JR.** | Percussion  
**J'NAI BRIDGES** | Mezzo-Soprano

Reuben Rogers | Bass  
Ted Rosenthal | Piano  
Jalen Baker | Vibraphone

Carol Robbins | Harp  
David Rosenthal | Guitar

Friday, April 28, 2023 | 7:30pm

Herbst Theatre

***Notes on Hope***

***Divine Hope***

TRADITIONAL	The Lord's Prayer
EDWARD KENNEDY	Creole Love Call
"DUKE" ELLINGTON	On a Turquoise Cloud Heaven
TRADITIONAL	There is a Balm in Gilead

***The Crux of Hope***

GERI ALLEN	Skin
HENRI DUPARC	L'invitation au voyage
ERIK SATIE	Je te veux
LOUIGUY	La vie en rose
VALDEMAR HENRIQUE	Boi Bumba

***Hope Fulfilled***

**FLORENCE PRICE** Adoration

Hold Fast to Dreams

**ANDRÉ PREVIN** It's Good to Have You Near Again

**This program is made possible in part by the generous support of the Bernard Osher Foundation**

**This program is made possible in part by the generous support of Edmon and Mary Jennings**

**Ulysses Owens Jr.** is represented by Unlimited Myles [unlimitedmyles.com](http://unlimitedmyles.com)

**J'Nai Bridges** is represented by William Guerri, LLC

## ARTIST PROFILES

*Ulysses Owens Jr. is SF Performances' Jazz Artist-in-Residence and makes his mainstage debut with tonight's performance.*

*San Francisco Performances presents J'Nai Bridges in her SF Performances debut.*



**Ulysses Owens Jr.** goes the limit in the jazz world and beyond; claiming eight successful albums of his own. Owens has also gained special attention for his performances on Grammy® Award-winning albums by Kurt Elling and The Christian McBride Big Band in addition to five Grammy® nominated albums with Joey Alexander, Christian McBride Trio, John Beasley's Monk'estra, and Gregory Porter. Both *JAZZIZ* and *Rolling Stone* picked his album *Songs of Freedom* as a Top Ten Album for 2019 and in 2021 his most recent Big Band release *Soul Conversations*, was voted the top album in May 2021 by *JAZZIZ Magazine*.

Ulysses is the creator of multiple online jazz drum video courses for Open Studio. He also created, filmed, and produced his own entrepreneurial course for drummers titled "Be More Than A Drummer" which teaches drummers how to expand beyond the instrument and accomplish whatever they dream of entrepreneurially. Ulysses was also host of the Open Studio weekly live YouTube series, *From The Drummer's Perspective* where he has interviewed many legendary drummers.

Ulysses has penned multiple articles for multiple publications (*Jazz Times*, *Downbeat*, and *Percussive Arts Society*.) He has released a Hallmark Drum instructional book titled: *Jazz Brushes for the Modern Drummer: An Essential Guide to the Art of Keeping Time*, published and distributed by Hal Leonard. His second book, *The Musicians Career Guide: Turning Your Talent into*

*Sustained Success*," was released by Skyhorse Publisher, and Simon and Schuster in 2021 and has been in the a top five on Amazon in the Music Business, and Arts and Entrepreneurship book categories.

In addition to his work as an author and musician, Ulysses serves on the faculty at

The Juilliard School in the role of Small Ensemble Director.

His passion project is his role as the Artistic Director for his family's nonprofit organization, "Don't Miss A Beat," in Jacksonville, Florida that utilizes the arts as a bridge to a better life for "At-Hope" students. Ulysses has received the "Difference Maker" Award from Beacon College; the



"Robert Arleigh White Advocacy Award" from the Cultural Council of Northeast Florida; and has been multi-year recipient of the Individual Artist Grant from the Community Foundation of Northeast Florida. What matters to him consistently is giving back and continuing to be grateful for a new day to make a difference in the lives of others.

Two-time Grammy® award-winning American mezzo-soprano **J'Nai Bridges**, known for her "plush-voiced mezzo-soprano" (*The New York Times*), and "calmly commanding stage presence" (*The New Yorker*) has been heralded as "a rising star" (*Los Angeles Times*), gracing the world's top opera and concert stages.

Bridges is a leading figure in classical music's shift toward conversations of inclusion and racial justice. The 2021–22 season alone saw Bridges' ascent into the sphere of new music taking on several world premieres but continuing to explore the traditional roles. She is one of Kennedy Center's Next 50 leaders of cultural diversity.

