Advance Program Notes

PostClassical Ensemble
Deep River: The Art of the Spiritual
Saturday, March 23, 2019, 7:30 PM

These Advance Program Notes are provided online for our patrons who like to read about performances ahead of time. Printed programs will be provided to patrons at the performances. Programs are subject to change.

Co-presented by PostClassical Ensemble and the Moss Arts Center

Kevin Deas, bass-baritone
Virginia Tech Choirs (Dwight Bigler and Jeb Sturgill, directors)
Blacksburg Master Chorale (Dwight Bigler, director)
Elizabeth Lantz Crone, flute
Joseph Horowitz, piano
Angel Gil-Ordóñez and Dwight Bigler, conductors

Peter Bogdanoff, video artist
Scripted by Joseph Horowitz
Hosted by Jaquan Scott

Sinner Please Doan Let Dis Harves’ Pass (arranged by Harry Burleigh)
Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child (arranged by Burleigh)
Steal Away (arranged by Burleigh)

My Lord What a Mornin’ (arranged by Burleigh)
Way Over in Beulah Lan’ (arranged by Stacey Gibbs)
There Is a Balm in Gilead (arranged by William Dawson)
Didn’t My Lord Deliver Daniel (arranged by Moses Hogan)

A City Called Heaven (arranged by Dwight Bigler)
Give Me Jesus (arranged by Larry Fleming)
My God Is a Rock (arranged by Alice Parker and Robert Shaw)
Little Innocent Lamb (arranged by Marshall Bartholomew)

Deep River (arranged by Angel Gil-Ordonez, after Fisk Jubilee Singers, 1877)
Deep River (arranged by Burleigh for male chorus)
Deep River (arranged by Burleigh for mixed chorus)
Goin’ Home (William Arms Fisher, after Dvořák)

Post-performance Q&A with NAME HERE
Tonight’s program is a touring version of a Harry Burleigh tribute that PostClassical Ensemble first presented in Washington, D.C., in 2015.

In conceiving it, I advised Peter Bogdanoff, the participating video artist, to use some footage I had discovered on the internet showing the funeral of Harry Burleigh. If I had looked more closely at this color film, I might have inferred what I later learned from the Burleigh scholar Jean Snyder: I wasn’t watching footage of a 1949 funeral, but of a more recent event.

As it turns out, the film shows Burleigh’s reinterment in Erie, Pennsylvania, as Erie’s most famous native son—128 years after he was born there in 1866. The reason Burleigh was reinterred is that he died in New York City, and that in 1949 it was not possible to bury a black American in a New York City cemetery. So Harry Burleigh, one of the most famous and important African-American musicians of his generation, was buried in Westchester County in 1949, and again in Erie in 1994. This sequence of events reminds us of the magnitude of Burleigh’s achievement in white America.

Harry Burleigh was born the grandson of a former slave. His mother, who spoke French, found work as a janitor in Erie. His early fame, singing in Erie churches and an Erie synagogue, was such that a collection was taken up by the community so he could travel to Manhattan and study music there. He wound up Antonin Dvořák’s personal assistant at the National Conservatory of Music, which Dvořák directed on the Lower East Side. It was partly via Burleigh that Dvořák came to know the music we call “spirituals”—music that inspired Dvořák to famously (and accurately) prophesy that a future American music would be grounded in “Negro melodies.”

After Dvořák died in 1904, Burleigh was the single most instrumental figure in bringing spirituals into the concert hall as art songs. His first such arrangement, Deep River, was instantly famous. Eventually, Burleigh made many dozens of arrangements of spirituals, including more than 60 as solo songs. If you have ever heard recordings of Marian Anderson or Paul Robeson singing Deep River, you are hearing variants of Deep River as set down by Harry Burleigh in the 1910s. And Burleigh’s arrangements are still sung today. They ingeniously balance modesty with creativity. They are full of eloquent counter-melodies, structural detours, and chromatic harmonies (sometimes evoking Dvořák). They are never predictable. Tonight’s peerless soloist, Kevin Deas, prefers Burleigh’s spiritual arrangements to those of any subsequent composer.

