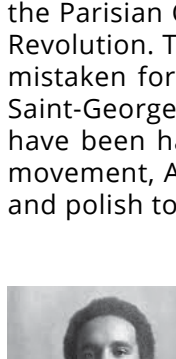


MUSIC

for days like this

SATURDAY, MARCH 27, 7:30 PM
THE DOUBLE E PERFORMANCE CENTER IN ESSEX JCT.

HOSTED BY REUBEN JACKSON CURATED BY MATT LAROCCA



ALLEGRO FROM SYMPHONY NO. 1 IN G MAJOR (ARR. LAROCCA) JOSEPH BOLOGNE, CHEVALIER DE SAINT-GEORGES (1745-1799)

Bologne was a classical composer, a virtuoso violinist, a conductor of the leading symphony orchestra in Paris, and a renowned champion fencer. Born in the French colony of Guadeloupe, he was the son of George Bologne de Saint-Georges, a wealthy married planter, and Anne Nanon, his wife's African slave. When he was young, his father took him to France, where he was educated. During the French Revolution, the younger Bologne served as a colonel in the Légion St.-Georges, the first all-Black regiment in Europe, fighting on the side of the Republic. Today Bologne is best remembered as the first known classical composer of African ancestry, often referred to as "The Black Mozart." He wrote numerous string quartets and other instrumental pieces as well as operas.

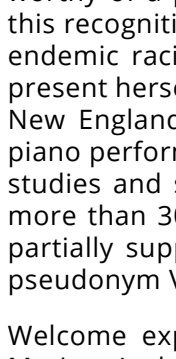
Symphony No. 1 in G Major was composed somewhere between 1771 and 1779. This work is a concise, yet delightful example of the Parisian Classical symphonic style at the dawn of the French Revolution. The writing is charming, elegant, and could nearly be mistaken for early Mozart, leaving the listener to wonder what Saint-Georges's contributions to the symphonic repertoire would have been had he continued composing in the genre. The first movement, Allegro, presents two themes with a beautiful shape and polish to the music.



SCHERZO FROM PIANO QUINTET IN G MINOR SAMUEL COLERIDGE-TAYLOR (1875-1912)

Coleridge-Taylor was raised in London, where his father, a native of Sierra Leone, had come to study medicine. At the age of fifteen the talented youngster was admitted to the Royal College of Music as a violin student, where he soon won a fellowship in composition. His most famous work is perhaps the trilogy based on the poems of Longfellow. The first of these, *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, is often seen as Coleridge-Taylor's crowning achievement. During his lifetime it had a popularity in England equaled only by Handel's *Messiah* and Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. Coleridge-Taylor was a leading exponent of Pan-Africanism, which emphasized the importance of a shared African heritage as the touchstone of Black cultural identity.

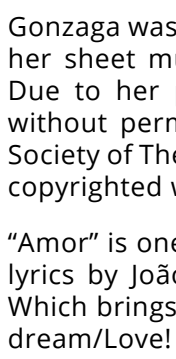
For someone who only lived to the age of 37, Coleridge-Taylor left a large catalogue of compositions, many of which lay almost completely unacknowledged for the better part of a century. His Piano Quintet, dating from 1894 and marked as Op. 1, was his first formal work, and clearly shows the influence of Dvorak, Brahms, and Elgar, composers he passionately admired. Coleridge-Taylor himself played piano at the first performance, with a string quartet led by a woman, which was quite unusual at the time. The captivating scherzo movement is characterized by effortless tonal phrasing and a homogenous timbral texture. As is true of his other compositions, counterpoint and rhythm are used to highlight and direct our focus throughout the straightforward formal structure.



"FLIGHT" AND "SETTLE" FROM WARMTH FROM OTHER SUNS CARLOS SIMON (B. 1986)

Carlos Simon, a native of Atlanta, Georgia, writes music which ranges from concert music for large and small ensembles to film scores, with influences of jazz, gospel, and neo-romanticism. The Sphinx Organization, which recognizes extraordinary classical Black and Latinx musicians, awarded Simon its highest honor, the Medal of Excellence, in 2021. Simon's string quartet, *Elegy*, honoring the lives of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown and Eric Garner, was recently performed at the Kennedy Center. His *Let America Be America Again* (text by Langston Hughes), is scheduled to be featured in an upcoming PBS documentary chronicling the inaugural Gabriela Lena Frank Academy of Music. Simon currently serves as Assistant Professor at Georgetown University.

