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The Arts Partnership presents

Our Song, Our Story — The New Generation of Black Voices

November 18, 2022

Ordway Concert Hall, Saint Paul

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Program

OPENING

Hale Smith 1925–2009

Evocation

Damien Sneed, piano

SPIRITUALS

Traditional arranged by Damien Sneed b. 1979

In That Great Gettin' Up Morning

Raven McMillon, soprano

Raehann Bryce-Davis, mezzo-soprano

Damien Sneed, piano

Traditional arranged by Damien Sneed b. 1979

Balm in Gilead

Raven McMillon, soprano

Damien Sneed, piano

Traditional arranged by Damien Sneed b. 1979

Ride On King Jesus

Raehann Bryce-Davis, mezzo-soprano

Damien Sneed, piano

Traditional arranged by Damien Sneed b. 1979

Scandalized My Name

Raven McMillon, soprano

Raehann Bryce-Davis, mezzo-soprano

Damien Sneed, piano

OPERA ARIAS

Giuseppe Verdi 1813–1901

“Caro nome che il mio cor” from *Rigoletto*

Raven McMillon, soprano

Damien Sneed, piano

Griot String Quartet

Giuseppe Verdi 1813–1901

“O don fatale” from *Don Carlo*

Raehann Bryce-Davis, mezzo-soprano

Damien Sneed, piano

Griot String Quartet

Giacomo Puccini 1858–1924

“Quando me’n vo” from *La bohème*

Raven McMillon, soprano

Damien Sneed, piano

Griot String Quartet

William Walton 1902–1983

“I Was A Constant Faithful Wife” from *The Bear*

Raehann Bryce-Davis, mezzo-soprano

Damien Sneed, piano

Griot String Quartet

OPERA DUETS

Jacques Offenbach 1819–1880

“Belle nuit (Barcarolle)” from *Les Contes d’Hoffmann*

Raven McMillon, soprano
Raehann Bryce–Davis, mezzo–soprano
Damien Sneed, piano
Griot String Quartet

Engelbert Humperdinck 1854–1921

“Evening Prayer” from *Hansel and Gretel*

Raven McMillon, soprano
Raehann Bryce–Davis, mezzo–soprano
Damien Sneed, piano
Griot String Quartet

STRING QUARTET

Coleridge–Taylor Perkinson 1819–1880

String Quartet No. 1, Calvary

Allegro
Griot String Quartet

LIEDER

Franz Schubert 1797–1828

Nacht und Träume

Raven McMillon, soprano
Damien Sneed, piano
Griot String Quartet

Robert Schumann 1810–1856

Widmung, Op. 25, No. 1

Raehann Bryce-Davis, mezzo-soprano

Damien Sneed, piano

Griot String Quartet

Richard Strauss 1864–1969

Kornblumen, Op. 22, No. 1

Raven McMillon, soprano

Damien Sneed, piano

Griot String Quartet

Ernest Chausson 1855–1899

Chanson Perpetuelle, Op. 37

Raehann Bryce-Davis, mezzo-soprano

Damien Sneed, piano

Griot String Quartet

BLACK COMPOSERS

Harry T. Burleigh 1866–1949

Among the Fuchsias

Raven McMillon, soprano

Damien Sneed, piano

Griot String Quartet

Harry T. Burleigh 1866–1949

Till I Wake

Raven McMillon, soprano

Damien Sneed, piano

Griot String Quartet

B.E. Boykin b. 1989

We Wear The Mask

Raehann Bryce-Davis, mezzo-soprano

Damien Sneed, piano

Griot String Quartet

Peter Ashbourne b. 1950

Nobody's Business

Raehann Bryce-Davis, mezzo-soprano

Damien Sneed, piano

Griot String Quartet

Traditional arranged by Damien Sneed b. 1979

He's Got The Whole World In His Hands

Raven McMillon, soprano

Raehann Bryce-Davis, mezzo-soprano

Damien Sneed, piano

Griot String Quartet

Artist Profiles

Damien Sneed, music director and piano

Biography

Damien Sneed is a pianist, organist, conductor, composer, producer, arranger, and arts educator whose work spans multiple genres. Sneed has worked with jazz, classical, pop, and R&B legends including the late Aretha Franklin, Wynton Marsalis, Jessye Norman, Stevie Wonder, Diana Ross, Ashford & Simpson, Lawrence Brownlee, and many others. The multi-genre recording artist is a recipient of the prestigious Sphinx Medal of Excellence, which is presented annually to emerging Black and Latino leaders in classical music.