Burleigh was also a distinguished composer of more than 100 art songs—once popular, now obscure. In his lifetime, his fame both as singer and composer was formidable. In New York, Burleigh sang for 52 years at St. George’s Episcopal Church—J.P. Morgan’s congregation, which had never before had a black soloist. For 25 years, Burleigh was also soloist at Temple Emanu-El on Fifth Avenue.

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The world of music scholarship intersects very little with the world of orchestras. PostClassical Ensemble is an exception.

Tonight’s program was inspired by a remarkable feat of scholarship: the article The Coming of Deep River (American Music, Winter 1997) by Wayne Shirley, a prodigious historian of American music, now retired from the Music Division of the Library of Congress here in D.C. [Shirley] showed how Burleigh—and also the black British composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, as described this evening—took an obscure spiritual and turned it into an iconic song for all America. His detailed treatment of this topic raised a fascinating and unexpected question: Is Harry Burleigh’s Deep River, as we know it now, more a “composition” than an “arrangement”? See what you think.

—Joseph Horowitz, executive director, PostClassical Ensemble
THE SPIRITUAL IN WHITE AMERICA: The Cultural Appropriation Debate
By Joseph Horowitz

Not so very long after W.E.B. Du Bois and Antonin Dvořák extolled the sorrow songs as the fundament for a future American music, the artists and intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance scoured the African-American musical past. One starting point was the cottonfield. Du Bois, his allies, and his adversaries pursued a now legendary debate over the uses of a past known and acknowledged, wracked with pain and yet protean with possibility.

It is too little remembered that, like Dvořák, Du Bois was a Wagnerite. As a graduate student in Berlin, he came to know and embrace The Ring of the Nibelung. In the tradition of Wagner, Herder, and other German theorists of race, he linked collective purpose and moral instruction to “folk” wisdom: the soul of a people. That Wagner understands the pariah was doubtless also pertinent: Du Bois’s favorite opera, Lohengrin, is (as ever with Wagner) about an outsider. To Du Bois it was merely obvious that for black Americans the sorrow songs comprised a usable past that, subjected to evolutionary development, would yield a desired native concert idiom—the same trajectory anticipated by Dvořák and Burleigh. Formal training and performance, for Du Bois, did not impugn the authenticity of folk sources; rather, a dialectical reconciliation of authority and cosmopolitan finesse would result. Concomitantly, ragtime, the blues, and jazz threatened Du Bois’s cultural/political agenda. A child of the Gilded Age, born in tolerant Massachusetts in 1868, he endorsed uplift.

Alain Locke, sole offspring of a well-to-do Philadelphia family in 1885, was, like Du Bois, a distinguished black Harvard graduate. His philosophy of the New Negro, a signature of the Harlem Renaissance, aligned with Du Bois’s high-cultural predilections. “Negro spirituals,” Locke wrote in 1925, could undergo “intimate and original development in directions already the line of advance in modernistic music ... Negro folk song is not midway in its artistic career yet, and while the preservation of the original folk forms is for the moment the most pressing necessity, an inevitable art development awaits them, as in the past it has awaited all other great folk music.” Like Du Bois, Locke championed the tenor Roland Hayes, who succeeded Dvořák’s onetime assistant Harry Burleigh as the pre-eminent exponent of the spiritual in concert. Like Du Bois, he mistrusted the popular musical marketplace in favor of elite realms of art.

The opposing camp included Harlem’s loudest white cheerleader: Carl Van Vechten, who deplored Hayes’ refinements in favor of Paul Robeson’s “traditional, evangelical renderings” of the Burleigh arrangements. This—and Van Vechten’s celebration of the blues and jazz—ignited a furious rebuttal from Du Bois, who discerned a decadent voyeur in love with black exoticism. But Van Vechten’s revisionism was supported by the black writers Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston. Many of Hughes’s poems keyed on the dialect and structure of the blues. He heard in jazz “the eternal tom-tom beating of the Negro soul.” He deplored the “race toward whiteness” in the uses of black music. Hurston deplored a “flight from blackness.” She heard concert spirituals “squeezing all of the rich black juice out of the songs,” a “sort of musical octoroon.” Du Bois’s “idea that the whole body of spirituals are sorrow songs” seemed to her “ridiculous.” It left out the earthiness and exuberance of the black vernacular. If to Hurston the sorrowful spirituals Du Bois espoused sounded submissive, to Locke the blues sounded “dominated” by “self-pity.” Pitting authenticity against assimilation, the debate identified conflicting vernacular resources, old and new, rural and urban.