The composer writes: "*Warmth from Other Suns* is a terrifying expression of the duality of wanting to find rest, yet never being able to call a place home. This musical journey is based on the thrilling book, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, by Pulitzer Prize novelist Isabel Wilkerson. Wilkerson's book describes the Great Migration where many African Americans fled from southern states which were filled with the hot stench of Jim Crow. The Great Migration would take them to a new part of America where the promise of more economic opportunity hung before them with wavering uncertainty. My aim was to embody the feelings of the main characters and express their spirit musically. The second movement, "Flight," represents the unrest that is brought forth when the decision is made to act on the pursuit of the uncertain promise of a better life. The decision of the great departure evokes fear on both sides of society. African Americans took a risk to journey through a racist country to find another home, while many white southerners feared an economic crash if African Americans fled the south. These feelings of unrest and fear can be felt throughout the movement through jolting rhythms, syncopated melodic lines, call and response, and rapid perpetual movement. The last movement, "Settle," echoes the material of the first movement that brought great hope and promise, but is now more grounded with rich harmonic support. The arrival of a new place where the sun gives warmth, comfort, and rest. Perhaps a place to finally call home."



"SWING LOW, SWEET CHARIOT" FROM FIVE FOLK SONGS IN COUNTERPOINT FLORENCE PRICE (1907-1953)

Florence Price was the first Black female composer to have a symphony performed by a major American orchestra when the Chicago Symphony premiered her Symphony No. 1 in 1933. The Chicago Daily News reported: "It is a faultless work... worthy of a place in the regular symphonic repertory." Despite this recognition, Price waged an uphill battle with Jim Crow laws, endemic racism, and sexism. Following her mother's advice to present herself as being of Mexican descent, she graduated from New England Conservatory with a double major in organ and piano performance. Several years later she undertook additional studies and started to focus on composition. While composing more than 300 works from symphonies to chamber works, she partially supported herself by selling popular songs under the pseudonym Vee Jay, and by playing organ for silent films.

Welcome exposure came as a result of her relationship with Marian Anderson, who began singing Price's "My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord" regularly on her concerts. Other leading Black vocalists, including Leontyne Price, were devotees of her songs. Among her many original arrangements of spirituals is a cantata entitled *Five Folk Songs in Counterpoint*, from which "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" is excerpted. It is a great example of Price's voice—a combination of romantic style and sophisticated counterpoint that honors her Black cultural heritage.



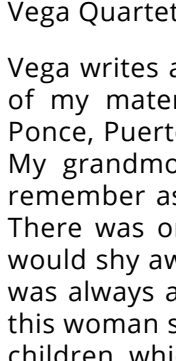
"AMOR" AND "ATRAENTE" (ARR. LAROCCA) CHIQUINHA GONZAGA (1847-1935)

Gonzaga was a Brazilian composer and the first woman conductor in Brazil. Her plays and operettas were a great success with the public because they used elements of Brazilian popular culture. Born in Rio de Janeiro of a mestizo mother and a wealthy white father, Gonzaga was well educated and became a proficient pianist at an early age. Her father gave her a piano as a wedding gift! However, her husband proved abusive and couldn't contain her desire to pursue a career in music, so she divorced him—quite a scandal at that time. She supported herself by giving piano lessons, but became more and more famous as a composer of polkas, waltzes, and tangos. She composed actively throughout her long life; her opera *Maria* was written at age 87.

Gonzaga was actively involved in suffragist causes and often sold her sheet music to raise funds for the abolitionist movement. Due to her popularity, many people began to use her music without permission, which led Gonzaga to found the Brazilian Society of Theatrical Authors, the first society put in place to protect copyrighted works by Brazilian artists.

"Amor" is one of Gonzaga's many art songs. An excerpt from the lyrics by João de Deus Falcão reads: "Love is sublime illusion! Which brings us in chains/It turns crime into beauty/Makes sin a dream/Love! Deep mystery/Greatness that says everything! You are the torment of the world/And the world makes you happy."

