

Her Phantom Happiness Performer Bios
Dec. 9th, Pickman, 8pm

Veronica Carolyn Williams, mezzo-soprano

Veronica Williams is an up-and-coming mezzo-soprano known for her “thrilling instrument” and “overwhelming authority” on stage. Most recently, Ms. Williams sang the role of The Witch in Chicago Summer Opera’s production of Humperdinck’s *Hansel und Gretel*. This February, Ms. Williams will make her concert debut with Fort Worth Opera as a soloist in their prestigious “Night of Black Excellence” series. Previously, she was a guest artist at the American Choral Directors’ Association Conference singing the contralto solo in William Grant Still’s *...And They Lynched Him On A Tree*. In December of 2019 she made her debut with the Austin Symphony Orchestra as the alto soloist in G.F. Handel’s *Messiah*. The previous season, she was personally invited by Maestro Sebastian Lang Lessing to join the San Antonio Symphony as their first ever Singer-In-Residence. As a result, she was the featured soloist in Leonard Bernstein’s *Symphony I*, Manuel De Falla’s *El Amor Brujo*, Beethoven’s 9th, and Sergei Prokofiev’s *Alexander Nevsky* throughout the Symphony’s 2018-2019 season. Ms. Williams received her Master of Music Degree from Boston’s New England Conservatory of Music, and her Bachelor of Music Degree from the University of Texas at Austin. Previous roles include Cornelia in Handel’s *Giulio Cesare*, the Mother in Menotti’s *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, Baba Yaga in Jason Tremblay’s *Gretel! The Musical*, the titular role in Handel’s *Rinaldo*, Concepción in Ravel’s *L’heure Espagnole*, the Old Prioress in Poulenc’s *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, Hansel in Humperdinck’s *Hansel and Gretel*, and the title roles of Cesti’s *Orontea* and Eisler’s *Die Mutter*. Currently based in Austin, Texas, Ms. Williams is an active board member of Local Opera Local Artists (LOLA), a member of the New England Conservatory of Music’s Progressive Alumni Coalition, and a piano and voice instructor who enjoys teaching and guiding talent in her growing and diverse voice studio. You can follow her journey towards international operatic success on Instagram at @kollektivkarma.

Matthew Vera, violin

Violinist and Violist Matthew Vera is known for his versatility as a soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral leader.

Matthew has been a member of the Boston Philharmonic’s first violin section since 2010. He recently stepped in as guest concertmaster to perform *Ein Heldenleben* to critical acclaim: “Playing with pure tone, terrific character, and not a bit of hesitation, Vera delivered an account of the solo part that was wholly captivating”. (Boston Arts Fuse); “Matthew Vera projected non-stop, drop-dead gorgeous tone, alternately flippant and ravishing, as directed. A virtual golden spotlight enwreathed him in laurels.” (Boston Musical Intelligencer). Orchestrally, Matthew performs in many ensembles including: The Boston Philharmonic, The Albany Symphony, The

Portland Symphony, The Rhode Island Philharmonic, The Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Teatro Nuovo, Eureka Ensemble, and the New Bedford Symphony.

An avid chamber musician, Matthew is the first violinist of the emerging Izarra String Quartet. Izarra explores fresh interpretations of the classic repertoire with a keen focus on amplifying compositional voices of the LGBTQIA + BIPOC communities. Matthew is a violinist with Castle of our Skins, a concert and educational series dedicated to celebrating Black artistry through music. He has also been heard with Radius Ensemble, Juventas New Music Ensemble, and Ogunquit Chamber Music Festival.

Matthew made his solo debut on the viola with the Tucson Philharmonia at age 14. He has appeared as soloist with the Buffalo Philharmonic, The Tucson Philharmonia, The Tucson Symphony, The World Youth Symphony Orchestra, and The New England Conservatory Symphony. He has attended numerous festivals including Tanglewood, The Heifetz Institute, Brevard Music Center, Green Mountain Chamber Music Festival, and more.

