

10 MOSS
ARTS
CENTER
10TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON



VT VIRGINIA
TECH.

MESHELL NDEGEOCELLO

Friday, March 15, 2024, 7:30 PM

Street and Davis Performance Hall, Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre

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MESHELL NDEGEOCELLO

Programmed by guest curator Shirlette Ammons

Chris Bruce, *guitar*
Jebin Bruni, *keys*
Abraham Rounds, *drums*
Kyle Miles, *bass*
Justin Hicks, *vocals*

Program to be announced from the stage.

Co-sponsored by the Black Cultural Center



PEACE BEYOND

Free my heart so my soul may fly
Free my mind of my worldly wants and desires
I look towards heaven with my arms open wide
Take my hand, come and take my hand

— *Meshell Ndegeocello*,
Free My Heart (Peace Beyond Passion)

As a rural Southerner raised in a Black Freewill Baptist tradition, prayer and ritual remain my nucleus. Road mercy, invocations for the sick and shut-in, sanctuary in the midst of storms, Black baptists have a prayer and procession for every occasion. When I began performing my original music in front of scant, open mic crowds at the burgeoning of a late-'90s spoken word movement, I leaned heavily into those proven prayers and rituals to soften my intimidation of the stage. In green rooms and hallways, before each performance, I'd call my momma to receive her blessing (ritual) and listen to *Free My Heart* by Meshell Ndegeocello (prayer). This disparate, definitive duet encouraged me to cross the invisible

line between secular and sacred. Momma embodied rapturous faith. Meshell confronted ghosts, lurking and holy. Both women had been resurrected more than once. Together, they helped me be born again.

For me, *Free My Heart* was the magic and the mantra on *Peace Beyond Passion*, Meshell's 1996 sophomore album. However, that record was not my introduction to the work of Meshell Ndegeocello. In 1993 I was an adolescent poet and bass player, having been gifted a scarlet blast-of-a-bass by Uncle Carl, my daddy's youngest brother. I'd never played an instrument and couldn't carry a note any worthy distance. But I loved holding the possibility of that bass in my grasp. As I was learning to articulate my queerness, I found refuge in its guttural gospel. I'd sit, mouthing bass lines until my fingers could pluck them. Shortly after acquiring Uncle Carl's bass, a friend gave me a raggedy Maxell tape with a fine-tipped Sharpie inscription. It read, *Plantation Lullabies*. I listened until the cassette player in my best friend's Sentra chewed the tape to shreds. Every song on Meshell's inaugural masterpiece introduced me to the audacity of Black women who bumrushed the patriarchy without invitation. I internalized every bassline and aligned myself with the Black writers and musicians overtly or covertly referenced. Through that album, I was gifted the expansive perspective of a certain Black woman; a Black woman radicalized by Eldridge Cleaver; a Black woman who rocked fresh Caesar cuts and stroked the dread locs of Black men while serenading their girlfriends with old soul records and picture shows. I became hip to the intersections of jazz, rock, go-go, soul, funk, and singer-songwriting as quintessential modes of Black storytelling. I followed Meshell from city to city, the way Deadheads chase Garcia. I studied the way she altered her musical personnel and persona. At her music's instruction, I aimed to make my basslines their own signature voice. I know there will always be a word in her compositions for me, so I search every album for that intimate whisper: *Bitter*, a broken heart's lament; *Comfort*

PEACE BEYOND, cont.

Woman, a celestial being's calling; *Weather*, a songwriter's best effort at the metaphors of meteorology; right up until *Good Good* from her latest offering, *The Omnichord Real Book* — "Feeling so good, good. What you gone do with me?" A question I pine daily as an ode to a life and a wife, both earned, charmed and chosen.

Meshell remains a beacon of genre defiance, craft-tending, and wrenching self-evaluation. She reminds me that music created in a stolen homeland is of a beautiful, bastard nature — blues midwived jazz, R&B mothered soul, country is every plantation's deadbeat dad. Meshell's music resuscitates us amidst Western efforts at our erasure.