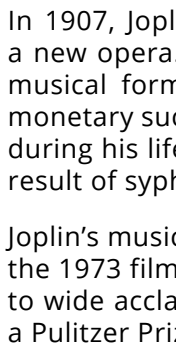
The polka song "Atraente," Gonzaga's first published work, was written in 1877 and was immediately a huge success. In 1914 it was #4 on the pop charts. Originally for piano, it is a classic example of "choro music," which Villa-Lobos defined as "the true incarnation of the Brazilian soul." Although "choro" translates to "cry" or "lament," the music is typically fast and happy, characterized by virtuosity, improvisation, syncopation, and counterpoint.



MODERATO FROM MODES DOROTHY RUDD MOORE (B. 1940)

Moore is an American composer, music educator, and one of the co-founders of the Society of Black Composers. Born in Delaware, Moore took piano lessons as a child and knew from a young age that she wanted to be a composer. In high school she played clarinet in the previously all-male band. She graduated from Howard University and received a fellowship to study in France with Nadia Boulanger. Moore taught privately as well as at Harlem School of the Arts and New York University. Her works, *Dirge and Deliverance* and *Songs from the Dark Tower*, were released by Performance Records in 1981. In 1985, the world premiere of her opera, *Frederick Douglass*, took place in New York City. Between 1988 and 1990, she sat on the music panel of the New York State Council of the Arts.

Modes was written in 1968 for an ensemble that included her husband Kermit, a well-known cellist at the time. It starts with a beautiful cello solo, which is probably no coincidence! In 2020, Moore released an arrangement of it for viola and cello. The first movement, *Moderato*, is a great example of Moore's intention to "put out positive energies" with her music. "I do not write music in a vacuum, but...communicating my ideas and emotions about the world could make a difference." Music courtesy of the American Composers Alliance.



ANTSY MATTHEW EVAN TAYLOR (B. 1980)

Born in Boston, Taylor grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, where he was exposed early to the music of Cannonball Adderly, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, and Ornette Coleman. He began playing saxophone at the age of nine, and quickly learned the music of his heroes by ear. In college, he encountered the music of Stravinsky and Schoenberg, which introduced him to the world of modern classical music. In 2009, after five years touring as a founding member of Sony Music recording artist Moses Mayfield, Taylor moved to Miami to focus on composition. He now serves as Professor of Music at Middlebury College.

Taylor is intrigued by four aspects of music: the growth of complex music from a simple idea; the social nature of the art form (especially, as it manifests in improvisation and the audience's reaction); the evocation of color and atmosphere through sound; and the relationship of dance and music.

The composer writes: "*Antsy* was written for Lucia Kobza of Friction Quartet as part of the Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music's #GigThruCovid initiative. The title is an understated description of all the unfocused angst I was feeling in late April 2020. The fast tempo, rotating and metrical emphasis between the two parts, and the use of harsher sounding techniques like over-pressure bowing and snap pizzicato were inspired by my feeling suspended between multiple time realities while doing my best to evade an invisible predator known as SARS-CoV-2. Please consider supporting the performing arts as always you can, as we are years away from normal."



BUSCANDO DOÑA JUANA FIGUEROA RAY VEGA (B. 1961)

A native of the South Bronx, Ray Vega is a veteran of the bands of Tito Puente, Ray Barretto, Mongo Santamaría, and Mario Bauzá, to name a few. He has performed and/or recorded with Nicholas Payton, Joe Henderson, Lionel Hampton, Mel Torme, Paquito D'Rivera, Arturo Sandoval, Jazz at Lincoln Center Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra, Paul Simon, and La Orquesta Sinfónica de Simón Bolívar among numerous others. A multi-talented trumpeter, percussionist, composer, arranger, and educator, Vega has established himself as an innovator on the Jazz and Latin music scenes. His recordings have been well received by critics, audiences, and musicians alike. Vega's "East-West Trumpet Summit" CDs were collaborations with Seattle trumpeter Thomas Marriott. Released in 2010, it hit number 1 on the Jazzweek national radio Jazz charts. "Chapter Two," released in 2014, received a 3.5 star rating in *Down Beat* magazine. From 2006-2014, Vega performed as the featured soloist in Osvaldo Golijov's contemporary classical masterwork "La Pasión Segun San Marcos." The recording on the prestigious Deutsche Grammophon label received international critical acclaim. Vega is a senior lecturer at the University of Vermont, where he directs the Jazz trumpet studio and three Jazz combos and teaches Jazz improvisation and history. UVM inducted Vega as a University Scholar for 2015-16, the first creative artist to receive this honor. His current music projects are Ray Vega Ensemble and The Ray Vega Quartet.