If certain black Americans rejected American classical music, American classical music also rejected them. Even though Roland Hayes and Paul Robeson enjoyed phenomenal success in recital, opera companies and orchestras resisted singers and instrumentalists of color. Notoriously, Marian Anderson had to wait until 1955 to sing at the Metropolitan Opera—an invitation engineered not by native-born Americans, but by the immigrants Sol Hurok, Rudolf Bing, Max Rudolf, and Dmitri Mitropoulos. Meanwhile, such black composers of symphonies, oratorios, and operas as Nathaniel Dett, William Grant Still, William Dawson, and Florence Price comprised a shadowy half-presence within the precincts of American classical music. Duke Ellington’s symphonic jazz at Carnegie Hall was a looming presence on the outskirts. George Gershwin, tainted by Harlem, was a presence less ignorable and yet unwanted.
If Harlem’s internal debate over the legacy of plantation song anticipated today’s harried preoccupation with issues of cultural appropriation, it was Gershwin—or, more specifically, it was *Porgy and Bess*—that in the 30s ignited a nascent cultural appropriation debate about interracial borrowings.

Who best decreed the destiny of American music? Of black vernacular roots that equally aroused W. E. B. Du Bois and Mark Twain, Henry Krehbiel and Antonín Dvořák, Carl Van Vechten and Zora Neale Hurston? The bifurcation of American music—into (white) classical and (black) popular camps—holds up a mirror to fractures and interstices that have long bedeviled and enriched the American cultural experience, with no end in sight.

**Biographies**

**KEVIN DEAS,** bass-baritone

PostClassical Ensemble (PCE) resident artist Kevin Deas, one of America’s pre-eminent concert singers, appears regularly with PostClassical Ensemble and at Washington National Cathedral. Deas also premiered and recorded, with PostClassical Ensemble, the *Hiawatha Melodrama* created by PCE Executive Director Joseph Horowitz and music historian Michael Beckerman (a 2014 Naxos CD named one of the best of the year by Minnesota Public Radio). He has taken part in Dvořák and America festivals curated by Horowitz for the New York Philharmonic, the Buffalo Philharmonic, the North Carolina Symphony, and many other orchestras. Deas has also appeared with the major orchestras of the world.

**ANGEL GIL-ORDÓÑEZ,** conductor, PostClassical Ensemble

The former associate conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra of Spain, PostClassical Ensemble Music Director Angel Gil-Ordóñez has conducted symphonic music, opera, and ballet throughout Europe, the United States and Latin America. In the United States, he has appeared with the American Composers Orchestra, Opera Colorado, the Pacific Symphony, the Hartford Symphony, the Brooklyn Philharmonic, and the Orchestra of St. Luke’s. He is also principal guest conductor of New York’s Perspectives Ensemble and music director of the Georgetown University Orchestra. In 2006, the king of Spain awarded Gil-Ordóñez the country’s highest civilian decoration, the Royal Order of Queen Isabella.
JOSEPH HOROWITZ, executive director, PostClassical Ensemble

PostClassical Ensemble Executive Director Joseph Horowitz has long been a pioneer in classical music programming. As executive director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra, resident orchestra of the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Horowitz received national attention for festivals exploring the folk roots of concert works. Now an artistic advisor to half a dozen American orchestras, he directs an National Endowment for the Humanities-funded symphonic consortium, Music Unwound. He is also the award-winning author of 10 books mainly dealing with the institutional history of classical music in the United States. Both his Classical Music in America: A History (2005) and Artists in Exile (2008) were named best books of the year by The Economist. Currently a Resident Fellow at New York University’s Center for Ballet and the Arts, Horowitz received an honorary doctorate from DePauw University last spring. His blog is artsjournal.com/uq.

