



New England
Conservatory

Concert Program

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Welcome to NEC!

I am thrilled to share New England Conservatory's 2023-24 concert season—a celebration of the power of music to connect and inspire one another.

Whether you are seated in one of our concert halls or watching online, we hope you are uplifted by the performances of our students, faculty, and guest artists.

Above all, we thank you for your support of our students as they cultivate their artistry and contribute to the world through music.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Andrea Kalyn".

Andrea Kalyn
President

NEC Department of Contemporary Musical Arts
presents

*Night and Day:
The Music of Chris Connor
and Mahalia Jackson*

Produced and directed by Hankus Netsky and Ran Blake
Nedelka F. Prescod, featured artist

Performed by NEC students and faculty

Wednesday, February 14, 2024
7:30 p.m.
NEC's Jordan Hall

The title of this year's Valentine's Day concert, *Night and Day*, refers not only to the iconic Cole Porter love song (a favorite of Connor's), but also to Connor's image as the queen of the smoky nightclub and Jackson's embodiment of the holy spirit of love that infuses the music of the Black church every Sunday morning. As you will notice in the program, from moment to moment the pendulum swings from Chris Connor's passion for singing of human love gone wrong to Mahalia's more celestial view of a love that is truly unconditional.

Concert Co-director and CMA Emeritus Department Chair Ran Blake recorded with Connor and knew her over the course of her entire career. He also studied piano with Mildred Falls, Jackson's perennial accompanist. According to Blake, Chris Connor was unsurpassed for her use of "the element of surprise," and Mahalia Jackson possessed nothing less than the "most majestic voice in American history." We are delighted to present NEC faculty members Anthony Coleman and our featured artist, Nedelka Prescod, along with students from NEC's CMA and Jazz departments interpreting the repertoire of these two great artists

– Hankus Netsky

PROGRAM

Cole Porter

Get Out of Town

Finn Lippard, voice

Traditional

Elijah Rock

Kayden Carter, voice
Pitiki Aliakai, piano

Matt Dennis

Angel Eyes

Michele Zimmerman, voice
Nadav Brenner, guitar
George Maclaurin, piano

Traditional

I'm Going to Tell God

Roman Barten-Sherman, voice,
fretless banjo

Peter Udell, Tommy Goodman
arranged by Hayley Qin

Driftwood

Hayley Yu Qin, voice
Shaylen Joos, harp

Margo Guryan

Moonride

Michael Yang-Wierenga, piano

Billy Strayhorn

Something to Live For

Agne Giedraityte, voice, piano

Lew Brown/Ray Henderson

The Thrill is Gone

Skyler Lim, voice, piano
Jamie Eliot, bass
Junfei Li, drums

Gus Kahn, Nacio Herb Brown

You Stepped Out of a Dream

Itay Dayan, clarinet

Duke Ellington

Come Sunday

Jacqueline Armbruster, voice, guitar
Itay Dayan, clarinet
Michele Zimmerman, violin
Karl Henry, cello

Intermission

Joe Green

All About Ronnie

Gabriel Boyarin, laptop

All About Ronnie

Anouk Chemla, voice

Caleb Schmale, tenor saxophone

Duke Ellington

Psalm 23

Serena Bixby, voice

Emily Mitchell, voice, guitar

David Raksin/Clara Ward

Laura/How I Got Over

Hidemi Akaiwa, piano

Thomas A. Dorsey

It Don't Cost Very Much

Yoona Kim, ajaeng

Anthony Coleman, piano

Cole Porter

Get Out of Town

Pitiki Aliakai, voice, piano

Rosario Rivas, voice

**Traditional
Traditional Black American
Spiritual**

Didn't It Rain
I'm On My Way (to Canaan Land)

Nedelka F. Prescod, voice
Peter Vazquez, piano
Kai Lance, guitar
Ben Walker, electric bass
Paul Joseph, Victor Giraldez,
drums, percussion

