

# **IMANI WINDS**

## **BLACK AND BROWN**

An entire program celebrating composers of color

MAR 25 / Cobb Great Hall

Brandon Patrick George, flute  
Toyin Spellman-Diaz, oboe  
Mark Dover, clarinet  
Kevin Newton, French horn  
Monica Ellis, bassoon

This performance will run approximately 110 minutes,  
including a 20-minute intermission.

Sponsored by MSU Federal Credit Union with additional  
support from Delta Dental of Michigan.

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## PROGRAM

Titilayo

Jeff Scott

The Light is the Same\*

Reena Esmail

Aires Tropicales

Paquito D'Rivera

- i. Alborada
- ii. Son
- iii. Habanera
- iv. Vals Venezolano
- v. Dizzyness
- vi. Afro
- vii. Contradanza

## INTERMISSION

Rubispheres No. 1 (For flute, clarinet & bassoon)

Valerie Coleman

- i. DROM
- ii. Serenade
- iii. Revival

Terra Incognita\*\*

Wayne Shorter

Belle Epoque en Sud-America

Júlio Medaglia

- i. El Porsche Negro
- ii. Vals Paulista
- iii. Requinta Maluca

*\* The Light is the Same was written for Imani Winds. Commissioned by The Lied Center of Kansas & premiered March 15, 2017 at the University of Kansas, Lawrence.*

*\*\* Terra Incognita was written for Imani Winds. Commissioned by the LaJolla Music Society, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, Da Camera of Houston and the Library of Congress. Premiered in La Jolla, CA, August 2006.*

Imani Winds is represented by Arts Management Group, Inc., 130 West 57th Street, New York, NY 10019

## **IMANI WINDS**

Celebrating over 20 years of music-making, the Grammy-nominated Imani Winds has led both a revolution and the evolution of the wind quintet through their dynamic playing, adventurous programming, imaginative collaborations and outreach endeavors that have inspired audiences of all ages and backgrounds.

The ensemble's playlist embraces traditional chamber music repertoire, and as a 21<sup>st</sup>-century group, Imani Winds is devoutly committed to expanding the wind quintet repertoire by commissioning music from new voices that reflect historical events and the times in which we currently live.

Present and future season performances include a Jessie Montgomery composition inspired by her great-grandfather's migration from the American south to the north; and socially conscious music by Andy Akiho designed to be performed both on the concert stage and in front of immigrant detention centers throughout the country.

Imani Winds regularly performs in prominent international concert venues, including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, The Kennedy Center, Walt Disney Hall and the Kimmel Center. Their touring schedule has taken them throughout the Asian continent, Brazil, Australia, England, New Zealand and across Europe.

Their national and international presence includes performances at chamber music series in Boston, New York, Washington DC, San Francisco, Philadelphia and Houston. Festival performances include Chamber Music Northwest, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Ravinia Festival, Chautauqua, Banff Centre and Music from Angel Fire.

Imani Winds' travels through the jazz world are highlighted by their association with saxophonist and composer Wayne Shorter, woodwind artist and composer Paquito D'Rivera and pianist and composer Jason Moran. Their ambitious project, *Josephine Baker: A Life of Le Jazz Hot!*, featured chanteuse René Marie in performances

that brought the house down in New York, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Los Angeles and St. Louis.

Imani Winds' commitment to education runs deep. The group participates in residencies throughout the U.S., giving performances and master classes to thousands of students each year. Academic and institutional residencies include the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Duke University, University of Chicago, Curtis Institute of Music, University of Michigan, Da Camera of Houston and numerous others across the country.

The ensemble launched its annual Imani Winds Chamber Music Festival in 2010, bringing together young instrumentalists and composers from across North America and abroad for exploration and performance of the standard repertoire and newly composed chamber music. Festival participants also take part in workshops devoted to entrepreneurial and outreach opportunities, with the goal of creating the complete musician and global citizen.

BIOS

**BRANDON PATRICK GEORGE** (*Flute*) has been the flutist of Imani Winds since 2018 and has appeared with the group around the United States and Europe, and on the Grammy-nominated album, *Bruits*. He has been praised as "elegant" by *The New York Times*, as a "virtuoso" by *The Washington Post*, and as a "knockout musician with a gorgeous sound" by *The Philadelphia*

*Inquirer*. His debut album was released by Haenssler Classics in September 2020; *The New York Times* has described it as “a program that showcases the flute in all its wit, warmth and brilliance.”

