

presents...

RAEHANN BRYCE-DAVIS | Mezzo-Soprano
JEANNE-MINETTE CILLIERS | Piano

Saturday, January 27, 2024 | 7:30pm

Herbst Theatre

AMY BEACH

Three Browning Songs, Opus 44

The Year's at the Spring
Ah, Love, but a Day!
I Send My Heart up to Thee!

WAGNER

Wesendonck Lieder

Der Engel
Stehe still!
Im Treibhaus
Schmerzen
Träume

MELISSA DUNPHY

Come, My Tan-Faced Children

INTERMISSION

MARGARET BONDS Birth

FLORENCE PRICE The Crescent Moon

MARIA THOMPSON The Beauty in My Blackness
CORLEY

I Am Not an Angry Black Woman

PETER
ASHBOURNE

From *Fi Mi Love Have Lion Heart*

No. 3—Banyan Tree
No. 4—Fi Mi Love Have Lion Heart
No. 5—Nobody's Business

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

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Raehann Bryce-Davis appears by arrangement with IMG Artists, LLC
7 West 54th Street, New York, NY 10019 imgartists.com

Steinway Model D, Pro Piano, San Francisco

For Tickets and More: sfperformances.org | 415.392.2545

ARTIST PROFILE

San Francisco Performances presents Raehann Bryce-Davis in her San Francisco recital debut.



Raehann Bryce-Davis has been hailed by the *New York Times* as a “striking mezzo soprano” and by the *San Francisco Chronicle* for her “electrifying sense of fearlessness.”

In the 2023–24 season, Ms. Bryce-Davis debuts at Santa Fe Opera as Ježibaba in *Rusalka* in a new production directed by Sir David Pountney and conducted by Lidiya Yankovskaya, and at Opera Philadelphia as Lizzie in the world premiere of *10 Days in a Madhouse*. Raehann will return to the Metropolitan Opera as Ella in *X: The Life and Times of Malcom X* in a new production by Robert O’Hare and Dutch National Opera to sing La Zia Principessa in *Il Trittico* a new Barrie Kosky production conducted by Lorenzo Vitotti. In concert engagements, she will sing Mahler’s *Symphony No. 3* with the Melbourne Symphony orchestra conducted by Jaime Martín and Mahler’s *Das Lied von der Erde* with the Luxembourg Philharmonie. Ms. Bryce-Davis will be giving recitals at Vocal Arts Society in Washington D.C., San Francisco Performances, Music at Amherst and St. Matthew’s Music Guild in California.

In the 2022–23 season, Ms. Bryce-Davis made noteworthy house debuts at Washington National Opera as Azucena in *Il trovatore*, at the Royal Danish Opera in her role debut as Amneris in *Aida*, and with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and Dutch National in her role debut as Ježibaba in *Rusalka*, conducted by Joana Mallwitz. She also sang with the BBC Proms in Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9*. Additional concert engagements include the world premiere of *A Nation of Others* with the New York Oratorio Society at Carnegie Hall; a tour titled *Our*

Song, Our Story, curated by Damien Sneed; and New York recitals for the George London Foundation and 89 Reade Series.

As a producer/performer, Ms. Bryce-Davis has released *To the Afflicted*, her first music video, which received widespread critical acclaim and was chosen as an official video for World Opera Day. Her second digital short, *Brown Sounds*, was co-produced with Los Angeles Opera and Aural Compass Projects, and won Best Music Video at film festivals around the globe including the New York International Film Awards, New York Cinematography Awards, Hollywood Boulevard Film Awards, the Anatolian Short Film Festival, and the Silk Road Film Awards – Cannes.

In the 2021–22 season, Ms. Bryce-Davis debuted at the Metropolitan Opera as Baba the Turk in *The Rake’s Progress* conducted by Susanna Mälkki, and at La Monnaie de Munt, Brussels as La Zia Principessa in *Suor Angelica*. She returned to both Los Angeles Opera and the Staatstheater Nürnberg as Azucena in *Il trovatore*, and to Opera Ballet Vlaanderen as the Komponist in *Ariadne auf Naxos*. On the concert stage, she sang solo recitals at both the Tuesday Musical Club in San Antonio, Texas, and for the Merola Opera Program.