Clara Ward
arr. Aretha Franklin and
Nedelka F. Prescod

How I Got Over

NEC Contemporary Gospel Music Ensemble
—Nedelka F. Prescod, director
Kayden Carter, Anouk Chemla,
Pitiki Aliakai, Hayley Yu Qin,
Aviana Gedler, Andy Messier,
Haijie Du, Cedrine Brisson,
Emily Mitchell, Ruochen Zang,
Haoyu Zheng, voice
Sammy Davies, trumpet
Weza Jamison-Neto, bass trombone
Peter Vazquez, piano
Kai Lance, guitar
Ben Walker, electric bass
Paul Joseph, Victor Giraldez,
drums, percussion

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Program notes are by Hankus Netsky unless otherwise indicated.

Porter *Get Out of Town*

Get Out of Town is a 1938 popular song written by Cole Porter, for his musical *Leave It to Me!*, where it was introduced by Tamara Drasin.

Traditional *Elijah Rock*

Elijah Rock is a traditional spiritual that bears some lyrical similarities to another spiritual, *Oh, Mary don't you weep*, as well as the later pop hit, *Fever* as recorded by Little Willie John and, most famously, by Peggy Lee.

Dennis *Angel Eyes*

Michele's rendition tonight is a homage to Chris Connor's classic rendition from her 1960 album *Chris in Person*, recorded at the Village Vanguard.

Traditional *I'm Going to Tell God*

I was first introduced to Maestra Jackson's formidable version of *I'm Going to Tell God* in the Fall of 2023, at the home of Ran Blake. This rendition is informed by my love of early 20th century North Mississippi black banjo stylings as well as my rage and depression towards/from contemporary anti-trans legislative fear mongering.

– Roman Barten-Sherman

Udell/Goodman *Driftwood*

Driftwood is from Chris's 1958 album *A Jazz Date with Chris Connor*. One of Chris's less-known songs, *Driftwood* fits seamlessly with Chris' throaty tone and deliberation on rhythms. *Driftwood* does not directly speak to the theme of love but tells a winter tale full of nostalgia, mystery, and tranquility. This three-minute song was originally written for piano and voice by Peter Udell and Tommy Goodman and I rearranged it for voice and harp. The new colors of the chords manifest themselves through the echoing, wavy notes on the harp and draw the audience to a contemplation of time.

– Hayley Yu Qin

Guryan *Moonride*

Moonride is the tale of a harrowing spaceship journey to the moon, full of adventure and risky encounters with the moon man. I like the juxtaposition of its vivid imagery with its playful, abstract absurdity, as well as the sense of inevitability I feel when I play it.

– Michael Yang-Wierenga

Strayhorn *Something to Live For*

Composed in 1939, *Something to Live For* was the first collaboration between Billy Strayhorn and Duke Ellington and the first of their collaborations to be recorded by the Ellington orchestra.

Brown/Henderson *The Thrill is Gone*

In this trio setting of *The Thrill is Gone*, rhythm and forward motion is important when imitating Chris Connor's characteristic rhythmic flexibility.

– Skyler Lim

Kahn, Brown *You Stepped Out of a Dream*

You Stepped Out of a Dream is one of these love songs where nothing goes wrong. What a relief! Happy Valentine's Day.

– Itay Dayan

Ellington *Come Sunday*

Come Sunday, a movement from Ellington's landmark tone poem, *Black, Brown and Beige*, strongly evokes the Black spiritual, both musically and emotionally. At its 1943 premiere, a violin and an alto saxophone presented the supremely tender melody

(one in a highly embellished version, the other straightforward). Mahalia Jackson later recorded a version with lyrics, and both versions now remain in the repertoire.

Green *All About Ronnie*

This song was written by Joe Greene, who worked extensively for Stan Kenton during the 1940s and 50s. Chris Connor recorded versions of it with the band in both 1953 and 1954, and it remained a staple of her repertoire for many years thereafter.

sense need Ronnie,
I is whisper glasses,
There's me well!
His Ronnie,
There's propose in for about no that to of wine! The host!
We'll fingers,
Their so him mine! embrace;
His Ronnie All about know about drink a told my so champagne Ronnie,
Best face.
All tell!
All from Ronnie,
And it,
He's favourite much dry toast;
Let you is magical Caressing,
lingers.

