

### Saturday, February 11, 2023, 7:30 PM PUBLIQuartet

Moss Arts Center Street and Davis Performance Hall Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre

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# SEASON at a glance—2022-2023

Tues., Feb. 14, 7:30 PM Broadway in Blacksburg Hairspray

Fri., Feb. 17, 7:30 PM Sat., Feb. 18, 2 and 7:30 PM

*Akutagawa* Co-created by Koryū Nishikawa V and Tom Lee

Tues., Feb. 28-Wed., March 1, 7:30 PM Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

Thurs., March 16, 7:30 PM An Evening with Viet Thanh Nguyen

Fri., March 24, 7:30 PM **Book of Mountains and Seas** Composer and librettist: Huang Ruo Director and production design: Basil Twist Just Added: Guest Curated Thursday, March 30-Friday, March 31, 2023, 7:30 PM **Rissi Palmer** 

Just Added: Guest Curated Friday, April 7, 2023, 7:30 PM **Shirlette Ammons** 

Just Added: Guest Curated Friday, April 14, 8 PM **Sonny Miles** 

Sun., April 23, 4 PM Opera Roanoke and Blacksburg Master Chorale Benjamin Britten's War Requiem

Sat., April 29, 7:30 PM Cécile McLorin Salvant

Tickets are available now at the box office and online. See the complete schedule of performances, exhibitions, and engagement activities at artscenter.vt.edu.

### PUBLIQuartet What Is American

Curtis Stewart, violin Jannina Norpoth, violin Nick Revel, viola Hamilton Berry, cello

Co-sponsored by the Creativity and Innovation District Living-Learning Community, Leadership and Social Change Residential College, Residential College at West Ambler Johnston, Honors Residential Commons, Cranwell International Center, and Mozaiko Living-Learning Community

MIND   THE   GAP: What is American? (2016) Improvisations on Antonín Dvořák's American Quartet (op. 96)	PUBLIQuartet
I. Allegro ma non troppo II. Lento	
III. Molto Vivace IV. Finale. Vivace ma non troppo	
Withde wate ha for toppo	
At the Purchaser's Option (2016)	Rhiannon Giddens (b. 1977) arr. PUBLIQuartet (2021)
Fifth Verse: Page of Her Story*	
MIND   THE   GAP: Pavement Pounding Rose (2019)	PUBLIQuartet
Improvisations on Fats Waller's Honeysuckle Rose	
MIND   THE   GAP: Free Radicals (2021) Improvisations on Law Years and Street Woman by Ornette Coleman	PUBLIQuartet
Fifth Verse: Land of the Free*	
Dig the Say (2012)	Vijay Iyer (b. 1971)
I. carry the ball IIa. this thing together IIb. up from the ground III. to live tomorrow	
Fifth Verse: Interlude*	
CARDS 11-11-2020 (2020)	Roscoe Mitchell (b. 1940)
MIND   THE   GAP: Wild Women Don't Get the Blues (2021) Improvisations on music by Tina Turner, Betty Davis, Alice Coltrane, and Ida Cox	PUBLIQuartet

What Is American

Fifth Verse: Prelude\*

\*Pre-recorded tracks featuring PUBLIQuartet's improvisations on the words of the unofficial "fifth verse" of the *Star Spangled Banner* (1861) by Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894); recorded 2021.

### Program

# **Program Notes**

#### WHAT IS AMERICAN

What Is American explores the resonance between contemporary, blues, jazz, free, and rock-inflected music — all of which trace their roots back to the Black and Indigenous music that inspired Dvořák's American Quartet. Interrogating these traditions of our nation's complex history, PUBLIQuartet attempts to connect the dots, illuminating the past, present, and future of American concert music. What Is American is ultimately a call to ponder the kaleidoscope of composers and diverse genres that make up America's rich musical history.

Woven throughout the program are several improvised interludes from the album recording — each is inspired by Oliver Wendell Holmes' rarely-heard, unofficial fifth verse to *The Star Spangled Banner*, which he penned in 1861. Recorded, edited, and mixed by PUBLIQuartet violist Nick Revel, these sonic vignettes are meant to give added thematic context and atmosphere to the tracks around them.

