

NEC Composers' Series

curated by Sid Richardson

The Music of Valerie Coleman

Malcom Peyton Artist-in-Residence

Thursday, March 28, 2024

7:30 p.m.

NEC's Jordan Hall

PROGRAM

Valerie Coleman

Wish Sonatine (2014)

Anna Kevelson, flute
Cynthia Chih-Yu Tseng, piano

Malcolm Peyton

String Quartet No. 2 (2001, rev. 2005)

Prelude
Harlequinade with Waltz
Intermezzo
March Fantasy
Tango
Soliloquies
Postlude

Meraki String Quartet
Sophia Szokolay, Yixiang Wang, violin
Joy Hsieh, viola
Kei Otake, cello

Valerie Coleman

Fanmi Imèn (2018)

Anne Chao, flute
Cynthia Chih-Yu Tseng, piano

Tzigane (2011)

Category Five Winds (NEC Honors Ensemble)
Honor Hickman, flute
Corinne Foley, oboe
Evan Chu, clarinet
Abigail Heyrich, bassoon
Graham Lovely, French horn

The Malcolm Peyton Composer Artist-in-Residence was established in 2018 to honor Malcolm Peyton, a member of the NEC Composition faculty for over 50 years. During his remarkable tenure, Malcolm influenced the lives and careers of many students through his teaching and direction, as well as his dedication to the creation of new music at NEC. This annual week-long residency was established to recognize his devotion to NEC and the continued pursuit of excellence in the Composition Department and features private lessons, masterclasses, seminars, and a performance.

Coleman *Wish Sonatine*

Valerie Coleman's first work for flute and piano, *Wish*, was inspired by a poem of the same name. *Wish* 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. It was commissioned and premiered by Elizabeth Lantz and Richard Masters.

Peyton *String Quartet No. 2*

Malcolm Peyton's String Quartet No. 2 was written for the quartet-in-residence at Duke University, the Ciompi Quartet. The world premiere was given by the Ciompi on September 29, 2001, at the Reynolds Theater on Duke's West Campus. Peyton's connections to Durham, NC are numerous. His first quartet was written in 1994 for the Borromeo Quartet, whose first violinist Nicholas Kitchen is a Durham native. The second quartet is dedicated to the Ciompi's violist Jonathan Bagg, who was himself a student of Peyton's at the New England Conservatory of Music (MM '84).

The work unfolds in seven short movements. The prelude opens with a lyrical solo in the second violin that spins off contrapuntal entrances in the rest of the ensemble. It presents the materials that will form the basis for the subsequent movements. The second movement, Harlequinade with Waltz, projects angular melodies in coordination with furious rhythms, which settle down into a cheeky waltz. The intermezzo third movement has an introspective character that springs from the timbre of the muted strings. Here, contrapuntal lines weave in and out of one another in a mesmerizing fashion. The March Fantasy that follows interjects crunchy chords under driving melodies in which the viola shines. The final three movements, Tango, Soliloquies, and Postlude, are all played *attacca*. They continue to develop variations on the opening prelude each in their own ways. Soliloquies notably begins with forceful statements that echo throughout the movement and into the beginning of the postlude. Jonathan Bagg has referred to the ending as "settled and settling," a fitting characterization of this, the most substantial movement. In it, the themes heard across the span of the quartet resurface and are recontextualized. All in all, Peyton's second quartet displays nuanced string writing with an ear for counterpoint, imitation, and cyclic development.

String Quartet No. 2 was revised in 2005 for a performance by the Fibonacci Quartet. It is in that form that we hear it tonight.

Coleman *Fanmi Imèn*

The title *Fanmi Imèn* is Haitian Creole for Maya Angelou's famous work, *Human Family*. Both the musical and literary poems acknowledge differences within mankind, 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's work draws inspiration from French flute music blending with an underlying pentatonicism found in Asian traditions, a caravan through Middle Eastern parts of the world merging with Flamenco, and an upbeat journey southward into Africa with the sounds of Kalimba (thumb piano). *Fanmi Imèn* was commissioned by the National Flute Association for its 2018 High School Soloist Competition.

