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.

Andrea Kalyn
President
Embracing Coretta:
A Celebration of Singer, Activist, Wife and Mother
Coretta Scott King

ensemble
Sarah Joyce Cooper, soprano
Melissa Joseph, soprano
Daon Drisdom, tenor
Neil Nelson, bass-baritone
Timothy Steele, piano

Cynthia A. Harmon, narrator

This event is presented by
NEC’s Office of Cultural Equity and Belonging
and Embrace Boston
as a celebration of the 70th anniversary of Coretta Scott King’s graduation from NEC.
Through narration and song, Coretta’s life story will be shared in a program featuring primarily African American composers.
The concert is a sabbatical project by NEC faculty member Timothy Steele.

Monday, October 30, 2023
7:30 p.m.
NEC’s Jordan Hall
Cynthia A. Harmon, narrator
Timothy Steele, piano

**Spiritual**
Shelton Becton, arr.
(b. 1953)

_A Balm in Gilead_  
Ensemble

**American Folk Ballad**
Jay Althouse, arr.
(b. 1951)

_Poor Wayfaring Stranger_  
Daon Drisdom, tenor

**Florence B. Price**
(1887–1953)

_We Have Tomorrow_  
Sarah Joyce Cooper, soprano

**George Frideric Handel**
(1685–1759)

_Thanks Be to Thee_  
Neil Nelson, bass-baritone

**Adolphus Hailstork**
(b. 1941)

_Justice from Songs of Love and Justice_  
Melissa Joseph, soprano

**Claude Debussy**
(1862–1918)

_Romance_  
Daon Drisdom, tenor
Amadeo Roldán  
(1900–1939) 
Texts by Nicolás Guillén

from *Motivos de Son*  
Negro Bembón  
Ayé Me Dijeron Negro  
Sigue

Sarah Joyce Cooper, soprano

H. T. Burleigh  
(1866–1949) 
Text by James Weldon Johnson

*Your Eyes So Deep*

Melissa Joseph, soprano

Florence B. Price  
Text by Nora Connelly

*God Gives Me You: A Wedding Song*

Neil Nelson, bass-baritone

Charles Lloyd, Jr.  
(b. 1938) 
Text by Paul Laurence Dunbar

*Compensation*

Sarah Joyce Cooper, soprano

Alma Androzzo  
(1912–2001)  
arr. George L. Salva 
Text by Alma Androzzo

*If I Can Help Somebody*

Daon Drisdom, tenor

*Intermission*

Spiritual

*A Balm in Gilead*

Ensemble
Jacqueline Hairston  
(b. 1932)  
Text by Jacqueline Hairston  

_She Sat Down… for Freedom_  
_(In Memoriam for Rosa Parks)_  

Sarah Joyce Cooper

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Adolphus Hailstork  
Text by Martin Luther King Jr.  

_Love from Songs of Love and Justice_  

Melissa Joseph, soprano

---

Lena McLin  
(1928–2023)  
Text by Lina McGlin  

_He Came to Alabama_  

Neil Nelson, bass-baritone

---

_Spiritual_  
Hall Johnson, arr.  
(1888–1970)  

_Honor, Honor_  

Daon Drisdom, tenor

---

_Spiritual_  
Julia Perry, arr.  
(1924–1979)  

_Free At Last_  

Ensemble

---

_Spiritual_  
Margaret Bonds, arr.  
(1913–1972)  

_Hold On_  

Neil Nelson, bass-baritone

---

Robert MacGimsey  
(1898–1979)  
Text by Robert MacGimsey  

_Sweet Little Jesus Boy_  

Melissa Joseph, soprano

---

_Spiritual_  
Hall Johnson, arr.  

_Witness_  

Daon Drisdom, tenor
Spiritual
Roland Carter, arr.
(b. 1942)

Oh, Freedom!
Melissa Joseph, Sarah Joyce Cooper, soprano

Thomas A. Dorsey
(1899–1993)
Text by Thomas A. Dorsey

Precious Lord
Ensemble

Dave Ragland
Text by Gwendolyn Brooks

Martin Luther King Jr.
Sarah Joyce Cooper, soprano

H. Lesley Adams
(b. 1932)
Text by James Weldon Johnson

Sence You Went Away
Neil Nelson, bass-baritone

J. Jakari Rush
(b. 1990)
Excerpt from a letter from Martin Luther King Jr.

Dear Coretta (2023)
World Premiere
Daon Drisdom, tenor

Spiritual
Moses Hogan, arr.
(1957–2003)

He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands
Sarah Joyce Cooper, soprano


**TEXTS**  (some Spiritual texts are abbreviated)

**A Balm in Gilead**

There is a Balm in Gilead
to make the wounded whole.
There is a Balm in Gilead
to heal the sinsick soul.

*Spiritual*

**Poor Wayfaring Stranger**

I’m just a poor wayfaring stranger
trav’ling through this world of woe.
But there’s no sickness, toil, nor danger
in that fair land to which I go.

*American Folk Ballad*

**We Have Tomorrow**

We have tomorrow,
Bright before us
Like a flame.

Yesterday,
a night-gone thing,
A sun-down name.