Hole in the Bucket appears on Meshell's wonderful new work, *The Omnichord Real Book*. In this interrogating ballad, she asks, "Where's the gold?" I believe the gold is in the concrete jungles and red earth that bore us. Meshell Ndegeocello tells me that the gold is in the mining and our willingness to constantly churn.

— *Guest Curator Shirlette Ammons*

BIOGRAPHY

MESHELL NDEGEOCELLO

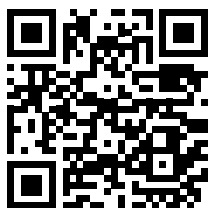
Meshell Ndegeocello has survived the best and worst of what a career in music has to offer. Ndegeocello eschewed genre for originality, celebrity for longevity, and musical trends for musical truths. Fans have come to expect the unexpected and follow her on sojourns into soul, R&B, jazz, hip-hop, and rock, all bound by the search for love, justice, respect, and resolution. Those sonic investigations have defied and redefined the expectations for women, queer artists, and Black music for over 30 years, and she remains one of few women who write the music, sing the songs, and lead the band.

A bass player above all else, Ndegeocello brings her warm, fat, and melodic groove to everything she does. She has earned a Grammy Award along with numerous nominations, and has played alongside the Rolling Stones, Madonna, Alanis Morissette, James Blood Ulmer, the Blind Boys of Alabama, Tony Allen, John Medeski, Billy Preston, and Chaka Khan. As for her own bass-playing influences, she credits Sting, Jaco Pastorius, Family Man Barrett, and Stevie Wonder. She is always grateful for the opportunity to share the stage and believes music is a fellowship. Ndegeocello looks to spread that gospel with every creation and collaboration.

This is the first performance by Meshell Ndegeocello 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 *Small Island, Big Song* on Wednesday, April 17, 2024.

bit.ly/ndegeocello-feedback

ENGAGEMENT EVENT

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2024

***ALL ABOUT THE VOICE: A ZOOM CONVERSATION
WITH MESHELL NDEGEOCELLO***

Moderated by Moss Arts Center guest curator Shirlette Ammons, this online conversation with Meshell Ndegeocello explored the musician's evolution over her nearly four-decade career, as well as inspiration and development of her most recent work.

Special thanks to the Black Cultural Center and Kimberly Clark

GO DEEPER

NPR has described Ndegeocello's sound as music made "for those who like: Afrofuturism, cosmic vibes, [and] self-care." Where do you hear these elements in the musician's work?





IN THE GALLERIES

Through Sunday, April 21

MESSENGERS

Leslie Hewitt

Tarrah Krajnak

Rodrigo Valenzuela

All galleries

Messengers explores the use of photography to communicate — not only through visual aesthetics, but to transmit more profound personal, cultural, and societal messages. Photography acts as a conduit for the artists' hybrid interdisciplinary approaches, enabling them to convey rich and multifaceted narratives, evolving through their formal and material languages.

Tarrah Krajnak; Self-Portrait as Weston/as Charis Wilson, 1934/2020, 1925/2020, 2020 (detail); from Master Rituals II: Weston's Nudes series; silver gelatin print; 10 x 8 inches; ed. of 5, 2 AP; exhibition copy on view; © Tarrah Krajnak, courtesy Zander Galerie

K-12 PROGRAMS AT THE MOSS ARTS CENTER

Experiences with the arts cultivate the next generation of creative thinkers, engage learners of diverse backgrounds, and foster community dialogue. The Moss Arts Center has been dedicated to providing K-12 students in the region with free, high-quality, and exciting arts programming since opening our doors in 2013. Through school-day matinee programs, gallery tours, in-school performances, and workshops with artists, we are passionate about serving our youngest community members and schools.

Learn more at bit.ly/moss-K12.

DID YOU KNOW?

In October 2022 the Moss Arts Center announced its first independent guest performing arts curator. North Carolina artist Shirlette Ammons brought a new perspective to the center's performance season, creating a focus on Black Southern artists who effortlessly cross genres and revitalize time-honored music traditions. One critical piece of Ammons' work was a series of conversations with Virginia Tech students and faculty members, which helped inform her curatorial process. Ammons has continued her work during the 2023-2024 season, which includes this performance by Meshell Ndegeocello. We thank Ammons for her brilliance, expressiveness, and innumerable passions.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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 the Morrill Land-Grant College Act (1862) enabled the commonwealth of Virginia to finance and found Virginia Tech through the forced removal of Native Nations from their lands in California and other areas in the West.