#### MIND | THE | GAP: What is American? (2016) Improvisations on Antonín Dvořák's American Quartet (op. 96)

I. Allegro ma non troppo II. Lento III. Molto Vivace IV. Finale. Vivace ma non troppo

Antonín Dvořák wrote his *American Quartet* during the summer of 1893 in the Czech enclave of Spillville, Iowa, following his first year directing the National Conservatory of Music of America in New York City. One of Dvořák's students at the conservatory was baritone and composer Harry T. Burleigh, who introduced him to Black spirituals, leading Dvořák to conclude that, "The future of this country must be founded upon what are called the Negro melodies. This must be the real foundation of any serious and original school of composition to be developed in the United States."

This *MIND* | *THE* | *GAP* project weaves together excerpts of Dvořák's original score with improvisation in various styles, with the aim of connecting the Black and Indigenous musics that inspired Dvořák to the blues, jazz, rock, and hiphop styles that these traditions would ultimately inform. Incorporating various extended techniques, the work's opening also evokes the prairie soundscape that might have surrounded Dvořák as he composed.

### Program Notes, continued

#### Rhiannon Giddens (b. 1977) At the Purchaser's Option (2016), arr. PUBLIQuartet (2021)

Inspired by an 1830s advertisement announcing the sale of a Black woman and her child, Rhiannon Giddens' *At the Purchaser's Option* is a meditation on the hard truths of American history; the song is reimagined here in an original arrangement by PUBLIQuartet that includes whispers, sung excerpts of Giddens' original lyrics, and various extended techniques.

#### MIND | THE | GAP: Pavement Pounding Rose (2019) Improvisations on Honeysuckle Rose by Fats Waller

This piece is an excerpt from PUBLIQuartet's larger project, *Reflections on Beauty*, which celebrates the life of Madam C.J. Walker, the pioneering Black entrepreneur, self-made millionaire, and activist. Inspired by Fats Waller's *Honeysuckle Rose*, these improvisations evoke Madam Walker's entrepreneurial hustle in Harlem in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

#### MIND | THE | GAP: Free Radicals (2021) Improvisations on Law Years and Street Woman by Ornette Coleman

This work marks one of the latest iterations of PUBLIQuartet's ongoing *MIND* | *THE* | *GAP* project, in which they use improvisation and group composition to make connections across genres and among musical voices. Here, they drew inspiration from two tracks from Ornette Coleman's 1971 album, *Science Fiction: Law Years* and *Street Woman*. In the process of putting together these improvisations, they sought to collage Coleman's motives in a way that balances structure and freedom, and which recalls the joyfully chaotic energy of the original recordings. This reflection on Coleman's music also finds resonance between his philosophy of Harmolodics — in which "harmony, melody, speed, rhythm, time, and phrases all have equal position in the results that come from the placing and spacing of ideas" — and the contrapuntal style of Johann Sebastian Bach.

#### Vijay Iyer (b. 1971) Dig the Say (2012)

I. carry the ball Ila. this thing together Ilb. up from the ground III. to live tomorrow

Commissioned by Brooklyn Rider in 2012, Vijay lyer's *Dig the Say* is an homage to the "Godfather of Soul," James Brown. Describing his inspiration by Brown's

music, lyer says, "[...] of course it's best to enjoy it with your body and soul, but there is also much to learn from analyzing his music's interlocking bass, drums, guitar, horn, and vocal parts. As a composer and bandleader I have strived for years to put some of his tactics into practice. He brought a lot of ideas to the table about groove, communication, form, and space. Each song has its own vivid and distinct identity, beginning with the intricacies in the rhythm section."

Much of the excitement, and challenge, of Iyer's quartet lies in his distribution of such intricate, driving rhythmic textures among multiple players; there are even moments where the score asks a single player to stomp or tap one rhythm while playing another. The titles of the work's four continuous movements refer to lyrics delivered emphatically by Brown in his 1969 song, *I Don't Want Nobody to Give Me Nothing (Open Up the Door I'll Get It Myself).* 

