

JAMES
MCVINNIE
ENSEMBLE

FRIDAY 12 AUGUST at 7.30PM

JAMES McVINNIE ENSEMBLE

**with special guest Paul Mendez reading
poems by Claude McKay**

A collaboration with London Review of Books

James McVinnie — Direction/Piano

Eliza McCarthy — Piano

Siwan Rhys — Piano

Hugh Rowlands — Piano

*I will not toy with it nor bend an inch.
Deep in the secret chambers of my heart
I muse my life-long hate, and without flinch
I bear it nobly as I live my part.
My being would be a skeleton, a shell,
If this dark Passion that fills my every mood,
And makes my heaven in the white world's hell,
Did not forever feed me vital blood.
I see the mighty city through a mist—
The strident trains that speed the goaded mass,
The poles and spires and towers vapor-kissed,
The fortified port through which the great ships pass,
The tides, the wharves, the dens I contemplate,
Are sweet like wanton loves because I hate.*

— Claude McKay

Programme

Meredith Monk, *Ellis Island* (1981)

Claude McKay
America
The City's Love

inti figgis-vizueta, *build-it-yourself* (2020)

Claude McKay
Harlem Shadows
When Dawn Comes to the City

Marcos Balter, *Dreamcatcher* (2018)

Claude McKay
The White City
Through Agony

Julius Eastman, *Gay Guerrilla* (1979)

Claude McKay
On Broadway
The Easter Flower

Christopher Cerrone, *Hoyt-Schermerhorn* (2010)

BOLD TENDENCIES

“Writing this has given me pause to think back to 2020 and the early pandemic. Coming to perform at Bold Tendencies in early September that year really saved my summer — the rare opportunity to make music in front of others was a golden dream come true, but also gave me purpose and structure to those long hot, endless days and weeks in preparation. The raw intimacy of this concrete jungle set against the London skyline makes for a truly unique experience as a performer and I’m very happy to be back.

The concert tonight is a collaboration with the London Review of Books. Paul Mendez will read from Claude McKay’s *Harlem Shadows*, published 100 years ago. 1922 was a conspicuous year for literature, which saw the near-simultaneous publication of T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, and Virginia Woolf’s *Jacob’s Room*. Claude McKay was one of the leading figures in the Harlem Renaissance, the flowering of black American intellectual and artistic talents in 1920s Harlem, New York City. Poems from *Harlem Shadows* will be interspersed with musical works written later in the 20th and 21st centuries from New York preoccupied by similar themes, culminating in *Gay Guerilla* by Julius Eastman.”

—James McVinnie

Paul Mendez is a London-based Jamaican-British writer. He was born in 1982 in the Black Country, a historically industrial region in the English West Midlands. Raised within the Jehovah's Witness faith, Mendez left the organisation while still a teenager. Upon receiving a manuscript of autobiographical fragments, Dialogue Books publisher Sharmaine Lovegrove (UK) challenged Mendez to find the fiction in his story, and the resulting novel, *RAINBOW MILK*, was published to rave reviews during the 2020 lockdown. *RAINBOW MILK* was named one of the Observer's Top Ten Best Debuts for 2020. It was shortlisted for the Gordon Burn Prize, the Jhalak Prize, the Polari Prize, in the Fiction Debut category of the British Book Awards, and for the LAMBDA Literary Award in Gay Fiction. Mendez is currently adapting the novel for a TV series. He has gone on to write for the London Review of Books, British Vogue, The Face, Attitude, Esquire, Times Literary Supplement and Brixton Review of Books, and is currently studying for the MA in Black British Literature at Goldsmiths, University of London.

