

**AARON
DIEHL
AND
BRANDON
PATRICK
GEORGE**



***SONGS
OF
BLACK AMERICA***

Friday, October 14, 2022
7:30 pm

**HANCHER'S GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY: WE ALL RISE
2022-23 SEASON**

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SONGS OF BLACK AMERICA

AARON DIEHL, piano
BRANDON PATRICK GEORGE, flute

Friday, October 14, 2022, at 7:30 pm
Hancher Auditorium, the University of Iowa

PROGRAM

Pastorela William Grant Still
(1895–1978)

Four Études Yusef Lateef:
(1920–2013)

1. Sato
2. Marwa
3. Neuf
4. Ahir-Bhairav

Three Songs William Grant Still
(1895–1978)

1. Bayou Home
2. If You Should Go
3. Song For The Lonely

Fanmi Imèn Valerie Coleman
(b. 1970)

INTERMISSION

Blues for Peter Mary Lou Williams
(1910–1981)

Three Silhouettes Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
(1875–1912)
arr. Katherine Needleman

1. Tambourine
2. Lament
3. Valse

Traditional spirituals arr. Brandon Patrick George
and Aaron Diehl

1. *His Eye is on the Sparrow*
2. *Soon I will be Done*
3. *Every Time I Feel the Spirit*

Wish Sonatine Valerie Coleman
(b. 1970)

EVENT PARTNERS

Alan and Liz Swanson



Photo: Maria Jarzyna



Photo: Marco Borggreve

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

AARON DIEHL, piano

Since his debut release on Mack Avenue Records in 2013, pianist-composer Aaron Diehl has mystified listeners with his layered artistry. He reaches into expansion. At once temporal and ethereal—deliberate in touch and texture—his expression transforms the piano into an orchestral vessel in the spirit of beloved predecessors Ahmad Jamal, Erroll Garner, Art Tatum, and Jelly Roll Morton. Moment to moment, he considers what instrument he's moved to evoke. "This is a singular voice here, but maybe this section is a saxophone soli, or this piece here are high winds or low brass in the bass," says the Steinway artist, describing his concept on the bandstand.

Following three critically acclaimed leader albums, the American Pianist Association's 2011 Cole Porter fellow now focuses his attention on what it means to be authentic, to be present within himself. His most recent release on Mack Avenue, *The Vagabond*, reveals his breadth as who *The New York Times* calls "a composer worth watching." Across nine original tracks and works by Philip Glass and Sergei Prokofiev, Aaron leans into imagination and exploration. His forthcoming solo record promises an expansion of that search in a setting at once unbound and intimate.

In his sound, Aaron finds evolving meaning in the briefest phrases. He conjures three-dimensional expansion of melody, counterpoint, and movement through time. Rather than choose one sound or another, one genre or another—one identity or another—Aaron invites listeners into the chambered whole of his artistry. His approach reflects varied ancestral lineages and cultural expressions. And he remains committed to independence and self-discovery.

Born in Columbus, Ohio, a young Aaron flourished among family members supportive of his artistic inclinations. His grandfather, piano and trombone player Arthur Baskerville, inspired him to pursue music and nurtured his talent. In 2003, Aaron traveled to New York; following his success as a finalist in Jazz at Lincoln Center's 2002 Essentially Ellington competition and a subsequent European tour with Wynton Marsalis, he began studying under mentors Kenny Barron, Eric Reed, and Oxana Yablonskaya, earning a Bachelor of Music in jazz studies at the Juilliard School. His love affair with rub and tension prompted a years-long immersion in seemingly disparate sound palettes he found to be similar in depth, resonance, and impulse to explore, from Monk and Ravel to Gershwin and William Grant Still. Among other towering figures, Still in particular inspires Aaron's ongoing curation of Black American composers in his own performance programming, unveiled this past fall at 92nd St. Y. This ongoing project, along with his recent and widely lauded trio interpretations of Glass's iconic repertoire, has propelled Aaron into the next phase of self-actualizing. He embraces the challenge of drawing on other artists' visions and expressions, then interpreting those within the framework of his own personal aesthetic.

As thoroughly a collaborator as he is a leader, Aaron has appeared at such celebrated international venues as The Barbican, Ronnie Scott's, Elbphilharmonie and Philharmonie de Paris, as well as domestic mainstays Jazz at Lincoln Center, The Kennedy Center, The Village Vanguard, and Walt Disney Hall. Jazz Festival

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

appearances comprise performances at Detroit, Newport, Atlanta, and Monterey, for which he received the 2014 festival commission. Orchestral performances include hits at New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Aaron's appetite for expansion has afforded him passing and extended associations with some of the music's most fascinating and enduring figures including Wynton Marsalis, Benny Golson, Jimmy Heath, Buster Williams, Branford Marsalis, Wycliffe Gordon, and Philip Glass. His formative association with multi-Grammy award-winning artist Cécile McLorin Salvant only enhanced his study and deeply personal delivery of the American Songbook. Recent highlights have included appearing at the New York premiere of Philip Glass's complete Etudes at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, collaborating with flamenco guitarist Dani de Morón in *Flamenco Meets Jazz* (produced by Savannah Music Festival and Flamenco Festival), and performing with the New York Philharmonic and the Cleveland Orchestra as featured soloist on George Gershwin's Piano Concerto in F. *The New York Times* lauded the "brilliance" of his performance: "The roomy freedom of [his] playing in bluesy episodes was especially affecting. He folded short improvised sections into the score, and it's hard to imagine that Gershwin would not have been impressed."

When he's not at the studio or on the road, he's likely in the air. A licensed pilot, Aaron holds commercial single- and multi-engine certificates.

