



**Imani Winds with
Robert Laidler, poet
Seth Parker Woods, cello
Cory Smythe, piano
April 9, 2022**

PROGRAM NOTES

Support for the program notes is generously provided by Roberta Viviano.

Enoch Mankayi Sontonga/Arr. Valerie Coleman

(Kariega, South Africa, 1873 – Johannesburg, South Africa, 1905)

***Nkosi si ke Leli* (South African National Anthem)**

Sung originally as a hymn, Sontonga's 1897 melody *Nkosi si ke leli 'i Afrika* (God Bless Africa) focused on text to stir the heart and give strength to millions during struggles in South African history. Adopted as the African National Congress anthem, and later as the national anthem of South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia, this rendition for woodwinds by flutist/composer Valerie Coleman is upbeat and celebratory.

Program note by Valerie Coleman

Nathalie Joachim

(Brooklyn, NY, 1984)

Seen

Nathalie Joachim explores visual artist Whitfield Lovell's *Kin Series* as the inspiration behind her new work titled *Seen*. Following Lovell's use of symbolic found objects within his *conté*

drawings of unknown African Americans, Joachim draws inspiration from ordinary objects in the lives of each member of Imani Winds. Seen is comprised of five intimate musical portraits that explore layers of musical and personal meaning, echoing Lovell's complex visual practice of history and cultural memory. Seen was commissioned by The Phillips Collection in Washington, DC and premiered by Imani Winds on March 15, 2021.

Program note courtesy of The Phillips Collection

Valerie Coleman

(Louisville, KY, 1970)

Afro-Cuban Concerto

Afro-Cuban Concerto infuses orchestral music with Afro-Cuban musical idioms, while reintroducing the concept of wind quintet as solo ensemble to the orchestral stage. In this three-movement work, the wind quintet mimics Afro-Cuban percussion instruments and traditional vocal sounds, using “wailing” melodies and rhythms at the root of Afro-Cuban music.

The quintet-only version was written for Imani Winds out of Ms. Coleman's desire to expand the sonorous possibilities of the traditional wind quintet and a belief in flexibility in performance situations. This version was premiered in November 2001 by Imani Winds at their Carnegie hall debut. The full orchestral version has been performed by both the New Haven Symphony under the baton of Maestro Jung-Ho Pak and the Interlochen Music Festival Orchestra under the baton of Lawrence Leighton Smith.

Program note by Valerie Coleman

Jeff Scott

(Queens, New York, 1968)

Fallen Petals of Nameless Flowers

The world premiere of *Fallen Petals of Nameless Flowers* is the outcome of a two-year collaborative effort at Chamber Music Detroit to highlight an important societal issue that began touching our organization directly two years before that. It was in the summer of 2018 that Bryan Jones joined the CM Detroit staff, a

few weeks following his release after serving more than three decades of a life sentence with the possibility of parole that was imposed in his youth. Bryan's uncommon optimism and positive attitude affected us all deeply, and his generosity of spirit exhibited in the sharing of his personal story created in us a growing awareness of the human side of his experience. Bryan's story became for us an inspiring testament to the power of the human spirit, and his active involvement in supporting others similarly released helped us understand the importance of this work. The prospect of dramatizing and humanizing his efforts through a major new work of art became a high priority.

After many months of gestation and refinement, in early 2020 Chamber Music Detroit submitted an application to the National Endowment for the Arts. We proposed a series of facilitated interviews with persons in Bryan's orbit with similar experiences of youthful life incarceration. Bryan would be paired with a creative writer whose role would be the creation of a libretto for the composition of a major work for a mixed chamber ensemble and spoken word. The project application was approved by the NEA, and composer Jeff Scott and poet Robert Laidler were recruited as creative collaborators. Imani Winds, cellist Seth Parker Woods, pianist Cory Smythe, and Robert Laidler himself as poet/narrator we engaged for the world premiere. Bryan Jones has served as project director since the inception.

The narrative path of *Fallen Petals of Nameless Flowers* is based upon material from four interviews with recently released "juvenile lifers." While its five movements follow actual experiences generically, the text includes direct quotations shared with Bryan and Robert by the interviewees. In this way, the work takes listeners into the courtroom, the crime scene, the prison yard; and more importantly, onto the emotional landscape of shock, pain, fear, grief, and remorse that characterizes lives so deeply wounded by the hopelessness of youthful life incarceration. The prospect of ultimate redemption – shared so movingly by Bryan and others – is expressed in the final movement, "To Bloom Again."

Program note by Steve Wogaman

For more information on Jeff Scott and Bryan Jones, please see page 13 of the Spring Program Book.

For those interested in learning more about Michigan’s “juvenile lifers,” here are links to several articles:

Michigan Juvenile ‘Lifers’ Continue to Wait For Resentencing
<https://www.michigancriminallawyers-blog.com/michigan-juvenile-lifers-continue-to-wait-for-resentencing/>

Crime by ‘juvenile lifers’ after prison ‘very rare,’ state says
<https://www.woodtv.com/news/target-8/crime-by-juvenile-lifers-after-prison-very-rare-state-says/>

Michigan Public Radio produced an award-winning series of articles on this topic. Here is a link to them:

Michigan's Juvenile Lifers: Who gets a second chance?
<https://www.michiganradio.org/michigans-juvenile-lifers-who-gets-a-second-chance>

CHAMBER MUSIC DETROIT PARTNERS WITH U OF M DEARBORN’S INSIDE OUT PROGRAM

The Inside Out Program at the University of Michigan – Dearborn is a semester-long academic course in which 15 to 18 “outside” (i.e.: undergraduate) students and an equal number of “inside” (i.e.: incarcerated) students attend class together inside prison. Participants read a variety of texts, write papers, form discussion groups and come together for a final project, all designed to encourage students and instructors to think about crime and punishment mechanisms in human terms. This semester, participating U of M students partnered with Chamber Music Detroit, working with Project Director Bryan Jones on the theme of tonight’s commissioned work which focuses on the challenges and controversy surrounding incarcerated youth. The students helped curate tonight’s post-concert reception in the Shaw lobby, assisting formerly incarcerated “juvenile lifers” in sharing their stories and promoting awareness in the community around this issue.