A native of Tucson, Arizona, Matthew's early musical training was fostered through the Tucson Unified Public Schools and Tucson Junior Strings, a unique conductorless orchestral training program for young people. He is a graduate of The New England Conservatory where he studied with James Buswell, Lucy Chapman, and Donald Weilerstein. His mentors have included: The Borromeo String Quartet, Roger Tapping, Martha Katz, and John Heiss.

Mina Lavcheva, violin

Violinist Mina Lavcheva is a native of Sofia, Bulgaria, where she graduated from the National School of Music "L. Pipkov". An active performer from an early age, Mina has appeared as a soloist, chamber and orchestra player throughout Europe and North America. She holds a Bachelor and a Master Degree in Music Performance from LSU School of Music and Boston University respectively.

Mina is a sought-after and frequently engaged artist by numerous chamber and orchestral ensembles in the New England area. Currently, she performs as a member of the Portland Symphony Orchestra (Maine) and Rhode Island Philharmonic, where she has served as acting concertmaster on numerous occasions. Mina also served as concertmaster for the Rhode Island Civic Chorale and Orchestra and has appeared in performances with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Vermont Symphony Orchestra, Handel and Haydn Society, Arcadia Players, and Odyssey Opera, to name a few. As a chamber musician, she frequently performs with Castle of our Skins, and is a violinist/violist for Zograf Strings Quarterly. Other chamber ensemble appearances include Aurea, Ensemble Parallax, and Juventas New Music Ensemble.

Ashleigh Gordon, viola

Described as a "charismatic and captivating performer," Ashleigh Gordon has recorded with Switzerland's Ensemble Proton and Germany's Ensemble Modern; performed with Grammy-award winning BMOP and Grammy-nominated A Far Cry string ensemble; and appeared at the

prestigious BBC Proms Festival with the Chineke! Orchestra. Comfortable on an international stage, Ashleigh has performed in the Royal Albert and Royal Festival Halls (London), Konzerthaus Berlin and Oper Frankfurt (Germany), Gare du Nord and Dampfzentrale Bern (Switzerland), Centre Pompidou (Paris), the Lee Hysan Concert Hall (Hong Kong), and throughout Sofia, Bulgaria as part of the multi-disciplinary 180 Degrees Festival.

Ashleigh is co-founder, Artistic/Executive Director and violist of Castle of our Skins, a Boston-based concert and educational series devoted to celebrating Black Artistry through music. In recognition of her work, she has presented at IDEAS UMass Boston Conference and 180 Degrees Festival in Bulgaria; has been featured in the International Musician and Improper Bostonian magazines as well as the Boston Globe; and was awarded the 2016 Charles Walton Diversity Advocate Award from the American Federation of Musicians. She is a 2015 St. Botolph Emerging Artist Award recipient, a 2019 Brother Thomas Fellow, a nominee for the 2020 "Americans for the Arts Johnson Fellowship for Artists Transforming Communities," and named one of WBUR's "ARTery 25", twenty-five millennials of color impacting Boston's arts and culture scene.

Francesca McNeeley, cello

Haitian-American cellist Francesca McNeeley has received critical acclaim as a collaborator and soloist, her playing described as "virtuosic", "impressive" and "a remarkable display" by the Boston Musical Intelligencer. She enjoys an eclectic career in the Boston area as a chamber musician, orchestral player, and modern music advocate. She has premiered dozens of works, solo and chamber music—including pieces by John Harbison, Bongani Ndodana-Breen, Mark Neikrug, Augusta Read Thomas, Anna Thorvaldsdottir, Joseph Phibbs, and Tyson Davis. Since the fall of 2022 she has become a core member of the Grammy-nominated A Far Cry chamber orchestra. She frequently performs with Castle of Our Skins and the Celebrity Series of Boston. She has also performed with the Boston Symphony, Boston Pops, Boston Ballet, and Sarasota Orchestras, and can be heard on BMOP/sound with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project. Catch her new album release, *Homage: Chamber Music from the African Continent & Diaspora*, performing with Castle of Our Skins and Dr. Samantha Ege.

