



# RUTH NAOMI FLOYD

## *ARE WE YET SOMEHOW ALIVE?*

**COMPOSER, VOCALS, FLUTE, PHOTOGRAPHER** Ruth Naomi Floyd

**CHORAL ARRANGER, DIRECTOR OF THE CATHEDRAL SINGERS,**

**DIRECTOR** Dr. Thomas Lloyd

**MUSIC DIRECTOR & PIANIST** Aaron Graves

**VIOLIN** Diane Monroe

**DANCER** Brenda Dixon Gottschild

**NARRATORS** The Reverend Dr. Charles (Chaz) Lattimore Howard, Valerie V. Gay

**VOCALS** Deion Peyton

**BASS CLARINET & TENOR SAXOPHONE** Anthony Nelson

**DOUBLE BASS** Lee Smith

**DRUMS** Mark Prince

**THE CATHEDRAL SINGERS** Brenda Bonhomme, Suzanne DuPlantis, Matthew English, Jenny Anne Flory, James Gwathney, Jane Kamp, Erik Nordgren, Dan Taylor

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Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral

Thursday, April 25 @ 7:30 PM

There will be no intermission.

This performance is co-presented with the Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral.

## PROGRAM NOTES

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*Are We Yet Somehow Alive?* is a moving world premiere that pairs jazz, blues and gospel with color photographic images to share compelling first-person accounts from enslaved Africans in America. At the intersection of despair, endurance and resistance, these narratives explore what it means to be human amidst the struggle for liberation and the fight against dehumanization.

### **About the Photography Exhibition and Projections**

The act of remembrance is a powerful theme in my visual and musical works. The African American Spirituals and my historical projects on Frederick Douglass, Octavius Catto, William Edmondson and Marian Anderson prepared the groundwork for me to reexamine the roots of the enslaved Africans' identity, language, oppression, survival and liberation in America. Exploring the enslaved Africans' narratives sheds light on the layers and depths of humaneness and inhumanity in America.

I have always chosen the medium of black and white photography; it allows me to express the brightest white to the deepest black and the vivid gray shades that fall in between. However, I decided this body of images would be my first color exhibition. Although this decision brought me new artistic and technical challenges, I am grateful for the process of producing the color images. I captured the images by photographing through translucent and textured objects.

My photographic images reflect the nuanced reality and spirit of endurance, strength, grief, rage and defiant joy in the battle for dignity and freedom amid unrelenting dehumanization. Experiencing the enslaved Africans' narratives helps us examine our present times and reflect upon the crucial questions of what it means to be human in our society, country and world.

- Ruth Naomi Floyd

View the exhibition at Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral through May 26, 2024 at public events or on weekdays by appointment by calling 215.386.0234.

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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### **Ruth Naomi Floyd** (Composer, Vocalist, Flautist and Photographer)

A vocalist and composer, Floyd has been at the forefront of creating a discography of vocal jazz settings that express theology, history and justice. Floyd performs and lectures on the intersection of beauty, theology, justice, culture and the arts worldwide.

*Frederick Douglass Jazz Works* is Floyd's award-winning body of compositions in honor of the great abolitionist, orator, writer and statesman. Floyd was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts Project Grant for *The Frances Suite*, which celebrates the life and writings of Frances Ellen Watkin Harper and features an all-female ensemble. Floyd's "Freedom" composition premiered in Wales, United Kingdom, and was commissioned in honor of human rights activist Mende Nazer's profound story of survival as an enslaved person in Sudan and London. In addition, during the centennial year of Leonard Bernstein's birth, Philadelphia's Mann Center, in partnership with NEWorks Productions, commissioned Floyd as one of four composers to create a community mass inspired by Bernstein's *Mass* that explores anew the relevance of faith in our times. Floyd's latest recording on the life and mission of Octavious Valentine Catto, an American educator and civil rights activist, will be released this year on Spring Garden Records. To honor and celebrate the life, art, activism and legacy of the great contralto Marian Anderson, Floyd is researching and composing a body of work for jazz and string quartet. The Orrin Evans Trio, featuring Floyd, was named one of NPR Music's Best Live Sessions. Floyd and poet Charles Lattimore Howard were awarded the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts Jazz Residency for a powerful message about homelessness in Philadelphia. Floyd was awarded the Philadelphia Arts + Business Council Leadership Award for her art and justice work and the Leeway Foundation Transformation Grant. Floyd is a Lincoln City Fellow through the Speranza Foundation and was a fellow at Mutual Mentorship for Musicians.