#### Roscoe Mitchell (b. 1940) CARDS 11-11-2020 (2020)

This work is part of a suite of three CARDS pieces, commissioned to commemorate the 43<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Creative Arts Collective (CAC), the Detroit-based arts organization founded by PUBLIQuartet violinist Jannina Norpoth's father, guitarist and composer A. Spencer Barefield, with Roscoe Mitchell in the 1970's. PUBLIQuartet was thrilled that Mitchell was inspired to write the second movement CARDS 11-11-2020 specifically for them. The other movements (CARDS The Maple Just Turned Red and CARDS The Detroit Deck) are for larger ensembles; all three works received their premieres at the Detroit Institute of Arts on May 20, 2022. This suite joins a larger series of Mitchell's CARDS that integrate and incorporate different improvisational skill sets. Many of these works contain what he refers to as a "deck" of cards: six pages that the player can assemble in any order they choose. CARDS 11-11-2020 is a throughcomposed piece that comes with a set of cards given to each player as a reference to create improvisation. Mitchell is fond of patterns and palindromes — this piece was composed during the pandemic, and the date 11-11-2020 holds numeric significance.

#### MIND | THE | GAP: Wild Women Don't Get the Blues (2021) Improvisations on music by Tina Turner, Betty Davis, Alice Coltrane, and Ida Cox

Inspired by Ida Cox's 1924 feminist blues anthem, *Wild Women Don't Have the Blues*, this *MIND* | *THE* | *GAP* also spotlights the work of Tina Turner (*Black Coffee*), Betty Davis (*They Say I'm Different*), and Alice Coltrane (*Er Ra*). In the spirit of Cox's lyrics, this set celebrates the legacy of independent women who hold their own.

# Biography

### PUBLIQUARTET

PUBLIQuartet is Grammy-nominated improvising string а quartet whose contemporary repertoire blurs genres and highlights American multiculturalism. Recognized as one of the most interesting and innovative ensembles in the field, they received the 2019 Visionary Artists Award from Chamber Music America, the 2015 award for Adventurous Programming from ASCAP/CMA, and the Sylvia Ann Hewlett Adventurous Artist Prize at the 2013 CAG Victor Elmaleh Competition. PUBLIQuartet has held artist residencies at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Carnegie Hall, and National Sawdust in Brooklyn, and has performed at Lincoln Center, Detroit Jazz Festival, Newport Jazz Festival, and The Barns at Wolftrap. Their 2016 appearance on The Colbert Report — Requiem for a Debate, in which they improvised a live soundtrack to the third presidential debate - not only received over a million views, but saw the Washington Post declaring them "the winner...indubitably."

The quartet's latest album, *What Is American*, released in June 2022 on the Bright Shiny Things label, explores resonances between contemporary, blues, jazz, freely-improvised, and rock-inflected languages, all of which trace their roots back to the Black and Indigenous musical traditions that inspired Dvořak's *American Quartet* (op. 96). Seth Colter Walls of the *New York Times* called it his "favorite classical album of the year thus far."

PUBLIQuartet's ingenuity extends to their educational initiatives, which focus on allowing participants to embrace their inner creators. They are the inaugural ensemble-in-residence for Carnegie Hall's PlayUSA program. PUBLIQuartet's initiatives include improvisation and composition workshops; a collection of original works for small ensemble commissioned by Carnegie Hall that invites performers and audiences to explore individuality and belonging through improvisation; and PUBLIQ Access, an ongoing program created to support emerging composers. PUBLIQuartet is committed to creating an inclusive performance space, supporting living composers of varying genres, and expanding the classical canon.

Founded in 2010, PUBLIQuartet is based in New York City and is a winner of the Concert Artists Guild International Competition.

This is PUBLIQuartet's first performance at the Moss Arts Center.

# Tell Us What You Think!

We'd love your feedback on this performance. If you complete the short survey, you can enter for a chance to win two tickets to *An Evening with Viet Thanh Nguyen* on Thursday, March 16, 2023.



bit.ly/publiquartet-feedback

### **Engagement Events**

#### FEBRUARY 9-11, 2023

During their visit to Blacksburg, members of PUBLIQuartet led seven engagement events, including music improvisation workshops, university class visits, and a school-day performance. Participants included students in grades 2-7 from Floyd and Montgomery counties and Radford and Salem cities, as well as Virginia Tech students in numerous living-learning programs.

#### FEBRUARY 11, 2023 TALK: COMPOSING STATES

Christopher Campo-Bowen — assistant professor of musicology in the School of Performing Arts — delivered this talk, which explored how composers embody, construct, and complicate notions of national identity.