Ms. McNeeley graduated Princeton University Phi Beta Kappa, and went on to receive scholarships to attend the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University and the New England Conservatory for her graduate degrees in cello performance. She has earned fellowships and prizes from the Tanglewood Music Center, where she also served as a New Fromm Player. With her Fromm colleagues she has founded the Chroma Trio, championing modern string trio repertoire. She has received fellowships to attend the Music Academy of the West, Kneisel Hall Chamber Music Festival, & Toronto Summer Music. She has been awarded multiple grants from the Sphinx Organization, and now serves on The Artist Council for the National Alliance for Audition Support. Her teachers and mentors have included Tom Kraines, Darrett Adkins, Norman Fischer, Yeesun Kim, and Astrid Schween.

Francesca is dedicated to community engagement through teaching and mentoring. In addition to her private teaching studio, she serves on the faculties for the Boston Youth Symphony

Orchestra's Intensive Community Program, Project STEP, as well as the Charles Ives Music Festival at the Western Connecticut Youth Orchestras.

As an advocate of social change through education, Ashleigh served as viola instructor in the Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra's Intensive Community Program, a rigorous string instrumental program that provides instruction to populations often underrepresented in classical music. Beyond instrumental instruction, she has presented lectures on citizen artistry and entrepreneurship, workshops for fellow educators on Caribbean folksongs, and guest lectured at Gettysburg College (PA), Keene State College (NH), Oberlin College Conservatory of Music (OH), and North Carolina Governor's School for the Arts (NC). She has shared the stage as a guest panelist at the Sphinx Connect Conference and Chamber Music America Conference discussing topics of diversity in classical music, and is an Instructor of Teaching Artistry at the Longy School of Music at Bard College.

Ashleigh attended the International Ensemble Modern Academy (IEMA) at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Frankfurt, a year-long program in Germany focused on the study and performance of contemporary music. As the sole IEMA violist, she studied and performed with members of Ensemble Modern with highlight appearances at IRCAM (Paris), Royaumont Abbaye (France), and the Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe (Germany). Continuing her new music passion throughout her summers, Ashleigh has participated in numerous festivals in Germany, Austria, France, England and North America including the Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme and 46 Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in Darmstadt, Germany studying with the Arditti Quartet, Ensemble Modern and Le Nouvel Ensemble Moderne among others. Along with receiving a Master of Contemporary Music degree from IEMA, Ashleigh received degrees in viola performance from the New England Conservatory and Baldwin Wallace University Conservatory of Music. Her primary teachers include Carol Rodland and Louise Zeitlin with supplemental solo and chamber music studies with Stephen Drury, Eric Rosenblith and Mai Motobuchi of the Borromeo String Quartet. She can be heard on chamber music and orchestral recordings under the Mode, Siemens, BMOP/Sound, Navona and Musiques-Suisse record labels.

Sarah Bob, piano

Hailed as "sumptuous and eloquent" by the Boston Globe, pianist Sarah Bob is an active soloist and chamber musician noted for her charismatic performances, colorful playing and diverse programming. A strong advocate for new music and considered a "trailblazer when it comes to championing the works of modern composers and combining art media in the process..." (Northeast Performer), she is the founding director of the New Gallery Concert Series, a series devoted to commissioning and uniting new music and contemporary visual art with their creators. The goal, her strong suit, is to introduce music in a loving, inclusive, and intoxicating way. Inspired by current events, she is also the creator of The Nasty Cooperative: numerous dialogue driven artistic events created to build community, help raise funds for organizations in need, and encourage others to do the same. Her most recent album, ...nobody move... Commissions and Premieres for the New Gallery Concert Series, received international acclaim, earning a place on the Boston Globe's best of classical recordings list and ALBUM OF THE

WEEK in National Sawdust among other accolades. According to AllMusic, "...nobody move... also exemplifies Sarah as "...pianist as curator, which is a different thing from simply selecting a program for a recording... the program, despite its variety, has a unique coherence forged by Bob's mixture of technical control and a certain verve and humor...One finishes the album interested in what Bob and other pianists may do with this concept in the future."

