



OPERA ON TAP PRESENTS  
**CELEBRATING  
BLACK EXCELLENCE**

**FEB  
24**

OPERA, ARTSONG, AND THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

**CITY WINERY**  
BOSTON

Celebrating Black Excellence  
Opera, Art Song, and the Harlem Renaissance  
City Winery Boston, February 24 2024  
Douglas Sumi, Piano

*Hold Fast to Dreams* (Langston Hughes) Florence Price (1887 - 1953)  
Nina Evelyn Anderson, soprano

*Song to the Dark Virgin* (Langston Hughes)  
Morgan Beckford, soprano

*Trouble Done Come My Way* (Florence Price)  
Keith Eric Brinkley, baritone

*The Negro Speaks of Rivers* (Langston Hughes) Margaret Bonds (1913 - 1972)  
*Poeme d'Automne* (Langston Hughes)  
Morgan Beckford, soprano

*To a Brown Girl Dead* (Countee Cullen)  
Keith Eric Brinkley, baritone

*Night Songs* H. Leslie Adams (b 1932)  
Prayer (Langston Hughes)  
Drums of Tragedy (Langston Hughes)  
The Heart of A Woman (Georgia Douglas Johnson)  
Night Song (Clarissa Scott Delany)  
Sence You Went Away (James Weldon Johnson)  
Creole Girl (Leslie Morgan Collins)  
Fred C. VanNess Jr., Tenor

- Intermission -



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*Lost Illusions* (Georgia Douglas Johnson)

Jeremiah Evans (b 1978)

*Southern Mansion* (Arna Bontemps)

*April Song* (Langston Hughes)

Marcus Schenck, Baritone

*Mortal Storm*

A House in Taos (Langston Hughes)

Robert Owens (1925-2017)

Little Song (Langston Hughes)

Jaime (Langston Hughes)

Marcus Schenck, Baritone

Faithful One (Langston Hughes)

Genius Child (Langston Hughes)

Keith Eric Brinkley, Baritone

*Mother to Son* (Langston Hughes)

Hall Johnson (1988-1970)

Morgan Beckford, Soprano

*Lovely, Dark, and Lonely One* (Langston Hughes)

Harry Burleigh (1866-1949)

*A Black Pierrot* (Langston Hughes)

William Grant Still (1895-1978)

Nina Evelyn Anderson, Soprano

*Lift Every Voice and Sing* (James Weldon Johnson)

John Rosemond Johnson

Please join us!

(1873-1954)

Lift every voice and sing  
Till earth and heaven ring,  
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;  
Let our rejoicing rise  
High as the listening skies,  
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.  
Sing a song full of the faith that the  
dark past has taught us,  
Sing a song full of the hope that the  
present has brought us,  
Facing the rising sun of our new day  
Begun let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,  
Bitter the chastening rod,  
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;  
Yet with a steady beat,  
Have not our wary feet  
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?

We have come over a way  
That with tears have been watered,  
We have come, treading our path  
Through the blood of the slaughtered,  
Out from the gloomy past,  
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years,  
God of our silent tears,  
Thou who has by Thy might  
Led us into the light,  
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.  
Lest our feet stray from the places,  
Our God, where we met Thee,  
Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine  
Of the world, we forget Thee;  
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,  
May we forever stand.  
True to our GOD,  
True to our native land.

Florence Price (1887-1953) was a multifaceted artist, pianist, and music teacher, and was known as the first Black woman composer to have her composition played by a major orchestra (Symphony No. 1 in E minor performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1933). She studied composition here in Boston at New England Conservatory and built her career in Chicago as a pianist and teacher. She composed over 100 songs for voice and piano.

Margaret Bonds (1913-1972) was a pianist, arranger, and teacher. Bonds studied composition with Florence Price when she was in high school in Chicago. She was one of the first Black composers to gain recognition in the United States, largely due to soprano Leontyne Price commissioning and recording her works. She is most known for her spiritual arrangements and frequent collaborations with Langston Hughes. Bonds and Hughes were great friends, and collaborated on “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” Songs of the Seasons, and Three Dream Portraits.

Compositions by H. Leslie Adams (b. 1932) have been performed by the Prague Radio Symphony, Iceland Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, and Indianapolis Symphony. He is best known for his vocal compositions, including choral music, art songs, vocal solos, and music drama. Adams’ compositions exhibit lots of influence from jazz and traditional spirituals.

