

A collaboration between The Museum of Modern Art and the New York Philharmonic

Friday, October 25, 2024, 7:00 p.m.

The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1
Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53 Street
New York City



International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE)
George Lewis, artistic director

Jalalu KALVERT-NELSON *Prelude #1* (2020)
Michael Nicolas, cello

Daniel KIDANE *Foreign Tongues* (2015)
Josh Modney, violin
Yezu Woo, violin
Kyle Armbrust, viola
Michael Nicolas, cello

Hannah KENDALL *Tuxedo: Diving Bell 2* (2021)
Nuiko Wadden, harp

Tebogo MONNAKGOTLA *Wooden Bodies* (2020)
Josh Modney, violin
Yezu Woo, violin
Kyle Armbrust, viola
Michael Nicolas, cello

Joshua UZOIGWE Selections from
Talking Drums (1990)
I. Ukom
V. Egwu Amala
Cory Smythe, piano

Leila ADU-GILMORE *Alyssum* (2014)
Josh Modney, violin
Yezu Woo, violin
Kyle Armbrust, viola
Michael Nicolas, cello
Nuiko Wadden, harp

The New York Philharmonic’s involvement in this concert is part of its exploration of Afromodernism.

About the program

This concert presents chamber music by Afrodiasporic composers from the United Kingdom, Nigeria, Ghana/New Zealand, Sweden, and the United States. These works reveal Afrodiasporic new music as an international, intercultural, and multigenerational space of innovation that offers new subjects, histories, and identities.

The title of the concert is drawn from *Composing While Black: Afrodiasporic New Music Today*, the bilingual English-German volume co-edited by Afro-German musicologist Harald Kisiedu and George Lewis. Like the book, this concert presents international perspectives on Afrodiasporic contemporary classical composers active between 1960 and the present, a period that academic inquiry, concert programming, curation, and journalistic accounts have insufficiently addressed, despite the enormous influence of Afrodiasporic music-makers around the world.

The work of the late Nigerian composer Joshua Uzoigwe (1946–2005), a major exponent of the style of African pianism, is rarely presented in the US. The work presented in this concert draws from his study of ukom (Igbo-tuned drums), from which, as the Ghanaian musicologist Kofi Agawu has observed, Uzoigwe sought to ground his work in an affectively and structurally African sonic field. Jalalu-Kalvert Nelson, born in Oklahoma and based for many years in Switzerland, has written for many experimental formations, such as his work for 25 tubas. Nelson’s music finds common ground with Leila Adu-Gilmore, born in New Zealand and with roots in Ghana, whose music is informed by her notion of critical sonic practice. Born and raised in Uppsala, Sweden, the Afro-Swedish composer Tebogo Monnakgotla creates works known for their intimate sonic detail. The concert also includes Daniel Kidane and Hannah Kendall, two of the most adventurously inventive British composers active today. Kidane’s music draws on his multicultural and multilingual background, while Kendall’s works often deal with memory by deploying artifacts associated with the slave trade as sound-making tools.

The extraordinary geographic, cultural, and aesthetic range of the music presented here exemplifies the International Contemporary Ensemble’s notion of *polyaspora*, a post-diaspora model of intercultural flows by which new music becomes conscious, collaborative, creolized, and connected across borders of aesthetics, practices, gender, ethnicity, race, and transnational formations. In this way, *Composing While Black* can serve as a guide to what a mobile decoloniality could sound like.

— George Lewis

About the composers

Leila Adu is an astonishing force at the intersection of electropop, avant-classical, and singer-songwriter. Exploring her roots in New Zealand, Great Britain, and Ghana, Adu is an international artist who has performed at festivals and venues across the world. Compared to Nina Simone and Joanna Newsom by WNYC, Adu has released five acclaimed albums and has given visionary solo BBC and WQXR performances. Adu’s credits include performing at the Ojai Music Festival and with Bang on a Can and the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, appearing on *Late Night with David Letterman*, and composing for a Billboard-charting album. Adu holds a PhD in music composition from Princeton University. In 2022 she was awarded a Charles Ives Composer Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Hannah Kendall’s music confronts our collective history with narratively driven pieces centered on bold statements. Her *Tuxedo: Vasco ‘de’ Gama* transcribes the melody of the spiritual “Wade in the Water” into a delicate music box, and *Tuxedo: Hot Summer No Water* points to a year defined by the police’s presence in Black communities. Her work has been performed by many ensembles, from the London and BBC symphony orchestras to the Los Angeles and New York philharmonic orchestras, and from the Lucerne Festival to Tanglewood. She collaborates with choreographers, poets, and art galleries. Kendall’s honors include the Hindemith Prize and the Ivor Novello Award. Born in London in 1984, she studied at the University of Exeter, Royal College of Music, and Columbia University.

