



Damien Sneed
Joy to the World:
A Christmas Musical Journey

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With the fast-approaching end of Fall Semester—and as we move towards the holidays—things are unusually busy on the UC Berkeley campus. The same can be said about Cal Performances, where—this weekend alone—we’ll enjoy visits by an array of world-class talent: the Bay Area’s beloved **Kronos Quartet** with special guest, Persian classical and world music vocalist and composer **Mahsa Vahdat** (Dec 2); musical polymath **Damien Sneed** with his delightful *Joy to the World: A Christmas Musical Journey* program (Dec 3); riveting performer of the 16-string *dan tranh* (zither) **Vân-Ánh Võ** and her acclaimed **Blood Moon Orchestra** in an exciting world premiere (Dec 4); and two of the brightest lights of their generation—choreographer/dancer **Caleb Teicher** (and their amazing dance company) and pianist **Conrad Tao** in the Bay Area premiere of *More Forever*, a fresh, new music and dance collaboration. I’m so happy you could join us during what promises to be a memorable weekend; it’s wonderful that we can gather together again, enjoying great live performances under the same roof!

This robust activity is especially meaningful this year, following such a prolonged period of shutdown! When the pandemic forced Cal Performances to close its doors in March 2020, no one could have imagined what lay ahead. Since then, we’ve witnessed a worldwide health crisis unlike any experienced during our lifetimes, an extended period of political turmoil, recurring incidents of civil unrest and racially motivated violence, and a consciousness-raising human rights movement that has forever—and significantly—changed how each of us views social justice in our time.

Of course, the pandemic remains with us to this date and future challenges—including many adjustments to “normal” procedures and policies—can certainly be expected. I encourage you to check Cal Performances’ website regularly for the most current information regarding our COVID-19 response. First and foremost, I assure you that there is nothing more important to us than the health and safety of our audience, artists, and staff. (And I remind one and all that proof of vaccination is mandatory today, as is protective masking throughout the event.)

Our season continues later this month with an exciting return concert by jazz phenom **Jazzmeia Horn**, a hit on last year’s *Cal Performances at Home* streaming season (Dec 10); the ever-popular **Canadian Brass** with its festive *Making Spirits Bright for 50 Years and Counting!* holiday program (Dec 11); and the long-awaited return to Zellerbach Hall (the group’s favorite home-away-from-home) by the great **Mark Morris Dance Group** (Dec 17–19). And our full 2021–22 calendar offers even more, packed with the kind of adventurous and ambitious programming you’ve come to expect from Cal Performances. In particular, I want to direct your attention to this year’s *Illuminations*: “Place and Displacement” programming, through which we’ll explore both loss and renewal, disempowerment and hope, while seeking paths forward for reclaiming and celebrating vital cultural connections that can fall victim to political and social upheaval.

Please take the opportunity to explore the complete schedule through our website and season brochure and begin planning your performance calendar; now is the perfect time to guarantee that you have the best seats for all the events you plan to attend.

Throughout history, the performing arts have survived incredible challenges: periods of war, economic collapse, and, yes, terrible disease. And if it will take time for us—collectively and individually—to process the events of the past 18 months, I’m certain that the arts have the power

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Friday, December 3, 2021, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Damien Sneed
Joy to the World: A Christmas Musical Journey

Damien Sneed, *MD, vocals, piano*
Chenee Campbell, *vocals*
Markita Knight, *vocals*
Alicia Peters-Jordan, *vocals*
Linny Smith, *vocals*
Alfred Rutherford, *Hammond B3 organ and keys*
Gabriel Michael Carter, *aux keys*
Ronald “CJay” Alexander, *bass guitar*
Joel Tate, *drums*

*Tonight’s program will be announced from the stage
and will be performed without intermission.
The program will last approximately 90 minutes.*

Mark Morris Dance Group

Water

(Indoor Stage Premiere; 2021;
music by George Frideric Handel)