Bridges' career highlights include receiving the 2016 Richard Tucker Career Grant and 2018 Sphinx Medal of Excellence, and she is a 2012 Marian Anderson award winner. She made her Metropolitan Opera debut in the Grammy® winning production of *Akhmaten* by Phillip Glass. Bridges has performed all over Europe and North America.

The 2022–23 season spotlights Bridges in one of her signature roles as Carmen with house debut engagements at the Arena di Verona, Canadian Opera Company, and returning to the Dutch National Opera, and Lyric Opera of Chicago in 2023. In December 2022 Ms. Bridges begins her recital engagements with a performance with the Catalist

Quartet at 92NY in a world premiere by Jimmy Lopez, and continues throughout 2023 at Washington University, Thomasville Center for the Arts, The Cliburn, Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, San Francisco Performances, and the Mondavi Center in Davis, California. Finally, as a native of Tacoma, WA, Bridges eagerly anticipates her homecoming with her Seattle Opera debut in a concert performance of *Samson and Delilah* as Delilah in January 2023.



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Ted Rosenthal | Piano  
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## Notes on Hope

### Program Notes, Texts, and Translations

*Please hold your applause until the end of each set. Please turn pages quietly.*

*Program Subject to Change*

***“Hope can be a powerful force. Maybe there’s no actual magic in it, but when you know what you hope for most and hold it like a light within you, you can make things happen, almost like magic.”***

*—Laini Taylor*

The human voice is considered the earliest musical instrument and the drum is regarded as one of the oldest instruments. Both instruments are essential to communication and the formation of society and civilization. Simply put, without the drum or the voice there is uncertainty about how far humanity would have advanced. This truth speaks to the power of J’Nai’s operatic voice and Ulysses Owens’ powerful drums creating a musical partnership through their Chamber project, *Notes On Hope*.

*Notes On Hope* spans the musical spectrum, from exploring works of Duke Ellington to reviving classic art songs once performed by opera matriarchs Jessye Norman, Leontyne Price, and Kathleen Battle, whom all have since passed the torch to J’Nai to carry into the 21st century. Other instrumental moments will highlight Ulysses’ musical direction and prowess as a jazz drummer with his stellar ensemble. The ensemble will feature the works of lesser known jazz composer luminaries such as Geri Allen, whose music fits eloquently within the thematic focus of hope.

With regard to their culture and heritage as African American artists, it is important to note that there is a greater subtext here between Ulysses and J’Nai. They are both utilizing this moment to highlight Black contributors in the Classical and Opera realm who have been often overlooked. Their artistry will shed light on beautiful works by composers like Florence Price who truly embodies the adage, “because of them, we are.”

## Divine Hope

The program is divided into three segments, the first of which is *Divine Hope* which focuses on the power of creation and is the conduit between hope and faith. This section begins with “The Lord’s Prayer,” as a devotional musical moment to cleanse the palette and center on the intention for the evening which is reverence.

Following “The Lord’s Prayer,” Duke Ellington (1899–1974), who is considered to be one of the greatest American composers, will be featured. Ellington happened to have composed several compositions for soprano voice dating back to the early 1940s. “Creole Love Call” was one of the first compositions that Ellington composed for his orchestra and singer Adelaide Hall, and shortly after he began to work with singers, Kay Davis and Alice Babs. It is important to note that Kay Davis and Adelaide Hall were trained classical African American singers who were unable to gain work because of the racial barriers, so through Ellington’s compositions they were able to perform. Two additional songs will be visited from this era, “On A Turquoise Cloud” and “Heaven.” To conclude the *Divine Hope* segment, the ensemble will perform the classic spiritual, “There is a Balm in Gilead,” which references an Old Testament scripture that speaks to the concept a spiritual medicine that is able to heal sinners. This spiritual has been performed by many great opera singers and is a spiritual rite of passage that only a voice like J’Nai can beautifully deliver and serve as a balm for the audience.

## Heaven

Heaven, my dream  
Heaven, divine  
Heaven supreme  
Heaven come by

Every sweet and pretty thing  
Life with love to bring  
Heavenly heaven to me  
is just the ultimate degree to be

Heaven, my dream  
Heaven, divine  
Heaven supreme  
Heaven come by

Every sweet and pretty thing  
Life with love to bring  
Heavenly heaven to me  
is just the ultimate degree to be

Heaven, my dream  
Heaven, divine

## There is a Balm in Gilead

There is a balm in Gilead  
to make the wounded whole,  
there is a balm in Gilead  
to heal the sin-sick soul.

