Advance Program Notes
Turtle Island Quartet with Cyrus Chestnut
Carry Me Home
Friday, April 12, 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.

The instrumentation is recognizable to any aficionado of chamber music, that of the classic piano quintet. Renowned jazz master Cyrus Chestnut and the Grammy-winning Turtle Island Quartet continue their remarkable journey together as they traverse the myriad colors of jazz and beyond. The collaboration is infused with the global reach of gospel and sacred music—ranging from the Appalachian Mountains to the spiritually defined musical landscape of J.S. Bach. Dipping into the rhythms of world cultures, these five multi-stylistic, singularly gifted musicians come together to embrace the transcendental power of great music, with a moving night of Ellington, Wayne Shorter, Bill Withers, Coltrane, and more.

The program will be announced from the stage and will include selections from the following pieces:

Come Sunday—Duke Ellington
Chant Mouride—Benoît Diamé (Senegal Sufi)
Wade in the Water—spiritual
Down in the Depths—Wayne Shorter
Hari Tuma Haro—Mirabai (12th century, Hindu Bhajan)
Ave Maria—Bach/Gounod
Psalm—John Coltrane
Will the Circle Be Unbroken—Ada Habershon
Lean on Me—Bill Withers

There will be a short intermission.

This performance is supported in part by gifts from the Merryman family and David A. West and Lindsey B. West.
Since its inception in 1985, the Turtle Island Quartet has been a singular force in the creation of bold, new trends in chamber music for strings. Winner of the 2006 and 2008 Grammy Awards for Best Classical Crossover category, Turtle Island fuses the classical quartet esthetic with contemporary American musical styles and by devising a performance practice that honors both, the state of the art has inevitably been redefined. Cellist nonpareil Yo-Yo Ma has proclaimed the Turtle Island Quartet to be “a unified voice that truly breaks new ground—authentic and passionate—a reflection of some of the most creative music-making today.”

The quartet’s birth was the result of violinist David Balakrishnan’s brainstorming explorations and compositional vision while writing his master’s thesis at Antioch University West. The journey has taken Turtle Island through forays into folk, bluegrass, swing, be-bop, funk, R&B, new age, rock, and hip-hop, as well as music of Latin America and India...a repertoire consisting of hundreds of ingenious arrangements and originals. It has included over a dozen recordings on labels such as Windham Hill, Chandos, Koch, and Telarc; soundtracks for major motion pictures; TV and radio credits such as the Today Show, All Things Considered, Prairie Home Companion, and Morning Edition; feature articles in People and Newsweek magazines; and collaborations with famed artists such as clarinetist Paquito D’Rivera; vibraphonist Stefon Harris; guitar legends Leo Kottke and the Assad brothers; the Manhattan Transfer; pianists Billy Taylor, Kenny Barron, Cyrus Chestnut, and Ramsey Lewis; singers Tierney Sutton and Nellie McKay; the Ying Quartet; and the Parsons and Luna Negra dance companies.

Another unique element of Turtle Island is their revival of venerable improvisational and compositional chamber traditions that have not been explored by string players for nearly 200 years. At the time of Haydn’s apocryphal creation of the string quartet form, musicians were more akin to today’s saxophonists and keyboard masters of the jazz and pop world—i.e., improvisers, composers, and arrangers. Each Turtle Island member is accomplished in these areas of expertise.

As Turtle Island members continue to refine their skills through the development of repertory by some of today’s cutting edge composers, through performances and recordings with major symphonic ensembles, and through a determined educational commitment, the Turtle Island Quartet stakes its claim as the quintessential “New World” string quartet of the 21st century.

For more information on the Turtle Island Quartet, please visit turtleislandquartet.com and find them on Facebook at @TurtleIslandQuartet and on Twitter at @tiq_music.
DAVID BALAKRISHNAN, violin

Violinist David Balakrishnan, the group’s founder and resident composer, graduated from University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) with a bachelor’s degree in music composition and violin. Moving to the San Francisco Bay Area, Balakrishnan quickly established his reputation as a talented young improvising violinist, making guest appearances with the David Grisman Quartet and jazz violin legend Stephane Grappelli, as well as earning a master’s degree in music composition at Antioch University West.