Daniel Kidane studied privately with Sergey Slonimsky and at the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) with Gary Carpenter and David Horne. His honors include the Royal Philharmonic Society Prize, Paul Hamlyn Award for Artists, and an honorary doctorate from Coventry University in 2022. Currently a visiting tutor in composition at RNCM and Cambridge University, his orchestral works include *Dream Song*, with words from Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I have a dream” speech, and *Woke*, premiered by the BBC Symphony Orchestra at the Last Night of the Proms. *Sun Poem*, commissioned by the LSO and San Francisco Symphony, has been performed in London, San Francisco, and on the LSO’s European tour. Kidane’s music can be heard on the NMC, Pentatone, and OUR Recordings labels.

Tebogo Monnakgotla, born and raised in Uppsala, is composer-in-residence at the Norrköping Symphony Orchestra. Her music is scheduled to be premiered at Chicago’s Grant Park Festival and by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Berlin Radio Orchestra, Chelsea Music Festival, and at Tanglewood. While a student at Stockholm’s Royal College of Music, she was a prize winner in the European broadcasting union’s composition competition. After focusing on composing for orchestra and chamber ensembles, she has recently turned to opera, including *Jean-Joseph*, written for the Royal Opera in Stockholm, and *Zebzan*, for Vadstena. Tebogo Monnakgotla often sets her music to poetry, including through a collaboration with poet Li Li and compositions featuring texts by Oliveira Silveira, the late Malagasies Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo, and others.

Born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, **Jalalu-Kalvert Nelson** studied composition at Indiana University with Eaton and Xenakis, and at the Berkshire Music Centre with Schuller and Druckman. Recipient of the first John W. Work III Composition Fellowship, he has worked in creative music education at the Lincoln Center Education Institute, Henry Street Settlement, and others. Nelson has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, Composers Fellowship, and Amsterdaams Fonds Voor Kunst (Holland), and has received commissions from ensembles including Kronos Quartet and Studio ensemble Dan-Wien; for Broken Frames Syndicate-Frankfurt he composed *Jim Is Still Crowing*, which has been performed from Lucerne to Brooklyn. *VOICESBETWEENTHESHADOWSBETWEEN-THEVOICES*, his new semiautobiographical music theater work, is scheduled to be premiered in Vienna in 2026.

Joshua Uzoigwe was a Nigerian composer and ethnomusicologist. He studied at King’s College School (Cambridge); the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; the Guildhall School of Music & Drama (London); and the University of Belfast, where he explored both European art music and Nigerian traditional music. Uzoigwe’s compositions blended modern techniques with African musical elements, particularly the ritual music of the Igbo people. His notable works include *Lustra Variations*, *Nigerian Dances*, *Ritual Procession for African and European Orchestra*, and *Four Igbo Songs*. Uzoigwe also experimented with atonality, including in works such as *Little Jesus* and *Water Lilly Serenade*. He held teaching positions at the University of Ife; University of Nigeria, Nsukka; and University of Uyo.

About the Artists

Now in its third decade, the **International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE)** is a multidisciplinary collective of musicians, digital media artists, producers, and educators committed to building and innovating collaborative environments in order to inspire audiences to reimagine how they experience contemporary music and sound. The Ensemble creates a mosaic musical ecosystem as “America’s foremost new-music group” (*The New Yorker*), honoring the diversity of human experience and expression by commissioning, developing, recording, and performing the works of living artists. Cofounded in 2001 by flutist and MacArthur “genius” Fellow Claire Chase, the Ensemble has premiered over 1,000 works. The Ensemble has given performances at Warsaw Autumn, TIME:SPANS, Berliner Festspiele, HEAR NOW Los Angeles, Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music, Ojai Music Festival, and Big Ears Festival, as well as in venues such as the Dutch National Opera, Cité de la Musique (Paris), the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Carnegie Hall, Japan Society, Merkin Hall at Kaufman Music Center, Fridman Gallery, Chelsea Factory, NYU Skirball, and Walt Disney Concert Hall.

George Lewis is an American composer, musicologist, and trombonist. He is Edwin H. Case Professor of American Music and Area Chair in Composition at Columbia University, and artistic director of the International Contemporary Ensemble. A fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a corresponding fellow of the British Academy, and a member of the Akademie der Künste Berlin, Lewis’s other honors include the Doris Duke Artist Award (2019), a MacArthur Fellowship (2002), and a Guggenheim Fellowship (2015). Lewis’s work is presented by ensembles worldwide, published by Edition Peters. Lewis is the co-editor (with Harald Kisiedu) of the bilingual edited volume *Composing While Black: Afrodiasporic New Music Today/Afrodiasporische Neue Musik Heute* (2023). Lewis holds honorary doctorates from Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, Oberlin College, and New England Conservatory.