

Nadine Benjamin: Songs of Joy

with Caroline Jaya-Ratnam and Michael Harper

Start time: 7.30pm

Approximate end time: 9.40pm, including a 20-minute interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change.

Programme

Nitin Sawhney Short piano introduction
Betty Jackson King *In the Springtime*
Innocent Ndubuisi Okechukwu *Ome N'Ala*
Margaret Bonds *Dream Variation*
Rosephanye Powell *Songs for the People*
Samuel Coleridge-Taylor 'The Rainbow-Child' from *Songs of Sun and Shade*
Sylvia Hollifield *In Time of Silver Rain*
Samuel Coleridge-Taylor 'This is the Island of Gardens' from *Songs of Sun and Shade*
Tebogo Monnakgotla *Images lunaires*
Undine Smith Moore *Watch and Pray*
Jacqueline Hairston *Dormi, Jesu*
Errollyn Wallen *My Feet May Take A Little While*
Traditional, arr Undine Smith Moore *Come Down Angels*
Undine Smith Moore *Love Let the Wind Cry*
How I Adore Thee
Harry T Burleigh *Elysium*

Amanda Ira Aldridge *Fickle Singers*
Richard Thompson *Black Pierrot*
Avril Coleridge-Taylor *Sleeping and Waking*
Maria Thompson Corley *My Heart is Awake*
Ella Jarman-Pinto *This Little Rose*
Florence Price *Night*
Barbara Sherill & Byron Motley *Mae's Rent Party*
R Nathaniel Dett *The Ordering of Moses*
Shirley Thompson *Precious Skies*
Dominique Le Gendre *Agua, dónde vas?*
Roderick Williams *Love*
Hannah Kendall 'In a Great Silence' from *The Knife of Dawn*
Cleophas Adderley *Nassau Harbour*
Franz Hepburn *Yes*
Tom Randle *Turn Around*
Errollyn Wallen *Peace on Earth*

Woven between the songs is poetry read by Michael Harper

Tonight's protagonists offer a programme of songs and poems that celebrate the richness and joy of black and mixed-heritage experiences.

Some time ago, through the initiative of Elizabeth de Brito, we started a conversation on the subject of joy in song. We all had a particular interest in the art songs of African-heritage and mixed-heritage composers, Elizabeth through her work on The Daffodil Perspective (an online classical radio show with a focus on gender equity), Nadine and I through our performances; and all of us through research and our relationships with living composers. Though we had an experience of the complex stories of African and mixed-heritage people, we had often seen our lives, as people of colour, portrayed in the mainstream arts only through suffering. We wanted to change that perspective.

We started a conversation on joy. Some of the associations that emerged were:

Michael: 'Joy can be catharsis. That means, it's not always nice things that are said or done – but things that are true from the source from which they emanate.'

Michael: 'Joy is the spiritual – the song in the strange land. The song created from the various parts of me slammed together through catastrophe. *Zerrissen*, the German word for "torn" (asunder), suggests for me that there is a possibility of this destruction revealing light.'

Nadine: 'The subject of joy is a complex one but by no means complicated. The joys of living, learning and moving through adversity all have different levels of expression. Finding a way to harmonise the stories being told while making space to include all voices was challenging but between us we found a way to unpick the deeper messages within them.'

Caroline: '... Nitin Sawhney, recounting his travels in India, remembered seeing a group of very poor young boys – so poor – without proper clothes or proper shoes playing football (without a proper ball!), and yet in that moment they had the biggest smiles he had ever seen ... without all the trappings ... these young boys were still finding fun, enjoyment and laughter.'

barbican

'I think it's wonderful that amid immense suffering and oppression – across the ages and which still continues today – we can find these times of joy through a rich culture, love, music, dance, relationships, nature, our dreams and aspirations and so much more!'

Elizabeth: 'The Daffodil Perspective is about joy and light and equity, so I wanted something to continue that message in this concert. In our work and world there is often a narrative of negativity: it can be difficult not to look at the politics and virtue signalling and not feel sorrow.'

'I wanted something to focus on black and mixed-race stories through the lens of joy, their experience of joy.'

Joy is multifaceted for us, and we wanted to share that.

The music

Since before Tudor times Africans have participated in the making of music in Europe. There is the image of 'John Blanke the blacke Trumpet' in the court of Henry VIII in the Westminster Tournament Roll – whose story is fleshed out in Miranda Kaufmann's *Black Tudors: The Untold Story*.

Later, came the 18th-century composer and abolitionist, Ignatius Sancho in England, Joseph Bologne, Le Chevalier de Saint-Georges, in France and George Bridgetower, who was born in Poland but settled in England. In the same century, spirituals and work songs arose through the experiences of enslaved Africans in the American colonies, where they often played instruments among themselves, for entertainment in cities, and on plantations. The celebrated fiddler, George Walker from Virginia is one such example.

With the influence of religious revivals and conversions to Christianity, some of the songs developed into the Negro spiritual, and often served as coded messages for communication and abolitionist movements. After the American Civil War (1861–5), many educational institutions were established to school formerly enslaved African Americans. At one such, Fisk School (Fisk University), there was a need to raise funds to support the work of the college. The Fisk Jubilee Singers set off on their international journey to raise money for the school and, equally importantly, to disseminate the songs of the slaves – the spirituals. They sang in private audiences for the Earl of Shaftsbury, Queen Victoria, the Prime Minister William Gladstone and Kaiser Wilhelm. They and other 'jubilee' groups performed in various cities throughout the UK, US, Europe, South Africa and Australia. These songs were to be influential to the many composers in Europe and the Americas, but especially those of the African diaspora.