Concert highlights include the world premiere of Paul Moravec’s *Sanctuary Road* at Carnegie Hall, the recording of which won a Grammy® Nomination, Verdi’s *Messa da Requiem* both with conductor Kent Nagano and the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal at the Olympic Stadium and the Oratorio Society of New York at Carnegie Hall, Elgar’s *Sea Pictures* at the Musikverein in Vienna with the Tonkünstler Orchestra, the world premiere of Anthony Davis’ *We Call the Roll* with The Lied Society, Martinů’s *Julietta* with the American Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, John Corigliano’s *Of Rage and Remembrance* at the Aspen Music Festival, the world premiere of *Come, My Tan-Faced Children* by Melissa Dunphy at Lyric Fest, Mahler’s *Symphony No. 2* at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, Prokofiev’s *Alexander Nevsky* with Philippe Entremont at Manhattan School of Music, and Mahler’s *Symphony No. 8* with the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra.

Ms. Bryce-Davis is a recipient of the George London Award; the 1st Place and Audience Prize-winner of the Concorso Lirico Internazionale di Portofino, chaired by Dominique Meyer; winner of the 2016 Richard F. Gold Career Grant at the Merola Opera Program; winner of the 2015 Hilde Zadek Competition at the Musikverein in Vienna; and the 2015 Sedat Gürel – Güzin Gürel International Voice Competition in Istanbul.

She holds a Master of Music and Professional Studies certificate from the Manhattan School of Music and a Bachelor of Music from the University of Texas at Arlington.

South African-born pianist **Jeanne-Minette Cilliers** has been hailed as “a pianistic poet,” garnering rave reviews for her color-rich and imaginative performances.

In high demand as a collaborator, Ms. Cilliers is a regular recital partner of mezzo-soprano Raehann Bryce-Davis, with other collaborators ranging from performers such as Janos Starker, Martina Arroyo, Eric Owens, Susan Graham, Joyce Castle, Lise Lindstrom, Lester Lynch, John Holiday, Justin Hopkins, Toby Girling, Victoria Yarovaya and Bo Skovhus, to conductors Alejo Pérez, Peter Rundel, Antonino Fogliani, Dmitri Jurowski, Cornelius Meister, Alexander Joel, Tomáš Netopil, Alberto Zedda, Harry Bicket, John Nelson and directors Peter Sellars, David Alden, Peter Konwitschny, Calixto Bieito and Claus Guth, as well as actor Vanessa Redgrave.

Ms. Cilliers fosters a strong interest in new music and has presented several scores in world and North American and European premieres. As head of music, she assisted conductor Titus Engel at Opera Vlaanderen (Belgium) and IRCAM, Paris in the widely acclaimed world premiere of Chaya Czernowin’s opera *Infinite Now*. Also at Opera Vlaanderen, she worked with composer Héctor Parra and conductor Peter Rundel on the operatic adaptation of the controversial novel *Les Bienveillantes*. In this production, staged by Calixto Bieito, Ms. Cilliers also performed the on-stage piano part on a flying piano.

Ms. Cilliers has been on the music staff of the Glimmerglass Opera Festival, Santa Fe Opera, Opera Ballet Vlaanderen, and the Bayerische Staatsoper (BSTO). From 2019–2022, Ms. Cilliers has spearheaded the new Collaborative Piano program at The Royal Conservatory Antwerp, while additionally serving as Studienleiter for the voice department. At the Manhattan School of Music she is on the Piano Artistic Staff and the Vocal Arts Artistic Staff: Manager of Artistic Staff for Vocal Coaching & Collaborative Piano; Opera Theatre: Vocal Coaching.

Ms. Cilliers earned her Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees from the University of Michigan with pianist Anton Nel. As a student of Menahem Pressler, she earned an Artist Diploma from Indiana University. She remains the first and only recipient of an Artist Diploma in vocal accompanying from the Manhattan School of Music, where she worked with Warren Jones.



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PERFORMANCES

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In Honor of Women

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Program Notes, Texts, and Translations

Please hold your applause until the end of the program. Please turn pages quietly.

Three Browning Songs, Opus 44

AMY BEACH

1867–1944

In 1899 the Browning Society of Boston wished to commemorate the poet's birthday, and it commissioned Amy Beach to compose a setting of Browning's *The Year's at the Spring*. But Beach had trouble writing the song and put it off for some time before she finally found the inspiration. On the train from New York to Boston, she listened to the sound of the train's wheels on the tracks, and suddenly a melody came to her. She later said: "I listened to the melody—it was only the melody, after that, for that burst of joy and faith. I wrote it down as soon as I got home." The song proved an immediate success, and over the next year she made two further Browning settings, publishing them in 1900 as her *Three Browning Songs*.