Sarah is an original member of many ensembles including her piano/percussion group, Primary Duo and Radius Ensemble, a chamber music collective that presents both the traditional and cutting edge. Recognized as a risk taker and cited for an "ideal combination of all-stops-out abandon and sure-footed technical control" by 21st Century Music, she is top prizewinner of the International Gaudeamus Competition 2001 and grant recipient of the Yvar Mikhashoff Trust for New Music. Sarah was featured as one of Boston's Most Inspiring Stories in the Boston Voyager and maintains other accolades including Outstanding Alumni Award from the New England Conservatory of Music, the St. Botolph Club Foundation's Grant-in-Aid Award, an honor that recognizes the quality of her work and artistic merit, the first annual John Kleshinski Award in honor of her daring, exciting and high quality New Gallery Concert Series presentations, a successful three year fellowship at the prestigious St. Botolph Club, and funding from the Trust for Mutual Understanding that brought her to Sofia, Bulgaria and Berlin, Germany to present and perform music by living American composers. She can be heard playing music on Tzadik, Albany Records, Cauchemar, NLM Records, BMOP/sound label, collaborations as featured pianist, chamber musician, and orchestral player with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project on New World and Oxingale Records, Ludovico Ensemble Edition, and Radius Ensemble, and Avie Records, where one album was recognized as one of best classical recordings of 2016 by The ARTery and "...nobody move...", her solo piano album, as one of "The Boston Area's best classical recordings for 2019" by the Boston Globe.

Past roles include original member of the Firebird Ensemble, Director of Classical Music at the Stone Mountain Arts Center in Brownfield, Maine, 2019 Artist in Residence of The Music Mansion which won the 2019 Dorry Award for "Best Performance Series" during her time as curator, contributor to SONUS: A Journal of Investigation into Global Musical Possibilities, and, with the composer's blessing, arranger of her solo piano rendition of Lee Hyla's "My Life on the Plains" coming soon through Carl Fischer Publishing. Sarah maintains a private studio and teaches "The Power of Art" as faculty at the Longy School of Music of Bard College. For more information, please go to www.sarahbob.net.

Anthony R. Green, piano/composer

The creative output of Anthony R. Green (b. 1984; composer, performer, social justice artist) includes musical and visual creations, interpretations of original works or works in the repertoire, collaborations, educational outreach, and more. Behind all of his artistic endeavors are the ideals of equality and freedom, which manifest themselves in diverse ways in a composition, a performance, a collaboration, or social justice work.

As a composer, his works have been presented in over 25 countries across six continents by various internationally acclaimed soloists and ensembles, including : vocalists Anthony P.

McGlaun, Julian Otis, Anna Elder, and Amanda DeBoer Bartlett; violists Ashleigh Gordon, Gregory Williams, Carrie Frey, and Wendy Richman; pianists Stephen Drury, Kathleen Supové, Jason Hardink, Kimi Kawashima, Lewis Warren Jr., Clare Longendyke, Hayk Melikyan, and Eunmi Ko; cellists Matthieu D'Ordine, Patricia Ryan, and Ifetayo Ali-Landing; percussionists Bill Solomon, Michael Skillern, and Dame Evelyn Glennie; saxophonists Neal Postma, Benjamin Sorrell, and Kendra Williams; and ensembles Tenth Intervention (Hajnal Pivnick – violin, and Adam Tandler – piano), ALEA III (with Gunther Schuller, conductor), the Thalea String Quartet, counter)induction, Ensemble Dal Niente, Dinosaur Annex, andPlay, NorthStar Duo, fivebyfive, Transient Canvas, the McCormick Percussion Group, the Icarus Quartet, Opera Kansas (as winner of the 2018 Zepick Modern Opera Contest), the American Composers Orchestra, the Lowell Chamber Orchestra, the Boston Landmarks Orchestra, the Minnesota Philharmonic, the String Archestra, the Playground Ensemble, Ossia New Music Ensemble, and Alarm Will Sound, to name a few. He has received commissions from the Fromm Foundation (a 2021 commissioned composer), Community MusicWorks, Make Music Boston, Celebrity Series Boston, Chamber Music Tulsa, Access Contemporary Music, the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, Boston University (for the 2023 Richmond Piano Competition), the Texas Flute Society (for the 2021 Myrna Brown Competition), NOISE-BRIDGE duo, Ghetto Classics (for the 2022 Kenya International Cello Festival), and various other soloists and ensembles. In 2021, three portrait concerts featuring his music were presented digitally by Boston University, and in live concerts at UMKC - presented by the saxophone studio, and in St. Paul, Minnesota - presented by the 113 Composers Collective. A fourth portrait concert featuring vocal works will be presented in December 2022 at the Longy School of Music in Cambridge, MA. He has been a resident artist at the Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts (Nebraska), Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, Escape to Create (Florida), Visby International Centre for Composers (Sweden), Space/Time (Scotland), atelier:performance (Germany), the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts (Nebraska), Gettysburg National Military Park (through the National Parks Arts Foundation), and the perfocraZe International Artist Residency (Ghana). Upcoming residencies include the Atlantic Center for the Arts (Florida) and Loghaven (Tennessee).