Vega writes about his new work: "It is dedicated to the memory of my maternal grandmother, Doña Juana Figueroa. Born in Ponce, Puerto Rico in 1912, she passed away before I was born. My grandmother was born into a life of extreme poverty. I remember as a little boy wondering what this woman was like. There was only one photo of her that I can recall. My mother would shy away from conversations concerning her mom. There was always a feeling of melancholy in the air when the topic of this woman simply known as Juana would come up. She had two children, which included my mother as well as a boy who died as a toddler. It was clear to me at a very young age that her life was hard and filled with much sadness. In recent years I've dedicated myself to searching for information concerning my grandmother, but sadly, I've hit many a wall.

The piece opens with five unaccompanied trumpet calls. These calls represent the voice of a child calling out for Grandma. The calls are repeated throughout the composition, with the string quartet answering differently each time. The improvisational sections represent the myriad emotions associated with the many unanswered questions in the search for Doña Juana Figueroa."



THE CASCADES (ARR. LAROCCA) SCOTT JOPLIN (1868-1917)

Dubbed the "King of Ragtime," Joplin was an African American composer and pianist. During his brief career, he wrote over 100 original ragtime pieces, a ragtime ballet, and two operas. His "Maple Leaf Rag" is recognized as the archetypal composition in the genre. Joplin grew up in a musical family of railway laborers in Arkansas. While there he formed a vocal quartet and taught mandolin and guitar. During the late 1880s, he left his job as a railroad laborer to become an itinerant musician. His appearance at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 played a major part in making ragtime a national craze.

In 1907, Joplin moved to New York City to find a producer for a new opera. He attempted to go beyond the limitations of the musical form that had made him famous—but without much monetary success. The opera *Treemonisha* was never fully staged during his lifetime. In 1916, Joplin descended into dementia as a result of syphilis, and died at the age of 48.

Joplin's music had a resurgence of popularity in large part due to the 1973 film *The Sting*. *Treemonisha* was finally produced in full, to wide acclaim, and in 1976, Joplin was posthumously awarded a Pulitzer Prize.

The Cascades is a piano rag composed especially for the 1904 World's Fair. The title refers to a particular feature built for the event, a waterfall which cascaded down in multiple tiers and was floodlit at night. The octave tempo indication is "Tempo di Marcia" or march time. The octave cascade effects in both hands in the original piano part make it one of Joplin's more difficult works to play.