Several things strike us immediately about these songs. They are very short—the first lasts only a minute, and the entire set takes less than seven minutes to perform. And these can be extremely dramatic settings, at moments almost operatic in their intensity. Beach sets much of them high in a soprano's range, at one point taking the vocal line up to a high B-flat. *The Year's at the Spring* has always been one of the most popular of Beach's 150 songs. Her marking is *Allegro di molto*, and the music drives forward constantly, pushed along by the piano's constant triplets and rising higher and higher as it proceeds to its ecstatic conclusion. Beach sets only the first two stanzas of Browning's *Ah, Love, but a Day*, with its tale of uncertainty amidst the shifting fortunes of love and life. The marking here is *Lento con molto espressione*, and the song proceeds through a mood of unrest to its quiet final question. *I Send My Heart up to Thee* is a love song—Beach marks it *Andante con affetto* ("with affection"). From a quiet beginning, the song grows to a soaring climax, then falls back to a calm conclusion, marked *triple piano*.

The Year's at the Spring

The year's at the spring,
All day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hillside's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in his heaven,
All's right with the world.

Ah, Love, but a Day!

Ah, Love, but a day,
And the world has changed!
Ah, Love, what a day,
And the world has changed!
The sun's away, and the bird estranged;
The wind has dropped, and the sky s deranged;
Summer, Summer has stopped,
Summer has stopped.
Ah, Love but a day,
And the world has changed!

Look in my eyes!
Wilt thou change too?
Look in my eyes!
Wilt thou change too?
Should I fear surprise?
Shall I find ought in the old and dear,
In the good and true,
With the changing year?
Ah, Love, look in my eyes,
Look in my eyes,
Wilt thou change too?

I Send My Heart up to Thee!

I send my heart up to thee,
All my heart in this my singing.
For the stars help me,
And the sea,
And the sea bears part;
I send my heart up to thee,
All my heart in this my singing.
For the stars,
The stars help me,
And the sea bears part;
The very night is clinging to Venice' streets
To leave one space above me,
Whence thy face may light my joyous heart to thee
To thee its dwelling place,
Thy face my light my joyous heart to thee,
My heart to thee its dwelling place.
I send my heart up to thee,
All my heart in this my singing.

—Texts by Robert Browning (1812–1889)

Wesendonck Lieder

RICHARD WAGNER

(1813–1883)

In Zurich in February 1852 Richard Wagner met the wealthy Swiss silk merchant Otto Wesendonck, who would become one of his most generous patrons. Over the next few years, Wesendonck would give the struggling composer a place to live, pay off many of his debts, and give him substantial advances in payment for operas not yet written. Wagner repaid this great generosity by having a lengthy affair with Wesendonck's young wife Mathilde. Though this affair may have remained platonic, it was passionately felt on both sides, and Mathilde—an amateur poet—effectively became Wagner's muse through the 1850s. In these same years Wagner was struggling to compose *The Ring*: by 1857 he had completed *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* and had begun work on *Siegfried*, but—discouraged by the prospects for these operas and under the spell of his unconsummated love for Mathilde—he set this vast project aside to compose *Tristan und Isolde* (1857–59). And it was during the first year of his work on *Tristan* that Wagner took time off to compose five songs on poems by Mathilde.

This was a very intense time emotionally for Wagner, and at a remarkable social gathering in Zurich in the fall of 1857 he read the libretto of *Tristan* to an audience that included his wife Minna, his current love Mathilde and her husband, and his future wife, the 19-year-old Cosima von Bülow, who was visiting with her husband Hans. The mood of longing, pain, death, and a sense of ecstasy just beyond reach that lie at the heart of *Tristan und Isolde* is also very much part of the poems by Mathilde Wesendonck that Wagner chose to set, and in fact he called two of these songs “studies for *Tristan und Isolde*.” He wrote the songs between November 1857 and May 1858 and then took them through several revisions. Though often performed with orchestra, they are heard at this recital in Wagner's original version for voice and piano.

The first two songs contrast sharply, with the lullaby-like *Der Engel* followed by the tense *Stehe still!*, which drives to a great climax on the word “nature,” then trails off to a quiet close. *Im Treibhaus* is one of the “studies for *Tristan und Isolde*,” and many have felt a connection between this song and the prelude to Act III of the opera. Listeners will certainly sense the kinship between this dark and expressive song—with its hothouse flowers longing for their distant homeland—and the mood of unfulfilled longing in the opera. *Schmerzen* offers a soaring restatement of the connection between sorrow and pleasure, while *Träume* is the other “study” for *Tristan und Isolde*—it would re-emerge as the duet in Act II.