The year 1898 saw the hugely successful premiere of Hiawatha's *Wedding Feast* by the Afro-British composer (of mixed English and Sierra Leonean heritage), Samuel Coleridge-Taylor; he subsequently toured it to the United States on three occasions. Coleridge-Taylor was greatly influenced by the poet Paul Laurence Dunbar, the writer-philosopher, W E B Dubois, Dvořák and Brahms. He was impressed by his visits to the States and the music of African Americans. He later made the acquaintance of Harry T Burleigh, a celebrated African American composer whose songs were performed by the most famous singers of the early 20th century, including Marian Anderson, Alma Gluck, Roland Hayes, John McCormack and Paul Robeson. The two composers corresponded regularly; Burleigh had also been a protegee of Dvořák and had taught him about African American music. Both Burleigh and Coleridge-Taylor were revered internationally.

In 1916 Burleigh penned the popular art song arrangement of the spiritual *Deep River*. It was to inspire the creativity of a whole generation of composers who flourished during the period of the Harlem and Chicago Renaissances, Pan Africanism, the Black Arts Movements – and still today.

In this recital we explore some of the songs (of joy) by the composers directly influenced by Burleigh and Coleridge-Taylor, others who will have indirectly benefitted from their legacies and still more who have found their inspiration in the multifarious sources of cultures from Africa, the Caribbean Islands, Europe, Asia and other cultures from around the world.

The pieces in tonight's programme take in the burgeoning of song through the Harlem and Chicago Renaissances and beyond, through the lush songs of Florence Price, the lively and dramatic texts and accompaniments of Undine Smith Moore, and the intricate harmonies and social commentary of Margaret Bonds. In the UK, the short-lived legacy of Coleridge-Taylor, through his daughter, Avril Coleridge-Taylor, and Amanda Ira Aldridge, daughter of the celebrated 19th-century tragedian, Ira Aldridge. Both women were of mixed African and European heritage and composed both classical and popular music – the popular songs under the sobriquets, Peter Riley and Montague Ring, respectively.

There is still much research to be done on their output and the works of many of the mid-century composers from the African continent and the wider diaspora. Some major scholarship has begun with Professor Olabode Omojola, Professor Christine Gangelhoff, Professor Felicia Sandler, Bongani Ndodana-Breen, Michael Harper (RNCM), Professor Darryl Taylor of the African-American Art Song Alliance, and Professor Louise Toppin of the African Diaspora Project.

In the US, the diasporic song continued to thrive, but in Britain it seems to have skipped a generation. So the second half of our programme is focused on living composers and the lively creations influenced by the rhythms and lives on the continent of Africa, Europe and in the Caribbean, sometimes transferred and replanted in various parts of the world. The list includes the songs of Innocent Ndubuisi Okechukwu (Nigeria), Shirley Thompson (Britain), Cleophas Adderley (The Bahamas), Errollyn Wallen (Belize), Dominique Le Gendre (Trinidad), Franz Hepburn (The Bahamas), Tebogo Monnakgotla (Sweden), Ella Jarmin-Pinto (Britain), Roderick Williams (Britain), Tom Randall (USA) and Hannah Kendall (Britain). Not forgetting a flourishing new generation in the US either: Maria Thompson Corley (Canada), Richard Thompson (born in Scotland but US-based), Sylvia Hollifield (USA) and Rosephanye Powell (USA).

The poetry

For us, this is the thread of joy running through the whole narrative of the African diaspora. Whether self-produced, as in the actual poetry from the pen of African- or mixed-heritage composers, or borrowed from other cultures (as in the texts of some of the songs), they relate the tales of so many joys. The poetry we have chosen exemplifies the lives of the people from the many places and facets of the diaspora, as if refracting light through a stained glass window of our collective stories.

We are excited to bring this programme to you as a celebration of these composers and poets and their lived experiences. As we share with you their stories, we also tell our own in real time, making room for further exploration and understanding in the joy of being human.

© Michael Harper, Elizabeth de Brito, Nadine Benjamin and Caroline Jaya-Ratnam

Performers

Nadine Benjamin soprano

Caroline Jaya-Ratnam piano

Michael Harper speaker

Elizabeth de Brito co-curator

Betty Jackson King (1928–94)

In the Springtime

In the Springtime.
The only pretty ringtime
When birds do sing
Hey ding-a-din ding
Sweet lovers love the spring.

from *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare
(1564–1616)

Koleka Putuma (born 1993)

Black Joy

We were spanked for each other's sins,
spanked in syllables and by the word of
God. Before dark meant home time. My
grandmother's mattress knew each of my
siblings, cousins, and the neighbour's children's
morning breath by name. A single mattress
spread on the floor was enough for all of us.
Bread slices were buttered with iRama and rolled
into sausage shapes; we had it with black
rooibos, we did not ask for cheese. We were
filled. My cousins and I would gather around one
large bowl of umngqusho, each with their own
spoon. Sugar water completed the meal. We
were home and whole. But isn't it funny? That
when they ask about black childhood, all they are
interested in is our pain, as if the joy-parts were
accidental. I write love poems, too, but you only
want to see my mouth torn open in protest, as if
my mouth were a wound with pus and gangrene
for joy.

Innocent Ndubuisi Okechukwu (born 1988)

Ome N'Ala

Ome n'ala, ome nala
Ai ye
E-O
Ome n'ala k'anyi ne'me
Nwankwo bia we re oché
Nweke bia we re oché
Ai ye
Lee k'osi eme
Iye o
Lee k'osi eme
Umu nne m
Bute nu egwu oma
Umu aka, agbogho, n'ikoro
Ome n'ala yio amaka
Ome n'ala amaka mma
Iyoko, iyoko ko
Ome n'ala yio
Obuya k'anyi jiri biri
Hem!