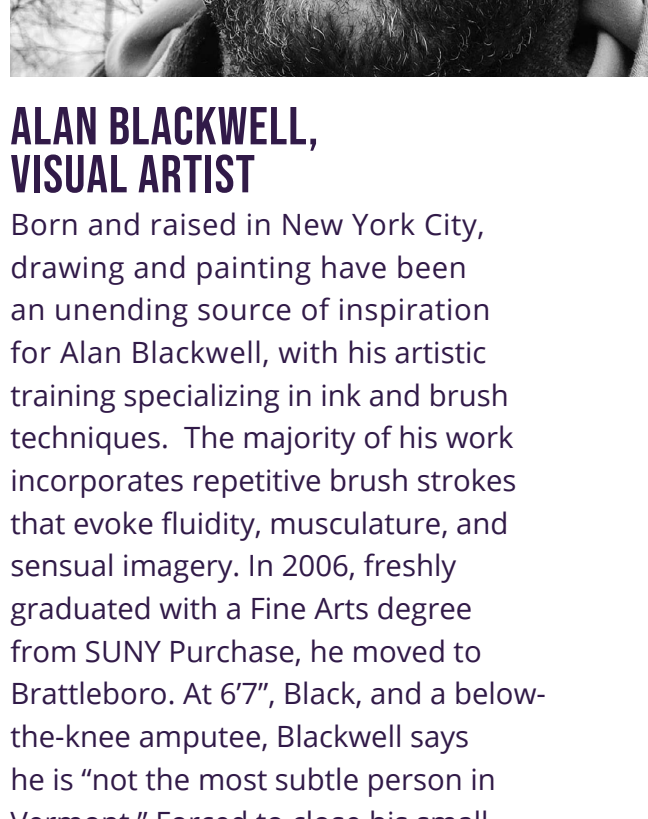


REUBEN JACKSON, HOST & POET

A jazz scholar, educator, archivist, and poet, Reuben Jackson served curator of the Smithsonian's Duke Ellington Collection in D.C. for over twenty years. His music reviews have been published in *The Washington Post*, *Jazz Times*, and on NPR's *All Things Considered*. He is currently an archivist with the University of the District of Columbia's Felix E. Grant Jazz Archives. A 1978 graduate of Goddard College in Plainfield, VT, Jackson taught high school for two years in Burlington, and from 2013 to 2018 was the host of Friday Night Jazz on Vermont Public Radio.

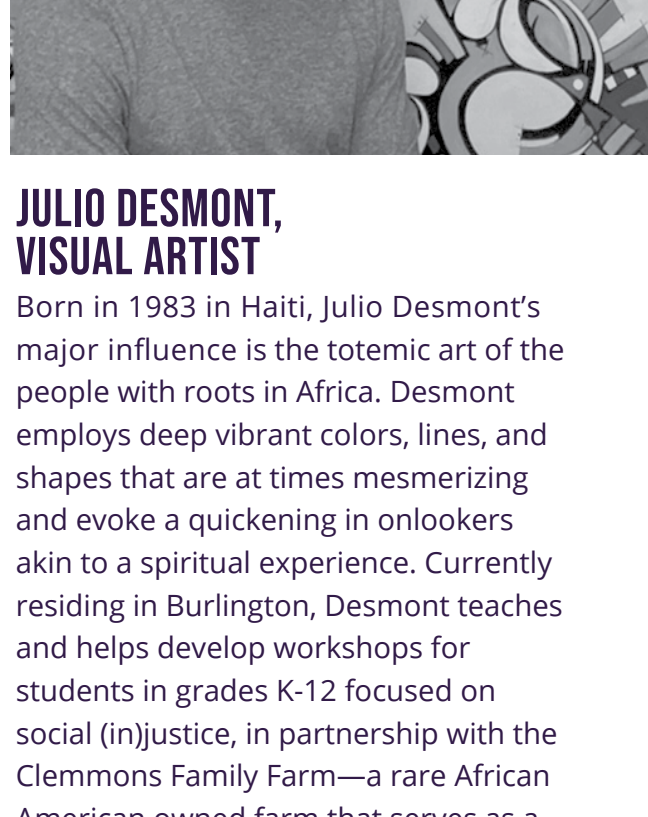
Jackson's poems have been published in over 40 anthologies. His first volume, *fingering the keys*, was selected for the Columbia Book Award. Fellow poet Terrance Hayes recently said: "Reuben Jackson's marvelous poems map the poles between ode and lamentation, politics and intimacy, sagacity and audacity. He writes for everyday neighbors, folkloric brothers, and imaginary sisters. He writes for Trayvon Martin as well as Frank Sinatra. He nimbly charts the broad spectrum of our lives and loves."

In an interview with Clara Jones, Jackson commented, "I would say that all poetry is a kind of sociology in that it (consciously or subconsciously) reflects the writer's position in society. Overtly political poetry doesn't guarantee that it is good writing, no more than writing a sonnet makes one a shoo-in for literary immortality. My writing has become more overtly political, thank God. In my case, I continue to experience what I semi-jokingly refer to as 'Late Blooming Blackness.' In many cases, I am digging into a long-suppressed closet of anger, sorrow, etc."