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Der Engel

In der Kindheit frühen Tagen
Hört ich oft von Engeln sagen,
Die des Himmels hehre Wonne
Tauschen mit der Erdensonne,

Daß, wo bang ein Herz in Sorgen
Schmachtet vor der Welt verborgen,
Daß, wo still es will verbluten,
Und vergehn in Tränenfluten,

Daß, wo brünstig sein Gebet
Einzig um Erlösung fleht,
Da der Engel niederschwebt,
Und es sanft gen Himmel hebt.

Ja, es stieg auch mir ein Engel nieder,
Und auf leuchtendem Gefieder
Führt er, ferne jedem Schmerz,
Meinen Geist nun himmelwärts!

Stehe Still

Sausendes, brausendes Rad der Zeit,
Messer du der Ewigkeit;
Leuchtende Sphären im weiten All,
Die ihr umringt den Weltenball;
Urewige Schöpfung, halte doch ein,
Genug des Werdens, laß mich sein!

Halte an dich, zeugende Kraft,
Urgedanke, der ewig schafft!
Hemmet den Atem, stillt den Drang,
Schweiget nur eine Sekunde lang!
Schwellende Pulse, fesselt den Schlag;
Ende, des Wollens ew'ger Tag!
Daß in selig süßem Vergessen
Ich mög' alle Wonne ermessen!

Wenn Auge in Auge wonnig trinken,
Seele ganz in Seele versinken;
Wesen in Wesen sich wiederfindet,
Und alles Hoffens Ende sich kündigt,
Die Lippe verstummt in staunendem Schweigen,
Keinen Wunsch mehr will das Innre zeugen:
Erkennt der Mensch des Ew'gen Spur,
Und löst dein Rätsel, heil'ge Natur!

The Angel

In the early days of childhood
I often heard tell of angels
Who exchange heaven's pure bliss
For the sun of earth

So that, when a sorrowful heart
Hides its yearning from the world
And would silently bleed away
And dissolve in streams of tears,

And when its fervent prayer
Begs only for deliverance,
That angel will fly down
And gently raise the heart to heaven.

And to me too an angel descended,
And now on shining wings
Bear my spirit, free from all pain,
Towards heaven!

Stand still!

Rushing, roaring wheel of time,
You that measure eternity;
Gleaming spheres in the vast universe,
You that surround our earthly sphere;
Eternal creation – cease:
Enough of becoming, let me be!

Hold yourselves back, generative powers
Primal Thought that always creates!
Stop your breath, still your urge,
Be silent for a single moment!
Swelling pulses, restrain your beating;
Eternal day of the Will – end!
That in blessed, sweet oblivion
I might measure all my bliss!

When eye gazes blissfully into eye,
When soul drowns utterly in soul;
When being finds itself in being,
And the goal of every hope is near,
When lips are mute in silent wonder,
When the soul wishes for nothing more:
Then man perceives Eternity's footprint,
And solves your riddle, holy Nature!

Im Treibhaus

Hochgewölbte Blätterkronen,
Baldachine von Smaragd,
Kinder ihr aus fernen Zonen,
Saget mir, warum ihr klagt?

Schweigend neiget ihr die Zweige,
Malet Zeichen in die Luft,
Und der Leiden stummer Zeuge
Steiget aufwärts, süßer Duft.

Weit in sehndem Verlangen
Breitet ihr die Arme aus
Und umschlinget wahnbefangen
Öder Leere nicht'gen Graus.

Wohl ich weiß es, arme Pflanze:
Ein Geschicke teilen wir,
Ob umstrahlt von Licht und Glanze,
Unsre Heimat is nicht hier!

Und wie froh die Sonne scheidet
Von des Tages leerem Schein,
Hüllet der, der wahrhaft leidet,
Sich in Schweigens Dunkel ein.

Stille wird's, ein säuselnd Weben
Füllet bang den dunklen Raum:
Schwere Tropfen seh ich schweben
An der Blätter grünem Saum.

Schmerzen

Sonne, weinest jeden Abend
Dir die Schönen Augen rot,
Wenn im Meeresspiegel badend
Dich erreicht der frühe Tod;

Doch erstehst in alter Pracht,
Glorie der düstren Welt,
Du am Morgen, neu erwacht,
Wie ein stolzer Siegesheld!

Ach, wie sollte ich da klagen,
Wie, mein Herz, so schwer dich sehn,
Muß die Sonne selbst verzagen,
Muß die Sonne untergehn?