And dawn today,
Broad arch above the road we came.

*Langston Hughes*

**Thanks Be to Thee**

Thanks be to Thee!
Thou hast led forth Thy chosen folk, Israel, safe through the sea.
As a good shepherd leads forth his flock, Lord, 
Thine own hand tended them; yea, in Thy goodness gave them Thy grace.

*Translated by Willis Wager*

**Justice**

When evil men plot, good men must plan. 
When evil men burn and bomb, good men must build and bind. 
When evil men shout ugly words of hatred, good men must commit themselves to the glories of love. 
When evil men would seek to perpetuate an unjust status quo, good men must seek to bring into being a real order of justice.

*Martin Luther King Jr.*

**Romance**

L’amé évaporée et souffrante,  
L’amé douce, l’amé odorante  
Des lis divins que j’ai cueillis  
Dans le jardin de ta pensée,  
Où donc les vents l’ont chassée,  
Cette amé adorable des lis?

N’est-il plus un parfum qui reste  
De la suavité céleste  
Des jours où tu m’enveloppais  
D’une vapeur surnaturelle,  
Faite d’espoir, d’amour fidèle,  
De béatitude et de paix?

*Paul Bourget*
**Negro Bembón**

¿Po qué te pone tan brabo
Cuando te disen negro bembón
Si tiene la boca santa
Negro bembón?

Bembón así como ere
Tiene de to;
Caridá te mantiene
Te lo da to

Te queja todabía
Negro bembón;
Sin pega y con harina
Negro bembón;
Majagua de dri blanco
Negro bembón;
Sapato de do tono
Negro bembón...

Bembón así como ere
Tiene de to;
Caridá te mantiene
Te lo dá to

---

**Ayér Me Dijeron Negro**

Ayer me dijeron negro
Pa que me fajara yo:
Pero el que me lo decía
Era un negro como yo
Tan blanco como te ve
Y tu abuela sé quien é
¡Sácalu de la cocina,
Mama Iné!
Mama Iné, tu bien lo sabe;
Mama Iné, yo bien lo sé;
Mama Iné, te dice nieto,
Mama Iné!

---

**Black Bembón**

Why do you get so upset when they call you ‘black bembón’? Bembón, Caridá supports you and gives you everything. You still complain!

---

**Sigue**

Camina, caminante,
sigue;
camina y no te pare,
sigue.

Cuando pase po su casa
no le diga que me bite:
camina, caminante,
sigue.

Sigue y no te pare,
sigue:
no la mire si te llama,
sigue;

acuéddate que ella e mala,
sigue.

Nicolás Guillén

Your Eyes So Deep

Your eyes so deep and tender are,
soft with the glamor of a star,
bright with the gentle light that lies
in placid streams and sunny skies.
Your eyes so tender are,
and yet those melting, smiling eyes,
from out their depths so sweet
have lanced a cruel, piercing dart;
and now my wounded, bleeding heart
Lies captive at your feet.

Your lips are like a sweet, red rose
That in some scented garden grows;
A dewy rose, so sweet and red,
That blooms amidst a Lily bed.
Your lips are like a rose.
And yet, those velvet-petal’d lips
A honey’d poison brew,
That through my veins has run like fire,
And filled my soul with love’s desire,
And left me mad for you.

James Weldon Johnson
God Gives Me You

Because you hold my hand and say “I do”,
before love’s altar I pledge my soul to you.
All through my life this promise will hold true,
because within this hour God gives me you.
Thy spirit soars on wings of visions fair;
from out the space of life you called to me there.
With gifts of love I came endowed anew,
because within this hour God gives me you.
Love’s conquering peace becalms my restless soul,
and angels sing as our hearts they enroll.
Throughout life’s day my vows I will hold true,
because within this hour God gave me you.

Nora Connelly

Compensation

Because I had loved so deeply,
Because I had loved so long,
God gave, in His great compassion,
the gift of song.

Paul Laurence Dunbar

If I Can Help Somebody

If I can help somebody as I pass along,
If I can cheer somebody with a word or song,
If I can show somebody He is trav’ling wrong,
Then my living shall not be in vain.

If I can do my duty as a Christian ought,
If I can bring back beauty to a world up-wrought,
If I can spread love’s message that the Master taught,
Then my living shall not be in vain.

Alma Androzzo
A Balm in Gilead

There is a Balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole.
There is a Balm in Gilead to heal the sinsick soul.
Sometimes I feel discouraged and think my work’s in vain,
but then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again.

Spiritual

She Sat Down for Freedom

She sat down for Freedom!
Not seeing what this would lead to, she sat down ‘cause she was simply tired.
Tired in body, tired in mind, but not tired in Spirit.
Her faith was strong!
Did she even know what she started?
She must have sensed that it was time to make a change.
And little did she know what that change would bring about.
Oh Freedom over me!
Oh, I ain’t weary yet,
‘cause there’s no time for me to fret.
I’ll not rest till I know all are free.
Who is this Pioneer of Freedom?
Who fought the good fight?
Rosa Louise McCauley Parks!
Has she died in vain?
I think not!
For there is a Balm in Gilead for Rosa Parks.
She’ll always be an icon, Mother of Civil Rights, Rosa Parks!
She will always be a lasting legacy for now and forevermore!