Brandon has performed at Alice Tully Hall, Carnegie Hall, the Elbphilharmonie, the Kennedy Center, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Dresden Music Festival, and the Prague Spring Festival. In addition to his work with Imani Winds, Brandon has collaborated with members of the Gryphon Trio, the New York Philharmonic, the Jasper String Quartet, and performed live on New York’s WQXR with harpist Bridget Kibbey.

Prior to his solo career, Brandon performed as a guest with many of the world’s leading ensembles including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE). With the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Brandon performed at Walt Disney Concert Hall and at the Hollywood Bowl under conductors including Music Director Gustavo Dudamel, Karina Canellakis, Ludovic Morlot, and John Williams. Brandon has toured with the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), appearing at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), the Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago), the Park Avenue Armory (NYC), and the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival in England. His time with the LA Phil and with ICE allowed him to work closely with some of the

foremost composers of our time including John Adams, Louis Andriessen, Steve Reich, and George Lewis.

Brandon George trained at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, the Conservatoire de Paris, and the Manhattan School of Music. He serves on the faculty of the Curtis Institute and the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity.

**TOYIN SPELLMAN-DIAZ** (*Oboist*) grew up surrounded by her parent's enormous record collection in Washington, DC. It was there she absorbed the many layers of classical music's beauty and the inspiring and uniting potential of the world's diverse cultural landscape.

Ms. Spellman-Diaz earned her Bachelor of Music degree from Oberlin Conservatory of Music and her Master's and Professional Studies degrees at the Manhattan School of Music. Her orchestral career includes performances with the New York Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Chicago Civic Orchestra, Orchestra of St. Luke's and the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra.

Hailed by *The Washington Post* for her "smooth, controlled tone and excellent technique," Toyin has performed concertos with the Chicago Civic Orchestra, Manhattan Virtuosi, and with the Kennedy Center Youth Orchestra.

An original member of Imani Winds, Ms. Spellman-Diaz has built her career as a champion of contemporary chamber music. Along with her Imani Winds colleagues, she is devoted to discovering new and diverse musical voices and cultures to increase and enhance the woodwind quintet repertoire. She has also collaborated with some of today's most influential chamber music ensembles, including Alarm Will Sound, the Antara Ensemble and Camerata Pacifica. Ms. Spellman-Diaz teaches at NYU Steinhardt School of Music, Brooklyn College, and Mannes School of Music. She currently serves on the Board of Directors of the American Composers Orchestra.

**MARK DOVER** (clarinetist) is a man of many horns, maintaining firm roots in classical music while ever-expanding into the vast world of improvised music.

Born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Mark was privileged to grow up in a town with a strong commitment to arts education, and with parents who were passionate about the arts.

In addition to performing with Imani Winds, Mark is the clarinetist with Manhattan Chamber Players, who he tours with regularly. He has performed with the Detroit Symphony, The Cleveland Orchestra at Kent Blossom Music Festival, The Knights, Nu Deco Ensemble, New World Symphony, The Spoleto Festival, Pacific Music



Festival, and many other orchestras and festivals throughout the country.

Mark is on the clarinet faculty at Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University, and Queens College, CUNY. He joined the chamber music faculty at Curtis Institute of Music in 2021. He has conducted master classes at numerous academic institutions throughout the country, such as University of Michigan, Manhattan School of Music and the University of Texas at Austin.

In addition to his work in the classical world, Mark has an extensive background in jazz and improvised music. He formed the multi-genre duo Port Mande with pianist/producer Jeremy Jordan in 2017. Their debut EP *Is This Loss?* was released in July of 2020. A frequent collaborator with American funk band, Vulfpeck, Mark was featured as a performer and arranger on their highly acclaimed album *Thrill of the Arts*, and in 2019, played to a sold-out Madison Square Garden. He has performed and/or recorded with musicians of many different genres, including Jason Moran, Alicia Moran, Edward Simon, Brian Blade, Scott Colley, David Binney, Bernard Purdie, Cyrille Aimée, Lawrence, Darren Criss, Theo Katzman, Joey Dosik, Dave Malloy, Phillipa Soo, Kris Bowers, Michael Thurber, Charles Yang and many more.

A graduate of Interlochen Arts Academy, Mark received his Master of Music from the Manhattan School of

Music and his Bachelor of Music from the University of Michigan. His most influential teachers include David Krakauer, Deborah Chodacki, and Jay DeVries. He lives in New York City with his wife, soprano Faylotte Crayton, and his 3-year-old daughter Lulu.

**KEVIN NEWTON** (*French horn*) is the newest member of Imani Winds. A native of South Boston, Virginia, he is a horn player and educator based in Manhattan. His first music teacher, his mother, instilled in him a love of music-making's collaborative spirit.