Und gebietet Tod nur Leben,
Geben Schmerzen Wonnen nur:
O wie dank'ich daß gegeben
Solche Schmerzen mir Natur.

In the greenhouse

High-arching leafy crowns,
Canopies of emerald,
You children who dwell in distant climes,
Tell me, why do you lament?

Silently you bend your branches,
Inscribe your symbols on the air,
And a sweet fragrance rises,
As silent witness to you sorrows.

With longing and desire
You open wide your arms,
And embrace in your delusion
Desolation's awful void.

I am well aware, poor plant;
We both share a single fate,
Though bathed in gleaming light,
Our homeland is not here!

And just as the sun is glad to leave
The empty gleam of day,
The true sufferer veils himself
In the darkness of silence.

It grows quiet, a whirring whisper
Fills the dark room uneasily:
I see heavy droplets hanging
From the green edge of the leaves.

Agonies

Every evening, sun, you redden
Your lovely eyes with weeping,
When, bathing in the sea,
You die an early death;

Yet you rise in your old splendour,
The glory of the dark world,
When you wake in the morning
As a proud and conquering hero!

Ah, why should I complain,
Why should I see you, my heart, so depressed,
If the sun itself must despair,
If the sun itself must set?

If only death gives birth to life,
If only agony brings bliss:
O how I give thanks to Nature
For giving me such agony!

program continues on next page →

Träume

Sag, welch wunderbare Träume
Halten meinen Sinn umfassen,
Daß sie nicht wie leere Schäume
Sind in ödes Nichts vergangen?

Träume, die in jeder Stunde,
Jedem Tage schöner blühen,
Und mit ihrer Himmelskunde
Selig durchs Gemüte ziehn!

Träume, die wie hehre Strahlen
In die Seele sich versenken,
Dort ein ewig Bild zu malen:
Allvergessen, Eingedenken!

Träume, wie wenn Frühlingssonne
Aus dem Schnee die Blüten küßt,
Daß zu nie geahnter Wonne
Sie der neue Tag begrüßt,

Daß sie wachsen, daß sie blühen,
Träumend spenden ihren Duft,
Sanft an deiner Brust verglühen,
Und dann sinken in die Gruft.

—*Texts by Mathilde Wesendonck (1828–1902)*

Dreams

Say, what wondrous dreams are these
Embracing all my senses,
That they have not, like bubbles,
Vanished to a barren void?

Dreams, that with every hour
Bloom more lovely every day,
And with their heavenly tidings
Float blissfully through the mind!

Dreams, that with glorious rays
Penetrate the soul,
There to paint an eternal picture:
Forgetting all, remembering one!

Dreams, as when the Spring sun
Kisses blossoms from the snow,
So the new day might welcome them
In unimagined bliss,

So that they grow and flower,
Bestow their scent as in a dream,
Fade softly away on your breast
And sink into their grave.

INTERMISSION

Birth

MARGARET BONDS

(1913–1972)

Margaret Bonds' mother taught her to play the piano, and the girl began composing at age 5. She quickly developed into an excellent pianist, so accomplished that in 1933, at age 20, she became the first African-American to perform as soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. As a young woman in Chicago, she also gave piano lessons to 10-year-old Ned Rorem, who spoke fondly of her across the span of his long life. Bonds earned both her bachelor's and master's at Northwestern, then went on to continue her studies at Juilliard. She composed over 200 works, and most of her music is for voice, either solo or choral. Bonds also arranged a number of spirituals for piano and voice; the most famous of these is the arrangement she made of *He's Got the Whole World in His Hands* for Leontyne Price, who recorded it.

Bonds made her career in three cities: first in Chicago; then she moved in 1939 to New York City where she was involved with the Harlem Renaissance; and in 1967 she moved to Los Angeles. In all three cities she taught, composed, performed, and was active in musical theater, and in all three she was active on behalf of African-American causes. Zubin Mehta and the Los Angeles Philharmonic gave the premiere of her *Credo*—for soloists, chorus, and orchestra on a text by W.E.B. DuBois—in May 1972, but unfortunately Bonds died a few weeks before that performance at age 59.

Bonds met Langston Hughes in 1936, and the two remained close friends until his death in 1967; his death, in fact, caused her to leave New York and move to Los Angeles. Hughes and Bonds collaborated on a number of projects, and she set a number of Hughes' poems, including *Birth*.

Birth

Oh, fields of wonder out of which stars are born and moon and sun and me as well
Like streak of lightning in the night some mark to make some word to tell.