Our Culture, Our Heritage
[Exclamation]
[Exclamation]
we are showcasing our culture
Child, born on NKWO day, come have your seat
Child, born on EKE day, come have your seat
[Exclamation]
Look how it is done
[Exclamation]
Look how it is done
My brothers and sisters
Bring on the good music
Children, young women and young men
Our culture is so good
Culture is so good
[Exclamation]
Our culture
This is what we stand on
[Exclamation]

Margaret Bonds (1913–72)**Dream Variations**

To fling my arms wide
 In some place of the sun,
 To whirl and to dance
 Till the white day is done.
 Then rest at cool evening
 Beneath a tall tree
 While night comes on gently,
 Dark like me –
 That is my dream!
 To fling my arms wide
 In the face of the sun,
 Dance! Whirl! Whirl!
 Till the quick day is done.
 Rest at pale evening ...
 A tall, slim tree ...
 Night coming tenderly
 Black like me.

from *Three Dream Portraits* by Langston
 Hughes (1901–67)

Rosephanye Powell (born 1962)**Songs for the People**

Let me make the songs for the people,
 Songs for the old and young;
 Songs to stir like a battle-cry
 Wherever they are sung.
 Let me make the songs for the weary,
 Amid life's fever and fret,
 Till hearts shall relax their tension,
 And careworn brows forget.
 Let me sing for little children,
 Before their footsteps stray,
 Sweet anthems of love and duty,
 To float o'er life's highway.
 Our world, so worn and weary,
 Needs music, pure and strong,
 To hush the jangle and discords
 Of sorrow, pain, and wrong.
 Music to soothe all its sorrow,
 Till war and crime shall cease;
 And the hearts of men grown tender
 Girdle the world with peace.

from *Miss Wheatley's Garden* by Frances Ellen
 Watkins Harper (1825–1911)

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906)**Cornstalk Fiddle**

When the corn's all cut and the bright stalks
 shine
 Like the burnished spears of a field of gold;
 When the field-mice rich on the nubbins dine,
 And the frost comes white and the wind
 blows cold;
 Then its heigho fellows and hi-diddle-diddle,
 For the time is ripe for the corn-stalk fiddle.

And you take a stalk that is straight and long,
 With an expert eye to its worthy points,
 And you think of the bubbling strains of song
 That are bound between its pithy joints –
 Then you cut out strings, with a bridge in the
 middle,
 With a corn-stalk bow for a corn-stalk fiddle.

Then the strains that grow as you draw the
 bow
 O'er the yielding strings with a practised
 hand!
 And the music's flow never loud but low
 Is the concert note of a fairy band.
 Oh, your dainty songs are a misty riddle
 To the simple sweets of the corn-stalk fiddle.

When the eve comes on and our work is done
 And the sun drops down with a tender
 glance,
 With their hearts all prime for the harmless
 fun,
 Come the neighbor girls for the evening's
 dance,
 And they wait for the well-known twist and
 twiddle,
 More time than tune – from the corn-stalk
 fiddle.

Then brother Jabez takes the bow,
 While Ned stands off with Susan Bland,
 Then Henry stops by Milly Snow
 And John takes Nellie Jones's hand,
 While I pair off with Mandy Biddle,
 And scrape, scrape, scrape goes the corn-stalk
 fiddle.

'Salute your partners', comes the call,
 'All join hands and circle round',
 'Grand train back', and 'Balance all',
 Footsteps lightly spurn the ground,
 'Take your lady and balance down the middle'
 To the merry strains of the corn-stalk fiddle.

So the night goes on and the dance is o'er,
 And the merry girls are homeward gone,
 But I see it all in my sleep once more,
 And I dream till the very break of dawn
 Of an impish dance on a red-hot griddle
 To the screech and scrape of a corn-stalk
 fiddle.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875–1912)**Songs of Sun and Shade –****No 3, The Rainbow-Child**

The sunshine met the stormwind
 As he swept across the plain,
 And she wooed him till he lov'd her,
 And his kisses fell as rain.
 She was fair, and he was ardent.
 And behold! one happy morn,
 While I watch'd their mingled glory,
 Lo! a rainbow child was born!

from *Songs of Sun and Shade* by Marguerite
 Radclyffe-Hall (1880–1943)

Sylvia Hollifield
In Time of Silver Rain

In time of silver rain
The earth
Puts forth new life again,
Green grasses grow
And flowers lift their heads,
And over all the plain
The wonder spreads
Of life, of life, of life!
In time of silver rain
The butterflies lift silken wings
To catch a rainbow cry,
And trees put forth
New leaves to sing
In joy beneath the sky
As down the roadway passing boys
And girls go singing, too,
In time of silver rain
When spring
And life are new.

Langston Hughes

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
Songs of Sun and Shade –
No 5, This is the Island of Gardens

This is the island of gardens,
Filled with a marvelous fragrance,
O! the pale scent of the jasmine!
O! the delicious mimosa!
Beating soft pinions together,
Cometh a wind from the mountains;
Why wouldst thou leave us, O small wind?
Rest thee a-while 'mid the laurels.
Even as thou, have I wandered
Over the earth and the ocean,
Pondering many things deeply,
Now I lie down in the sunshine.