A committed music educator, Floyd is the first African American woman to serve as the Founding Director of a university jazz studies program in the United States. She served as Director of Jazz Studies at Cairn University and is an artist-in-residence at Temple University. In addition, Floyd was the Music Director at the City School for over two decades. Community College of Philadelphia appointed Floyd as their inaugural artist-in-residence, and she is an inaugural Equity in Action Visiting Scholar of the Office of Social Equity and Community at the University of Pennsylvania. Concordia College New York awarded Floyd an Honorary Doctorate for her unique and valuable contribution to the arts, her commitment to music education and her justice work.

Floyd is also an award-winning fine art photographer specializing in black-and-white portraits. She captures her images using silver-based films and 35mm and 4x5 inch view cameras. Floyd produces her final images using traditional wet darkroom and digital printing on archival papers. Floyd has received awards, prizes and grants for her photographic images, and her work is included in permanent and private collections.

Floyd has recorded and performed with notable instrumentalists such as James Newton, James Weidman, Gary Thomas, John Patitucci, Terri Lyne Carrington, George Cables, Bobby Watson, Aaron Graves, Mark Prince, Matthew Parrish, Bobby Zankel, Diane Monroe, Byron Landham, Bryan Carrot, Keith Loftis, Uri Caine, Craig Handy, The EVER Ensemble and many others.

### **Dr. Thomas Lloyd** (Choral Arranger and Director)

Lloyd has served as director of music at the Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral since 2010 and director of the visual arts program since 2018. As a composer, the premier recording of his 70-minute choral-theatre work *Bonhoeffer* in 2017 earned The Crossing its first Grammy® Award nomination. His portfolio includes over 40 choral and solo voice compositions setting both sacred and secular texts. He has published articles and presented workshops exploring how predominantly White choirs can begin to approach African American spirituals and sacred jazz with integrity. As part of this work, he has collaborated with a range of artists including Ruth Naomi Floyd, Dr. Jay Fluellen, Dr. J. Donald Dumpson, Dr. Lourin Plant, DeVonne Gardner and Waltier Blocker in performances bringing together musicians and choirs from across racial and cultural boundaries.

Lloyd is in his 24th season as Artistic Director of the Bucks County Choral Society, where programs of major choral works with orchestra have included rare Philadelphia performances of Elgar's *The Apostles* and Cesar Franck's *The Beatitudes*, as well as ongoing series of concerts devoted to the spirituals and sacred jazz, musical theatre and opera. Lloyd is Emeritus Professor of Music at Haverford College, where he directed the choral and vocal studies program for Haverford and Bryn Mawr Colleges from 1996 to 2017. Through numerous domestic and 12 international tours with these choirs to Latin America, Eastern Europe and Russia, Africa and the Middle East, Lloyd has planned collaborative concerts with over 60 regional choirs and orchestras.

Lloyd holds degrees from the Oberlin Conservatory, Yale School of Music, Yale Divinity School and the University of Illinois. He has served as Chair of the Women's Sacred Music Project and is currently in his fifth year serving on the Anti-Racism Commission of the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania.

### **Aaron Graves** (Music Director and Pianist)

Graves is a musician, composer, arranger, producer and conductor. He was raised in Reidsville, North Carolina and learned to play various instruments, including piano, bass, organ and drums, in the church where his father, a great musician with a musical family, was pastor. Graves eventually moved to Washington, D.C. at 16 to play bass guitar with Richard Smallwood and attended The Duke Ellington School for the Performing Arts. This is where he began sharing the art form that some call jazz.

After touring with various artists, including Richard Smallwood, Myrna Summers, The Voices Supreme and Henry Davis, Graves entered Howard University and received a Special Talent Scholarship. After two years of study, he transferred to the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) to study with jazz master Calvin Jones. While studying at UDC, Graves auditioned for a National Endowment of the Arts grant, was accepted and studied with NEA Jazz Master Kenny Barron. He has also studied with jazz greats Barry Harris and Stanley Cowell.