BLACKSBURG MASTER CHORALE

The Blacksburg Master Chorale is a community organization that inspires lifetime engagement in outstanding choral music. Over the past 31 years, the group has performed many masterworks, including Orff’s Carmina Burana, Bach’s Mass in B Minor, Brahms’ Requiem, Mendelssohn’s Elijah, and Rachmaninoff’s Vespers.

VIRGINIA TECH CHOIRS

The Virginia Tech Choirs include the Chamber Singers, Women’s Chorus, and Tech Men. Students from any major and year are welcome to sing in the choirs. They regularly combine to perform masterworks with orchestra, and in 2017 they traveled to New York City to perform in Carnegie Hall. The Chamber Singers has performed at the Virginia Music Educators Association conference, throughout Italy and Ireland, and this spring will embark on a performance tour through Spain.

DWIGHT BIGLER, director, Blacksburg Master Chorale and Virginia Tech Chamber Singers

Dwight Bigler is associate professor and director of choral activities at Virginia Tech and music director of the Blacksburg Master Chorale. He has also held positions as assistant conductor and pianist of the Dale Warland Singers and director of choral activities at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. Under his direction, the Virginia Tech Chamber Singers has performed in Carnegie Hall, for the Virginia Music Educators Association conference, throughout Italy and Ireland, and in multiple performances of masterworks with orchestra. He has conducted concerts and workshops throughout the United States and in China, Austria, the Czech Republic, Italy, Ecuador, and Indonesia. Bigler’s choral compositions are published by Boosey & Hawkes, Walton Music, Alliance Music, E.C. Schirmer, Hinshaw Music, and Oxford University Press. Bigler holds degrees from Brigham Young University (a bachelor of music in piano performance and a master of music in choral conducting) and the University of Texas at Austin (a doctor of musical arts in choral conducting).

JEB STURGILL, director, Virginia Tech Women’s Chorus and Tech Men

Jeb Sturgill is the director of the Virginia Tech Women’s Chorus and Tech Men, as well as the choral director at Auburn High School and Auburn Middle School in Montgomery County. Sturgill has performed throughout the region with numerous ensembles, including musical casts, choirs, quartets, orchestras, and brass ensembles. He holds a bachelor of arts in music education from Virginia Tech, where he studied both vocal and instrumental education. Sturgill also holds a master of arts in education from Virginia Tech.
POSTCLASSICAL ENSEMBLE

Washington National Cathedral ensemble-in-residence PostClassical Ensemble (PCE)—called “one of the country’s most innovative music groups” (Philip Kennicott) and “wildly ambitious” (Anne Midgette)—was founded in 2003 by Gil-Ordóñez and Horowitz as an experimental orchestral laboratory, producing immersion experiences that upend traditional boundaries. PCE programming is thematic and cross-disciplinary, typically incorporating art, film, dance, or theatre; exploring unfamiliar works and composers; or recontextualizing standard repertoire.

PETER BOGDANOFF, video artist

Media artist Peter Bogdanoff has worked extensively with Joseph Horowitz, co-creating visual presentations for Dvořák’s New World Symphony (premiered by the Brooklyn Philharmonic and subsequently shown by the Pacific Symphony, the Nashville Symphony, the Berlin Komische Oper Orchestra, and others) and Stravinsky’s Symphony in Three Movements (commissioned by the Pacific Symphony and shown by the New York Philharmonic, among other orchestras). Bogdanoff also partners Horowitz’s National Endowment for the Humanities-funded Music Unwound consortium.

JAQUAN SCOTT, host

Jaquan Scott is a graduate assistant in the Student Success Center and a master’s student in the Higher Education and Student Affairs program at Virginia Tech. Scott’s responsibilities include working with the Black Male Excellence Network, academic recovery initiatives, co-teaching a college success strategies course, and presenting summer orientation sessions. Prior to joining the Student Success Center, Scott was an admissions advisor in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions at Virginia Tech. He is a 2014 graduate of Virginia Tech with a bachelor’s degree in public relations. Scott is originally from Farmville, Virginia, and is an avid LeBron James fan.

