



MONTCLAIR
STATE UNIVERSITY

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PEAK Performances presents



Cécile McLorin Salvant

Sat. December 16, 2023, 8:00pm

Alexander Kasser Theater

Cécile McLorin Salvant, Composer, Singer, Visual Artist

Sullivan Fortner, Piano

Marvin Sewell, Guitar

Yasushi Nakamura, Bass

Keita Ogawa, Drums/Percussion

Running Time: 90 minutes, no intermission.

About the Artists

Cécile McLorin Salvant (Composer/Singer) is a composer, singer, and visual artist. The late Jessye Norman described Salvant as “a unique voice supported by an intelligence and full-fledged musicality, which light up every note she sings.” Salvant has developed a passion for storytelling and finding the connections between vaudeville, blues, theater, jazz, baroque, and folkloric music. Salvant is an eclectic curator, unearthing rarely recorded, forgotten songs with strong narratives, interesting power dynamics, unexpected twists, and humor.

Salvant won the Thelonious Monk competition in 2010. She has received three consecutive Grammy Awards for Best Jazz Vocal Album for *The Window*, *Dreams and Daggers*, and *For One to Love* and was nominated for the award in 2014 for her album *WomanChild*.

In 2020, Salvant received the MacArthur Fellowship and the Doris Duke Artist Award. Nonesuch Records released *Ghost Song* in March 2022; the album has since gone on to receive two Grammy nominations as well as appearing on a number of year-end best lists for 2022. On March 24, 2023, Nonesuch Records released the highly anticipated follow-up, *Mélusine*, an album mostly sung in French, along with Occitan, English, and Haitian Kreyòl.

Born and raised in Miami, FL, of a French mother and Haitian father, Salvant started classical piano studies at age five, sang in a children’s choir at eight, and started classical voice lessons as a teenager. Salvant received a bachelor’s in French law from the Université Pierre Mendès–France in Grenoble while also studying baroque music and jazz at the Darius Milhaud Music Conservatory in Aix-en-Provence, France.

Salvant’s latest work, *Ogresse*, is a musical fable in the form of a cantata that blends genres (folk, baroque, jazz, country). Salvant wrote the story, lyrics, and music. It is arranged by Darcy James Argue for a 13-piece orchestra of multi-instrumentalists. *Ogresse*, both a biomythography and an homage to the Erzulie (as painted by Gerard Fortune) and Sara Baartman, explores fetishism, hunger, diaspora, cycles of appropriation, lies, othering, and ecology. It is in development to become an animated feature-length film, which Salvant will direct.

Salvant makes large-scale textile drawings. Her visual art can now be found at Picture Room in Brooklyn, NY.
cecilemclorinsalvant.com

Sullivan Fortner (Piano) for the past decade has been stretching deep-rooted talents as a pianist, composer, band leader, and uncompromising individualist. The Grammy Award–winning artist out of New Orleans received international praise as both key player and producer for his collaborative work on *The Window*, alongside Cécile McLorin Salvant. As a solo leader, he has released *Moments Preserved* and *Aria* to critical acclaim.

In addition to associations with such diverse voices as Wynton Marsalis, Paul Simon, Dianne Reeves, Etienne Charles, and John Scofield, Fortner’s frequent and longtime collaborators have included Ambrose Akinmusire, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Stefon Harris, Kassa Overall, Tivon Pennicott, Peter Bernstein, Nicholas Payton, Billy Hart, Gary Bartz, Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah, Fred Hersch, and the late Roy Hargrove. Recent collaborations include Grammy-nominated releases *Dear Love* (Empress Legacy) and *Generations* from leaders Jazzmeia Horn and the Baylor Project, respectively.

A highly sought improviser, Fortner has performed across the country and throughout the world at such cultural institutions as Snug Harbor, New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts, Sweet Lorraine’s, and the Jazz Playhouse in New Orleans, and Jazz at Lincoln Center, Jazz Standard, and Smalls Jazz Club in New York City. He has appeared at celebrated festivals, including Newport, Monterey, Discover, Tri-C, and Gilmore Keyboard, among others. In 2019, Fortner brought his band to the historic Village Vanguard for a week-long engagement he would reprise in 2020 as a virtual performance during lockdown. His notable studio contributions include work on Etienne Charles’s *Kaiso* (Culture Shock, 2011), Donald Harrison’s *Quantum Leap* (FOMP, 2010), and Theo Croker’s *The Fundamentals* (Left Sided Music, 2007).

Playing solo or leading an orchestra, Fortner engages harmony and rhythmic ideas through curiosity and clarity. Within phrases, he finds universes, and listeners often hear how he is moved by each note he explores. Coming up in New Orleans, Fortner began playing piano at age seven, following a storied lineage of improvisers, masters of time and every iteration of the blues. He earned his bachelor of music from Oberlin Conservatory and master of music in Jazz Performance from Manhattan School of Music (MSM). A champion of mentorship, Fortner has offered masterclasses at MSM, New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA), Purdue University, Lafayette Summer Music Workshop, Belmont University, and Oberlin Conservatory, where he held a faculty position.