BRANDON PATRICK GEORGE, flute

Brandon Patrick George is a leading flute soloist and Grammy-nominated chamber musician whose repertoire extends from the Baroque era to today. He is the flutist of Imani Winds and has appeared as a soloist with the Atlanta, Baltimore, and Albany symphonies, American Composers Orchestra, and the Orchestra of St. Luke's, among others. He has been praised as "elegant" by *The New York Times*, as a "virtuoso" by *The Washington Post*, and as a "knockout musician with a gorgeous sound" by *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. His debut album was released by Haenssler Classics in September 2020; *The New York Times* has described it as "a program that showcases the flute in all its wit, warmth and brilliance."

Brandon has performed at the Elbphilharmonie, the Kennedy Center, the Dresden Music Festival, and the Prague Spring Festival. In addition to his work with Imani Winds, Brandon's solo performances include appearances at Lincoln Center, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 92nd Street Y, Tippet Rise, and Maverick Concerts. His current collaborations include touring projects with harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani, pianist Aaron Diehl, and harpist Parker Ramsay. In 2021, Brandon was part of the inaugural class of WQXR's Artist Propulsion Lab, a program designed to advance the careers of early and mid-career artists and support the future of classical music. During his yearlong residency at WQXR, Brandon guest hosted *Evening Music*, interviewed Ford Foundation president Darren Walker about diversity and equity in the performing arts, and recorded with pianist Aaron Diehl and harpist June Han.



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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Prior to his solo career, Brandon performed as a guest with many of the world's leading ensembles including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE). With the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Brandon performed at Walt Disney Concert Hall and at the Hollywood Bowl with music Director Gustavo Dudamel. His ensemble work allowed him to work closely with some of the foremost composers of our time including John Adams, Louis Andriessen, Tania León, Steve Reich, and George Lewis.

Raised by a single mother in Dayton, Ohio, Brandon is the proud product of public arts education. He draws on his personal experiences in his commitment to educating the next generation, performing countless outreach concerts for schoolchildren every year, and mentoring young conservatory musicians of color embarking on performance careers. Brandon trained at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, the Conservatoire de Paris, and the Manhattan School of Music. He serves on the faculty of the Curtis Institute and the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity.

Photo: Marco Borggreve



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PROGRAM NOTES

Aaron Diehl and Brandon Patrick George explore the rich culture of music, both traditional and classical, by African American composers.

WILLIAM GRANT STILL *Three Songs for Flute and Piano*

Prolific composer and conductor William Grant Still (1895–1978) frequently collaborated with renowned African American writers and poets. In *Three Songs for Flute and Piano*, the text for “Bayou Home,” “If You Should Go,” and “Song for the Lonely” was created by poet Countee Cullen (1903–1946), a key voice of the Harlem Renaissance, and Still’s wife, the librettist, pianist, and writer Verna Arvey (1910–1987).

Still was the first African American to conduct a professional symphony orchestra in the United States and was a prolific composer of symphonies, ballets, operas, and other works. He is perhaps best known for 1931’s *Afro-American Symphony*.



William Grant Still
by Carl Van Vechten
(1949)

VALERIE COLEMAN *Wish Sonatine and Fanmi Imèn*

Wish Sonatine is Valerie Coleman’s first work for flute and piano. The piece was inspired by and titled from the poem “Wish” by Fred D’Aguiar (1960–). It is a dramatic tone poem for flutist and pianist alike, depicting the Middle Passage in which Africans were trafficked across the Atlantic by tall ships to be sold into slavery.

Coleman’s *Fanmi Imèn* is Haitian Creole for *Human Family*, the most famous work by poet Maya Angelou (1928–2014). Both the musical and literary poems acknowledge differences within humankind, either due to ethnicity, background, or geography, but Angelou’s refrain: “we are more alike, my friends, than we are unlike,” reaffirms our humanity as a reminder of unity.

Coleman (1970–), who is also a Grammy-nominated flutist known for her work with Imani Winds, was named one of the “Top 35 Women Composers” by *The Washington Post*. She was also named *Performance Today’s* 2020 Classical Woman of the Year, an honor bestowed to an individual who has made a significant contribution to classical music as a performer, composer, or educator. Her piece *Umoja, Anthem for Unity* was chosen by Chamber Music America as one of the “Top 101 Great American Ensemble Works” and is now a staple of woodwind literature.



Photo: Matthew Murphy



Nabil Ayers and James Spooner

Friday, September 23, 2022

2:00 pm

Strauss Hall in Hancher Auditorium

On September 23, Hancher and the Office of Performing Arts and Engagement collaborated with The Englert Theatre and Prairie Lights Bookstore to present **NABIL AYERS** and **JAMES SPOONER** in conversation with André Perry in Hancher’s Strauss Hall and at Prairie Lights.



Each an author of a memoir, Ayers (*My Life in the Sunshine*) and Spooner (*The High Desert*) spoke about their creative process, their experiences as Black men and artists, and the impulses behind their books.

7:00 pm

Prairie Lights Bookstore



TWO DAYS WITH THREE AMAZING ARTISTS

Photo: Justin Turner



Photo: Sachin Fong

On September 24, **LESLIE ODOM, JR.**—*Hamilton* star, Emmy and Oscar nominee, and Hancher favorite—was supported by a killer band as his beautiful, soulful voice filled the auditorium and thrilled the audience.

Leslie Odom, Jr.
Saturday, September 24, 2022
7:30 pm
Hancher Auditorium



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| <p>September & October; January–May Wednesdays, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.</p> | <p>November & December Tuesday–Thursdays, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.</p> |
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