As a chamber musician, he has performed with Orchestra of St. Luke's, Metropolitan Horn Authority, Roomful of Teeth, and Tredici Bacci, among other ensembles. He has appeared professionally on the stages of Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, the DiMenna Center for Classical Music, and National Sawdust.

An advocate for new music, Mr. Newton collaborated with composer Erin Busch to premiere a solo work as a part of the Contemporary Performance Institute at the Composers Conference in 2020. He is involved with several commissions set to premiere in the 2021–22 season. Mr. Newton formerly served as principal horn of the Waynesboro Symphony and, as an orchestral soloist, he has performed works by Gordon Jacob, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Franz Strauss.

Mr. Newton enjoys a busy recording schedule and has recently recorded with Tredici Bacci, Metropolitan Horn Authority, Tex Crick, and Sami Stevens, as well as for commercial projects. He is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at Stony Brook University. He holds a Master of Music degree in orchestral performance from Manhattan School of Music and a Bachelor of Music degree from Virginia Commonwealth University. He is a regular participant at Yellow Barn in Vermont.

Mr. Newton joined the faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music in 2021. He is also on the horn faculty of Manhattan School of Music's Precollege division and MSM Summer.

**MONICA ELLIS** (*Bassoonist*) is a founding member of Imani Winds, who in their 25th season continue to dazzle audiences with their dynamic playing, adventurous programming, and commitment to outreach, new works and collaborations.

Monica's strong work ethic was instilled early on from her mother and father, the late jazz saxophonist, Clarence Oden. She is executive director and tour manager for Imani Winds, co-artistic director for the Imani Winds Chamber Music Festival, and treasurer for the Imani Winds Foundation.

A self-proclaimed "band kid" growing up in her beloved city of Pittsburgh, Monica played clarinet, saxophone,

and piano. After being introduced to the bassoon in middle school, she began studying with Mark Pancerev, of the Pittsburgh Symphony and went on to receive her Bachelor of Music degree from Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, studying with George Sakakeeny. While at Oberlin, her desire to connect with others flourished through her participation in the Panama Project, a month-long camp for young Panamanian musicians. She received her Master of Music degree from The Juilliard School and Professional Studies Certificate from Manhattan School of Music in the Orchestral Performance Program, studying with Frank Morelli at both institutions.

Recording credits include nine albums with Imani Winds (Bright Shiny Things, Koch International Classics, EOne and EMI Classics). Monica can also be heard on: Edward Simon – *Sorrows and Triumphs*, Chick Corea–*The Continents*, Wayne Shorter Quartet–*Without a Net*, Mohammed Fairouz–*Native Informant*, Jeff Scott–*Urban Classical Music Project*, Brubeck Brothers Quartet–*Classified*, Steve Coleman–*Ascension to Light*, and Perspectives Ensemble–*Montsalvatge Mardrigal*.

A passionate teacher, she is on the faculty of Curtis Institute of Music and Manhattan School of Music and has been a visiting professor/faculty at The University of Chicago, Mannes School of Music and The Juilliard School's Music Advancement Program. Also a renowned

clinician, she has given master classes and solo recital performances across the country.

She is a frequent commentator on critical issues of race, gender and entrepreneurship in classical music and serves on the advisory boards for Orchestra of St. Luke's Education Committee and Meg Quigley Vivaldi Competition & Symposium for Women Bassoonists of the Americas, and is a board member of Concert Artists Guild and the International Double Reed Society.

Monica religiously watches *Jeopardy!*, loves home decorating and resides in the historic village of Harlem in New York City with the greatest joy of her life, her 8-year-old son, Oden.

## **PROGRAM NOTES**

"Imani" is the Swahili word for "faith." This chamber ensemble is unique for two primary reasons: its focus on expanding the wind quintet repertoire and its emphasis on underrepresented composers and performers. The award-winning ensemble established the Legacy Commissioning Project in 2008 to "diversify the wind quintet repertoire." Imani Winds tours extensively and is active in master classes and other educational ventures.

Wind quintet music is fairly rare compared to other forms of chamber music, because the unique tone qualities of each instrument—flute, oboe, clarinet, French horn, and

bassoon—are difficult to blend. With Imani Winds, these characteristics are exploited through music that expands and celebrates the variant qualities rather than submerging them in the overall texture. Each instrumentalist uses a combination of classical and extended techniques to create an unusual and exciting program.