His compositional approach—based on the principle of multi-stylistic integration applied to bowed string instruments—established the Turtle Island Quartet template that, in addition to the group awards, has earned him two Grammy nominations in the arranging category and most recently a 2016 nomination in the composition category for his piece *Confetti Man* on the latest Turtle Island Quartet recording of the same name.

He is the recipient of numerous grants from private sources such as conductor Marin Alsop, who commissioned his piece for violin and orchestra, *Little Mouse Jumps*, as well as from organizations such as the National Endowment for the Arts, Chamber Music America, League of American Orchestras, and Meet the Composer. In 2005 he received a Meet the Composer/American Symphony Orchestra League Music Alive residency with the Nashville Chamber Orchestra (largest orchestral composing grant of the year), for which he composed six works. The NCO also commissioned Balakrishnan’s composition *Darkness Dreaming*, which premiered in April 2004 with guitarists Sharon Isbin and John Jorgenson.

His piece *Spider Dreams* (1992) has been widely performed and recorded throughout the world by a diverse array of musical organizations, including a live recording by Turtle Island with the Detroit Symphony conducted by Neeme Järvi on Chandos Records. A 2002 commission, awarded by a consortium of presenters headed by the Lied Center of Kansas, resulted in a string octet entitled *Mara’s Garden of False Delights*, which is featured on Turtle Island’s Grammy-winning Telarc release, *4+Four*.

Again commissioned by the Lied Center in 2008, Balakrishnan composed a full-length work involving theatre, dance, poetry, video, and the Turtle Island Quartet with the University of Kansas wind ensemble that is an artistic response to the socio/political issues concerning the various theories of evolution, both scientific and cultural, entitled *The Tree of Life*. In 2015 he received Chamber Music America’s prestigious Classical Commissioning Program grant, supporting a full-length work commemorating the quartet’s 30th anniversary season.

MALCOLM PARSON, cello

A native of New Orleans, cellist Malcolm Parson has been hailed as “the most creative cellist of his generation.” According to Grammy Award winner Eugene Friesen, “He is that rare player with feet planted firmly in classical music and the music of our time while possessing perfect intonation, fluent technique, and stylistic versatility.”

Parson studied at Atlanta Symphony Orchestra’s Talent Development Program and Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts, giving his first performance as a soloist with an orchestra at age 14. He made his debut in Atlanta with the Atlanta Symphony Community Orchestra after winning their Young Artist Competition, and followed with debuts at the National Black Arts Festival *Classics from the Next Generation* and Andre Watts’ 50th Birthday Celebration. He was also awarded his first personal violin from the Louis Armstrong Foundation, Inc.’s Golden Horn Award and his first personal cello from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Science (NARAS).

A longtime member of the Grammy-winning Carolina Chocolate Drops, Parson has also shared the stage with musicians and bands such as James Lauderdale, Della Mae, Del McCoury, Old Crow Medicine Show, Ron Carter, Paquito D’Rivera, Patrice Rushen, Toshi Reagon, Terri Lynn Carrington, Dave Liebman, and Christian Howes, and has also collaborated with choreographers such as Twyla Tharp, Julia Gleich, and dance company Brooklyn Ballet.
Biographies, continued

GABRIEL TERRACCIANO, violin

Originally from Portland, Maine, Gabriel Terracciano is a violinist and composer currently residing in Brooklyn, New York. Classically trained from a young age, Terracciano has spent his career focusing on playing the violin in a variety of non-classical genres, including jazz, bluegrass, rock, and hip-hop, among others. He has played throughout the United States as well as internationally, including at the 2018 New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival.

Terracciano most recently was awarded first prize in the 2018 Freshgrass Fiddle Competition and won third prize in the 2018 Zbigniew Seifert Jazz Violin Competition. He holds undergraduate degrees from Tufts University and the New England Conservatory of Music, as well as a master’s degree from New York University in jazz performance. Terracciano has studied with teachers such as Tanya Kalmanovitch, Don Doane, Cecil McBee, John Scofield, Ari Hoenig, and Rob Thomas.