ELIZABETH LANTZ CRONE, flutist

Flutist Elizabeth Lantz Crone is a Yamaha Performing Artist and artist/teacher of flute in the School of Performing Arts at Virginia Tech. A passionate performer and educator, Crone’s recent activities include commissions, performances, presentations, master classes, and adjudication throughout the Eastern U.S., Trinidad, and Colombia. She holds degrees in flute performance from the University of Southern California and the University of Arizona. Crone lives in Blacksburg with her youngest son, Sam, and their dog, Ben.
Blacksburg Master Chorale

Dwight Bigler, conductor
Cindy Blevins, assistant conductor
Joetta Petersen, pianist

SOPRANO
Diane Baker
Amelia Ball
Jean Brickey
Debra Call
Elizabeth Cox
Sheila Darby
Anita Ehrhardt
Leah Fitchett
Kaye Gilliam
Jane Hammel
Mary Harder
Renee Jacobsen
Janice Jones
Jeanette Jones
Elizabeth Kaler
Linda King
Alex Kinnaman
Jennifer McCord
Susan Miller
Patricia Perez
Judy Ruggles
Angela Schulz
Jennifer Spoon
Julann Stephenson
Donna Thielen
Kelly Weber
Lucy Anne Wontrop
Bonnie Zare

ALTO
Janie Adkins
Elizabeth Aker
Katherine Asbury
Searcy Bason
Cindy Blevins
Heidi Brunk
Hannah Burks
Kate Burnham-Hull
Alice Feret
Rachel Fry
Bridget Garza Griffin
Mary Hansbrough
Susan Hansen
Marcia Harris
Lynda Hartson
Hannah Lau
Peggy Layne
Kelly Lemkul
Jane Mahone
Paula Markham
Tammy McClellan
Kandra Meyers
Mary Denson Moore
Mary W. Osgood
Annie Pearce
Katie Randall
Judie Reemsnyder
Catherine Rolling
Leda Stubbs
Leticia Stucki
Beth Thomas
Brenda van Gelder
Patricia Winter

TENOR
Ferdinand Bikle IV
Pat Brown
Mark Caldwell III
Ed Champion
Matt Chan
Julian Cooper
Caleb Davidson
Jean Elliott
Robert Kincaid
Nicholas Restrepo
Randy Stith
Ben Stovall
George Terrell
Goldie Terrell
Hugh Vanlandingham
Patrick Withem

BASS
Joe Adkisson
Phil Araman
Joe Ball
Ezra Brown
John Byrne
Joshua Carroll
Jeremy Cox
Kenneth D’Amato
Alex Darby
Bill Drummond
Timothy Ellis
John Fite
Rick Geoghegan
David Harder
John Hassler
Paul Metz
Bill Neely
Wayne Neu
William Newton
Zane Scott
Keith Stephenson
Robert Wall
Carroll Wontrop
# Virginia Tech Chamber Singers

Dwight Bigler, conductor  
Taylor Baldwin, pianist

**SOPRANO**  
Erin Atienza  
Aly Fuller  
Maggie Good  
Allison Harris  
Mary Haugh  
Isabella Kitts  
Willow Pedersen

**ALTO**  
Jordyn Birden  
Stephanie Draper  
Torey Driggs  
Eles Jones  
Emma Maguire  
Camry Sidick  
Rebecah Storms  
Kerrigan Strong

**TENOR**  
Logan Codella  
Collin Deans  
Jonathan Elmore  
Danny Fritsch  
Paul Mack  
Trevor Parsons

**BASS**  
Matthew Alvarez  
James Gilchrist  
Kaleb Jubar  
Evan Mallory  
Christian Mergl  
Dawson Naccarato  
Alex Patterson  
Skyler VonDeben  
Kevin Zhang

# Virginia Tech Women’s Chorus

Jeb Sturgill, conductor  
Luke Williams, pianist

**SOPRANO I**  
Alexa BeMent  
Katie Berry  
Josie Bowman  
Renee Daly  
Valerie Hubert  
Taylor McCleary  
Mackenzie Mulkey  
Nikkita Parrish  
Ann Marie Paul  
Ansley Pfeiffer  
Kasey Socks