Grace Nichols (born 1950)
Apple and Mango

When last home, trying to recover
some of the bright light of small-girl days,
My sister threw the sudden gift
Of a Buxton Spice mango.
I remember how I peeled and sliced
that plump orb of sunshine
Adding a sprinkling of salt,
the way I liked it as a child.
I remember how she raised her eyes
when I said I'd leave back for afters, a slice –
Girl, you can't finish one mango?
How could I have admitted
that I had to save back space
For the fruits of my other back-home –
This rain and winter-driven Blighty
where summery strawberry
and apple and my daughters all grow.

Tebogo Monnakgotla

Images lunaires

Clair de lune, clair de lune et après?
Ne bois trop le lait qui fuit du pis de cette
chienne
qui aboie dans les ruines du ciel
comme pour appeler du fond du désert de
la nuit.
son innombrable progéniture dont
s'ouvrent les yeux en myriades d'étoiles.

Clair de lune, clair de lune et après?
Le vent lui-même est laiteux
qui ébranle les ombres sculptées sur le sol
et augmente le nombre des âmes visibles de
toutes les choses
qui semblent fuir l'aboielement silencieux
mais résonnant partout.

Clair de lune, clair de lune et après?
Vois-tu ces oiseaux pacifiques
qui grandissent au coeur du paysage
fantomatique?

Ils paissent l'ombre, ils picorrent la nuit.
De quoi donc leur jabot sera-t-il rempli
lorsque deviendront des chants dans le leur
les épis de riz et de maïs ravis par les coqs?

Clair de lune, clair de lune-et après?
Moi, je ne suis plus assez jeune
pour chercher une soeur lunaire dehors
après les rondes infantines:
Je tiendrai mes enfants dans mes bras
jusqu'à ce qu'il s'endorment,
et il est des livres que je lirai avec ma femme

jusqu' à ce que la lune change
et devienne pour nous elle-même
en l'attente de l'aube
qui nous surprendra aux rives du sommeil.

Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo (1901/3–37)

Georgia Douglas Johnson (1880–1966)

Common Dust

And who shall separate the dust
What later we shall be:
Whose keen discerning eye will scan
And solve the mystery?

The high, the low, the rich, the poor,
The black, the white, the red,
And all the chromatique between,
Of whom shall it be said:

Here lies the dust of Africa;
Here are the sons of Rome;
Here lies the one unlabelled,
The world at large his home!

Can one then separate the dust?
Will mankind lie apart,
When life has settled back again
The same as from the start?

Moonlight, moonlight, and after
don't drink too much milk leaking from this
female dog's udder
who barks in the ruins of the sky
as if to call from the depths of the desert
of night.
Her innumerable offspring, including
open their eyes into myriads of stars.

Moonlight, moonlight, and after?
The wind itself is milky
that shakes the shadows carved on the ground
and increases the number of visible souls of
all things
that seem to flee the silent bark
but resonating everywhere.

Moonlight, moonlight, and after?
Do you see these peaceful birds
growing in the heart of the ghostly
landscape?

They graze in the shade, they peck at night.
What will their crop be filled with?
when became songs in theirs
the ears of rice and corn delighted by the roosters?

Moonlight, moonlight, and after?
Me, I'm not young enough anymore
to look for a moon sister
outside after infant rounds:
I will hold my children in my arms
until they fall asleep
and-these are the books that I will read with my wife

until the moon changes
and become for ourselves
waiting for dawn
which will surprise us on the shores of sleep.

Undine Smith Moore (1904–89)

Watch and Pray

Child: Mama, is Massa goin' to sell us tomorrow?

Mother: Yes, Yes, Yes.
Oh, Watch and Pray.

Child: Is he a-goin' to sell us down to Georgia?

Mother: Yes, yes, yes.

Child: Oh mama, Don't you grieve after me.

Mother: Oh, Watch and Pray.

Undine Smith Moore

Jacqueline Hairston (born 1932)

Dormi, Jesu

Dormi, Jesus
Dormi, Jesu. Mater ridet
Quae tam dulcem somnum videt,
Dormi, Jesu, dormi Jesu, blandule.
Dormi, Jesu, dormi Jesu, dormi Jesu blandule.
Dormi, Jesu, dormi Jesu, dormi Jesu blandule.

Si non dormis, Mater plorat,
Inter fila cantans orat,
Blande, veni, blandi, veni somnule.
Dormi, Jesu, dormi Jesu, blandule.
Dormi, Jesu, dormi Jesu, dormi Jesu blandule.
Dormi, Jesu, dormi Jesu, dormi Jesu blandule.

Lullaby from Chile as sung by the Araucanian Indians

Maya Angelou (1928–2014)

Still I Rise

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard.

Sleep, Jesus.
Your mother she smiles:
It is such a sweet sleep she watches,
Sleep, Jesus, Jesus, sleep, gentle.
Sleep, Jesus, Jesus, sleep, sleep so gently Jesus.
Sleep, Jesus, Jesus, sleep, sleep so gently Jesus.

If you are not sleeping, [your] mother cries
Among the praises that she sings, she prays,
Quietly, go on sweetly to sleep.
Sleep, Jesus, Jesus, sleep, so gently.
Sleep, Jesus, Jesus, sleep, sleep so gently Jesus.
Sleep, Jesus, Jesus, sleep, sleep so gently Jesus.

Translation © Bertram Kottmann

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

Errollyn Wallen (born 1958)
My Feet May Take A Little While

My feet may take a little while
To walk the way of my dreaming heart
The more I walk the more I breathe
The more I breathe, the less I know.

There is song that I was taught
Of hills and streams
And all the hopes and fears
Of living things
Are written there
In me.

My feet are slower than my heart,
Slower than my dreams,
Than my will.

I'll walk a million miles,
I've walked a million miles of innocence.

My feet may take a little while
To walk the way of my dreaming heart
The more I walk ,
The more I breathe,
The more I breathe,
The less I know.