– Gabriel Boyarin

Ellington *Psalm 23*

The Bible's Psalm 23 is filled with imagery of God-given peace, restoration, perseverance, comfort, and blessing. The setting of this Psalm, recorded in 1958 on *Black, Brown and Beige*, shows the heart of these words beautifully and exemplifies their themes musically. In our performance, we hope to capture Mahalia Jackson's artistic decisions and honor Duke Ellington's setting and arrangement, but with paired-down instrumentation and the addition of a second voice. – Emily Mitchell

Raksin/Ward *Laura/How I Got Over*

Tonight I will blend together two pieces, *Laura* as sung by Chris Connor and *How I Got Over* as sung by Mahalia Jackson. Some people might know the film *Laura* where the main character fell in love with Laura when he saw her portrait, but she had already passed away. In the lyric, there's a phrase: "That was Laura, but she's only a dream." I'd like to express his hopeless and vulnerable, but beautiful, adoration - like the magic of night that fleetingly disappears with the rising of the sun...

In contrast to *Laura*, Mahalia Jackson sang *How I Got Over* in front of Martin Luther King, Jr. just before his "I Have a Dream" speech. According to many articles, Mahalia told Dr. King, "Tell'em about The Dream!" She had such a powerful impact on that grand historical moment, like the sun shining on all things.

Even though the dreams we dream at night are fleeting and fade away, we could live strong in the dreams we see when we wake up. I'd like to express all those elements with my playing.

– Hidemi Akaiwa

Dorsey *It Don't Cost Very Much*

I want to present the idea of creating a world infused with peace and love through music, featuring the Korean traditional instrument, ajaeng, and a piano duo with Anthony Coleman, inspired by the way Mahalia Jackson sang in *It Don't Cost Very Much*

– Yoona Kim

Porter *Get Out of Town*

Through the improvisation aspects in our piece we are able to establish a constant conversation with all the elements in our performance. By doing so we honor the lyrics and the story behind the original piece. Staying true to Chris Connor's style while adding our personal touch.

– Rosario Rivas

Traditional *Didn't It Rain*

From the vantage point of 2024 there's something deeply beautiful, and even haunting, about traditional gospel music. Yet, when Mahalia Jackson first sang the traditional spiritual *Didn't It Rain* with an uptempo feel in 1954, it was considered contemporary for gospel music. A move away from its original expression, and its noted arrangement (1919) by renowned African American Spirituals arranger, Harry T. Burleigh, *Didn't It Rain* does the work it is intended to do... it spreads the good news! *Didn't It Rain* embodies the good work of music in the Black Church, keeping alive the witness and testimony of a Bible story, reminding us of how a never seen before outpouring of water came down from the sky... oh! what a troubling time it was, and then... the flight of a bird marked salvation.

– Nedelka F. Prescod

Traditional *I'm On My Way (to Canaan Land)*

Part of the brilliance of a traditional African American Spiritual is that it speaks more than it says. Embedded in the canon of religious AfAm spirituals is an artistic technology for sending messages that is devoid of tangible technologies while offering healing balms, and they, quite literally, saved lives. In the same way that traditional African religions were preserved behind the veil of Christianity, the AfAm Spiritual lifted Biblical names and places, transforming them into tools that kept the Underground Railroad running. Mahalia Jackson's *I'm On My Way (to Canaan Land)*, in true form, weaves the characteristic enchanting repetition of the AfAm Spiritual with hints of Latin rhythms that further marks the bitter path of enslaved Africans from their homeland, through the Diaspora, and to America.

– Nedelka F. Prescod

Ward *How I Got Over*

How I Got Over was born in 1951, gained its independence as a stand-out song, and was further developed into a gospel golden hit that has stood the test of time by the iconic renditions of Gospel music matriarchs. Clara Ward birthed it, Mahalia Jackson

further exposed it, and Aretha Franklin helped it to stand without apology. In the many ways that Gospel music embodies and expresses the woes and lamentations of its original expressors, it also inherently celebrates their miraculous overcomings. Clara Ward composed *How I Got Over* as an inspired response to a moment of racial terror. Through the wit of her singing group-mate and sister, Gertrude Ward, their band of women singers, and Mother Ward, lived to tell how they got over. The NEC CGME Ensemble will offer a version in the way of Queen Aretha Franklin.