Coleman *Tzigane*

Tzigane is a virtuosic tour-de-force. One important touchstone for Coleman is Maurice Ravel's work of the same name, which was conceived, interestingly enough, for violin and piano with the optional use of a luthéal attachment. This innovation allowed for several new tone-colors to be achieved by activating stops similar to those on a harpsichord. One of these was a cimbalom-like timbre that the composer felt fit with the Romani character of the music, which at the time would have been pejoratively termed "gypsy" music.

Coleman's work resonates with the Ravel with its engagement with a Romani-inspired harmonic and gestural palette. After an energetic, syncopated opening, flowing lines in the upper winds unfold over a tango bass line in the bassoon. The bassoon soon takes center stage, after which a reprise of the tango leads to a shawm-like oboe solo. Clarinet is given its own time to shine shortly thereafter with its own sinuous declaration. The mood shifts abruptly in the middle of the work as the flute presents a freely expressive, soaring melody over lush chords in the rest of the ensemble. The tutti texture returns with a tinge of Romani flavor, after which the clarinet takes up the virtuoso torch with an improvised cadenza. A driving, syncopated texture marked by sharp accents follows, in which the horn finally comes to the fore. The music builds in intensity towards a climax that plumbs new registral depths through the use of a low A extension on the bassoon.

Valerie Coleman is regarded by many as an iconic artist who continues to pave her own unique path as a composer, GRAMMY®-nominated flutist, and entrepreneur. Highlighted as one of the "Top 35 Women Composers" by *The Washington Post*, she was 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 works have garnered awards such as the MAPFund, ASCAP Honors Award, *Chamber Music America's* Classical Commissioning Program, Herb Alpert Ragdale Residency Award, and nominations from The

American Academy of Arts and Letters and United States Artists. *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.

Coleman commenced her 2021/22 season with the world premiere of her latest work, *Fanfare for Uncommon Times*, at the Caramoor Festival with the Orchestra of St. Luke’s. In October 2021, Carnegie Hall presented her work *Seven O’ Clock Shout*, commissioned by The Philadelphia Orchestra, in their Opening Night Gala concert featuring The Philadelphia Orchestra and Yannick Nézet-Séguin. This followed on the success of the world premiere of Coleman’s orchestral arrangement of her work *Umoja*, commissioned by The Philadelphia Orchestra and performed in Philadelphia and at Carnegie Hall in 2019, marking the first time the orchestra performed a classical work by a living female African-American composer. In February 2022, The Philadelphia Orchestra and soprano Angel Blue, led by Nézet-Séguin, gave the world premiere of a new song cycle written by Coleman, commissioned by the orchestra for performances in Philadelphia and at Carnegie Hall. Coleman's new work, *Ashé*, was commissioned and premiered by Boston University Tanglewood Institute (BUTI) in Summer 2022, where she was a returning Visiting Artist for BUTI’s Young Artists Program. She is also the Director of BUTI’s new Woodwind Quintet Workshop.

Coleman has been named to the Metropolitan Opera/Lincoln Center Theater New Works dual commissioning program in 2021/22. That season saw performances of her works by orchestras around the United States including the Minnesota Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Sarasota Orchestra, New Haven Symphony Orchestra, Yale Symphony Orchestra, Vermont Symphony and The Louisville Orchestra. Recent commissions include works for the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, The Library of Congress, Orchestra of St. Luke’s, American Composers Orchestra, The National Flute Association, University of Chicago and University of Michigan. Previous performances of her works have been with the New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, St. Louis Symphony, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Symphony and significant chamber ensembles and collegiate bands across the country.

Former flutist of the Imani Winds, Coleman is the creator and founder of this acclaimed ensemble whose 24-year legacy was documented and featured in a dedicated exhibit at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. She recently founded and currently performs as flutist of the performer-composer trio Umama Womama.