Errollyn Wallen

Traditional, arr Undine Smith Moore
Come Down Angels

Come down, Angels
trouble the water
Let God's saints come in!
I love to shout
I love to sing.
Let God's saints a-come in
I love to praise my heavenly King,
Let God's saints come in.
O, come down, Angels, etc.
I think I hear the Sinner say
Let God's saints a come in
My Savior taught me how to pray,
Let God's saints a come in.
Down, down
Trouble the water
Let God's saints a come in.

Traditional

Interval: 20 minutes

Undine Smith Moore
Love Let the Wind Cry How I Adore Thee

Love, let the wind cry from the high mountain,
Bending the ash trees and the tall hemlocks
With the great voice of thunderous legions.
How I adore thee.
Let the hoarse torrent in the blue canyon
Murmuring mightily out of the gray mist of
primal chaos
Cease not proclaiming How I adore thee.
Let the long rhythm of crunching rollers
breaking and bursting,
On the white seaboard, Titan and tireless tell,
While the world stands... How I adore thee.
Love let the clear call of the tree cricket,
Frailest of creatures, green as the young
grass,
Mark with its trilling resonant bellnote,
How I adore thee.
But, more than all sounds Surer,
Serener,
Fuller of passion and exultation,
Let the hushed whisper in thine own heart
say...
How I adore thee.

Sappho, rendered by Bliss Carman based on
the translation by H T Wharton

Pat Parker (1944–89)
My lover is a Woman

I
my lover is a woman
& when i hold her
feel her warmth
i feel good
feel safe
then – i never think of
my family's voices
never hear my sisters say
bulldaggers, queers, funny
come see us, but don't

bring your friends
it's ok with us,
but don't tell mama
it'd break her heart
never feel my father
turn in his grave
never hear my mother cry
Lord, what kind of child is this?

II
my lover's hair is blonde
& when it rubs across my face
it feels soft
feels like a thousand fingers
touch my skin & hold me
and i feel good
then – i never think of the little boy
who spat & called me nigger
never think of the policemen
who kicked my body & said crawl
never think of Black bodies
hanging in trees or filled
with bullet holes
never hear my sisters say
white folks hair stinks
don't trust any of them
never feel my father
turn in his grave
never hear my mother talk
of her backache after scrubbing floors
never hear her cry
Lord, what kind of child is this?

III
my lover's eyes are blue
& when she looks at me
i float in a warm lake
feel my muscles go weak with want
feel good
feel safe
then – i never think of the blue
eyes that have glared at me
moved three stools away from me
in a bar
never hear my sisters rage
of syphilitic Black men as
guinea pigs
rage of sterilised children
watch them just stop in an
intersection to scare the old
white bitch
never feel my father turn
in his grave
never remember my mother
teaching me the yes sirs & ma'ams
to keep me alive
never hear my mother cry
Lord, what kind of child is this?

IV
& when we go to a gay bar
& my people shun me because i crossed
the line
& her people look to see what's
wrong with her
what defect
drove her to me
& when we walk the streets
of this city
forget and touch
or hold hands
& the people
stare, glare, frown, & taunt
at those queers
i remember
every word taught me
every word said to me
every deed done to me
& then i hate
i look at my lover
& for an instant
doubt
then – i hold her hand tighter
& i can hear my mother cry.
Lord, what kind of child is this?

Harry T Burleigh (1866–1949)

Elysium

Your lips to mine,
My heart's desire,
Let my soul thrill to their passionate fire;
The world melts away in the glow of your kiss,
And leaves just you and me
This perfect hour of bliss.
Your lips again
Press them to mine;
One more full draught of your nectarous wine;
In the fold of your arms
Lull me softly until
There comes the wondrous calm of love,
So deep and still.

James Weldon Johnson (1871–1938)

Amanda Ira Aldridge (1866–1956)

Fickle Singers

A bird once sang in a gilded cage,
A poor little captive songster!
Now she had been there for quite an age
Ever since she was a youngster;
And she fluttered her wings to the sunshine
warm,
And sang
'Oh how I wonder if a poor little bird
Would come to harm away in the world
Out yonder?
But I think' sighed she
'If I once were free
I'd be a success out yonder.'

Now there was one who had heard the sigh
Of the little captive songster.
And filled with pity He wondered nigh,
(He was only a callow youngster!)
And he said 'Now if I should set you free,
You poor little bird,
I wonder if you would be ready
To fly with me away to the wonder out
yonder?'
'Oh! Of course' smiled she
'If you set me free
I'd love you for aye out yonder.'

So he opened the door with a joyful cry
For that poor little captive songster,
But left him there with a brief 'goodbye'
That innocent callow youngster,
And she laughed 'Oh, of course I was only in
jest,
When will you learn, I wonder,
That birds in a cage are just like the rest
Away in the world out yonder?'
So when maidens sigh
Why just pass them by,
Or they'll break your heart asunder.

Harold Simpson

Richard Thompson (born 1954)
Black Pierrot

I am a black pierrot:
She did not love me,
So I crept away into the night
And the night was black, too.
I am a black pierrot:
She did not love me,
So I wept until the red dawn
Dripped blood over the eastern hills
And my heart was bleeding, too.
I am a black pierrot:
She did not love me,
So with my once gay colored soul
shrunken like a balloon without air,
I went forth in the morning
To seek a new brown love.

Langston Hughes

Jackie Kay (born 1951)
Between the Dee and the Don

'The middle ground is the best place to be'
– Igbo saying

I will stand not in the past or in the future
not in the foreground or the background;
not as the first child or the last child.
I will stand alone in the middle ground.