This year, Sneed embarked on a 36-city North American tour, "We Shall Overcome: A Celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. featuring Damien Sneed." This year also marks the 35th Anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, which was signed into law and made a federal holiday in 1983.

Sneed has also served as music director for Grammy Award-winning gospel artists The Clark Sisters, Richard Smallwood, Donnie McClurkin, Hezekiah Walker, Marvin Sapp, Karen Clark Sheard, Dorinda Clark-Cole and Kim Burrell.

Sneed is the founder and artistic director of Chorale Le Chateau, which has gained a global reputation for its vivid interpretations of vocal literature, from Renaissance period pieces to art songs to jazz, spirituals, gospel, and avant-garde contemporary music. He is featured on the recording of Wynton Marsalis' Abyssinian Mass as a conductor, with Marsalis, the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and Chorale Le Chateau.

Sneed joined the acclaimed staff of the Houston Grand Opera (HGOco) as Music Director and Composer in Residence and served as cover conductor for HGO mainstage productions under Patrick Summers, Artistic and Music Director for the 2018 – 2019 season. He has been commissioned to compose a new chamber opera called *MARIAN'S SONG* about the life of Marian Anderson for Houston Grand Opera which will have its world premiere on March 5, 2020 at the Cullen Theater.

This past August 14 – 17, 2019, Sneed held the Damien Sneed Foundation's inaugural Performing Arts Institute in his hometown, Augusta, Georgia at his mentor's school, the Jessye Norman School of Arts. The inaugural Performing Arts Institute's first class included both high school and undergraduate students in the disciplines of music (instrumental music, vocal music, musical theater, music technology), drama (theater, playwriting, screenwriting), dance (ballet, modern, hip-hop) and entrepreneurship.

Sneed was recently named a 2019 Artist-in-Residence at the Carr Center in Detroit, MI, along with Debbie Allen, George Shirley, and Savion Glover. In May, 2019 he served as Music Director for the 103rd Pulitzer Prize Awards ceremony at Columbia University in New York City.

Raven McMillon, soprano

Biography

Soprano Raven McMillon is a native of Baltimore, MD. Recently, Ms. McMillon was named a 2021 Grand Finals Winner of the Metropolitan Opera's Eric and Dominique Laffont Competition. She returns to Houston Grand Opera as a second year studio artist for their 2021-2022 season as Frasquita in *Carmen*, Peter in Joel Thompson's *The Snowy Day*, and Papagena in *The Magic Flute*. Elsewhere, she makes her house and role debut at Opera Philadelphia as Gilda in *Rigoletto*.

In the summer of 2021, Ms. McMillon joined Cincinnati Opera as Frasquita in the company's outdoor presentation of *Carmen*. She was also seen in her role debut as Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* at Opera Steamboat.

During the 2020-2021 season, she made her house debut at Houston Grand Opera in scenes from *Carmen* (Frasquita) and *L'elisir d'amore* (Adina) in the Studio Showcase. She was also seen in the HGO Digital season as Rona Richards in *The Impresario*, Peter in *The Making of The Snowy Day* documentary, and Gretel in *Hansel and Gretel*. Ms. McMillon also performed as a soloist in the Giving Voice concert as well as the HGO Studio Recitals.

In 2020, Ms. McMillon also collaborated with Lyric Opera of the North as Trish in the company's chapter in The Decameron Coalition's "Tales from a Safe Distance."