As a performer, Coleman has appeared at Carnegie Hall and The Kennedy Center and with The Philadelphia Orchestra, Hartford Symphony, New Haven Symphony, Boston University Tanglewood Institute, Orpheus Orchestra, Banff, Spoleto USA and Bravo! Vail. As a guest flutist, she has participated in the Mid-Atlantic Flute Fair, New Jersey Flute Fair, South Carolina Flute Society Festival, Colorado Flute Fair, Mid-South Flute Fair and the National Women’s Music Festival. In 2021/22, Valerie appeared at a host of festival and collegiate multi-disciplinary residencies, including Orchestra of St. Luke’s, Chamber Music Northwest, Phoenix Chamber Music Society, University of Michigan and Coastal Carolina University.

Coleman was the featured guest artist at the Long Island Flute Club, Raleigh Area Flute Association, Greater Portland Flute Society, Seattle Flute Society, University of Wisconsin-Madison Flute Day, Bethune-Cookman University Flute Day and the Florida Flute Society Festival.

As a chamber musician, Coleman has performed throughout North America and Europe alongside Dover Quartet, Orion String Quartet, Miami String Quartet, Harlem String Quartet, Quarteto Latinoamericano, Yo-Yo Ma, Ani and Ida Kavafian, Anne-Marie McDermott, Wu Han, David Shifrin, Gil Kalish, members of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, and jazz legends Paquito D’Rivera, Stefon Harris, Jason Moran and René Marie. A laureate of Concert Artists Guild, she is a former member of Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center CMS Two.

Coleman’s work as a recording artist includes an extensive discography. With Imani Winds, she has appeared on Sony Classical, Deutsche Grammophon, Sony Classical, Naxos, Cedille Records and eOne, and as a guest flutist on albums with Wayne Shorter Quartet, Steve Coleman and the Council of Balance, Chick Corea, Brubeck Brothers, Edward Simon, Bruce Adolphe, and Mohammed Fairouz. Her compositions and performances are regularly broadcast on NPR, WNYC, WQXR, Minnesota Public Radio, Sirius XM, Radio France, Australian Broadcast Company and Radio New Zealand.

Committed to arts education, entrepreneurship and chamber music advocacy, Coleman created the Imani Winds Chamber Music Festival in 2011, a summer mentorship program in New York City welcoming young leaders from over 100 international institutions. She has held flute and chamber music masterclasses at institutions in 49 states and over five continents, including The Juilliard School, Curtis Institute, Manhattan School of Music, Mannes College of Music, New England Conservatory, Oberlin College, Eastman School of Music, Yale University, Carnegie Mellon, Interlochen Arts Academy, Beijing Conservatory, Brazil’s Campo do Jordão Festival and Australia’s Musica Viva. As a part of Imani Winds, she has been artist-in-residence at Mannes College of Music, Banff Chamber Music Intensive and Visiting Faculty at the University of Chicago.

Coleman recently joined the Mannes School of Music Flute and Composition faculty in Fall 2021 as the Clara Mannes Fellow for Music Leadership. Prior to that she served on the faculty at The Frost School of Music at the University of Miami as Assistant Professor of Performance, Chamber Music and Entrepreneurship. In 2021/22, she led a year-long residency at The Juilliard School in their Music Advancement Program through American Composers Forum and joined that distinguished composition faculty in the fall of 2022.

Coleman’s compositions are published by Theodore Presser and her own company, VColeman Music. She studied composition with Martin Amlin and Randy Wolfe and flute with Julius Baker, Judith Mendenhall, Doriot Dwyer, Leone Buyse and Alan Weiss. She and her family are based in New York City.

Composer **Malcolm Peyton** has directed, conducted, and concertized in myriad new music concerts in Boston and New York, including this very Composers' Series at the New England Conservatory of Music's Jordan Hall. Over the course of his eminent teaching career here at NEC, he developed new teaching concepts for understanding modern tonal practice. He has received a Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship and awards from the NEA, Norlin Foundation, and American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. His music has been performed in Europe and the U.S. and is published by Boelke Bomart/Mobart and the Association for the Promotion of New Music.

Well-known and celebrated compositions include: *Apostrophe* for chorus, soloists, and orchestra; *Fantasies Concertantes* for orchestra; String Quartets Nos. 1 and 2; five song cycles including *Four Songs from Shakespeare*, *Songs from Walt Whitman*, and *Sonnets from John Donne*.

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