The **James McVinnie Ensemble** is a collective of virtuoso keyboardists from London that specialises in new music. The ensemble's roots go back to 2017 with a performance at London's Barbican Centre of Philip Glass' *Music in Twelve Parts*—the only performance in the piece's history given by anyone other than the Philip Glass Ensemble. The group launched in its current incarnation in 2021 at Bold Tendencies with composer portraits of John Adams, Philip Glass alongside Gabriella Smith ('high-voltage and wildly imaginative – the coolest, most exciting, most inventive new voice I've heard in ages'). In November 2021 the ensemble performed a new version by McVinnie of Philip Glass' seminal *Glassworks*, together with Glass' *Music in Fifths & True Stories & Rational Numbers* by Chris P Thompson scored for just-intonation keyboards at London's Barbican Centre.

James McVinnie has a singular career as a musician and performer working at the intersection of the organ, contemporary classical and electronic music. He has commissioned major new works for the organ from Philip Glass, Tom Jenkinson/Squarepusher, Nico Muhly, Gabriella Smith, Martin Creed, David Chalmin, David Lang, Richard Reed Parry, Bryce Dessner, Hildur Guðnadóttir & Darkstar. He has collaborated as a performer with an endless array of artists from diverse musical backgrounds. He has released music on Warp Records, Bedroom Community and Orange Mountain Music. 2021/22 season premieres include *Infinity Gradient*, an hour long work written for McVinnie by Tristan Perich for organ and 100 speakers in 1bit audio, *Breathing Forests* a new organ concerto about the complex relationship between humans, forests, climate change, and fire by Gabriella Smith for McVinnie and LA Philharmonic/Esa Pekka Salonen, and a new work by Ellen Reid as part of *SOUNDWALK*, a GPS-enabled work of public art in London's Regent's Park that uses music to illuminate the natural environment.

A recent graduate of Cambridge University, organist **Hugh Rowlands** has appeared with London Contemporary Orchestra at London's Union Chapel, and Icelandic duo Jónsi and Alex at London's Barbican Centre and Paris Philharmonie. As an organist he appears on recordings with the Choir of Royal Hospital Chelsea (where he spent his gap year as organ scholar) of previously unrecorded music by Ralph Vaughan Williams on Albion labels and on a disc of music for Remembrancetide. At Cambridge he was organ scholar at Sidney Sussex College where he acted as accompanist to the choir in services in Chapel during term time, as well as concerts, recordings and tours to the Far East. He was also organ scholar for King's Voices, King's College's mixed voice choir which sings in King's College Chapel each week.

Eliza McCarthy is a London based pianist dedicated to performing new and experimental music. Passionate about developing close creative relationships with composers she has had the pleasure of working with, commissioning, premiering and recording music by many including John Adams, Thomas Adès, George Crumb, Tansy Davies, Donnacha Dennehy, Kit Downes, Andrew Hamilton, Nico Muhly and Laurie Spiegel. She regularly collaborates with Mica Levi (*Under the Skin, Jackie*) and their album *Slow Dark Green Murky Waterfall* was released in 2018 on Slip. Recent performance highlights include Morton Feldman's 90 minute solo piano work *Triadic Memories* which she performed at the Southbank Centre's DEEP∞MINIMALISM festival, a solo show for Nature Unwrapped at King's Place featuring music by John Luther Adams, Kit Downes and Donnacha Dennehy and the world premiere of *True Stories & Rational Numbers* by Chris P. Thompson with James McVinnie Ensemble at the Barbican Centre.

Siwan Rhys focuses on interpreting and creating new music, working closely with composers, improvisers, and other artists. She plays regularly as a soloist, chamber musician, and ensemble pianist. She is one half of piano-percussion duo GBSR Duo. Recent commercial releases include a critically-acclaimed recording of Stockhausen's *KONTAKTE*, a Barbara Monk Feldman portrait disc, Oliver Leith's *good day good day bad day bad day*, re-voicings by Mira Calix of John Cage's *Sonatas and Interludes*, a 70-minute work by Eva-Maria Houben, and piano music by Ryoko Akama. A regular ensemble pianist, Siwan works with groups such as the London Sinfonietta, Colin Currie Group, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, and is a member of new music group Explore Ensemble.