Pulling distinct elements from different eras, Fortner's artistry preserves the tradition and evolves the sound. He seeks connections among different musical styles that are at once deeply soulful and wildly inventive. Both his works and his insights have been featured in culturally iconic publications, from the *New York Times* to the *Root*. Accolades include the 2015 Cole Porter Fellowship awarded by the American Pianists Association, Leonore Annenberg Arts Fellowship, the 2016 Lincoln Center Award for Emerging Artists and, in 2020, the prestigious Shifting Foundation Grant for artistic career development. sullivanfortnermusic.com

Marvin Sewell (Guitar) was born and raised in Chicago. He learned how to play the guitar by hanging out with many Chicago basement bands. At that time, Sewell was exposed to a variety of styles of music such as blues, gospel, soul, rock, and fusion. At the same time, he played in a Catholic church in a guitar band playing acoustic guitar. A few years later he became interested in jazz. In high school, he started playing with the Malcolm X Community College Big Band. From there he started playing with many famous local Chicago musicians such as Von Freeman, Ramsey Lewis, Billy Branch, Jody Christian, Big Time Sarah, and Barbara La Shore. He attended Roosevelt University in Chicago, where he studied composition.

Sewell moved to New York in 1990. His very first tour in New York was with an Algerian pop music band. Since in New York, Sewell has played with various bands of different styles of music, ranging from acoustic to electric music. In 1992, he made his first major jazz band when he began working with Jack DeJohnette's Special Edition. At that same time, he was playing with jazz cellist Diedre Murray and jazz bassist Fred Hopkins. The following year he recorded albums with Jack DeJohnette, Diedre Murray, and Gary Thomas. That same year he played in Hannibal Peterson's composition *African Portraits*, an opera in which he played blues slide guitar in collaboration with the St. Louis Symphony, New Music Symphony, and the Westchester Symphony Orchestra. Sewell has performed and recorded with David Sandborn, Marcus Miller, Jorge Sylvester, Greg Osby, Joe Lovano, George Benson, Sekou Sundiata, Peter Herborn, and a host of many other esteemed musicians.

In 1995, he began playing with Cassandra Wilson, with whom he played a variety of string instruments for six years. On Wilson's CD *Traveling Miles*, Sewell cowrote the song "Right Here, Right Now" with Wilson. Before leaving Wilson, he was the music director of her band for a little over a year. In the summer of 2001, Sewell went on tour with Sekou Sandiata along with Ani DiFranco. While out on tour, Sewell got a chance to share the stage with Ani DiFranco.

In 2002, Sewell did a tour of eastern Africa with the Newsome, Sewell, and Harris Trio. The group performed in Kenya, Malawi, Botswana, Mozambique, and Mauritius. Today, Sewell spends most of his time writing music for his own band, the Marvin Sewell Group. He has performed all over New York City and is preparing to put out his debut recording under his own name. This group has received great reviews in many of the local New York papers. marvinsewell.com

Yasushi Nakamura (Bass) is praised for imaginative, quicksilver bass lines that deepen the groove. His blend of guitar-like precision and gut-level blues has sparked collaborations with artists such as Wynton Marsalis, Wycliffe Gordon, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Hank Jones, Dave Douglas, Steve Miller, etc. With his charismatic stage presence and artful, hard-swinging melodic touch, Nakamura is a first-call performer capturing new audiences and fans around the world.

Born in Tokyo, Nakamura moved to the United States at age nine and considers both places home. He began with clarinet and tenor saxophone, but his older brother's study of guitar and drums drove him to pick up the bass. His love of rock and funk aside, the music of Charlie Parker, Ray Brown, and Miles Davis were a potent influence on him. Nakamura received a BA in Jazz Performance from Berklee School of Music in 2000 and was awarded a full scholarship to the Juilliard School for his artist diploma in 2006. He credits Myron Walden as an early champion and keeps close ties to Juilliard mentors Victor Goines, Wycliffe Gordon, Carl Allen, and Ben Wolfe, all of whom maintain him in their bands.

Nakamura's career is flourishing, with consistent engagements at premier jazz festivals including Tokyo, North Sea, Monterey, and Ravinia and venues such as Birdland, Village Vanguard, the Blue Note, the Kennedy Center, Jazz at Lincoln Center, and Carnegie Hall. In 2014, he was honored to play the *NEA Jazz Masters Concert: Celebrating Jamey Abersold, Anthony Braxton, Richard Davis, and Keith Jarrett*, sharing the stage with Joe Lovano and Dave Liebman. A wide array of projects permits him to explore musical styles and collaborations. In 2016, he recorded with one of his long-time inspirations, Toshiko Akiyoshi, for her recent release, *Porgy and Bess*. His performance with Akiyoshi's Jazz Orchestra was also broadcast as a documentary film. Recent works include *For the Love of Duke* with New York City Ballet, choreographed by Susan Stroman, and *Ellington at Christmas: Nutcracker Suite* with Savion Glover, Lizz Wright, the Abyssinian Baptist Choir, and David Berger conducting. In 2010, he toured the Middle East with Jazz at Lincoln Center's *Kings of the Crescent City* project and he toured Asia in 2008 with the Juilliard All-Stars. As an educator, Nakamura has led master classes and summer intensive courses at the Juilliard School, New School, Koyo Conservatory, Osaka Geidai, and Savannah Swing Central.