ALAN BLACKWELL, VISUAL ARTIST

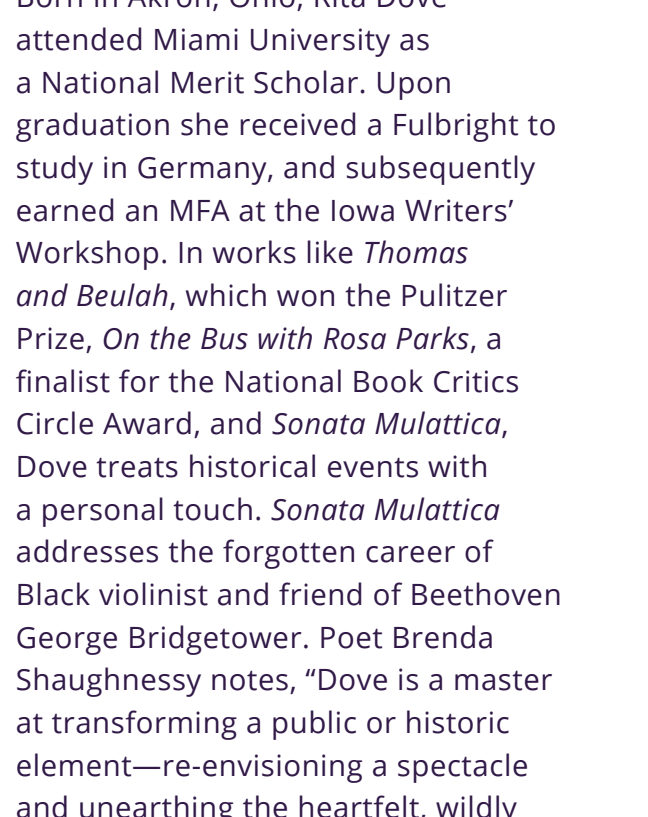
Born and raised in New York City, drawing and painting have been an unending source of inspiration for Alan Blackwell, with his artistic training specializing in ink and brush techniques. The majority of his work incorporates repetitive brush strokes that evoke fluidity, musculature, and sensual imagery. In 2006, freshly graduated with a Fine Arts degree from SUNY Purchase, he moved to Brattleboro. At 6'7", Black, and a below-the-knee amputee, Blackwell says he is "not the most subtle person in Vermont." Forced to close his small artsy dive bar in Brattleboro as a result of Covid, he has focused on family, art, and life. He now works for a social service agency, has enrolled in nursing school, and is illustrating an amazing book of Black poetry. He and his wife welcomed their baby girl in early March.



JULIO DESMONT, VISUAL ARTIST

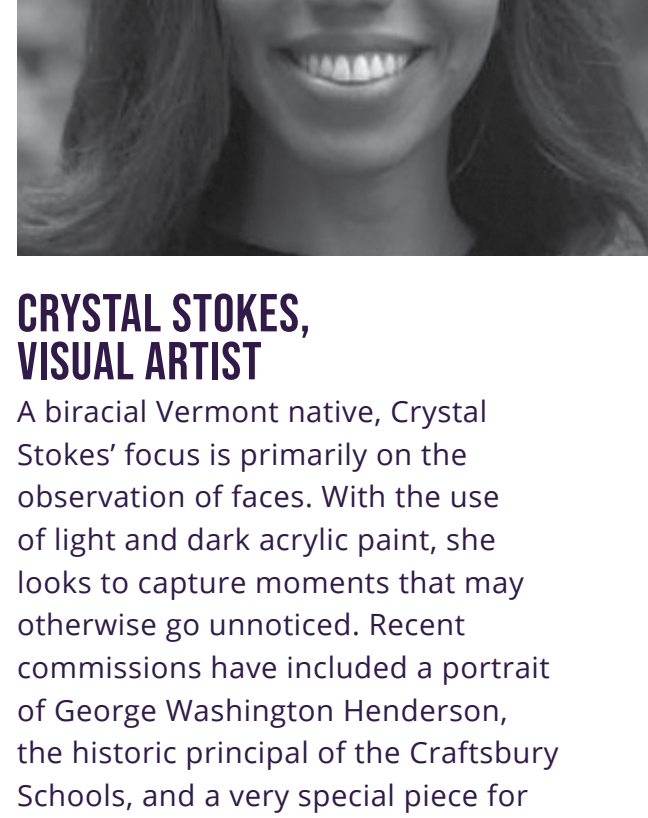
Born in 1983 in Haiti, Julio Desmont's major influence is the totemic art of the people with roots in Africa. Desmont employs deep vibrant colors, lines, and shapes that are at times mesmerizing and evoke a quickening in onlookers akin to a spiritual experience. Currently residing in Burlington, Desmont teaches and helps develop workshops for students in grades K-12 focused on social (in)justice, in partnership with the Clemmons Family Farm—a rare African American owned farm that serves as a cultural and healing center for African Americans and African diaspora.