Robert Owens (1925-2017) was a concert pianist, stage and television actor who spent most of his career as an American expatriate in Europe. After serving in the army during World War II, he used the GI Bill to complete his music studies in Paris and Vienna. Owens met Hughes in New York City in 1958, and at this meeting, Hughes gifted him Fields of Wonder, a collection of his lyrical poetry, and told him to “see what he could do with it.” Owens wrote six song cycles using this collection, including Mortal Storm, Op. 29.

from L to R: Margaret Bonds, William Grant Still, Hall Johnson



A singer first, Harry Burleigh (1886-1949) became an important contributor to the development of American music. Throughout his career, he made Black music available to classically trained artists by introducing them to spirituals. Additionally, he introduced Antonín Dvořák to Black American music, influencing some of Dvořák's most famous compositions and leading him to say that Black music would be the basis of American classical music. While he is most known for his spiritual arrangements, he has composed over 100 secular art songs as well. “Lovely, Dark, and Lonely One” is a musical setting of Hughes’ poem “Song.”

William Grant Still (1895-1978) wrote over 200 works including five symphonies, four ballets, nine operas, art songs, chamber music, and works for solo instruments. He is known as the “Dean of Afro-American composers” because he was the first Black composer to have an opera produced by New York City Opera, the first to have his symphony performed by a major orchestra (Afro-American Symphony premiered by Eastman Rochester Philharmonic in 1931), the first to conduct a major symphony orchestra, and the first to have his opera performed on national television. “A Black Pierrot” is excerpted from Still’s Songs of Separation.

Hall Johnson (1888 – 1970) was an American composer, professional violinist, conductor, and arranger of choir music and African-American spirituals. Hall Johnson was known not only for his compositions but for the articles he authored that discussed the history of the spiritual and their performance practice. Johnson formed the Hall Johnson Negro Choir in September 1925. The choir was also featured in several movie soundtracks, including a few by Walt Disney. He had great success performing African-American spirituals. He coached many singers including Marian Anderson, Robert McFerrin, and Shirley Verrett. His arrangements of the spirituals have been recorded by some of the world's finest artists.

Jeremiah Evans (b. 1978) is an esteemed pianist and composer of neotraditional contemporary classical music that has been widely performed. He is recognized as co-composer for the Grammy-nominated album, *RISING* (66th Annual Grammy Awards). His work has been featured as part of the African Diaspora Music Project and the American Song Institute. Evans' work has been performed in a variety of professional and collegiate concert settings. He has served as a guest faculty member, guest composer, and guest artist at various institutions and competitions. His compositions range from art songs for vocalists, to piano suites, to oboe solos.

# Performers

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Nina Evelyn Anderson



Morgan Beckford



Keith Eric Brinkley



Fred C. VanNess Jr.



Marcus Schenk



Douglas Sumi

Opera on Tap Boston programs made possible by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, Boston Cultural Council, Club Passim Iguana Fund

# Upcoming Programs

**Feb 29**

Exploring Opera, Art Song and the Harlem Renaissance  
Cambridge Public Library

**March 9**

Vocal Music of the African Diaspora with Boston Singers' Resource  
Brookline Public Library

**April 6**

Ladies Who Brunch  
Club Cafe

**May 4**

Ladies Who Brunch  
Club Cafe

**June 22**

Pride Trivia Cabaret with MassOpera  
Club Cafe

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## Flowers and Opera

### Spring 2024

June 7

Bow Market, Somerville



## OPERA ON TAP + CIRCUS 617

arias aloft

July 14

deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum

August 3

Gov. Hutchinson's Field, Milton



# Opera on Tap Boston

## Leadership

Kathryn McKellar - Artistic and Executive Director & Co-founder

David Rivera Bozón

Keith Eric Brinkley

Melynda Davis

Caitlin Felsman

Aurora Martin

## Opera on Tap Boston

Opera on Tap is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote opera as a viable, living, and progressive art form by taking it out of the concert hall and putting it into venues where people least expect it. The company was founded in Brooklyn in 2005, and Opera on Tap's Boston chapter launched in 2011 with an inaugural show at Cambridge's Club Oberon. With live shows in unconventional venues ranging from public parks to bars to farmer's markets across greater Boston, OOT has introduced audiences of all ages and cultural backgrounds to opera in performance formats that are fun, inclusive and accessible.

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