—Text by Langston Hughes (1901–1967)

The Crescent Moon

FLORENCE PRICE

(1887–1953)

The life and career of Florence Price form one of the most interesting chapters in American music, but for years she was virtually unknown, and her achievement is becoming clear only now, 70 years after her death. Born Florence Beatrice Smith in Little Rock, she was the daughter of a dentist and music teacher who encouraged her remarkable musical talent. At age 15 she entered the New England Conservatory, where she studied composition with George Whitefield Chadwick and Frederick Converse. Her *Symphony No. 1 in E Minor*, composed in 1931–32, won the Wanamaker Competition and was performed in 1933 by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the Chicago World's Fair—it was the first work by an African-American woman to be performed by a major American symphony orchestra. Price wrote over 300 works, including four symphonies, two violin concertos, a piano concerto, piano music, and a large number of songs and choral compositions. Her songs were championed by Marian Anderson, but in the years following her death in 1953 her music drifted into obscurity. Perhaps in a new century that music will find the audience it deserves.

While she was still living in Arkansas, Price discovered the work of the young African-American poet Louise Charlotte Wallace (1902–1973), from Fort Smith, Arkansas. Price set a number of Wallace's poems, and many of these—including *The Crescent Moon*—had not been published when she set them. The text of *The Crescent Moon* is very short, and Price gives it an appropriately brief setting: the rapturous vocal line soars above a rippling accompaniment.

The Crescent Moon

I saw the crescent moon,
One silver star beside.
"The moon's my love"
I made lament
"Would God I were her star!"

—Text by Louise C. Wallace (1902–1973)

Come, My Tan-Faced Children

MELISSA DUNPHY

(B. 1980)

Though she was born in Australia, Melissa Dunphy came to this country in 2003 and has made her career here. She earned a Ph.D. in composition from the University of Pennsylvania and currently teaches at Rutgers University. While Dunphy has written orchestral and chamber music, she has focused primarily on vocal music and has been particularly concerned with the causes of women and under-represented peoples. Among the texts she has set are a number of examples of what has been called “erasure poetry,” in which parts of an existing text are edited out to create a poem with a new meaning. *Come, My Tan-Faced Children* is an example. On her website, the composer has provided an introduction to this work:

“*Come, My Tan-Faced Children* was commissioned by Lyric Fest for premiere at “Carol of Words—Walt Whitman in Song” (Suzanne DuPlantis & Laura Ward, Artistic Directors), and written for Raehann Bryce-Davis.

“*Come, My Tan-Faced Children* was commissioned in recognition of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Walt Whitman, but it is not a blind celebration of that poet’s legacy. Intended for performance by a Black mezzo-soprano, this song recontextualizes words from Whitman’s poem *Pioneers! O Pioneers!* in a way that the poet almost certainly never intended. Although Whitman campaigned against slavery, he held regressive racist views about African-Americans and did not believe they should be given full citizenship rights. *Pioneers! O Pioneers!* was Whitman’s call to arms for white pioneers in the American West to fight in the Civil War, but by removing the title and the last line of each stanza and placing the words in the mouth of a woman of color, the song carries an entirely different meaning, especially now during the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement.” (Melissa Dunphy)

Come, My Tan-Faced Children

Come, my tan-faced children,
Follow well in order, get your weapons ready:
Have your pistols? have your sharp-edged axes?
For we cannot tarry here,
We must march my darlings, we must bear the brunt of
danger
We, the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend.
O resistless, restless race!
O my beloved race in all! O my breast aches with tender
love for all!
O I mourn and yet exalt – I am wrapped with love for all!

—Text by Walt Whitman (1819–1892)

Black Riders’ Freedom Song The Beauty in My Blackness I’m Not an Angry Black Woman

MARIA THOMPSON CORLEY

(B. 1966)

Born in Jamaica, Maria Thompson Corley grew up in western Canada and later attended Juilliard. She taught for some years at Florida A&M University. A multi-talented artist, Corley is an actor, poet, and novelist, as well as a composer. She wrote both the text and music for these three songs, and she composed them specifically for Raehann Bryce-Davis.

The texts spring from the experience of being a Black woman; they are proud and defiant. *The Beauty in My Blackness* proclaims the poet’s pride and independence, and the song opens and closes with an emphatic statement of the poem’s title. The title *I Am Not an Angry Black Woman* might best be taken ironically, because this is a song full of rage. The vocal line, dramatic and intense, is virtually declaimed above a fierce piano accompaniment.