As a performer, he has appeared at venues in the US, Cyprus, France, the Netherlands, the UK, Israel, Germany, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey, South Korea, and Ghana, premiering original works and working with student, emerging, and established composers such as David Liptak, Renée C. Baker, and George Crumb for various performance presentations. Green has participated in consortium commissions organized by Neal Postma (saxophone), Meraki (clarinet and piano duo), and New Works Project (solo percussion). His music has been performed at Symphony Space (New York), Marian Anderson Theater at Aaron Davis Hall (New York), the DiMenna Center (New York), Jordan Hall (Boston), Tivoli Vredenburg (Utrecht), Kunstraum (Stuttgart), Cité de la Musique et de la Danse (Strasbourg), the Shoe Factory (Nicosia), the TWA Hotel (New York), the Edward A. Hatch Memorial Shell on the Charles River Esplanade (Boston), and the Elbphilharmonie (Hamburg), amongst many others. Selections of Green's music and performances are on CDs and DVDs on the Navona, Ravello, Stone, and Innova labels. His recent engagement in performance art and divergent theater has yielded presentations of such works in Berlin (Spike Gallery), New York City (Union Square for the Art in Odd Places Normal Project, 2021; JACK in Brooklyn for the 2021 Radical Acts Festival), Oslo

(Kulturkirken Jakob for the Periferien “SITES AND SOUNDS” project), and in Kumasi, Ghana. Other visual and sonic art projects have been presented at Galerie Wedding (Berlin), Federation Square (Melbourne), Monkey Bar (Hannover), Alliance Francaise Kumasi, the Tampa Museum of Art, the Milwaukee Art Museum, and venues in Malaysia, Venezuela, Spain, and more. Through music, text, and entrepreneurship, Green comments on many issues related to social justice. Such issues have included: immigration (Earned - narrator & double string quartet), civil rights (Dona Nobis Veritatem - soprano, viola, & piano), the historical links between slavery and current racial injustice in the US (Oh, Freedom! - spoken word, voice, flute, viola, cello), the contributions of targeted and/or minority groups to humanity (A Single Voice: Solitary, Unified - solo alto sax & fixed media), and more. His ongoing opera-project Alex in Transition highlights the life of Alex - a trans woman - and her journey to truth and authentic living. This opera has been featured in the Ft. Worth Opera Frontiers Festival, presented by New Fangled Opera and One Ounce Opera, and performed in a concert production at the Israel Conservatory of Music in Tel Aviv. For the Concord Revisited Project, organized by pianists Jason Hardink and Kimi Kawashima at Westminster College (Salt Lake City), Green composed The Baldwin Sonata : a concert-length piano sonata celebrating and musically analyzing the life, legacy, philosophy, and text of the legendary James Baldwin. Other social justice works include: short cabaret operas, which are comedic-yet-piquant critiques on capitalism via corporations (one of which was premiered by Strange Trace for their 2021 Stencils Festival); His Mind & What He Heard in Central Park in the Late 90s for solo voice, concerning a gay Black man’s encounters with queer racism and toxic exoticification (premiered by Anna Elder at the 2019 Conference: Music & Erotics at the University of Pittsburgh); To Anacreon in the US for solo piano, concerning nationalism - especially US “patriotism” (premiered by Aristo Sham at New England Conservatory, with subsequent performances by Kathleen Supové at Barge Music, Clare Longendyke at the Mostly Modern Festival, and more); the sax quartet Almost Over, a musical symbol of Black history in the United States (featured in the 2017 Grachten Festival in Amsterdam and the 2017 Gaudeamus Music Week in Utrecht); rest - reflect - reignite, a video work exploring Black rest, inspired by the Nap Ministry (commissioned by the Cleveland Uncommon Sound Project for the Re:Sound 2021 Festival); Piano Concerto: Solution, sonifying and visualizing the power of women (commissioned by the McCormick Percussion Group; presented at the University of South Florida in Tampa, and the Milwaukee Art Museum presented by Present Music); and I Returned. I wanted to., a video work examining Black joy, Black queerness, Christianity in Africa, and more (commissioned by CAP UCLA for the 2021 Tune In Festival), amongst others. Publications include text for New Music Box, TEMPO (Cambridge University), Archive Books, Positionen magazine (Berlin), and more.