LABOR RECOGNITION

Virginia Tech acknowledges that its Blacksburg campus sits partly on land that was previously the site of the Smithfield and Solitude Plantations, owned by members of the Preston family. Between the 1770s and the 1860s, the Prestons and other local White families that owned parcels of what became Virginia Tech also owned hundreds of enslaved people. Enslaved Black people generated resources that financed Virginia Tech's predecessor institution, the Preston and Olin Institute, and they also worked on the construction of its building.

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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 cash donations during the period of July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023, from the following:

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and Jeffrey C. Cole
Ms. Nicole L. Wagner
Ms. Anne M. Waldmiller
Hunter Walker
Mr. Kevin G. Wang
Dr. Anna K. Ward and
Mr. Christopher B. Bartlett
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Mr. Claude L. Wimmer
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SPECIAL THANKS

Dr. Mary Leigh Wolfe

Dr. and Ms. Craig A. Woolsey

Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Yonce

Carter and Janet Younger

Ms. Mary J. Zody

**deceased*

ENDOWMENTS

The Moss Arts Center extends its appreciation to those donors who have established endowments in support of the arts.

Timothy and Michelle Bendel Center for the Arts Excellence Fund

Larry and Lindsey Bowman Center for the Arts Excellence Fund

Deborah L. Brown Center for the Arts Excellence Fund

Rosina and Dean Carter Endowment for Visual Arts Residency Program

Dr. Mark and Connie Froggatt Education Fund

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James M. and Margaret F. Shuler Fund for Excellence

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SŌ PERCUSSION WITH CAROLINE SHAW AND SPECIAL GUEST SHODEKEH

Wednesday, March 20, 7:30 PM

artscenter.vt.edu



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Thursday, March 21, 2024
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YMCA AT VIRGINIA TECH

Event brought to you by the YMCA at Virginia Tech
with support from Blacksburg Junior Women's Club, XDA and volunteers from VCOM

March 22- 3pm-6:30pm
March 23 - 10am-2pm

At The Y Center
1000, N. Main St., Blacksburg

Cinderella & Prince Charming Boutique

The Y 150 YEARS
The YMCA of Virginia Tech

Formal attire for teens on a budget!

The Y Thrift Shop has always provided low-cost goods for members of our community. But while the Thrift Shop sales are essential to funding our service programs, we don't forget its first mission to help others. It does this by donating inventory to social services, the Christmas Store, the Women's Resource Center, United Way, local schools and others. Be sure to stop by and check out our awesome Craft Corner for your latest project!



The Y Thrift Shop



Meet the Y Team

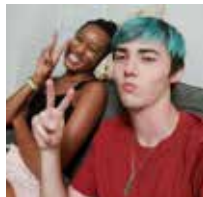
Violet Zaleski

I just finished my undergraduate degree in Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise in December 2023.

I am currently taking my gap year and studying for the MCAT and am serving as a Program Leader for the Joining Generations program.

My favorite thing about the Y has been how welcoming everyone is. I didn't expect to share so many laughs with others! I have cherished my moments volunteering with other Y members. I love being a part of celebrating 150 years of the Y! It's incredible to be a part of an organization that has been committed to serving the community in an abundance of ways.

A fun fact about me is that I have yet to see the original Lion King movie!



Mark Andrew Young

I am a Senior, majoring in Psychology and Cognitive/Behavioral Neuroscience. I am an Americorps service member, leading the Y afterschool program at Blacksburg Middle School (BMS).

Probably my favorite thing about the Y is the thrift store. It is a really affordable and expansive collection of items that you'll have trouble finding elsewhere in Blacksburg.

It's incredible that our Y has continued to run for so long and it's inspiring that people's commitment to service in our community has endured for so long.

I enjoy dyeing my own hair, and while I certainly fried my hair the first few times I tried I've gotten pretty decent and have had 8 different hair colors over the years!