I was conceived between the Dee and the Don.
I was born in the city of crag and stone.

I am not a daughter to one father.
I am not a sister to one brother.
I am light and dark.
I am father and mother.

I was conceived between the Dee and the Don.
I was born in the city of crag and stone.

I am not forgiving and I am not cruel.
I will not go against one side.
I am not wise or a fool.
I was not born yesterday.

I was conceived between the Dee and the Don.
I was born in the city of crag and stone.

I can say tomorrow is another day tomorrow.
I come from the old world and the new.
I live between laughter and sorrow.
I live between the land and the sea.

I was conceived between the Dee and the Don.
I was born in the city of crag and stone.

Avril Coleridge-Taylor (1903–98)
Sleeping and Waking

Let me lie here,
Quiet in the sun,
And think new thoughts
And dream new dreams,
And let the whisp'ring breeze
That sings along the shore
Kiss my upturned face
And lull me into sleep.

And when I wake anew
And know that life is mine,
And see the sky, the waves,
The gently setting sun,
May I know God
Far better than before,
And rising may I sing for joy.
For joy.

Norman Notley (1890–1980)

Maria Thompson Corley (born 1966)
My Heart is Awake

My heart is awake,
Roused with the exhilarating melody
My brain seeks to ignore
in its quest for sleep's sweet stasis
My heart's sparks are frequently
Foolish and futile.
My brain, cold water in hand,
Basks a moment in warm embers' glow,
And smiles.

Maria Thompson Corley

Ella Jarman-Pinto (born 1989)

This Little Rose

Nobody knows this sweet little Rose
It might a pilgrim be
Did I not take it from the ways
And lift it up to thee.
Only a Bee will miss it
Only a Butterfly,
Hastening from far journey
On its breast to lie
Only a Bird will wonder
Only a Breeze will sigh
Ah Little Rose – how easy
For such as thee to die!

Emily Dickinson (1830–86)

Florence Price (1887–1953)

Night

Night comes
A Madonna clad in scented blue,
Rose red her mouth,
And deep her eyes,
She lights her stars
And turns to where
Beneath her silver lamp,
The moon,
Upon a couch of shadow lies,
A dreamy child,
The wearied day.

Louise C Wallace (1902–73)

Langston Hughes

Madam and the Rent Man

The rent man knocked.
He said, Howdy-do?
I said, What
Can I do for you?
He said, You know
Your rent is due.

I said, Listen,
Before I'd pay
I'd go to Hades
And rot away!

The sink is broke,
The water don't run,
And you ain't done a thing
You promised to've done.

Back window's cracked,
Kitchen floor squeaks,
There's rats in the cellar,
And the attic leaks.

He said, Madam,
It's not up to me.
I'm just the agent,
Don't you see?

I said, Naturally,
You pass the buck.
If it's money you want
You're out of luck.

He said, Madam,
I ain't pleased!
I said, Neither am I.
So we agrees!

Barbara Sherill & Byron Motley
Mae's Rent Party

Say did you go to Mae's rent party?
Let me tell you what it was all about.
They had pig's feet and potato salad
And it jumped 'til the man threw us out.
They had hogmaws and cornpone dumplings
White whiskey and four kegs of beer
I sure hopes I get invited when they let her out
of jail
Next year.

Ernest J Wilson, Jr

Roger Robinson (born 1982)
A Portable Paradise

And if I speak of Paradise,
then I'm speaking of my grandmother
who told me to carry it always
on my person, concealed, so
no one else would know but me.
That way they can't steal it, she'd say.
And if life puts you under pressure,
trace its ridges in your pocket,
smell its piney scent on your handkerchief,
hum its anthem under your breath.
And if your stresses are sustained and daily,
get yourself to an empty room – be it hotel,
hostel or hovel – find a lamp
and empty your paradise onto a desk:
your white sands, green hills and fresh fish.
Shine the lamp on it like the fresh hope
of morning, and keep staring at it till you sleep.

R Nathaniel Dett (1882–1943)
The Ordering of Moses

Come, let us praise Jehovah,
For His triumph is glorious;
The clouds and fire are his chariots,
The winds and waves obey Him.
Now all the armies of Pharaoh
Are sunk as stones in deep waters.
The deeps stood up as the mountains,
When Thou didst blow Thy breath upon them.

based on Scripture and folklore

Shirley Thompson (born 1958)
Precious Skies

Underneath these skies so precious
We together make our journey

Over hills and gentle waters,
We find troubles and we find joy!
We all find joy.

Underneath these skies so pleasant
We are one with all around us.

We are blessed beyond all measure.
We are loved today and always.
Ah!

Crackling leaves under foot.
Sun shining through the whispering trees.
Oh, how I love days like this!
Let it last forever more.

Birds dancing here, dancing there
They have no care of what tomorrow may
bring.
Show me the way little bird.
Let your sweet song touch my heart,
through and through.

Let your sweet song touch my trembling heart.
Let us all live well today!
Let us all dance to the beat.
Let us all sing your sweet song!

Underneath these skies so precious
We together make our journey
Over hills and gentle waters,
We find troubles and all find joy.

Underneath these skies so precious
We are one with all around us.
We are blessed beyond all measure
We are loved today and always.
Ah!

Let us shout and praise,
We are here today.
Let us sing,
Let bells ring.
Beneath these skies, Let's Sing!

Shirley Thompson

Sophia Thakur **Self Love**

Dominique Le Gendre (born 1960) **Agua, dónde vas?**

Agua, dónde vas?
Riyendo voy por el río
a las orillas del mar.