Graves has been blessed to perform and/or record with Stanley Turrentine, Oscar Brown, Jr., Dakota Staton, Houston Person, Ernie Andrews, Marlena Shaw, Linda Hopkins, Cassandra Wilson, Antonio Hart, Greg Osby, Keter Betts, Bill Lee, Grady Tate, Kenny Burrell, Frank Foster, Grover Washington, Jr., Vanessa Rubin, Earl May, The Blackbyrds, The Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, Maceo Parker, Fred Wesley, Pee Wee Ellis, The Boys Choir of Harlem, Jann Parker, Donald Byrd, James Moody, Kevin Mahogany, Barbara Montgomery, Jimmy Scott and many others.

Some of Graves's television credits are the award-winning documentary *Eyes on the Prize with Sweet Honey and the Rock*, *The Bill Cosby Show*, *The Lou Rawls Show*, *Good Morning Australia*, Japan Airlines, *Conjurers: Women in Jazz with Cassandra Wilson* and the theme for *The Carol Randolph Show*. He performed on the soundtrack for the movie *Ashes and Embers* by independent filmmaker Haile Gerima; was the conductor on Broadway for *Truly Blessed* about the life of Mahalia Jackson, written and performed by Queen Esther Marrow; was the conductor of *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill* with Criss Calloway in Edinburgh, Scotland; and was the conductor for *Essentially Ellington* at the Prince Theater in Philadelphia. He has also performed with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

### **Diane Monroe** (Violin)

Monroe is a versatile violinist, composer and educator. While in demand as a classical chamber artist, she gained visibility in the jazz world with membership as the first violinist of the Max Roach Double Quartet and the Uptown String Quartet. She later joined the String Trio of New York, an avant-garde jazz performing and composers collective. She has recorded on the Philips/Soul Note, Black Saint, Innova and Musical Heritage labels.

Monroe performs regularly with her own trio-to-septet ensembles and projects include collaborations with dancers Germaine Ingram, Leah Stein, and with the coveted storyteller/librettist, Charlotte Blake Alston. In 2018, Monroe won the Clef Club/PA Senator's Jazz Legacy Award and both a fellowship and project grant from The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage. She has performed with both renowned jazz and classical artists including Yo-Yo Ma, Arnold Steinhardt, Paul Badura-Skoda, Odean Pope, Reggie Workman, Renee Rosnes, Bobby Zankel, John Blake Jr., Regina Carter, Jon Faddis, Tom Lawton, Uri Caine, Mark O'Connor, Jim Ridl, Tony Miceli, Barbara Walker and Ruth Naomi Floyd.

Monroe's upcoming events include two solo performances with the Lehigh University Orchestra, a composing commission from the PRISM Quartet, a Clef Club trio performance with Odean Pope and Reggie Workman, and a performance of her original suite, *Violin Woman, African Dreams*.

Monroe has performed at Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully, Avery Fischer, BAM, Switzerland's Tonhalle, the Kennedy Center, The Apollo Theater and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. her composition *Vibes* and her orchestration of Fred Rogers' "You Are Special" appear on the Sony Classical Records soundtrack for the film *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*.

Monroe has adjudicated at the coveted Sphinx and Fischhoff solo and chamber competitions. She has also taught as an assistant professor of violin at Oberlin Conservatory and as adjunct faculty at Swarthmore, Temple and Lehigh Universities, Settlement Music School and The Quartet Program. She holds degrees from the Curtis Institute of Music and the Philadelphia Musical Academy (now University of the Arts).

### **Brenda Dixon Gottschild** (Dancer)

Gotschild is the author of *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts*, *Waltzing in the Dark: African American Vaudeville and Race Politics in the Swing Era* (winner of the 2001 Congress on Research in Dance Award for Outstanding Scholarly Dance Publication), *The Black Dancing Body—A Geography from Coon to Cool* (winner, 2004 de la Torre Bueno prize for scholarly excellence in dance publication) and *Joan Myers Brown and The Audacious Hope of the Black Ballerina—A Biohistory of American Performance*.