Jacqueline Hairston

Love

Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend.

Martin Luther King Jr.
He Came to Alabama

He came to Alabama one strong to right a wrong.
He led in Alabama thousands strong to right a wrong.
They prayed in Alabama thousands strong to right a wrong, marching and hoping for freedom and justice for all.
As they knelt, inclined in single thought, they cried: ‘Holy, Holy, oh God, hear our prayer!’
Then came southern law, clothed in justice garb: ‘Get them! Bash their heads in!
Strike them as they kneel! Turn on the fire hose! Use the billy club!
Let the gun butts pound! Fill the jails to the brim!’
But they stood with heads unbowed, led by a man unafraid, and said:
‘We shall not be moved.
Jails cannot hold us;
liberty enfolds us.
With prayer we will go on.
The Lord is on our side.
Standing in silence
we fear no violence.
We shall not be moved.’
Marching and hoping for freedom and justice for all, he led from Alabama the nation strong to right its wrong.

Lena McLin

Honor, Honor

King Jesus lit the candle by the waterside to see the little children when they’re truly baptized.
Honor, honor unto the dyin’Lamb.

Spiritual

Free at Last

Free at last, free at last,
I thank God I’m free at last!
Serve you Lord while I have breath;
see my Jesus after death,
I thank God I’m free at last!

Spiritual
Hold On

Noah, let me come in;  
door’s all fastened and the window’s pinned.  
Keep your hand on the plow;  
hold on, hold on.

_Spiritual_

**Sweet Little Jesus Boy**

Sweet Little Jesus Boy,  
they made You be born in a manger.  
Sweet Little Holy Child,  
didn’t know who You was.  
Didn’t know You’d come to save us, Lord!  
To take our sins away.  
Our eyes was blind, we couldn’t see.  
We didn’t know who You was.

Long time ago, You was born  
Born in a manger low,  
Sweet Little Jesus Boy.  
The world treat You mean, Lord,  
Treat me mean, too,  
But that’s how things is down here.  
We don’t know who You is.

You done told us how, we is a tryin’!  
Master, You done showed us how, even when You’s dyin’.  
Just seems like we can’t do right;  
Look how we treated You.  
But please, Sir, forgive us, Lord.  
We didn’t know ‘twas You.

_Robert MacGimsey_
**Witness**

Oh Lord, what manner of man is this?
All nations in Him are blest.
All things are done by His will.
He spoke to the sea and the sea stood still.

Now ain’t that a witness for my Lord?
My soul is a witness for my Lord.

**Spiritual**

**Oh, Freedom!**

Oh freedom! Oh freedom over me!
And before I’d be a slave, I’ll be buried in my grave,
and go home to my Lord, and be free!
No more mourning over me.

**Spiritual**

**Precious Lord**

Precious Lord, take my hand.
Lead me on, let me stand.
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.

Through the storm, through the night,
lead me on to the light.
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

*Thomas A. Dorsey*

**Martin Luther King Jr.**

A man went forth with gifts.

He was a prose poem.
He was a tragic grace.
He was a warm music.
He tried to heal the vivid volcanoes.
His ashes are
reading the world.

His Dream still wishes to anoint
the barricades of faith and control.

His word still burns the center of the sun
above the thousands and the
hundred thousands.

The word was Justice. It was spoken.

So it shall be spoken.
So it shall be done.

_Gwendolyn Brooks_

_Sence You Went Away_

Seems like to me the stars don’t shine so bright.
Seems like to me the sun done lost his light.
Seems like to me there’s nothin’ going’ right sence you went away.

Seems like to me the sky ain’t half so blue.
Seems like to me that everything wants you.
Seems like to me I don’t know what to do sence you went away.

Oh, everything is wrong.
the day’s just twice as long.
The bird’s forgot his song
sence you went away.

Seems like to me I just can’t help but sigh.
Seems like to me my throat keeps gettin’ dry.
Seems like to me a tear stays in my eye
sence you went away.

_James Weldon Johnson_
Dear Coretta

Coretta,
my love for you is based on a solid foundation that the stormy winds of anger cannot blow it asunder.
Love is such a dynamic force, inexplicable, and yet the most beautiful force.
Oh, how joyous it is!
My life without you is like a year without a springtime, giving illumination from the dark cold of winter.
Imagine a King without a throne.
Such would be if I could not reign at the throne of Coretta.

Adapted from a love letter from Martin Luther King Jr.

He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands

He’s got the whole world in His hands.
He’s got you an’ me, brother, in His hands.
He’s got you an’ me, sister in His hands.
He’s got the little bitty baby in His hands.
He’s got the whole world in His hands.

Spiritual

Support the future of music at NEC!
Your gift to The NEC Fund has a direct and immediate impact on student scholarships, NEC’s world-class faculty, and a collaborative and innovative learning environment rooted in the highest level of musical excellence.
Please consider making a gift to support NEC at necmusic.edu/give.

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Assistive listening devices are available for all Jordan Hall concerts; contact the head usher or house manager on duty or inquire at the Coat Room.
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*deceased
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