Mar ¿adónde vas?
Río arriba voy buscando
fuente donde descansar.

Chopo, y tú ¿qué harás?
No quiero decirte nada.
Yo, ¡temblar!

Federico García Lorca (1898–1936)

Water, where are you going?
Laughing, I go by the river
to the shores of the sea.

Sea, where are you going?
I am going upriver looking for the
source where I may rest.

Black poplar, and what will you do?
I don't want to tell you anything.
I tremble!

Translation © Michael Harper

Roderick Williams (born 1965)**Love**

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew
back,
Guilte of dust and sinne.
But quick-ey'd love observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me,
Sweetly questioning,
If I lack'd anything.
A guest, I answered, worthy to be here
Love said, you shall be he, you shall be he,
you shall be he.

I, the unkinde ungratefull?
Ah my deare, I cannot look on thee, cannot
look on thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
who made the eyes but I?
Truth Lord, but I have marred them:
Let my shame go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, sayes Love,
who bore the blame? who bore the blame?
My deare then I will serve, then I will serve
you must sit down, sayes Love and taste my
meat.

So I did sit and eat, so I did sit and eat.

George Herbert (1593–1633)

Derek Walcott**Love After Love****Hannah Kendall (born 1984)****The Knife of Dawn – In a Great Silence**

In a great silence I hear approaching rain:
There is a sound of conflict in the sky
The frightened lizard darts behind a stone
First was the wind, now is the wild assault.

I wish this world would sink and drown again
So that we build another Noah's ark
And send another little dove to find
What we have lost in floods of misery.

Martin Carter (1927–97), arr Tessa McWatt

Benjamin Zephaniah (born 1958)**The British**

Take some Picts, Celts and Silures
And let them settle,
Then overrun them with Roman conquerors.

Remove the Romans after approximately 400
years
Add lots of Norman French to some
Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Vikings, then stir
vigorously.

Mix some hot Chileans, cool Jamaicans,
Dominicans,
Trinidadians and Bajans with some Ethiopians,
Chinese,
Vietnamese and Sudanese.

Then take a blend of Somalians, Sri Lankans,
Nigerians
And Pakistanis,
Combine with some Guyanese
And turn up the heat.

Sprinkle some fresh Indians, Malaysians,
Bosnians,
Iraqis and Bangladeshis together with some
Afghans, Spanish, Turkish, Kurdish, Japanese
And Palestinians
Then add to the melting pot.

Leave the ingredients to simmer.
As they mix and blend allow their languages
to flourish
Binding them together with English.

Allow time to be cool.

Add some unity, understanding, and respect
for the future,
Serve with justice
And enjoy.

Note: All the ingredients are equally
important. Treating one ingredient better than
another will leave a bitter unpleasant taste.
Warning: An unequal spread of justice will
damage the people and cause pain. Give
justice and equality to all.

Cleophas Adderley (1955–2017)**Nassau Harbour**

Ships sailin' into Nassau Harbour
Da sun shinin' on da waters of Nassau
Harbour
Da woman in da market,

Chile dey talkin' about
'She tief my customer,
She too bigaty,
Dat could-a been
My straw hat did sell..
'Hey sweetie! Ya wan'ta buy dis one ...
I gat a special sale..'

The seagulls fly over beautiful
Nassau Harbour
The water is oh so gentle
Over Nassau Harbour.
Its sapphire

Da fishmans in da market,
Sellin' grouper;
Da people on Bay Street
Is buyin' up da t'ings;
Da horse and carriage
dem is full of people:

All da people in da car
All da people on da dock
An' da straw market
full of people,
dem is everywhere you go,
People fussin'
People fightin'

People buyin'
People sellin'.
Oh what a rowdy crowd.

I must go where,
Ships sailin'
Where seagulls flyin'
Over beautiful Nassau Harbour;
Over beautiful Nassau Harbour;
Over beautiful Nassau Harbour...

Cleophas Adderley

Antonia Jade King

Alive

You call it unprofessional because of course
professionalism is straight and white
I am too much for you and I accept that
I've never followed patterns or rules
And my hair hasn't either
Neither of us want to be tamed
You call my hair wild
I call it alive
When you try and push us to the ground we
will both rise to the sky
Apparently my hair is good enough to touch
even when I don't want you to
But it is also the reason why I should not get a
job
Listen
My hair is meticulously looked after glory
It is coconut oil covered beauty
It is all the hours I have spent lovingly
detangling
It is resistant to your words because I've put
too much love into these curls
Your hate cannot break through the Shea
Butter barrier I've wrapped each of these curls
in
My hair bounces when I walk like it refuses to
stop dancing
You will not stop us dancing.
I have spent years massaging pride into this
scalp
I have taught each curl on this head its history
and you cannot undo the education by this
point
There is more power in one strand of hair on
this head than in your entire narrow minded
existence
If my hair is too big I suggest you make room.

Franz Hepburn (born 1965)

Yes

Yes!

Tom Randle (born 1958)

Turn Around

Whenever there's danger,
When you're facing fear
When darkness surrounds you
And the road's unclear,
When courage is tested
And strength is waning
And when your spirit falters
And you feel all hope is fading,
Just turn around
I am always near.

There's hope for the future,
And the strength we've found
By standing together
We're on common ground.
Bright days lie in waiting
A new beginning,
We'll put the past behind us
And embrace this time of healing!

Turn around
We can always turn around,
Turn around,
I can hear you when you're calling,
Turn around, turn around,
I will catch you when you're falling,

Turn around, turn around,
When you need someone,
Really need someone
I'm there.

Though you may feel sorrow
Though you may feel pain,
With trust in tomorrow,
There's so much to gain.