Sometimes I feel discouraged  
and think my work’s in vain,  
but then the Holy Spirit  
revives my soul again.

There is a balm in Gilead  
to make the wounded whole,  
there is a balm in Gilead  
to heal the sin-sick soul.

If you cannot preach like Peter,  
if you cannot pray like Paul,  
you can tell the love of Jesus  
and say, “He died for all.”

There is a balm in Gilead  
to make the wounded whole,  
there is a balm in Gilead  
to heal the sin-sick soul.

## The Crux Of Hope

The second segment is titled *The Crux of Hope*, which references the most essential shift and point of the process: where difficult matters must be addressed so that hope is a possibility. This segment begins with the instrumental composition “Skin” by prolific pianist and composer, the late Geri Allen (1957–2017), who broke many barriers for women in the jazz industry. This composition is very textural and features the band. It allows listeners to unearth the reality of skin, texture, color, race and creed which unfolds beautifully.

Henri DuParc’s “L’invitation au voyage” (1848–1933), composed in 1870, is a setting of two of three verses of the Symbolist poet Baudelaire’s famous poem describing his love of the countryside in Holland. During this time, Beaudelaire was in love with actress Marie Daubrun, and this poem describes a mystical trip growing in his mind, which finds them both in an exotic and perfect world.

“Je te veux” (“I Want You”), composed by Erik Satie (1866–1925) with a text from Henry Pacory, has a sensual undertone because of the intimate relationship between Satie and Paulette Darty, which this song beautifully displays. It is a popular song rendered by Jessye Norman, Cecile McLorin Salvant, and many other brilliant vocalists. However, the arrangement performed in *Notes On Hope* is a very unique adaptation featuring unique instrumentation. “La Vie En Rose” (“Life in Happy Hues”) also translated as “Life seen through rose-colored glasses,” is a favorite of J’Nai’s to sing her adaptation of Edith Piaf’s classic lyric. [Music: Louiguy (Louis Guglielmi) (1916–1991).]

The second segment will conclude with a beautiful Brazilian composition called “Boi Bumba,” composed by Valdemar Henrique (1905–1995) who is from the North of Brazil, and is inspired by Amazonian folklore, as well as Indigenous and Northeastern Afro-Brazilian Rhythms. J’Nai and Ulysses fell in love with a recording of Kathleen Battle and Christopher Parkening, utilizing that sound as the foundation for their arrangement of “Boi Bumba.”

## L'invitation au voyage

Mon enfant, ma sœur,  
Songe à la douceur  
D'aller là-bas vivre ensemble ;  
—Aimer à loisir,  
Aimer et mourir  
Au pays qui te ressemble !  
Les soleils mouillés  
De ces ciels brouillés  
Pour mon esprit ont les charmes  
Si mystérieux  
De tes traîtres yeux  
Brillant à travers leurs larmes.

Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,  
Luxe, calme et volupté.

Vois sur ces canaux  
Dormir ces vaisseaux  
Dont l'humeur est vagabonde ;  
C'est pour assouvir  
Ton moindre désir  
Qu'ils viennent du bout du monde.  
—Les soleils couchants  
Revêtent les champs,  
Les canaux, la ville entière,  
D'hyacinthe et d'or ;  
—Le monde s'endort  
Dans une chaude lumière.

Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,  
Luxe, calme et volupté.

—Text by Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867)

## Invitation to the voyage

My child, my sister,  
think of the sweetness  
of going there to live together!  
To love at leisure,  
to love and to die  
in a country that is the image of you!  
The misty suns  
of those changeable skies  
have for me the same  
mysterious charm  
as your fickle eyes  
shining through their tears.

There, all is harmony and beauty,  
luxury, calm and delight.

See how those ships,  
nomads by nature,  
are slumbering in the canals.  
To gratify  
your every desire  
they have come from the ends of the earth.  
The westering suns  
clothe the fields,  
the canals, and the town  
with reddish-orange and gold.  
The world falls asleep  
bathed in warmth and light.

There, all is harmony and beauty,  
luxury, calm and delight.

—Translation © 2000 by Peter Low

*program continues on next page →*

## Je te veux

J'ai compris ta détresse,  
Cher amoureux,  
Et je cède à tes vœux:  
Fais de moi ta maîtresse.  
Loin de nous la sagesse,  
Plus de détresse,  
J'aspire à l'instant précieux  
Où nous serons heureux:  
Je te veux.

