



Karolis Kaminskas

Thursday, January 25, 2024, 7:30pm
Zellerbach Hall

Cécile McLorin Salvant

Cécile McLorin Salvant, *vocals*
Sullivan Fortner, *piano*
Yasushi Nakamura, *bass*
Savannah Harris, *drums*

*This program will be performed without intermission
and last approximately 90 minutes.*

*This performance is made possible, in part, by
Joe W. Laymon, Kiese Laymon, Jeanne Laymon, and Thomas Laymon.*

Cécile McLorin Salvant (*vocals*), is a composer, singer, and visual artist. The late Jesse Norman described Salvant as “a unique voice supported by an intelligence and full-fledged musicality, which light up every note she sings.”

Salvant has developed a passion for storytelling and finding the connections between vaudeville, blues, theater, jazz, Baroque, and folkloric music. She is an eclectic curator, unearthing rarely recorded, forgotten songs with strong narratives, interesting power dynamics, unexpected twists, and humor.

Salvant won the Thelonious Monk competition in 2010. She has received three consecutive Grammy Awards for Best Jazz Vocal Album for *The Window*, *Dreams and*

since gone onto receive two Grammy nominations as well as appearing on a number of year-end “best” lists for 2022. Last March, Nonesuch Records released Salvant’s highly anticipated and now Grammy-nominated follow up, *Mélusine*, an album mostly sung in French, along with Occitan, English, and Haitian Kreyòl.

Salvant received a bachelor’s degree in French law from the Université Pierre-Mendes France in Grenoble while also studying Baroque music and jazz at the Darius Milhaud Music Conservatory in Aix-en-Provence, France.

Her latest work, *Ogresse*, is a musical fable in the form of a cantata that blends genres (folk, Baroque, jazz, country). With story,

lyrics, and music by Salvant, it is arranged by Darcy James Argue for a 13-piece orchestra of multi-instrumentalists. *Ogresse*, both a “biomythography” and an homage to the Erzulie (as painted by Gerard Fortune) and Sara Baartman, explores fetishism, hunger, diaspora, cycles of appropriation, lies, othering, and ecology.

It is in development to become an animated feature-length film, which Salvant will direct.

Salvant makes large-scale textile drawings. Her visual art can now be found at Picture Room in Brooklyn, NY.

For the past decade, **Sullivan Fortner** (*piano*) has been stretching his deeply rooted talents as a pianist, composer, band leader, and uncompromising individualist. The Grammy Award-winning artist out of



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Daggers, and *For One To Love*, and was nominated for the award in 2014 for her album *WomanChild*.

Born and raised in Miami, Florida, of a French mother and Haitian father, she started classical piano studies at age five, began singing in a children’s choir at eight, and started classical voice lessons as a teenager. In 2020, Salvant received the MacArthur fellowship and the Doris Duke Artist Award. Nonesuch Records released her *Ghost Song* in March 2022, and she has

New Orleans has received international praise as both a key player and producer for his collaborative work on *The Window*, alongside Cécile McLorin Salvant. As asolo leader, he has released *Moments Preserved* and *Aria* to critical acclaim.

In addition to associations with such diverse voices as Wynton Marsalis, Paul Simon, Diane Reeves, Etienne Charles, and John Scofield, Fortner's frequent and long-time collaborators have included Ambrose Akinmusire, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Stefon Harris, Kassa Overall, Tivon Pennicott, Peter Bernstein, Nicholas Payton, Billy Hart, Gary Bartz, Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah, Fred Hersch, and the late Roy Hargrove. Recent collaborations include Grammy-nominated releases *Dear Love* (Empress Legacy) and *Generations* from leaders Jazzmeia Horn and the Baylor Project, respectively.

A brilliant improviser, Fortner has performed across the country and throughout the world at such cultural institutions as Snug Harbor, the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts, Sweet Lorraine's, and the Jazz Playhouse in New Orleans, and Jazz at Lincoln Center, Jazz Standard, and Smalls Jazz Club in New York City. He has appeared at celebrated festivals including Newport, Monterey, Discover, Tri-C, and Gillmore Keyboard. In 2019, Fortner brought his band to the historic Village Vanguard for a week-long engagement he would reprise in 2020 as a virtual performance during lockdown.