Other opera credits include La Princesse in *L'enfant et les sortilèges* (Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra); Adele in *Die Fledermaus* (Carnegie Mellon); Goldie in *Goldie B. Locks and the Three Singing Bears* (Pittsburgh Festival Opera); and Linfea in *La Calisto* (CCM). Ms. McMillon has also workshopped new roles such as Mary in Faye Chiao's *The Secret Codes of Mary Bowser* and Lucy in Tobias Picker's *Awakenings*.

Ms. McMillon received her MM in Vocal Performance at the University of Cincinnati-College Conservatory of Music and her BFA in Vocal Performance at Carnegie Mellon University.

Raehann Bryce-Davis, mezzo-soprano

Biography

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 2019/20 season she makes several role and company debuts including Eboli in *Don Carlos* with both Opera Vlaanderen and Staatstheater Nürnberg, and Sara in *Roberto Devereux* and the Big Stone in in the world premiere of Aucoin and Ruhl's *Eurydice* with LA Opera, a coproduction with The Metropolitan Opera. She also debuts with Bard Summerscape as Genièvre in Chausson's *Le roi Arthus*, joins conductor Kent Nagano and the Montreal Symphony for Verdi's *Requiem*, returns to Carnegie Hall for the world premiere of Moravec's *A Nation of Others* with the Oratorio Society of New York, joins the Dallas Opera for the Hart Institute for Women Conductors Concert, sings Nathaniel Dett's *The Ordering of Moses* for the centennial of the Harlem Renaissance, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with St. George's Choral Society, and a recital series with pianist Mark Markham.

Last season she made her role debut as Leonor in *La Favorite* at the Teatro Massimo di Palermo, Marguerite in *La Damnation de Faust* with Maestro John Nelson and the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de Costa Rica, Ms. Alexander in *Satyagraha* at Opera Vlaanderen, the world premiere and tour of *Unknown, I Live With You* with The Airport Society, Kristina in *The Makropulos Affair* at the Janáček Brno Festival, Verdi's *Requiem* with the Oratorio Society of New York at Carnegie Hall, Martinů's *Julietta* with the American Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, and Mahler's Symphony No. 8 with the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra.

Ms. Bryce-Davis recently sang her first performances of Wellgunde in *Die Ring-Trilogie* with Theater an der Wien, and Madeline Mitchell in *Three Decembers* with Opera Maine. While a member of the ensemble of Opera Vlaanderen, Ms. Bryce-Davis sang Nezhata in *Sadko*, Kristina in *The Makropulos Affair*, and Mary in *Der fliegende Holländer*. She was a recent participant in San Francisco Opera's prestigious Merola Opera Program, where she sang Eboli in selections from Verdi's *Don Carlo* and Santuzza from Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*. While a resident artist at Michigan Opera Theatre, she sang Third Lady in *Die Zauberflöte*, Lady in Waiting in *Macbeth*, and Ma Moss in *The Tender Land*. Other recent performances include Mama McCourt in *The Ballad of Baby Doe* with Chautauqua Opera, Albine in *Thaïs* with Florida Grand Opera, Zita in *Gianni Schichi* with Aspen Music Festival, Owl in *Alice in Wonderland* with Opera Theatre of Saint

Louis, Lily in *Porgy and Bess* with both Grand Théâtre de Genève and Odysseus Blagnac, Abuela in *En Mis Palabras* with the Fall Festival of the Arts, and Begbick in *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* with Manhattan School of Music.

On the concert stage, Ms. Bryce-Davis recently sang Elgar's *Sea Pictures* at the Musikverein in Vienna, the world premiere of Paul Moravec's *Sanctuary Road* in her Carnegie Hall debut with Oratorio Society of New York, and Verdi's *Requiem* with both the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de Costa Rica and the Greenwich Village Orchestra. She also joined the Aspen Music Festival for John Corigliano's *Of Rage and Remembrance*, Mahler's Symphony No. 2 with Maestro Kent Tritle in a world premiere organ transcription at the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine, Verdi's *Requiem* with Marywood University, Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky* with Maestro Philippe Entremont and the Manhattan School of Music Symphony, Durufle's *Requiem* with Maestro David Thye, and Handel's *Messiah* with Maestro Phillip Nuzzo and the Metro Chamber Orchestra. Also an ardent proponent of contemporary music, she premiered composer Kyle Werner's *Psalm 42*, and sang the world premiere of *Four Songs* for Mezzo Soprano and Orchestra by Jacob A. Greenberg.