Special thanks to the Creativity and Innovation District Living-Learning Community, Leadership and Social Change Residential College, Residential College at West Ambler Johnston, Honors Residential Commons, Cranwell International Center, Mozaiko Living-Learning Community, Virginia Tech String Project, Kevin Ayoub, Christopher Campo-Bowen, Kayley Carter, Tanner Cooper, Robert S. Emmett, Grant Hamming, Iuliia Hoban, Lauren Oliver, and Molly Wilkens-Reed

# Go Deeper

PUBLIQuartet's program, *What Is American*, integrates audio excerpts of the unofficial "fifth verse" of the *Star Spangled Banner* (1861) by Oliver Wendell Holmes with performed works by Antonín Dvořák, Fats Waller, and Rhiannon Giddens, among others. How does the program's content define and question what it means to be "American?"

# In the Galleries

#### COMING SOON

Spring Exhibitions Thursday, February 16-Saturday, April 22

Opening Reception: Thursday, February 16, 5-7 PM

Anne Samat Follow Your Heart Wholeheartedly 2 Ruth C. Horton Gallery

In her fiber-based reliefs, Malaysian artist Anne Samat meticulously juxtaposes beadwork and traditional South Asian weaving techniques with common items, a project that questions the boundaries of craft and art.

Yanira Collado Zafa/ A Spellworking of Temporal Geometry Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery and Sherwood Payne Quillen '71 Reception Gallery

In the face of inevitable change and displacement, memories find a home in the relic. Yanira Collado explores the ideas of migration, reliquary, and memory through construction and ritual.

# K-12 Programs at the Moss



At the Moss Arts Center, we believe that arts experiences are a crucial part of a child's education. We've been dedicated to providing opportunities for children at no cost since we opened in 2013. A wide array of Moss programming and experiences to inspire, engage, and empower students of all ages and backgrounds. This season, we're offering five school-day matinee programs, in-school workshops and performances, and gallery tours with professional artists for learners of all ages. Learn more at **bit.ly/moss-k12**.

### Did You Know?

The Moss Arts Center's portable and collapsible orchestra shell installs in a matter of hours. Featuring a curved, hard surface, the shell primarily acts as a monitor so that musicians can hear each other, but also provides modest amplification to the house, reflecting sound to the audience.

### Land Acknowledgement and Labor Recognition

Virginia Tech acknowledges that we live and work on the Tutelo/Monacan People's homeland and we recognize their continued relationships with their lands and waterways. We further acknowledge that legislation and practices like the Morrill Act (1862) enabled the commonwealth of Virginia to finance and found Virginia Tech through the forced removal of Native Nations from their lands, both locally and in western territories.

We understand that honoring Native Peoples without explicit material commitments falls short of our institutional responsibilities. Through sustained, transparent, and meaningful engagement with the Tutelo/ Monacan Peoples and other Native Nations, we commit to changing the trajectory of Virginia Tech's history by increasing Indigenous student, staff, and faculty recruitment and retention, diversifying course offerings, and meeting the growing needs of all Virginia tribes and supporting their sovereignty.

We must also recognize that enslaved Black people generated revenue and resources used to establish Virginia Tech and were prohibited from attending until 1953. Through InclusiveVT, the institutional and individual commitment to *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve) in the spirit of community, diversity, and excellence, we commit to advancing a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive community.

### Health and Wellness

The Moss Arts Center adheres to the guidelines of the Virginia Department of Health and Virginia Tech in its operations, including protocols for distancing, face coverings, and cleaning and sanitation. Our status may change according to changes in university operating procedures. Find the most up to date information at artscenter.vt.edu/visit.

We ask patrons to do their part in keeping our community healthy. If you feel unwell, please stay home.

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The Moss Arts Partners (MAP) are ambassadors, advocates, and donors serving to advance and guide the mission of the Moss Arts Center. Thanks to our 2022-2023 MAP members for their leadership:

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### **Special Thanks**

We are grateful for the generosity of our patrons and donors who sustain the Moss Arts Center with their annual gifts. The impact of all contributions, no matter the amount, is significant in helping us transform lives through exploration and engagement with the arts and the creative process. We are honored to have received donations during the period of July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022, from the following:

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XY Community Gardens grew into a multi-acre community asset and transitioned to the Town of Blacksburg's Community Gardening program