Black Riders' Freedom Song

When I ride, when I ride,
When I ride like the wind, I am free.
When I ride like the wind, I am free.
With the wind on my face, I am free.
When I ride like the wind with the wind on my face on the
back of my horse,
I am free.

I am an outlaw, I am a sharpshooter,
I am a rancher, an actor, a cook.
I am a singer, I am a writer.
Born in enslavement, I ride like the wind.

When I ride like the wind, I am free.
With the wind on my face, I am free.
When I ride like the wind with the wind on my face on the
back of my horse,
I am free.

My freedom and I breeze through the plains like the dust
in the wind,
Like the wind through the air.
With my hat on my head and my boots on my feet, I ride
with the wind
And the wind blows warm, warm and free.
Free, like me.

I'm not your boy. I'm not your girl.
No man my master, no shackles, no chains.
I'm free from the bondage of racial division
With sisters and brothers who ride with the wind.
Vaquero, Indigenous, White or Chinese;
We are free.
When we ride like the wind, we are free.
With the wind on our face, we are free.
When we ride like the wind with the wind on our face on
the back of our horse,
We are free.

The range is our home, the sky, our cathedral, the wide-
open prairie, is the love of our lives.
The Earth is our Mother, her breath is the wind.
She whispers at night from the diamond-flecked velvet
above,
"You are free, you are free!"

Freedom is hard. Freedom is beautiful.
Freedom is dangerous. Freedom is ev'ry thing.
Freedom, freedom, freedom, Freedom is ev'ry thing!

When I ride like the wind, I am free.
My Blackness is no barrier, I am free.
Try to erase me; you'll never succeed.
The wind knows the truth.

I am free.
I am free.

The Beauty in My Blackness

The beauty in my blackness isn't open to debate.
The beauty in my blackness isn't open to debate.
My life force irrigates, irrepressible
Irrepressible, irrepressible, irrepressible
Undaunted, undimmed, unmistakable, unashamed.
Rivulets of royalty feed my river of resilience.
I am a fountain of femininity,
Coursing with charisma, overflowing with opulence.
Overflowing with opulence.
The beauty!
The beauty in my blackness isn't open to debate.

I Am Not an Angry Black Woman

I'm not an Angry Black Woman.
I am not an Angry Black Woman.
I am not, I am not, I am not an Angry Black
Woman!
I am a live butterfly impaled by a pin.
I am a strapped-in passenger careening into an
approaching train.
I am a writhing worm on the sidewalk after rain.
I am not, I am not an Angry Black woman, I am not!
I am an Olympic swimmer tethered to a slave ship.
I am not an Angry Black Woman.
I am not, I am not, I am not an Angry Black
Woman.
But what if I were?
What if I were?

program continues on next page →

Fi Mi Love Have Lion Heart

No. 3—*Banyan Tree*

No. 4—*Fi Mi Love Have Lion Heart*

No. 5—*Nobody's Business*

PETER ASHBOURNE

(B. 1950)

Peter Ashbourne studied first in Jamaica and then came to this country, where he earned a Bachelor of Music from the Berklee College of Music in Boston. A versatile artist, he plays both violin and piano and has made his career as a performer composer, arranger, teacher, and conductor. Ashbourne has composed largely for theater and dance, and he has been particularly interested in the music of Jamaica and the West Indies.

The composer has provided a note for these songs:

“I have always admired traditional Jamaican music. The sheer quantity of songs is amazing and seemingly out of proportion with the size of the island. Additionally, many of these songs are of high quality and amply show the talent and wit of their creators.

“When my good friend, soprano Dawn-Marie Virtue-James asked me to “arrange a few folk songs” for her in 1999, I immediately said ‘yes, certainly,’ put this request on my bucket list, and forgot about it. It took another year of her nagging, but I finally scored ‘Banyan Tree,’ ‘Liza,’ and ‘Nobody’s Business’ for a recital Dawn-Marie was having in 2001. Over the next year ‘Fi Mi Love’ and ‘Long Time Gal’ were also scored for her. I am now glad that Dawn-Marie insisted I work on those folk songs.

“My approach to these folk songs is to avoid making too many radical changes to the original melody, but everything else—harmony, form, style is a potential point of departure. I hope you find these pieces an enjoyable taste of Jamaican folk music.” (Peter Ashbourne)

—Program notes by Eric Bromberger

No. 3—*Banyan Tree*

Moonshine tonight come nek we dance an' sing,
Me deh rock so, you deh rock so, under Banyan tree.
Ladies mek curtsy, gentlemen mek bow.
Me deh rock so, you deh rock so, under Banyan tree.
Den we join hands an' dance around an' round,
Me deh rock so, you deh rock so, under banyan tree.
Moonshine tonight come nek we dance an' sing,
Me deh rock so, you deh rock so, under Banyan tree.