Ms. Bryce-Davis is a 2018 recipient of the prestigious George London Award, the 2017 1st Place and Audience Prize winner of the Concorso Lirico Internazionale di Portofino competition, a Prize Winner of the 2016 International Hans Gabor Belvedere Singing Competition and Winner of the 2016 Richard F. Gold Career Grant, the 2015 9th International Hilde Zadek Competition at the Musikverein in Vienna, the 2015 Metropolitan Opera National Council Pittsburgh District, and the 2015 Sedat Gürel - Güzin Gürel International Voice Competition in Istanbul. In addition to winning the Zadek competition in Vienna, she also walked away with the Supporters and Sponsors Prize, the Media Jury prize, a master class with Christa Ludwig, and a gala concert at Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe in Germany. 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.

Griot String Quartet

Amyr Joyner, violin

Amyr Joyner has performed in numerous venues across the country and internationally as a fervent solo, orchestral, and chamber performer. His concert engagements include appearances in the 2019 Capitol Fourth Concert in Washington D.C., the 2021 March on Washington Film Festival, Millennium Stage and the Terrace Theater at the John F. Kennedy Center, performances at the Grant Park Music Festival's 2013 Advocate for the Arts Awards Benefit, and chamber music at both the Ray Charles Performing Arts Center at Morehouse in Atlanta, and Symphony Hall in Jacksonville as a member of the Ritz Chamber Players. Joyner has been a member with the Verbier Festival Orchestra, Sphinx Chamber

Orchestra, and the Soulful Symphony. He has performed and toured around the country with the Sphinx Virtuosi Orchestra and has performed in venues including Carnegie Hall, Millennium Park, and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. He has been featured on Atlanta NPR radio and Detroit television news. He has participated in a number of summer festivals including the Verbier Music Festival in Switzerland, Grant Park Music Festival in Chicago, Colour of Music Festival, Gateways Music Festival, Aspen Music Festival, and Heifetz Music Festival. He has also served as a violin teaching artist for the Atlanta Music Project, an El-Sistema based program in Southwest Atlanta. He has performed solos for the Grammy in the Schools National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences Convention, and the National Association of Negro Musicians Convention. Joyner was violinist of the Augusta Symphony Orchestra, and has acted as a substitute violinist for the New World symphony.

He has participated in the Madeline Island Summer Music Camp performing chamber music, where he studied with the late Vartan Manoogian and jazz violinist John Blake Jr. In the years following, he also attended The Weathersfield Music Camp, Encore School for Strings, Aspen Music Festival, and the Heifetz Music Festival. He has also given masterclasses in numerous outreach events, including in Kansas City, Atlanta, and Rochester.

Joyner was a semi-finalist in the 2002 National Sphinx Competition in Detroit. He was the third place laureate the following year and later made his orchestral debut with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra under conductor Alexander Mickelthwate performing the Tchaikovsky Violin concerto. As a chamber musician, he performed at the Atlanta Grammy Heroes Awards in July 2002. He is also the co-founder and member of the KAJ trio, along with his two brothers Jarin and Khari, both accomplished musicians. In 2002, the group opened for Bruce Hornsby during a benefit concert in November 2002. The group has also performed for Coretta Scott King in the kickoff reception for the Martin Luther King Jr. week in January 2003, and for baseball legend Hank Aaron at the Hank Aaron 80th Birthday celebration at the Smithsonian Museum in D.C.

In 2003, Joyner attended the Manhattan School of Music on a full scholarship where he studied with Patinka Kopec. He transferred the following year to the Peabody Conservatory and completed his Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Violin Performance, while studying with the late violinist and pedagogue Victor Danchenko, graduating in both 2008 and 2009. In 2012, he was awarded a chamber residency position at the University of Kentucky, where he was a member of the Verdi Quartet and served as co-concertmaster for the University of Kentucky Symphony Orchestra. He has attended the University of Maryland, receiving his Doctorate of Musical Arts (DMA) degree in May 2020. He has also served as violin instructor for the faculties at Peabody Preparatory in Baltimore, International School of Music in Bethesda, Maryland, and the Kirov Ballet Academy in Washington D.C.