**SOPRANO II**  
Kayla Blatman  
Laura Crowe  
Saloni Goel  
Tingting Luo  
Sami Milner  
Jessica Orefice  
Olivia Orefice  
Kathy Strong  
Mia Taylor  
Rachel Vanlandingham  
Ashley Yong

**ALTO I**  
Fallon Curry  
Kailee David  
Audrey Gumbert  
Xinnuo He  
Caroline Hopper  
Bhava Lankipalli  
Aimee Maurais  
Candy Yuan Li  
Beth Marsico  
Mia Thomas

**ALTO II**  
Kathy Bruckner  
Victoria Dashevsky  
Jillian Donahue  
Erica Van Doren  
Emma Jones  
Annabelle Layman  
Julia Schneider

# Virginia Tech Men

Jeb Sturgill, conductor  
Luke Williams, pianist

**TENOR I**  
William Grumley  
Tyler Noegel  
Jake Vail  
Robert Walters  
Josh Wenger

**TENOR II**  
Quinn Hair  
Evan Joachin  
Jiajun Li  
Evan McLean  
Carl Wang  
Tim Wu

**BARITONE**  
Dorian Bloy  
Isaac Edwards  
Jack Gan  
Arjun Guidroz  
Alex Mazarr  
Josh Saville  
Cyrus Unvala  
Andy Waldo

**BASS**  
Dylan Boles  
Michael Glaudemans  
Gjeri Mukemba  
Zachariah Rizk  
Seth Stoner  
Brooks Ward
Engagement Events

Thursday, March 21, 2019
CULTURAL APPROPRIATION: PAST AND PRESENT VOICES
Featuring Dwight Bigler, associate professor and director of choral activities, School of Performing Arts at Virginia Tech; Kevin Deas, bass-baritone; Joseph Horowitz, executive director, PostClassical Ensemble; and Angel Gil-Ordóñez, conductor, PostClassical Ensemble
In this hybrid performance and discussion, patrons engaged with guest artists/experts in the history of American music, including spirituals and sorrow songs.

Saturday, March 23, 2019
PRE-PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION
Featuring Joseph Horowitz, executive director, PostClassical Ensemble; Angel Gil-Ordóñez, conductor, PostClassical Ensemble; and Kevin Deas, bass-baritone
Directly before Deep River: The Art of the Spiritual, participants engaged with members of the creative team during this panel discussion.

Saturday, March 23, 2019, following the performance
POST-PERFORMANCE Q&A
Following their performance, speak with local performers and members of PostClassical Ensemble at this public discussion.
Street and Davis Performance Hall, Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre

Special thanks to Dwight Bigler, Rhonda Morgan, and Jaquan Scott

Go Beyond

What did you learn about Harry Burleigh (1866-1949) from tonight’s program? How does that knowledge impact your understanding of the history of spirituals in American music?
In the Galleries

SOVA FACULTY TRIENNIAL
Thursday, April 4-Saturday, May 4, 2019
Ruth C. Horton Gallery, Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery, and Sherwood Payne Quillen ’71 Reception Gallery

This inaugural faculty triennial exhibition highlights new work by current faculty in Virginia Tech’s School of Visual Arts (SOVA). Spanning a wide variety of media, subject matter, and scale, these works and site-specific installations explore and expand upon both traditional and cutting-edge approaches to artmaking, highlighting the creativity, ingenuity, and skill of SOVA faculty.

JOIN US!
OPENING RECEPTION AND ARTIST TALKS
Thursday, April 4, 2019, 5-7 PM
Grand Lobby
Free; refreshments provided

GALLERY HOURS
Monday-Friday, 10 AM-5:30 PM
Saturday, 10 AM-4 PM

To arrange a group tour or class visit, please contact Meggin Hicklin, exhibitions program manager, at megh79@vt.edu.

Michael Borowski
Through the Swift, Black Night, 2018
Archival pigment print
30 x 40 inches
Image courtesy of the artist