Upcoming Events

Saturday 20 August at 7.30pm

**Górecki: Symphony No. 3, Symphony of Sorrowful Songs
– Ella Taylor & the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted
by Rory Macdonald**

This major work, written in 1976, was dedicated by Górecki to his wife, Jadwiga Rurańska. An evocation of the ties between mother and child, a solo soprano sings Polish texts in each of the three movements. The first is a 15th-century Polish lament of Mary, mother of Jesus, the second a message written on the wall of a Gestapo cell during World War II, and the third a Silesian folk song of a mother searching for her son lost in the Silesian uprisings. The dominant themes of the Symphony are motherhood, despair and suffering, and it is an unforgettable experience to hear it live. The Philharmonia Orchestra will be conducted by Rory Macdonald and we are excited to welcome award-winning soprano Ella Taylor as soloist.

Saturday 27 August at 7.30pm

**Stockhausen: KONTAKTE, Aphex Twin: Computer
Controlled Acoustic Instruments pt.2 – GBSR Duo**

Known for his ground-breaking work in electronic music, influential German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen's masterpiece *KONTAKTE* from 1958–60 uses incredibly detailed spectral analysis of acoustic sound sources (metal, skin, and wood) to shape electronic phrases. The work combines directional recordings with live performers, the effect being sounds passed around and across the audience in an elaborate and dramatic use of acoustic space. Similarly Aphex Twin's *Computer Controlled Acoustic Instruments pt.2* features acoustic sounds - prepared piano, drums, and wood and metal percussion- controlled electronically. It will be performed in a new live version in the unique spatial and auditory conditions of the former car park spaces. GBSR Duo is George Barton (percussion) and

Siwan Rhys (piano), two of the UK's finest young contemporary chamber musicians. They will be joined by percussionist Sam Wilson, pianist Joseph Havlat and sound engineers Sound Intermedia.

Thursday 1 September at 7.30pm

Sheku Kanneh-Mason

Sheku Kanneh-Mason is returning with a new programme devised specially for Bold Tendencies. He will perform with Harry Baker, an award-winning improvisational pianist and composer in jazz, classical and new-music, as well as four fellow cellists (Hadewych van Gent, Max Ruisi, Ashok Klouda, Hannah Roberts) and English-Moroccan singer songwriter Zak Abel. The programme will open with the shattering harmonies and soaring melody of Bach's *Komm, süßer Tod (Come, sweet death...)*; written in 1736 for the German composer's book of 69 *Sacred Songs and Arias*, it is presented here in a new arrangement by Sheku for five cellos. It will close with the Nile Rogers hit *Good Times*, a utopian disco celebration from 1979. For Chic, disco was more than a beat — it was “a new state of mind.”

Saturday 10 September at 7.30pm

Rachmaninov: Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor — Jeneba Kanneh-Mason & the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Roderick Cox

This towering epic is one of the greatest works in the piano repertoire and notoriously difficult to play. It burns and sparkles with yearning, bittersweet intensity. Rachmaninov dedicated the concerto to Dr Nikolai Dahl, a neurologist and musician who enabled him to rebuild himself after his breakdown and begin to compose again. The music notably features throughout David Lean's film *Brief Encounter*. The Philharmonia Orchestra will be conducted by celebrated young American conductor Roderick Cox, joining us specially for this final concert of the season. Twenty year old pianist Jeneba Kanneh-Mason, applauded for her

BOLD TENDENCIES

performance of the work of Florence Price at the Proms last year, is the soloist.

We need your help!

Every year we fundraise to keep our programme thriving and to keep tickets affordable. This means ticket sales only cover about 5% of our costs. Every donation, however big or small, has a major impact and helps us to do more and better.

Huge thanks to everyone who has supported the 2022 Programme

Southwark Council, Selfridges. Bloomberg Philanthropies, Big Issue Invest Access, Phillips, Outset Partners, Genesis Kickstart Fund, Morrisons Peckham, Vanguardia, d&b audiotechnik, J&C Joel, Steinway & Sons, Locke Hotels, CMS-CMNO, Hallett Independent Art Insurance, Think Smart Accounts, White Light and all those individuals who have generously donated.