Messiah Ahmed, violin

Messiah Ahmed is a 21 year-old violinist from Dallas, Texas and a senior at the Manhattan School of Music. Messiah has been playing the violin since he was 5 years old, and has been in the Dallas Symphony Orchestra's Young Strings Program since the 5th grade. YSP is a non-profit organization under the Dallas Symphony Orchestra designed to assist African-American and Latinx students under 18 to study under the acclaimed musicians of the Dallas Symphony. Through out high school he has won a number of competitions including the Friedlander Concerto Competition through the Young Strings program and was invited to play in Carnegie Hall's National Youth Orchestra for its 2019 season. This orchestra ranges in age from 16 to 19, and musicians have been recognized as being among the best in the country following a comprehensive and highly selective audition process. He was also a member of the 2017-18 TMEA All-State Philharmonic Orchestra and attended the Interlochen Center of the Arts. While there, he had the opportunity to study with many acclaimed concertmasters, and was associate concertmaster of the World Youth Symphony Orchestra with conductors such as Larry Rachleff and JoAnn Falletta, with artist in residence, Sarah Chang. All of these achievements would not have been possible if it were not for the intensive training he had received through the Young Strings Program. With the help of countless teachers and mentors he was then able to pursue an undergraduate degree at MSM under the tutelage of Mrs. Patinka Kopec. In 2021 Messiah and his colleagues were winners of MSM's Fuchs Chamber Competition, with the help of his coach Laurie Carney of the American String Quartet.

Edward Hardy, viola

Edward W. Hardy is a critically acclaimed Black and Puerto Rican composer, music director, virtuoso violinist and violist and is one of the foremost exponents of solo violin repertoire for theatrical productions. At the age of 25, "Hardy (was) one of the youngest composers to ever be accepted into the Exploring the Metropolis Con Edison Composer Residency and one of the most prominent composer / violinists in New York City" (BroadwayWorld).

Edward is a proud member of Local 802 Musicians Union, Dramatist Guild of America, ASCAP and is affiliated with the American Composers Orchestra, the Sphinx Organization, Exploring the Metropolis, the Gateways Music Festival, Carnegie Hall/ Weill Music Institute. He is also the founder and artistic director of the Omnipresent Music Festival - BIPOC Musicians Festival, the digital marketing director and artistic advisor of Beethoven in the Rockies: Concert Series, and the senior director of operations and co-founder of the Northern Colorado Center for Arts Entrepreneurship. Master of Music, Aaron Copland School of Music, Queens College CUNY, cum laude, Bachelor of Music, SUNY Purchase, cum laude. Edward is a doctoral candidate/ graduate instructor in violin performance at the University of Northern Colorado under the mentorship of Dr. Jubal Fulks. For more information, visit

EDWARDWHARDY.COM.

Thapelo Masita, cello

Thapelo Masita uses his artistic voice to amplify and uplift the arts in his country, South Africa.

Thapelo was recently invited to play Antonín Dvořák's Concerto with the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra and performed in recital at the Morgan Library and The Met Cloisters featuring a program of Bach Cello Suite No. 1 in conversation with Negro spirituals, South African hymns and Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson's "Lamentations" suite as part of the MetLiveArts series.

Thapelo is an active freelance musician in New York City and is a frequent guest musician with the Orchestra of St. Luke's, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and Harlem Chamber Players. These relationships have led to collaborations with artists such as Augustin Hadelich, Solange Knowles, Anna Clyne, Pulitzer Prize winners Tania León and Caroline Shaw. Masita is a graduate of The Juilliard School, Eastman School of Music, and is pursuing his Doctor of Musical Arts Degree at CUNY Graduate Center where he works with Julia Lichten.

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