Je n'ai pas de regrets,  
Et je n'ai qu'une envie:  
Près de toi, là, tout près,  
Vivre toute ma vie.  
Que mon cœur soit le tien  
Et ta lèvre la mienne,  
Que ton corps soit le mien,  
Et que toute ma chair soit tienne.

J'ai compris ta détresse,  
Cher amoureux,  
Et je cède à tes vœux:  
Fais de moi ta maîtresse.  
Loin de nous la sagesse,  
Plus de détresse,  
J'aspire à l'instant précieux  
Où nous serons heureux:  
Je te veux.

Oui, je vois dans tes yeux  
La divine promesse  
Que ton cœur amoureux  
Vient chercher ma caresse.  
Enlacés pour toujours,  
Brûlés des mêmes flammes,  
Dans des rêves d'amours,  
Nous échangerons nos deux âmes.

J'ai compris ta détresse,  
Cher amoureux,  
Et je cède à tes vœux:  
Fais de moi ta maîtresse.  
Loin de nous la sagesse,  
Plus de détresse,  
J'aspire à l'instant précieux  
Où nous serons heureux:  
Je te veux.

—Text by Henry Pacory (1873–?)

## I want you

I have understood your distress,  
dear lover,  
and I yield to your wish:  
make me your mistress.  
Modesty shall be far from us,  
no more distress,  
I long for the precious moment  
when we will be happy:  
I want you.

I have no regrets,  
and I want only one thing:  
next to you, there, so close,  
to live all of my life.  
Let my heart be yours  
and your lips be mine,  
let your body be mine,  
and let all of my flesh be yours.

I have understood your distress,  
dear lover,  
and I yield to your wish:  
make me your mistress.  
Modesty shall be far from us,  
no more distress,  
I long for the precious moment  
when we will be happy:  
I want you.

Yes, I see in your eyes  
the divine promise  
that your loving heart  
comes to seek my caress.  
Enlaced forever,  
burned with the same flames,  
in dreams of love,  
we will exchange our two souls.

I have understood your distress,  
dear lover,  
and I yield to your wish:  
make me your mistress.  
Modesty shall be far from us,  
no more distress,  
I long for the precious moment  
when we will be happy:  
I want you.

—Translation ©2005 by Laura (Pranada) Sylvis

## La Vie en Rose

Des yeux qui font baisser les miens,  
Un rire qui se perd sur sa bouche—  
Voilà le portrait sans retouche  
De l'homme auquel j'appartiens.

*[Refrain]*

Quand il me prend dans ses bras,  
Il me parle tout bas,  
Je vois la vie en rose.  
Il me dit des mots d'amour,  
Des mots de tous les jours,  
Et ça me fait quelque chose.  
Il est entré dans mon cœur,  
Une part de bonheur  
Dont je connais la cause.  
C'est lui pour moi,  
Moi pour lui dans la vie,  
Il me l'a dit, l'a juré pour la vie.  
Et dès que je l'aperçois,  
Alors je sens en moi  
Mon cœur qui bat.

Des nuits d'amour à plus finir,  
Un grand bonheur qui prend sa place,  
Les ennuis, les chagrins s'effacent,  
Heureux, heureux à en mourir.

*[Refrain]*

## Life in Happy Hues

A gaze that make me lower my own  
A laugh that is lost on his lips -  
That is the un-retouched portrait  
Of the man to whom I belong

*[Refrain]*

When he takes me into his arms  
He speaks to me softly  
And I see life through rose-colored glasses  
He speaks words of love to me  
They are every day words  
And they do something to me  
He has entered into my heart  
A bit of happiness  
That I know the cause of  
It's only him for me  
And me for him, for life  
He told me, he swore to me, for life  
As soon as I notice him  
I feel inside me  
My heart beating

Endless nights of love  
Bring great happiness  
The pain and bothers fade away  
Happy, so happy I could die

*[Refrain]*

*program continues on next page →*



## Boi Bumba

Ele não sabe que seu dia é hoje  
Ele não sabe que seu dia é hoje  
Ele não sabe que seu dia é hoje  
Ele não sabe que seu dia é hoje

O céu forrado de veludo azul-marinho  
Venho ver devagarinho  
Onde o Boi ia dançar  
Ele pediu pra não fazer muito ruído  
Que o Santinho distraído  
Foi dormir sem celebrar