Additional honors include the Congress on Research in Dance Award for Outstanding Leadership in Dance Research (2008), a Leeway Foundation Transformation Grant (2009), the International Association for Blacks in Dance Outstanding Scholar Award (2013), the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus Civil Rights Award (2016), a Pew Fellowship in the Arts (2017) and a *Dance Magazine* Award (2022).

A self-described anti-racist cultural worker utilizing dance as her medium, she is a freelance writer, consultant, performer and lecturer; a former consultant and writer for *Dance Magazine* and Professor Emerita of dance studies, Temple University. As an artist-scholar, she coined the phrase, "choreography for the page," to describe her embodied, subjunctive approach to research writing.

Nationwide and abroad, she curates post-performance reflexive dialogues, writes critical performance essays, performs self-created solos and collaborates with her husband, choreographer/dancer Hellmut Gottschild, in a genre they developed and titled "movement theater discourse."

**The Rev. Charles Lattimore Howard, PhD** (Narrator)

Howard serves as The University Chaplain and Vice President for Social Equity & Community at the University of Pennsylvania, his alma mater. Over his more than quarter-century at Penn, he and his team in the chaplaincy have worked to curate a dynamic and nationally recognized spiritual and religious community on campus. Through his work as Vice President, he has provided leadership to a range of university initiatives that have sought to make Penn and the surrounding community more equitable, more accessible and more welcoming.

Over the course of his career, he has taught college and seminary courses on church history, faith and politics, preaching, African American history, social activism, cross cultural education, Black theology and hip hop. Howard has preached, lectured and led retreats in congregations and universities around the country as well as in Europe, Asia and Africa.

Howard's writing has been featured in such publications as *Sojourners Magazine*, *The Christian Century*, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, The Huffington Post, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, The Forward, *Democratic Left*, Slate and Daily Good. He is the author or editor of four books including most recently *Pond River Ocean Rain* (2017) and *The Bottom: A Theopoetic of the Streets* (2020).

Howard is an Episcopal Priest and shares life with his beloved wife Dr. Lia C. Howard and their three daughters.

**Valerie V. Gay** (Narrator)

Gay is a creative, certified financial planner, non-profit administrator, recording and performing artist and thought leader. While a classically trained soprano, Gay is an active performer across several genres, having widely performed, including a solo performance at Carnegie Hall and a feature on NPR Music.

Gay was recently appointed by the Mayor of Philadelphia as executive director of the Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy (OACCE), the first executive director of OACCE to serve in the Mayor's Cabinet in Philadelphia.

In 2019, Gay received an Honorary Doctorate in humane letters from St. Joseph's University and has earned a Professional Studies Certificate and a Master of Music in vocal performance at Temple University's Boyer College of Music and Dance, a Bachelor of Music in voice performance from the University of the Arts and completed degree course work at the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University.

### **Deion Payton** (Vocals)

Payton is a native of Boston, and grew up in Philadelphia. He began singing at the age of four and studied at the Philadelphia High School for Creative and Performing Arts as a vocal major. He studied at Cairn University and graduated with a Bachelor of Art in music with a concentration in voice. While at Cairn, Payton restored and led the Cairn Gospel Choir, which is now an accredited course and university ensemble. Presently, Payton serves on the faculty at Cairn University as director for the gospel choir. During his college career while singing and touring both in Europe and Hong Kong, Payton was afforded the opportunity to go into the schools and share on the origin and practice of gospel music and the technique of gospel singing.

### **Anthony Nelson, Jr.** (Bass Clarinet and Tenor Saxophone)

Musician, composer and arranger Anthony Nelson, Jr. ignites fans with his melodic originality. A saxophonist, flautist, clarinetist and bass clarinetist, Nelson is blessed with an inherent talent that is boundless in its ability to reach across generational and genre lines. Nelson was born and raised in Plainfield, NJ, where he was fortunate to be groomed in the church by gospel musicians, many of whom were backing major recording artists.

Nelson attended the University of the District of Columbia, where he studied under master arranger Calvin Jones. He later went to William Paterson University under the tutelage of Gary Smulyan and Vincent Herring. Nelson is pursuing a master's in ethnomusicology worship service at Cairn University. Nelson has served as the clarinetist in the quintet of MacArthur award-winner and Grammy®-nominated violinist Regina Carter, touring and appearing with her on NPR's *JazzSet*. Nelson has released five albums, including his debut solo CD, *Testament: Live at Cecil's*, which stayed on the JazzWeek charts for 10 weeks. He has since released *Tenor for Two*, *Live @ Twins Jazz*, *Swift to Hear*, *Slow To Speak* and his most recent offering, *Swinging Sunset*.

