

NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY and THE BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
present

“WHAT I HEAR”

A SPECIAL BSO PRELUDE PROGRAM

WITH **ANTHONY DAVIS**

MODERATED BY ERIC VALLIERE

MUSICAL DIRECTION BY STEPHEN DRURY

9 MARCH 2023 * 5:30 PM * WILLIAMS HALL

ANTHONY DAVIS
(b. 1951)

Middle Passage

Joseph Vasconi '23, piano

Still Waters III

Anne Chao '23, flute
Jonah Kernis '25, cello
Ariel Mo '24 GD, piano

ALVIN SINGLETON
(b. 1940)

Be Natural

Shannon Ross '24 MM, Kei Otake '24 MM, cello
Jesse Dale '24 MM, double bass

ANTHONY DAVIS

“They Wanted a Girl” Margru’s aria from *Amistad*

Gayeon Lee '23 MM, soprano
Christina Wright-Ivanova *, piano

* *faculty*

*The Boston Symphony Orchestra will perform Anthony Davis’ You Have the Right to Remain Silent,
Anthony McGill clarinet soloist, tonight at 7:30 p.m. in Symphony Hall.*

They wanted a girl

I could tell by their looks, their touches, the way they handled me, they wanted a girl.
They thought I was a virgin.
Even these men here, in this prison, call me the girl.
They think I'm a virgin.
They got what they wanted, a slight girl, with slim hips and small breasts.
They don't know I left a baby wrapped in cloth waiting for his milk.
He is lying in his cloth on a pallet on the ground under my mother's gaze in my house of grass,
 in a small round house on barren heartless soil where the wind blows all but the goats away.
His cloth was orange with sea shells on it.
I kept him wrapped tight to my back, except that afternoon, when I went for food.
When they took me my milk flowed down the dirt trails, down my legs and arms on the rusty irons.
And yes, I helped to kill the men. I cut one of those sailors in his chest.
I was not afraid to die. I was afraid I could not get back where I still live my life.
I'm still caught in a step on my way back to a pallet on the ground, my baby wrapped in sea shells,
 waiting for his milk. – Thulani Davis

ANTHONY DAVIS

As a composer, Davis is best known for his operas. *X, The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, which played to sold-out houses at its premiere at the New York City Opera in 1986, was the first of a new American genre: opera on a contemporary political subject. A new production of a revised version was launched in May 2022 at Detroit Opera and directed by Robert O'Hara. The premiere recording of *X* was released on the Gramavision label in August 1992 and received a Grammy Nomination for "Best Contemporary Classical Composition" in February 1993. A new recording with BMOP and Odyssey Opera was released in October 2022. Davis won a Pulitzer Prize for his recent opera, *The Central Park Five*. Davis's second opera, *Under the Double Moon*, a science fiction opera with an original libretto by Deborah Atherton, premiered at the Opera Theatre of St. Louis in June 1989. His third opera, *Tania*, with a libretto by Michael-John LaChiusa and based on the abduction of Patricia Hearst, premiered at the American Music Theater Festival in June 1992. A recording of *Tania* was released in 2001 on Koch, and in November 2003, Musikwerkstaat Wien presented its European premiere. A fourth opera, *Amistad*, about a shipboard uprising by slaves and their subsequent trial, premiered at the Lyric Opera of Chicago in November 1997. Set to a libretto by poet Thulani Davis, the librettist of *X*, *Amistad* was staged by George C. Wolfe.

Photography and audio or video recording are prohibited.

Food and drink are not allowed in the concert hall.

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contact the head usher or house manager on duty or inquire at the Coat Room.

Latecomers will be seated at the discretion of management.

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