E vem de longe o eco surdo do bumbá  
Sambando  
A noite inteira encurralado  
Batucando  
E vem de longe o eco surdo do bumbá  
Sambando  
A noite inteira encurralado  
Batucando

Bumba meu Pai do Campo  
Bumba meu boi bumbá

A Estrela Dalva lá no céu já vem surgindo  
Para ouvir galo cantar  
Na minha rua resta cinza da fogueira  
Que passou a noite inteira  
Fagulhando para o ar

E vem de longe o eco surdo do bumbá  
Sambando  
A noite inteira encurralado  
Batucando

Bumba meu Pai do Campo  
Bumba meu boi bumbá

## Boi Bumba

He doesn't know it's his day today  
He doesn't know it's his day today  
He doesn't know it's his day today  
He doesn't know it's his day today

The sky covered in dark-blue velour  
I'm coming slowly to see  
Where the bull was going to dance  
He asked not to do a lot of noise  
Since the distracted angel  
Went to sleep without celebrating

And from afar comes the deaf echo of the « bumba »  
Dancing samba  
The whole night hemmed  
Drumming  
And from afar comes the deaf echo of the « bumba »  
Dancing samba  
The whole night hemmed  
Drumming

Bumba (bull) my Father from the Fields  
Bumba my bull « bumba »

The Dalva Start in the sky slowly appears  
To listen to the rooster sing  
On my street is left over gray ashes from the bonfire  
That spent the whole night  
Emitting sparks into the air

And from afar comes the deaf echo of the « bumba »  
Dancing samba  
The whole night hemmed  
Drumming

Bumba my father from the fields  
Bumba my bull "bumba"

—Translation by Julia Mulatinho Simoes

## Hope Fulfilled

The final segment of the program is titled *Hope Fulfilled* which speaks to reality that as we remain committed to the journey, we will experience the fulfillment of our efforts and hard work.

Florence Price (1887–1953) was arguably the first African American woman to have a symphony (*Symphony No. 1 in E Minor*) performed by a major orchestra and was a trailblazer. She once stated, “I have two handicaps—those of sex and race.” Her legacy is honored with a performance of two of her songs, first “Adoration,” which was initially published in 1951 for the organ, but this arrangement has been orchestrated for rhythm section, harp, marimba, and voice. “Dreams” is a song that she composed setting a poem by Langston Hughes, from the song collection *Five Art Songs*.

Ulysses writes, “A few months ago, I had dinner with Michael Feinstein, his husband Ken, and my mentor/Celebrity Chef and Restaurateur Alexander Smalls in Harlem. I spoke directly to Michael about J’Nai, this project and the overall goals we desired to accomplish artistically, and he said, ‘Ulysses, there is one song you have to perform, because it sounds like it was created for *Notes On Hope*, and it’s called “It’s Good to Have You Near Again.”’ He began to sing the song to me right at the dinner table, and then introduced me to the album, *Right as The Rain* featuring André Previn and Leontyne Price performing many popular and accessible songs; but this is my favorite, and Michael was correct. This song opened up a treasure trove for me, and to hear Leontyne’s lyrical approach with André’s gorgeous piano playing will, quite frankly, be the perfect close to the evening and illustrate the notes of hope that we have and continue to have as we are honored to perform and create again and again.”

—Program notes by Ulysses Owens Jr.

### Hold Fast to Dreams

Hold fast to dreams  
For if dreams die  
Life is a broken-winged bird  
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams  
For when dreams go  
Life is a barren field  
Frozen with snow.

—Text by Langston Hughes (1901–1967)

### It’s Good to Have You Near Again

It’s good to have you near again  
It’s pointless to disguise  
How good it is to hear again  
Your sweet familiar lies

It’s good to have you say again  
You’re home forevermore  
You’ll never go away again  
As you have done before

Anything you tell me, I’ll believe is true  
Though the only one that you deceive, is you

The stories you have told, my love  
Could never be the truth  
You’re just a little old, my love  
To blame it on your youth  
But ‘til you disappear again, I want it understood  
To have you near again....is good

Anything you tell me, I’ll believe is true  
Though the only one that you deceive, is you

The stories you have told, my love  
Could never be the truth  
You’re just a little old, my love  
To blame it on your youth  
But ‘til you disappear again, I want it understood  
To have you near again....is good

—Lyrics by Dory Previn (1925-2012)



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**Simon Lepper** | Piano  
March 21

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