Desmont writes, "I grow alongside my art and each piece feels alive. My pieces often begin without premeditated ideas. Indeed, the blank canvases are the source of my inspiration. They offer me infinite trajectories, a way of wandering and means of seeking the truth, finally culminating in an end that feels right and seeking nothing else."



RITA DOVE, POET

Born in Akron, Ohio, Rita Dove attended Miami University as a National Merit Scholar. Upon graduation she received a Fulbright to study in Germany, and subsequently earned an MFA at the Iowa Writers' Workshop. In works like *Thomas and Beulah*, which won the Pulitzer Prize, *On the Bus with Rosa Parks*, a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award, and *Sonata Mulattica*, Dove treats historical events with a personal touch. *Sonata Mulattica* addresses the forgotten career of Black violinist and friend of Beethoven George Bridgetower. Poet Brenda Shaughnessy notes, "Dove is a master at elevating a public or historic element—re-envisioning a spectacle and unearthing the heartfelt, wildly original private thoughts such historic moments always contain." A recipient of numerous honors and awards, including the 2017 NAACP Image Award, Dove was named U.S. poet laureate in 1993, the youngest person, and the first African American, ever elected. Dove currently teaches English at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.



CRYSTAL STOKES, VISUAL ARTIST

A biracial Vermont native, Crystal Stokes' focus is primarily on the observation of faces. With the use of light and dark acrylic paint, she looks to capture moments that may otherwise go unnoticed. Recent commissions have included a portrait of George Washington Henderson, the historic principal of the Craftsbury Schools, and a very special piece for the Alchemist Brewery's new "People Power" beer, with proceeds benefiting the ACLU. Her work expresses these moments with the help of her artistic interpretation and her broad scope of life experience. With each new piece, Stokes continues to investigate the raw beauty of the world around her. Her work has been displayed in several venues, galleries, and group shows throughout New England, but Stokes remains a proud member of the artistic community of Vermont.

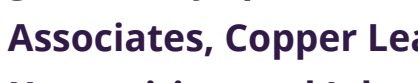


MATT LAROCCA, CREATIVE PROJECTS CHAIR

Matt LaRocca is a composer, performer, and educator who you are just as likely to see playing with a band in a dive bar as conducting an orchestra. He is on the composition and theory faculty at the University of Vermont, and is the Artistic Director of the Champlain Philharmonic Orchestra. He is also the Executive Director of Music-COMP, an organization that teaches composition to students throughout the country by pairing them with professional composers as mentors. Committed to new music and innovation, LaRocca loves bringing classical music to new audiences and new spaces through his work as the curator of the VSO's Jukebox and Higher Ground concert series.

As a musician growing up in the 80s and 90s, Matt feels equally at home in the rock and classical worlds. His classical work has been commissioned by the New Jersey Youth Symphony and the Great Falls Symphony Orchestra as well as the VSO. From 2007-2008 he was the Faculty Composer in Residence for the Montana State University Symphony. LaRocca also frequently works as an arranger for rock bands, and his arrangements can be heard on Guster's OMAGAH! album recorded with the Omaha Symphony. Artistic residencies include an expedition in the high arctic through the Arctic Circle Organization and composition/improvisation teaching residencies at schools throughout New England and California. He frequently performs as a violinist and guitarist in classical, rock, and improvisation ensembles.

LaRocca holds degrees in chemistry and music from Middlebury College, and a doctorate in music composition from Boston University. He lives in Duxbury with his wife Heather and their children Jasper, Sawyer, and Mary.



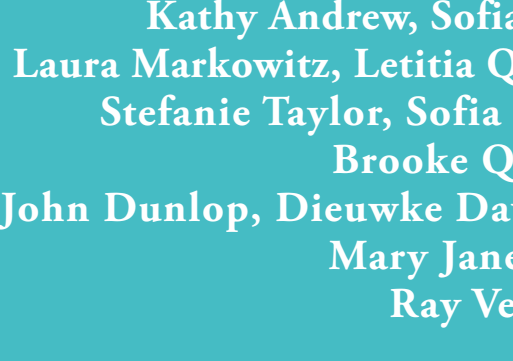
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 Stefanie Taylor, Sofia Hirsch, Laura Markowitz,
 Brooke Quiggins, *violas*
 John Dunlop, Dieuwke Davydov, Bonnie Klimowski, *cellos*
 Mary Jane Austin, *piano*
 Ray Vega, *trumpet*

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