Raised in New Orleans, Fortner began playing piano at age seven, following a storied lineage of improvisers, masters of time, and every iteration of the blues. He earned his bachelor's degree in music from Oberlin Conservatory and his master's in jazz performance from Manhattan School of Music (MSM). A champion of mentorship, Fortner has offered master classes at MSM, New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, Purdue University, Lafayette Summer Music Workshop, Belmont University, and Oberlin Conserva-

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tory, where he held a faculty position. Both his works and his insights have been featured in iconic publications such as the *New York Times* and *The Root*. Honors include the 2015 Cole Porter Fellowship awarded by the American Pianists Association, a Leonore Annenberg Arts Fellowship, the 2016 Lincoln Center Award for Emerging Artists, and, in 2020, the prestigious Shifting Foundation Grant for artistic career development.

Yasushi Nakamura (*bass*) is praised for imaginative, quicksilver bass lines that deepen the groove. His blend of guitar-like precision and gut-level blues has sparked collaborations with artists such as Wynton Marsalis, Wycliffe Gordon, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Hank Jones, Dave Douglas, and Steve Miller. With his charismatic stage presence and artful, hard swinging melodic touch, Nakamura is a first-call performer who has captured new audiences and fans around the world.

Born in Tokyo, Nakamura moved to the United States at age nine, and considers both places home. He began with clarinet and tenor saxophone, but his older brother's study of guitar and drums drove him to pick up the bass. His love of rock and funk aside, the music of Charlie Parker, Ray Brown, and Miles Davis were a potent influence on him. Nakamura received a BA in jazz performance from Berklee School of Music in 2000, and was awarded a full scholarship to the Juilliard School for his Artist Diploma in 2006. He credits Myron Walden as an early champion, and keeps close ties to Juilliard mentors Victor Goines, Wycliffe Gordon, Carl Allen, and Ben Wolfe, all of whom maintain him in their bands.

Today, Nakamura's career is flourishing, with consistent engagements at premier jazz festivals including Tokyo, North Sea, Monterey, Ravinia, and venues such as Birdland, the Village Vanguard, the Blue Note, the Kennedy Center, Jazz at Lincoln Center, and Carnegie Hall. In 2014, he was honored to play the NEA Jazz Masters Concert: Celebrating Jamey Abersold, Anthony Braxton, Richard Davis, and Keith Jarrett, sharing the stage with Joe Lovano and Dave Liebman. A wide array of projects permits him to explore various musical styles and collaborations. In 2016, he recorded with one of his long-time inspirations, Toshiko Akiyoshi, for her recent release, *Porgy and Bess*. Nakamura's performance with Akiyoshi's Jazz Orchestra was also broadcast as a documentary film. Recent works include *For the Love of Duke* with New York City Ballet, choreographed by Susan Stroman; and *Ellington at Christmas: Nutcracker Suite* with Savion Glover, Lizz Wright, and the Abyssinian Baptist Choir, David Berger conducting. In 2010, he toured the Middle East with Jazz at Lincoln Center's Kings of the Crescent City project, and he toured Asia in 2008 with the Juilliard

All-Stars. As an educator, Nakamura has led master classes and summer intensive courses at the Juilliard School, New School, Koyo Conservatory, Osaka Geidai, and Savannah Swing Central.

In 2016, Nakamura release his first album, *A Lifetime Treasure*. His second album, *Hometown*—released the following year from Atelier Sawano, featuring Lawrence Fields, Bigyuki, and Clarence Penn—was named Album of the Year in 2017 by *JazzLife* magazine.

Savannah Harris (*drums*) is a New York City-based drummer, composer, and producer. Raised in Oakland by musician parents, she gravitated towards the drums at age two. Steeped in a jazz tradition, Harris' more recent work reflects her versatility. She has recorded with indie and experimental artists Helado Negro, Kate Davis, Justin Allen, and Standing on the Corner. Her jazz recordings include releases from Peter Evans, María Grand, and Or Bareket, and she has also performed with Jason Moran, Ambrose Akinmusire, Kenny Barron, Terence Blanchard, Billy Childs, Christian Scott, José James, and Georgia Anne Muldrow. Currently, she has been working extensively with Nick Hakim and Roy Nathanson, Aaron Parks, Melanie Charles, Or Bareket, Peter Evans, and Joel Ross. In 2019, Harris was awarded the Harlem Stage Emerging Artist Award, and received her master's in jazz performance from Manhattan School of Music. She was featured twice in the January 2021 issue of *Modern Drummer* as both a featured artist and a contributing writer. In October 2021, she debuted her solo piece "With Inner Sound, Truth" commissioned by Issue Project Room as a tribute to composer Ruth Anderson. Harris was also featured in *Sixteen Journals*'s "JAZZ" edition, with portraits shot by photographer James Brodribb.