

Tuesday, November 8, 2022
10AM & 12:30PM

Allison Miller and Derrick Hodge present

Soul on Soul: A Musical Tribute Honoring Mary Lou Williams

featuring

Alicia Olatuja, *vocals*

Shamie Royston, *piano*

Derrick Hodge, *electric bass*

Allison Miller, *drums*

**As a courtesy to the performers and fellow audience members, please be sure to silence all mobile devices.
The use of recording equipment and the taking of photographs are strictly prohibited.**



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the performance

Allison Miller and **Derrick Hodge** present *Soul on Soul*: a musical tribute honoring renowned pianist and composer **Mary Lou Williams** and her groundbreaking chorale masterpiece, *Black Christ of the Andes*. Miller and Hodge, both known for balancing tradition with innovation, have crafted a show that exemplifies the importance and influence of Mary Lou Williams's body of music in the present day. Throughout her 70-year career, Williams continually spearheaded new movements in jazz. As Duke Ellington said, "Mary Lou Williams is perpetually contemporary." Miller and Hodge have captured this innovative spirit in *Soul on Soul*, using imaginative instrumentation and modern approaches to harmony and orchestration.

Today's program will include selections from the following Mary Lou Williams compositions:

"It Ain't Necessarily So"
"Afungus Amungus"
Intermission
"Koolbonga"
"Anima Christi"
"Medi I"
"Medi II"
"In the Land of Oo-Bla-Dee"

meet the performers

Alicia Olatuja continuously astounds audiences with her vocals, versatility and demeanor. She first came into the spotlight in 2013, while performing as the featured soloist with the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir at President Barack Obama's Second Inauguration. Shortly thereafter, she assembled her own jazz-based ensemble and recorded her first solo album, *Timeless* (2014).

Originally from St. Louis, MO, she grew up immersed in a wide range of musical styles, including gospel, soul, jazz and classical. She later with a master's degree in classical voice/opera from the Manhattan School of Music. After appearing in operatic and musical theater productions, she performed in gospel and jazz concerts and worked with such artists as Chaka Khan, BeBe Winans and Christian McBride.

In 2014, Alicia came to the attention of the acclaimed composer/arranger/pianist Billy Childs, and was brought on to be part of the touring company of *Map to the Treasure: Reimagining Laura Nyro* alongside vocalist Becca Stevens. Her own band has been steadily in demand, performing at the Jazz Standard, Vermont Jazz Center, Sioux Falls JazzFest, Rockport Jazz Festival, Markham Jazz Festival, Monty Alexander Jazz Fest and the Harlem Stage Gatehouse.

Born in Denver, CO, **Shamie Royston** is, according to *JazzTimes*, "a vigorous, versatile pianist." She grew up alongside her sister, the award-winning Tia Fuller, in a musical and academic household. The sisters were introduced to jazz at a young age, and eventually joined their parents in the family band. As a

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teenager, she attended the Telluride Jazz Camp, and the University of Denver, mentoring with trumpeter Ron Miles with whom she formed a band and later recorded with drummer Ginger Baker (of Cream). She appears on two of Tia Fuller's albums, *Decisive Steps* and *Angelic Warrior*, and has released two albums as a leader. Kevin Whitehead, in reviewing her album *Beautiful Liar* on *Fresh Air*, claims that her music is "a straight-ahead, tuneful, hard-swinging brand of jazz that's always in style" and that her "composing really stamps her music." She has established herself as an in-demand performer and educator in the New York/New Jersey area. Aside from leading her own ensembles, she continues to work with Tia Fuller and Ron Miles and has appeared with Christian McBride, Sean Jones, Lonnie Plaxico, Ralph Peterson, Terri Lyne Carrington, Allison Miller and many others.

GRAMMY® Award-winning bassist and Blue Note recording artist **Derrick Hodge** grew up in Willingboro, NJ. In his formative years, he pursued multiple styles of music ranging from gospel and pop music to jazz and orchestral music, continuing his formal music education at Temple University where he studied jazz composition and performance. He became the first jazz major to participate in the Temple University Symphony Orchestra conducted by Luis Biava and New Music Chamber Orchestra.

He played with Philly jazz greats Bootsie Barnes and Terrell Stafford, meanwhile participating in session work with some of Philly's finest R&B artists like

Jill Scott, Musiq Soulchild, Floetry and DJ Jazzy Jeff. He worked with music icons Common and Kanye West for Common's albums *Be* (which reached the Billboard #1 chart) and *Finding Forever*. He also won two GRAMMY® Awards in 2012 and 2014 in the R&B category with the Robert Glasper Experiment as a founding member of the group.