– Nedelka F. Prescod

How I Got Over

(condensed lyrics)

How I got over
You know my soul looks back and wonder how I got over
Just as soon as I see Jesus
The man who made me free
He was the man who bled and suffer
You know he died for you and for me

I wanna thank ya because you brought me, Lord
I wanna thank you Jesus, because you taught me
I wanna thank you because you kept me
I'ma thank you 'cause you never left me

I wanna sing (hallelujah)
Ah, I just might shout this evenin' (troubles over)
My soul looks back and wonder
(thank you, Lord, for all you've done for me)
How I got over

How I got over, over
Soul looks back and wonder
How I got over

One mornin' I'm a wear a diadem
In the New Jerusalem
I'ma walk me some streets of gold
In the homeland of the soul
I'm going to view the host in white
Who travel both day and night

Comin' up from every nation
On the way to the great coronation

Hallelujah
Troubles over
Thank you, Lord, for all you've done for me

How I got over, over
Soul looks back and wonder
How I got over

Thank you, Thank you, Lord

Hallelujah
Troubles over
Thank you, for all you've done for me

How I got over, over
Soul looks back and wonder
How I got over

Minister **Nedelka F. Prescod** is a seasoned multi-genre vocalist, a multi- expressive musician, a teacher, preacher and orator, and consultant. Her work fuses music with a desire to develop and edify community through collaborative music-making and creative practices, holding a heart for social justice and celebrating personal stories. A daughter of proud Panamanians, Minister Prescod was inspired from an early age by her family's commitment to the practice of social activism and community building through music and the Black church in the U.S., Caribbean and Central America. As a multi-genre vocalist, Minister Prescod has released three recording projects: *Manifest* (2008); *The Light* (2018); and *The Un-Silenced Voice* (2020), an EP developed into an endeavor that seeks to uncover and empower voices—actual, artistic and communal, silenced and retracted by trauma. She has performed in venues and festivals around the world, such as Joe's Pub in New York City, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Panama Jazz Festival, and the Muka Music Center in Shanghai. She is the founder ensemble coach and director of New England Conservatory's African Heritage Ensemble, R&B Ensemble and Gospel Contemporary Music Ensemble. Minister Prescod has been recognized for her artistry and community mindedness through awards from the Boston Foundation and Brooklyn Arts Council, among others.

Minister Prescod's belief in the power of art to illuminate social issues and galvanize action has led her to found multiple community initiatives. In 2008, she founded "Progression Community Youth Choir" in Brooklyn to work with youth in her spiritual community to use music as a vehicle for activism on issues ranging from youth empowerment to food insecurity. Minister Prescod also co-founded "Conscious Uprising", a series of independent artist events used as a platform for

local artists to perform, promote their art, and share information and resources with the community. She has served as a DEI consultant at New England Conservatory and Andover Newton Seminary at Yale Divinity School, spearheading "The Sound of Andover Newton" project.

A sought after teacher and coach, Minister Prescod has over 30 years of experience working in a range of educational settings. She began her teaching career as a teenager volunteering in a summer program at St. Edmund's Church in Brooklyn for alternately abled young people. For nearly two decades, Minister Prescod taught in NYC public schools as a full time music teacher and teaching artist, and transitioned in higher education, serving on faculty at New England Conservatory and Berklee College of Music, while maintaining a private studio in Brooklyn, NY. Minister Prescod holds a BS and MA in Music Education from New York University and CUNY Brooklyn College respectively, an MM in Contemporary Improvisation from New England Conservatory, and is currently pursuing an MDiv from Yale Divinity School. Minister Prescod is also one of two co-producer of the docu-series, *Black & Panamanian* (YouTube).

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