Jenn and Spencer

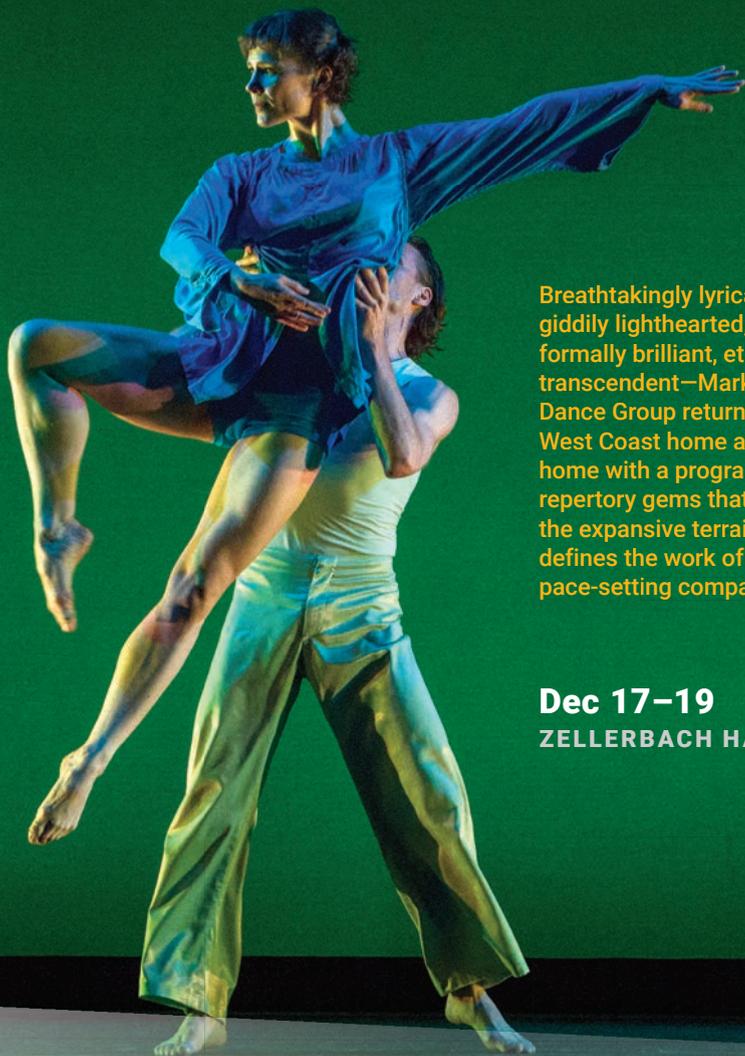
(2013; music by Henry Cowell)

Dancing Honeymoon

(1998; music arranged by Ethan Iverson)

V

(2001; music by Robert Schumann)



Breathtakingly lyrical, giddily lighthearted, formally brilliant, ethereally transcendent—Mark Morris Dance Group returns to its West Coast home away from home with a program of repertory gems that traverse the expansive terrain that defines the work of this pace-setting company.

Dec 17–19
ZELLERBACH HALL

Damien Sneed is a pianist, organist, conductor, composer, producer, arranger, and arts educator whose work spans multiple genres. He has worked with jazz, classical, pop, and R&B legends including the late Aretha Franklin, Wynton Marsalis, Jessye Norman, Stevie Wonder, Diana Ross, Ashford & Simpson, Lawrence Brownlee, and many others. The multi-genre recording artist is a recipient of the prestigious Sphinx Medal of Excellence, which is presented annually to emerging Black and Latino leaders in classical music.

In recent years, Sneed embarked on a 36-city North American tour of his program *We Shall Overcome: A Celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. featuring Damien Sneed*. The tour marked the 35th anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, which was signed into law and confirmed as a federal holiday in 1983.

Joining Sneed this evening is an ensemble of accomplished performers comprised of vocalists Chenee Campbell, Markita Knight, Alicia Peters-Jordan, and Linny Smith, and instrumentalists Alfred Rutherford (Hammond B3 organ and keys), Gabriel Michael Carter (aux keys), Ronald “CJay” Alexander (bass guitar), and Joel Tate (drums).

A graduate of the John S. Davidson Fine Arts School, Sneed has studied at some of the finest conservatories and universities, including Howard University (bachelor’s degree in music, piano performance), the Peabody Conservatory of the Johns Hopkins University; New York University (master’s degree in music technology: scoring for film and multimedia); and the Manhattan School of Music. Sneed has also received a doctorate in orchestral conducting from USC.

During the 2018/19 season, Sneed served as music director, composer in residence, and cover conductor for the staff of the Houston Grand Opera. He was also commissioned to compose a new chamber opera titled *Marian’s Song* about the life of Marian Anderson for Houston Grand Opera, which had its world premiere on March 5, 2020, at the Cullen Theater at the Wortham Center. The Library of Congress commissioned Sneed to compose a brief solo piano work, *Sequestered Thoughts*, for its Boccaccio Project in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which premiered online on June 15, 2020.

For more information on Damien Sneed, please visit www.damiensneed.com.

Memphis Jookin': The Show featuring Lil Buck

West Coast Premiere

In the West Coast premiere of this dazzling show, Lil Buck—along with a DJ and an expert eight-dancer crew—transports us to the streets, the hallways, and the clubs where Memphis Jookin' was born.

"His agile physical instrument is astounding... [and] fueling it all is the emotion that drives his magnetic dancing. There is struggle and pain, joy and healing, and ultimately, a transformation."

—The New York Times

Feb 25 & 26
ZELLERBACH HALL



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to play a critical role as we come to terms with what we have experienced and move together toward recovery.

I know you join us in looking forward to what lies ahead, to coming together once again to encounter the life-changing experiences that only the live performing arts deliver. We can't wait to share it all with you during the coming year.

Cal Performances is back. Welcome home!

Jeremy Geffen

Executive and Artistic Director, Cal Performances

COVID-19 Information

Proof of vaccination status is required for entrance and masking is mandatory throughout the event.

COVID-19 information is updated as necessary; please see Cal Performances' website for the most up-to-date policies and information.

UC Berkeley does not promise or guarantee that all patrons or employees on site are vaccinated.

Unvaccinated individuals may be present as a result of exemptions, exceptions, fraudulent verification, or checker error. None of these precautions eliminate the risk of exposure to COVID-19.