In 2016, Nakamura release his first album, *A Lifetime Treasure*, and in 2017 he released second album, *Hometown*, from Atelier Sawano featuring Lawrence Fields, Bigyuki, and Clarence Penn, which received album of the year 2017 in *JazzLife* magazine. **yasushinakamurabass.com**

Keita Ogawa (Drums/Percussion), hailing originally from Sasebo, Nagasaki, Japan, is a five-time Grammy nominee, three-time Grammy Award winner, and one of the most versatile and sought-after percussionists and drummers in New York City.

Ogawa started his music career on a drum set at the age of 15. After performing regularly in Tokyo for several years, Ogawa decided to pursue his musical studies overseas. He was accepted into the prestigious Berklee College of Music in fall of 2005, where he studied with legendary musicians and educators Manuel "Egui" Castrillo, Jamey Haddad, Tito De Gracia, David Rosado, and Mark Walker. Seeking full immersion into the world of Brazilian percussion, Ogawa relocated to Rio de Janeiro for three months and studied with some of the country's most respected musicians—Jorginho do Pandeiro, Celsinho Silva, Kiko Freitas, and Marcio Bahia, among others.

Since his arrival in America, Ogawa has worked with some of the biggest names in modern music, including Yo-Yo Ma, Assad Brothers, Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra, Romero Lubambo, Clarice Assad, Jaques Morelenbaum, Osvaldo Golijov, Les Nubians, Charlie Hunter, Benny Green, Eric Harland, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and more. Currently he works on several projects, including Snarky Puppy, Bokanté, Banda Magda, Cécile McLorin Salvant, Charlie Hunter, JSquad, Camila Meza and the Nectar Orchestra, Clarice Assad, and more.

In 2016 he wrote the opening theme for a national TV program in Japan called *Hodo Station*. In 2017 he became the Ambassador of Tourism of his hometown, Sasebo, Nagasaki, Japan.

He is endorsed by Canopus Drum, Meinl Percussion, Meinl Cymbal, Vic Firth, Evans Drumhead, Stack Ring Percussion, Cooperman Company, Dem Sticks, Parka Percussion, and Decora 43.

Ogawa can play virtually any percussion instrument and musical style with fluency and unparalleled musicality. Despite his youth, he has set an example for the next generation of world-class musicians. Ogawa's passion for crossing musical borders and uniting differences in cultures is a rare talent, which he exhibits with a smile and an open heart. **keitaogawa.com**

An Invitation to Our Community

We believe that the live performing arts contribute to the building of healthier communities.

We would like to invite you to become a member of our community in any way that's comfortable for you.

Our community is diverse and inclusive: you'll find interesting folks from surrounding towns, Montclair State University students, faculty and staff, and artists and thinkers from the world at large.

If this sounds interesting to you and you'd like more information, please reach out to me.

I'll be back in touch. Thank you so much for your interest in being together in a physical space to experience the live performing arts!

Sincerely,



Wiley Hausam

Director, PEAK Performances

Email: hausamw@montclair.edu

Upcoming Events

OPERA IN-CONCERT

BLIND INJUSTICE

Music by **Scott Davenport Richards**

Libretto by **David Cote**

Based on the book *Blind Injustice* by **Mark Godsey**

Musical Direction by **Ted Sperling**

Stage Direction by **Robin Guarino**

FRI., FEBRUARY 16 @ 7:30 PM

SUN., FEBRUARY 18 @ 3:00 PM

FOR TICKETS:

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MANDY PATINKIN IN CONCERT

BEING ALIVE

With **Adam Ben-David** on Piano

SAT., FEBRUARY 24 @ 8:00 PM

KEIGWIN + COMPANY

STAGE DOOR

Dance | Variety

SAT., MAY 11 @ 8:00 PM | vSUN., MAY 12 @ 3:00 PM



Programs in this season were made possible, in part, by the Alexander Kasser Theater Endowment Fund, PEAK Patrons, and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

PEAK Performances develops, presents, and produces a broad range of world-class dance, film, master classes, music, opera and music theater, talks, and theater in the Alexander Kasser Theater on the campus of Montclair State University for students, faculty, staff, and the general public. We are building community through live performance. PEAK Performances is a program of the university's Arts + Cultural Programming Department



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