BENJAMIN VON GUTZEIT, viola

Benjamin von Gutzeit, one of only a handful of true jazz violists worldwide, was born in Bochum, Germany into a musical family. His father is a well-known music pedagogue, his mother a pianist, and two of his siblings are classical string players. He began his viola studies at the age of four, starting on a very small violin that was fitted with viola strings. He received instructions from his father until age 12, when he became the student of violist Emile Cantor of the Orpheus String Quartet.

Von Gutzeit consecutively won the 1992 and 1994 German Youth Competition Jugend Musiziert, which led to a solo concert tour in Japan. At age 15 he developed a fascination for popular music and took up playing the electric bass in addition to viola. From 2001 to 2004 he studied at the Bruckner Conservatory in Linz, Austria, under the tutelage of jazz violinist Andreas Schreiber.

In 2004 von Gutzeit moved to Holland to further his jazz studies at the Conservatory of Amsterdam with saxophonists Ferdinand Povel and Jasper Blom and guitarist Jesse van Ruller. He became an active participant of the Dutch jazz scene and performed with numerous groups, including Elastic Jargon by Maurice Horsthuis and Starvinsky Orkestar by Martin Fondse. He was sought after at prominent concert venues and festivals, such as the Bimhuis and the famed North Sea Jazz Festival.

In 2010 he moved to New York City (supported by scholarships of the Dutch Fonds Podiumkunsten, the Deutsche Stiftung Musikleben, and the Kogel&Schmidt Foundation) and became the first violist to earn a master’s degree from the jazz department of the Manhattan School of Music.

Von Gutzeit has performed and recorded with many great musicians, including jazz violinist Mark Feldman, electronic music virtuoso Matthew Herbert, cellist Ernst Reijseger, and saxophonist Dave Liebman.

CYRUS CHESTNUT, piano

Cyrus Chestnut is a musical force who utilizes his classical, spiritual, and jazz influences to entertain and capture his audiences. As one of the world’s most respected pianists, Chestnut has been lauded by various jazz publications and featured in the New York Times for his unique musical style. A noted bandleader and music director, Chestnut has played at the world’s premier venues and festivals, including the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Montreux Jazz Festival, the North Sea Jazz Festival, Jazz at Lincoln Center, and the New Orleans Jazz Fest.

As a bandleader, Chestnut’s repertoire is vast, and his work has been featured in films such as Kansas City and Piano Grand: A Smithsonian Celebration. With more than a dozen studio albums in his discography, Chestnut continues to experiment with his familiar integration of jazz, spiritual, and classical sounds that reflect his heritage and identity as an artist. Evidence of this brilliant integration has been displayed by his work as a music
Biographies, continued

director with the legendary Kathleen Battle on *So Many Stars* and *Underground Railroad*, and in his 2015 studio release on Highnote Records, *A Million Colors in Your Mind*.

An alumnus of the nation’s top music institutions, including Peabody Preparatory and the Walden School, Chestnut’s music showcases his discipline and respect for his early training and its influence on his sound today. Following his studies at Peabody and the Walden School, Chestnut excelled as a student at the Berklee College of Music, where he received the Oscar Peterson Award, Count Basie Award, and Quincy Jones Award for his exceptional skill. Recently appointed to the faculty at the prestigious Howard University Department of Music, Chestnut continues to honor the legacy of education and mentorship by offering lectures on jazz piano and improvisation to the next generation of musical artists. Devoted to education and community engagement, Chestnut’s new appointment builds upon his career as one of jazz’s most celebrated performers.
Engagement Events

Friday, April 12, 2019

WORKSHOP: IT’S ABOUT TIME
At this workshop for Virginia Tech string students, members of Turtle Island Quartet shared various aspects of
their performance practice, including jazz phrasing and improvisatory techniques for melodic playing.

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MUSIC IN THE CUBE: HIGHLANDS JAZZ QUARTET
Prior to the performance by the Turtle Island Quartet with Cyrus Chestnut, the Highlands Jazz Quartet played
selections from the standard repertoire in the Cube. Tonight’s quartet featured Lou Madsen on saxophone,
Paul Deck on piano, Justin Craig on bass, and Bill Ray on drums.

Special thanks to John Irrera and Alan Weinstein

Go Beyond

Which selections from tonight’s eclectic program hew most closely to the sound of their original recordings?
Which pieces seem to depart (i.e. stylistically, sonically, etc.) most from these original versions?
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.

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