As a Blue Note recording artist, he has released three solo projects under the label: *Live Today* (2013), *The Second* (2016) and *Color of Noize* (2020). He has directed, scored and written for films such as *Back to School Mom*, the *180 Days Documentary Series*, *Land of Opportunity*, *The Black Candle*, *The Army Recruiter* and *Uneasy Listening*. Recent film projects include a music consultant credit for *The Photograph* and a composer credit for the American Library System's documentary *Free for All Lives*, directed by Dawn Logsdon

NYC-based drummer/composer/teacher **Allison Miller** engages her deep roots in improvisation as a vehicle to explore all music. Described by critics as a "modern jazz icon in the making," she won *Downbeat's* 67th Annual Critics Poll for "Rising Star Drummer" and the *JazzTimes'* 2019 Critics Poll for "Best Jazz Drummer." Boom Tic Boom, her longtime band, won the Jazz Journalists Association's 2019 award for "Best Mid-Sized Ensemble." Her composition *Otis Was a Polar Bear* is included on NPR's list of the "200 Greatest Songs by 21st Century Women+." She is also the first recipient of the Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation's Commissioning Grant. The commissioned work, *Rivers in Our Veins*, explores multimedia performance (live music, tap dance and interactive

meet the cast

video) as a vital form of knowledge production through the poetic interpretation of historical events and their association with the geography, ecology and flow of specific rivers.

A three-time Jazz Ambassador for the U.S. State Department and Monterey Jazz Festival Artist in Residence alumni, she has released five albums with her longtime band, Boom Tic Boom. Their most recent release, *Glitter Wolf*, was met with critical acclaim, including “Best Jazz Of 2019” lists from NPR, *Rolling Stone* and *JazzTimes* magazine. The band has toured throughout the U.S., Europe and Asia as well as being featured on such programs as NPR’s *Fresh Air* with Terry Gross, *Tiny Desk* with Bob Boilen, WNYC’s *Soundcheck* and *New Sounds* with John Schaefer, and *Jazz Night in America* with Christian McBride.

She teaches at The New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music (where she is a Melba Liston Fellow), Stanford Jazz Workshop, Centrum, Geri Allen Jazz Camp, Carnegie Hall’s NYO Jazz, Jazz Education Abroad — Arts Envoy to Thailand and is the Artistic Director of Jazz Camp West. She is the 2022 director for Jazz Educator’s Network *Sisters in Jazz* program and a featured clinician at PASIC’s 2022 International Convention. She is also a contributor to the groundbreaking book, *New Standards: 101 Lead Sheets by Women Composers*, published by Berklee Press/Hal Leonard and proudly endorses Yamaha drums, Zildjian cymbals, Vic Firth sticks, Evans drumheads and Sunhouse percussion.

meet the composer

Mary Lou Williams was not only the First Lady of jazz; she has a place at the very top echelon of the jazz pantheon. She wrote over 350 compositions throughout her rich and highly eclectic musical career. She also helped spawn an entire generation of young musicians during the 1940s that would precipitate the birth of one of the world’s most influential musical styles, known as bebop. Her students included musicians as influential and varied as Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Charlie Parker and countless others.

She came to prominence in the late ’20s and ’30s as the principal composer/arranger and pianist for Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy, enhancing her reputation by contributing to the big band books of Benny Goodman, Earl Hines, Tommy Dorsey and, later, Duke Ellington and Dizzy Gillespie. She became an early champion of bebop, adapting its modern harmonies and rhythms to her blues and boogie rooted piano style. In the ’50s she had a spiritual crisis that led her to abandon music for about three years; then she became a Roman Catholic. This yielded a small masterpiece in 1964 with her hymn in honor of St. Martin de Porres called “Black Christ of the Andes.” She also composed three complete masses including “Music for Peace” later known as “Mary Lou’s Mass.” In 1964, she founded Mary Records to release her own self-produced album *Black Christ of the Andes*. She also released “Music for Peace” (later “Mary Lou’s Mass”) and “Zoning”, as well as four 45 RPM recordings on Mary Records. Williams also founded her own publishing company, Cecilia Music Co., for the same purposes and is one of the very few African American, and

meet the composer

particularly African American women artists of her time, to have done so. She returned to the jazz world fully in 1970 and remained there for the rest of her life. She appeared in concert and at workshops in colleges, at jazz festivals, in clubs, on recordings, on radio and television. In her last four years she maintained a full professional schedule of appearances while functioning as Artist in Residence at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. To this day, she remains one of the most historically significant and influential women in jazz.

resources

For post-show resources, please visit:
njpac.org/education-program/soul-on-soul-a-musical-tribute-honoring-mary-lou-williams-resources/

acknowledgments

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