Green’s most important social justice work has been with Castle of our Skins : a concert and education series organization dedicated to celebrating Black artistry through music. Co-founder, associate artistic director, and composer-in-residence, his work with Castle of our Skins has included concert/workshop curation and development, community outreach, lecturing about the history and politics concerning Black composers of classical music, commissioning and supporting young, emerging, and established composers, curating the BIBA (Beauty in Black Artistry) Blog, and more. The current 10th season will be his final season with CooS, after which he will transition to director emeritus, occasional consultant, and lifelong friend.

His primary teachers include Susan Kelley, Dr. Donald Rankin, and Maria Clodes-Jaguaribe for piano, and Dr. Martin Amlin, John Drumheller, Theodore Antoniou, Lee Hyla, and Dr. Robert Cogan for composition. He has participated in masterclasses with Laura Schwendinger, Paquito D'Rivera, Walter Zimmermann, Jonathan Harvey, the Fidelio Trio, and the JACK Quartet, amongst others. His solo and collaborative work has been recognized by grants from Meet the Composer, the Argosy Foundation, New Music USA, and the American Composers Forum as a McKnight Visiting Composer, among others. A passionate educator, Green has given courses, workshops, lectures, and studio visits at numerous institutions, including Walker West Music Academy, Boston University, the Longy School of Music, the Piet Zwart Instituut, the Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHiO), UC Santa Cruz, the Eastman School of Music, Northwestern University, the Gotland School of Music Composition (Gotlands Tonsättarskola), Westminster College, the University of Milwaukee, and Columbia University. He has served on the faculty for the Sewanee Music Festival, Project STEP summer program, Really Spicy Opera's Aria Institute, the Alba Music Festival Composition Program, and the Vienna Summer Music Festival's Composers Forum. An avid thought contributor, he has appeared on panels concerning various subjects for the Wellesley Composers Conference, the 2020 New Music Gathering (along with Angélica Negrón, Daniel Bernard Roumain, and more), and most recently for the 2022 WASBE Conference in Prague (along with Jennifer Higdon and David T. Little, and more), among others. He has also taught various subjects and given private composition lessons at the Universität der Künste Berlin, the University of Colorado at Boulder, and the University of Hartford's Hartt School of Music, Theater, and Dance. He is a 2021 graduate fellow (alumnus) of the Berlin Centre for Advanced Studies in Arts and Science (BAS) at the Berlin University of the Arts graduate school (Graduiertenschule), and also holds degrees from New England Conservatory and Boston University.

Green was born on Nacotchtank land (Arlington, VA) and raised on Narragansett and Pauquunaukit land (Providence, RI) in a country named by violent Europeans and built significantly by the labor of the enslaved. He currently splits his time mostly between the US and Europe, with ever-increasing travel to Africa. He is married to his occasional piano duo partner and forever husband Dr. Itamar Ronen.