No. 4—*Fi Mi Love Have Lion Heart*

Fi mi love have lion heart,
Strong and everlasting only fi you,
Fi mi love will never done,
Shining like the sunshine only fi you.
If we part and never meet again,
Strong and everlasting only fi you.
Fi mi love have lion lieart,
Strong and everlasting only fi you,
Only fi you.
If we part and never meet again,
Though we part and never meet,
Fi mi love keep on a beat
Strong and everlasting only fi you.

No. 5—Nobody's Business

Solomon grandpa gawn a Ecuador
Lef ' him wife an' pickney outa door
Nobody's business but him own
Solomon grandma swear she naw go beg
Tief weh all 'bra Sammy fowl an' egg
Nobody's business but she own
Nobody's business but she own
If ah married to Nayga man
An 'ah lef 'him for a Chiney man
Nobody's business but me own.
If ah even old like Tagg oram
An ah wan 'to pose as twenty one
Nobody's business but me own
Nobody's business but me own

2023–24 Season Calendar

All performances at Herbst Theatre unless otherwise indicated

September 2023

Fri 29 7:00pm *Gala Performance:*
Alexander String Quartet

October 2023

Fri 6 7:30pm Isata Kanneh-Mason, piano
Sat 7 7:30pm Stephanie Jones, guitar*
(*St. Mark's Lutheran Church*)
Tue 10 7:30pm Calder Quartet
Timo Andres, piano
Sat 21 7:30pm Ian Bostridge, tenor
Wenwen Du, piano
Thu 26 7:30pm JACK Quartet
Sat 28 10:00am Alexander String Quartet with
Robert Greenberg

November 2023

Thu 2 7:30pm Miranda Cuckson, violin
Blair McMillen, piano
Wed 8 7:30pm Jay Campbell, cello
Conor Hanick, piano
Fri 10 7:30pm Dublin Guitar Quartet*
Sat 11 10:00am Alexander String Quartet with
Robert Greenberg

December 2023

Sat 2 7:30pm Beijing Guitar Duo*
(*St. Mark's Lutheran Church*)

January 2024

Thu 18 7:30pm Jonathan Biss, piano
Wed 24 7:30pm *PIVOT Festival:*
Gabriel Kahane, piano
Attacca Quartet
Thu 25 7:30pm *PIVOT Festival:*
Gabriel Kahane, piano
Roomful of Teeth
Thu 25 7:30pm *PIVOT Festival:*
Gabriel Kahane, piano
Attacca Quartet
Roomful of Teeth
Sat 27 10:00am Alexander String Quartet with
Robert Greenberg
Sat 27 7:30pm Raehann Bryce-Davis,
mezzo-soprano

February 2024

Wed 7 7:30pm Javier Perianes, piano
Sat 10 7:30pm Pepe Romero, guitar*
Thu 15 7:30pm *Gift Concert:*
Jonathan Swensen, cello
Stephen Waarts, violin
Juho Pohjonen, piano
Sat 24 7:30pm Leila Josefowicz, violin
John Novacek, piano
Tue 27 7:30pm Pierre-Laurent Aimard, piano
Thu 29 7:30pm Lawrence Brownlee, tenor
Kevin Miller, piano

March 2024

Sat 2 10:00am Alexander String Quartet with
Robert Greenberg
Tue 5 7:30pm Castalian String Quartet
Stephen Hough, piano
Thu 14 7:30pm Jonathan Biss, piano
Sat 16 7:30pm Calder Quartet
Antoine Hunter/Urban Jazz
Dance Company
Thu 21 7:30pm Ilker Arcayürek, tenor
Simon Lepper, piano
Sat 23 10:00am Alexander String Quartet with
Robert Greenberg

April 2024

Tue 16 7:30pm George Hinchliffe's
Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain
Tue 23 7:30pm *Gift Concert:*
Camille Thomas, cello
Thu 25 7:30pm Dover Quartet
Leif Ove Andsnes, piano
Sat 27 10:00am Alexander String Quartet with
Robert Greenberg

May 2024

Thu 2 7:30pm Jonathan Biss, piano
Fri 3 7:30pm Pekka Kuusisto, violin
Gabriel Kahane, piano

Programs, Artists, Dates and Times Subject to Change

* Presented in association with OMNI Foundation for the Performing Arts