**Jeff Scott** (1967- ) played French horn with Imani Winds for 20 years before joining academia. Since 2020, he has been an associate French horn professor at Oberlin College and Conservatory. “Titilayo” is based on a melody with Yoruban roots, written by Titilayo Rachel Adedokun (1973- ), a soprano who was born in the United States to Nigerian parents. “Titilayo,” composed in 2006, is in call-and-response form. Each instrumentalist, and especially the flutist, is featured in demanding solo sections in this exuberant composition.

**Reena Esmail** (1982- ) is the daughter of immigrants from India. “The Light Is The Same” was commissioned by the Lied Center of Kansas and premiered at the University of Kansas (Lawrence) in 2021. It is also a product of the Imani Winds’ Legacy Commissioning Project. The inspiration for the work was a poem by the 13th-century Sufi poet Rumi, in which he wrote, “Religions are many/But God is one/The Lamps may be different/ But the Light is the same.” Two Hindustani raags are used: “Vachaspati” and “Yaman.” The first

theme is quite dark and complex, while the second is brighter and simpler. Each theme employs almost the exact same pitches but in different order. The two are interwoven to conclude the piece.

**Paquito D'Rivera** (1948- ) was born and educated in Cuba, where his father was a conductor and saxophonist. In 1981 Paquito was granted political asylum in the United States. He has enjoyed a prominent career in both jazz and classical music as a saxophonist, clarinetist, composer, and arranger. "Aires Tropicales" was written in 1994, commissioned by the Aspen Quintet. The music of Cuba and Latin America plays a prominent role in the work. "Alborada" (Morning Music) is a brief introduction to "Son," a country dance from Oriente Province, Cuba. The second "Son" movement is based on an Afro-Cuban ritual melody, with a bolero-style rhythmic structure. "Habanera" has lush chords in the style of Ravel, with scaled-down instrumentation of flute, clarinet and bassoon. "Vals Venezolano" (Venezuelan Waltz) is dedicated to Venezuelan composer Antonio Lauro (1917-1986.) D'Rivera's mentor, Dizzy Gillespie (1917-1993), is the dedicatee of "Dizzyness," which quotes his "A Night in Tunisia" and "Con Alma." "Contradanza" is a tribute to Cuba's greatest composer, Ernesto Lecuona (1896-1963.) The finale, "Afro," pays homage to John Coltrane (1926-1967) with reference to his jazz composition "Afro Blue."

**Valerie Coleman** (1970- ) flutist and founder of Imani Winds, composed a suite of three “Rubispheres” for flute, clarinet and bassoon. This program features her “Rubispheres No. 1,” described as a musical tour by a young Black woman in New York City. The first movement, “DROM,” is a vibrant rhythmic tribute to the Lower East Side club, DROM, where it premiered in 2012. The second movement, “Serenade,” is more tranquil. Valerie composed it as her then-two-year-old daughter napped in her arms, a tribute to a universal love. “Revival” unites the spirit of a southern baptism in the river with the sounds of a tent revival in a spirited, driving finale, with virtuosic writing for each instrument.

**Wayne Shorter** (1933-2023) was a clarinet and saxophone virtuoso as well as an in-demand composer and arranger, especially in the field of jazz. When he accepted a Legacy Commissioning Project grant from Imani Winds and other funders, he had never composed a work for an ensemble in which he did not play, nor had he written for a chamber ensemble. “Terra Incognita” explores the “landscapes of the mind” as well as of the external world. The music is episodic and frequently contrasts emotions or characteristics such as playfulness with melancholy, or lyricism with abruptly rhythmic passages. By the end of the piece, these episodes overlap, making for an exciting conclusion. The Library of Congress, which was one of the commissioning sponsors,



houses the manuscript of the piece, which premiered in 2006.

**Júlio Medaglia** (1938- ) was born in São Paulo, Brazil. He studied composition in Germany with Karlheinz Stockhausen and Pierre Boulez. He then studied conducting in Freiburg am Breisgau (Germany) before working in Germany for 10 years. Once he returned to Brazil, he was in demand as a conductor and composer for film, stage and TV. The suite “Belle Epoque en Sud-America” was written for the Berlin Bläserquintett and is inspired by the folk dances of different countries. The first movement, “El Porsche Negro,” is a tango. The second movement, a waltz, is “Traumreise nach Attersee: Vals Paulista,” or “Dream Trip to The Attersee,” a lake near Munich. The finale, “Requinta Maluco,” is a *chorinho*, a popular fast dance form from Brazil. All three movements are lively and bring the concert to a toe-tapping conclusion.

—Mary Black-Junttonen, MSU Music Librarian Emeritus