And shoulder to shoulder
We are invincible,
Rising higher than before
Unafraid what's to come!

Let's turn around
See what we've found,
Love will abound
When we turn around
We can turn around
Just turn around
Turn around.

Tom Randle

Susan Nalugwa Kiguli (born 1969)

I Love Home

For those people who find laughter
Such company
Laugh like they are falling apart
Or coming loose
With tears gliding down their cheeks
And these days all this on
A mobile phone.
For laughter that soars
Echoing in every nook
For laughter sprayed
On blossoming bushes
For laughter that escapes out of caves
Rising to greet the sun
For laughter of mobile phone to mobile
phone.
For those people who had dance lessons
In the womb
Who touch the floor
Making it worship them
Who turn this way and create magic
Turn that way
And send a billion angels
Begging them never to stop
For them who whistle songs
And cast you into singing along
Despite yourself.
For those people who grieve
Calling upon a thousand names
Remembering name upon name
Revisiting each story of a life
Which matters to them
Each face of love.
For those people who feel their sorrow
From within to without
Who crawl and scratch the earth
As if she would answer their questions
For those who each day look upon the sky
And beseech God
Continuing to love
To hope
To live as if life is always
For those people who never let go of
themselves
Of people who paint their landscape
For people who make sadness part of
happiness
An element of peace
Of seeing before now and forever
For my people who make me
Long to understand what I do not understand.

Errollyn Wallen

Peace on Earth

And snow falls down on me.
Peace on earth.
The night is dark and soft.
Peace on earth.
The lights that sparkle in the square.
The smoke that lingers in the air.
Peace on earth.
And grace falls down on me.
Peace on earth.
The dark will turn aside.
Peace on earth.
The fires that burn in every hearth
Do sing our praise of Christmas past
Peace on earth.
Hear them singing.
Peace on earth.

Errollyn Wallen

The Barbican sparks creative possibilities and transformation for artists, audiences and communities – to inspire, connect, and provoke debate.

As a not-for-profit charity, we need to raise two thirds of our income through fundraising, ticket sales, and commercial activities. With the help of our generous supporters, we are able to share the work of some of the most inspiring and visionary artists and creatives, enabling the widest possible audience to experience the joy of the arts.

We're passionate about expanding access to ensure anyone can participate in art and creativity in London and beyond. From our work with local schools to provide unforgettable learning experiences, to development opportunities for emerging creatives, to discounted tickets to our events, your support helps us make a real difference every day.

There are many ways you can support the Barbican, including by making a donation, joining our programme as a sponsor, or becoming a Member. To find out more and join our community, please visit barbican.org.uk/supportus or contact development@barbican.org.uk

With thanks
The City of London Corporation, founder and principal funder

Major Supporters

Arts Council England
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (UK Branch)
SHM Foundation
The Terra Foundation for American Art

Leading Supporters

Lonti Ebers
Trevor Fenwick and Jane Hindley
Marcus Margulies

Programme Supporters

Marie-Laure de Clermont-Tonnerre (Spirit Now London)
Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery
Sayeh Ghanbari
Elizabeth and J Jeffry Louis
Pat and Pierre Maugüé
The Clare McKeon Charitable Trust
Hugh Monk
Romilly Walton Masters Award
The Rudge Shipley Charitable Trust

Director's Circle

Farmida Bi CBE
Tom and Jo Bloxham MBE
Philippe & Stephanie Camu
Cas Donald
Trevor Fenwick and Jane Hindley
Ruth and Stuart Lipton
Tracey, Eloise and Max Mayerson
John Murray
Natrium Capital Limited

Corporate Supporters

Audible
Bank of America
Bloomberg
Bolt Burdon Kemp
DLA Piper
Google Arts & Culture
Linklaters LLP
Morrison Foerster
Norton Rose Fulbright
Osborne Clarke
Pinsent Masons
Sotheby's
Slaughter and May
Taittinger
UBS

Trusts & Grantmakers

The Austin and Hope Pilkington Charitable Trust
Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne
Art Fund
Bagri Foundation
CHK Foundation
Cockayne – Grants for the Arts
John S Cohen Foundation
Italian Cultural Institute in London
Korean Cultural Centre UK
Kusuma Trust UK
London Community Foundation
Mactaggart Third Fund
The Polonsky Foundation
Rix-Thompson-Rothenberg Foundation
Swiss Cultural Fund

If you're interested in supporting the Barbican Centre Trust, visit barbican.org.uk/supportus or contact us on 0207 382 6185 or development@barbican.org.uk

The Barbican Centre Trust, registered charity no 294282

Barbican Board

Tom Sleigh *chair*
Sir William Russell *deputy chairman*
Tobi Ruth Adebekun *deputy chairman*
Deputy Ann Holmes
Munsur Ali
Tijs Broeke
Stephen Bediako
Deputy Randall Anderson
Farmida Bi cbe
Russ Carr
Zulum Elumogo
Alpa Raja
Gerard Grech
Deputy Wendy Hyde
Deputy Edward Lord obe
Wendy Mead
Graham Packham
Mark Page
Dr Jens Riegelsberger
Professor Jane Roscoe
Irem Yerdelen
Despina Tsatsas
Michael 'Mikey J' Asante

Directors Group

Claire Spencer *CEO*
Will Gompertz *artistic director*
Jonathon Poyner *director of operations & buildings*
Natasha Harris *director of development*
Ali Mirza *director of people and inclusion*
Sarah Wall *head of finance & business administration*
Jo Daly *senior executive assistant to CEO and artistic director*



The City of London
Corporation is the founder
and principal funder
of the Barbican Centre