Nelson utilizes Vandoren mouthpieces, reeds and accessories as well as Yanagisawa saxophones, Uebel and Moe-Bleichnor clarinets.

### **Lee Smith** (Double Bass)

Smith was born and raised in Philadelphia. Smith's professional career as a bassist started 50 years ago, touring and recording with several Philadelphia-based R&B legends including the Delphonics, Blue Magic and Billy Paul. Smith moved to NYC and spent five years touring with Afro-Cuban percussionist Mongo Santamaria. He appears on five of Mongo's albums, including the Grammy® Award-winning *Amanecer*. Smith has worked with numerous jazz legends including Dizzy Gillespie, Sonny Fortune, Benny Golson and Odean Pope. He is a current member of the Jazz Orchestra of Philadelphia under the direction of Terell Stafford. Smith's music history is included in Jazz Bridge's Jazz Legends Archives. He has written, arranged and produced three of his own CDs, *Sittin' on a Secret*, *My Kind of Blues* and *Faith in the New Day*, all receiving critical acclaim. Smith is also the proud father of bass great Christian McBride.

### **Mark Prince** (Drums)

Born and raised in Washington, D.C., Prince is one of the premier drummers in today's music scene, having honed his skills at Howard University under the legendary tutelage of the late Grady Tate. He has gained a strong reputation as an extremely versatile drummer, playing styles ranging from contemporary and straight-ahead jazz to hip hop and R&B, as well as funk/fusion and Brazilian jazz. In addition to leading his own ensemble and performing all original material from his critically acclaimed debut release, *Fraction of Infinity*, on Contour Records, Prince also co-leads a world-class organ trio, Firm Roots with Brad Collins and Benjie Porecki, garnering critical acclaim for its album release, *Live at Blues Alley*.

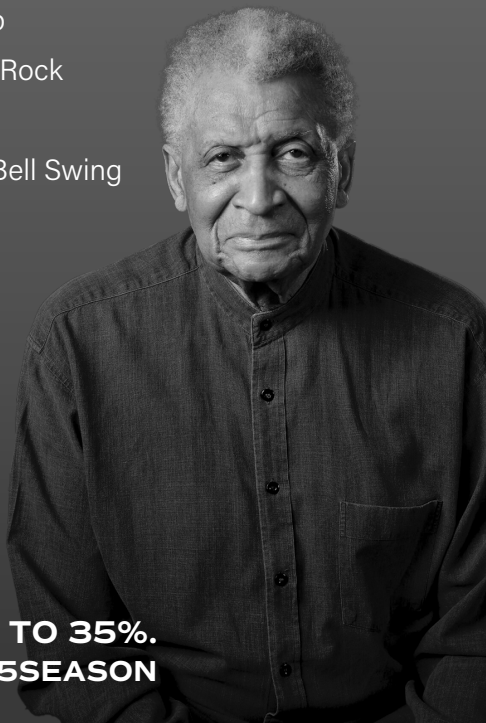
### **The Cathedral Singers**

The Cathedral Singers are the liturgical choir of the Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral. An octet of core singers is supplemented by volunteers on Sunday mornings, Sunday afternoon evensongs, special contemplative services and diocesan events in collaboration with choirs from around the diocese. The group sings a broad and eclectic range of repertoire from the historic Anglican tradition and beyond, both old and new. Reflecting the diversity of the Cathedral congregation, African American spirituals and sacred jazz are an important part of their repertoire throughout the year.

# 24/25 SEASON

## JAZZ & WORLD MUSIC HIGHLIGHTS

- OCT 5** Joshua Redman Group
- OCT 27** Sweet Honey and the Rock
- NOV 10** Abdullah Ibrahim Trio
- DEC 8** Bria Skonberg: Jingle Bell Swing
- FEB 7** Shemekia Copeland
- MAR 22** Angélique Kidjo
- MAY 9** Lakecia Benjamin



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