



# RUCKUS WITH DAVÓNE TINES

## WHAT IS YOUR HAND IN THIS?

**BASS-BARITONE** Davóne Tines

**VIOLIN** Keir GoGwilt

**VIOLIN** Shelby Yamin

**VIOLA** Manami Mizumoto

**GUITARS** Paul Holmes Morton

**KEYBOARDS** Elliot Figg

**BASS, ARRANGEMENTS & COMPOSITIONS** Douglas Adam August Balliett

**BASSOON, ENGLISH HORN, PERCUSSION & RESEARCH** Clay Zeller-Townson

**PROGRAM CONCEIVED BY** Douglas Balliett, Davóne Tines, Clay Zeller-Townson

**DEVELOPED BY** Ruckus Early Music

Commissioned by Carnegie Hall and Hudson Hall with support from the New York State Council of the Arts.  
Special thanks to Marta Miller & Carolyn Brooks.

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Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral

Thursday, January 29 @ 7 PM

There will be no intermission.

## PROGRAM

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### PART I

"Beautiful Dreamer" (1864)  
Overture from *Compassion Preludes* (2025)  
"The Four F's" from *Compassion Preludes*  
"Be the Lover of My Soul" (2025)

Stephen Foster (1826-1864)  
Douglas Adam August Balliett (1982-)  
Douglas Adam August Balliett  
Traditional, arr. Davóne Tines (1986-)

### PART II

Concerto Grosso No. 10 in D Minor, op 6: ii  
"Scherzo" from *Compassion Preludes*  
"The Liberty Song" (1768, arr. 2025)  
Concerto Grosso No. 10 in D Minor, op 6: iv  
"What Mean Ye?" (1856)

George Frederic Handel (1685-1759)  
Douglas Adam August Balliett  
John Dickinson (1732-1808), arr. Balliett  
George Frederic Handel  
George W. Clark

### PART III

"The New Death March" (circa 1801)  
"To The White People of America" (1854)  
  
"The Rays of Liberty" (circa 1801)  
*Federal Nations* (2025)  
    *The Federal Overture* (1794)  
    "Why do the Nations so Furiously Rage" from *Messiah* (1741)  
"The House I Live In" (1942, arr. 2025)

Sawney Freeman (1769-1828)  
Joshua McCarter Simpson (ca. 1820-1877),  
    Text; Stephen Foster, Music  
Sawney Freeman  
Douglas Adam August Balliett  
    Benjamin Carr (1768-1831)  
    George Frederic Handel  
Abel Meeropol (1902-1986) & Earl Robinson  
    (1910-1991), arr. Tines and Balliett

### PART IV

*Buddha* (1984)  
"This Bitter Earth" (1960)  
"What is My Hand in This?" (2025)  
"Chester" (1778)  
"A Change is Gonna Come" (1964)  
"Nunc Dimittis" from *Compassion Preludes*  
"Be the Lover of My Soul" (Reprise)

Julius Eastman (1940-1990)  
Clyde Otis (1924-2008), arr. Tines & Balliett  
Davóne Tines, arr. Balliett  
William Billings (1746-1800)  
Sam Cooke (1931-1964)  
Douglas Adam August Balliett  
Traditional, arr. Tines

## PROGRAM NOTES

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### By Clay Zeller-Townson

#### **"Beautiful Dreamer"**

Words and music by Stephen Foster

One of Stephen Foster's most iconic parlor songs, "Beautiful Dreamer" was one of the final songs he wrote while in bad health and in desperate need of money. Its sentimental style is devoid of the minstrel themes that many of his songs contain. It has become one of his most performed songs in the last century, covered by The Beatles, Roy Orbison, Bing Crosby and many others.

#### **"Be the Lover of My Soul"**

Traditional, as sung by Providence Baptist Church, Orlean, Virginia; arranged by Davóne Tines

Tines grew up singing this hymn (as "Jesus, Lover of My Soul") at the Providence Baptist Church. He has adapted it and arranged it for this program.

#### **"Liberty Song"**

Lyrics by John Dickinson, tune: "Heart of Oak," arrangement by Douglas Balliett

When John Dickinson published his "Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer" in 1767-1768, he became a political celebrity across the colonies. While they were written to protest the Townsend Acts, Dickinson's goal was novel: he taught citizens how to begin to think of themselves as a united "American" people, rather than British subjects divided across the sea. Shortly after these letters were published, Dickinson took to pen "The Liberty Song," to further this notion musically. In its chorus, Dickinson repeats repeatedly the founding hypocrisy of the American Revolution: "not as slaves, but as freemen our money we'll give." Indeed, while Dickinson wrote "The Liberty Song," he had dozens of enslaved people working on his farm in Delaware. The song became one of the most popular songs of the time and was sung to the well-known tune (and anthem of the British Royal Navy) "Heart of Oak."

#### **"What Mean Ye?"**

Published in *The Liberty Minstrel*, lyrics by George W. Clark, hymn: "Mear" (composer unknown) as appears in *The Sacred Harp*

*The Liberty Minstrel*, just as in Joshua McCarter Simpson's *Emancipation Car*, functioned as a way for abolitionists to express themselves during group meetings. Abolitionist George Washington Clark published numerous songbooks in his lifetime for the cause. "What Mean Ye?" has an everlasting power, as it simply sets forth a series of searing questions to the listener. The chorale we have set it to, "Mear", has been a favorite of shape-note singers (a living tradition of American folk singing) for hundreds of years and is one of the oldest hymns found in *The Sacred Harp*.

#### **"The New Death March" and "The Rays of Liberty"**

By Sawney Freeman

Sawney Freeman's music has only very recently been rediscovered. Born into slavery in Connecticut at around 1770, he escaped in 1790. Freeman was a devoted violin player and composer, and he is one of the earliest known published Black American composers, writing in the New England four-part instrumental-chorale idiom. His "New Death March" is likely written in reaction to Handel's March from *Saul*, a perennial piece that made its way into many of these "instrumental tutor" publications of the time. Freeman's first known publication was his *Musicians Pocket Companion* of 1801 (an existing copy has yet to be found). The works in this program were collected in the "Gurdon Trumbull Copybook" from 1817.

#### **"To the White People of America"**

Published in *The Emancipation Car* by Joshua McCarter Simpson, tune: "Massa's in the Cold Cold Ground" (1852)

In 2022, a new resource became available to students of American musical history. *Songs of Slavery and Emancipation*, a collection of some of the earliest published songs from the Black American experience was compiled and published by Mat Callahan and the University Press of Mississippi. In this collection, we found the work of Joshua McCarter Simpson and his *Emancipation Car*. Simpson's boldly honest preface ("A Note to the Public") and his searing texts were among the earliest findings that felt essential for us as performers. "To The White People of America" holds a powerful balance of ideas: calling out the hypocrisy of white enslavers, questioning if anyone can actually hear his people's suffering, and a remarkable refrain: "the day will come that you must die." Is this a condemnation, is it speaking a truth that we are all equal under the force of mortality? Or is he referring to the death of an ideology? Simpson carefully chose the tune to set this text to: Stephen Foster's "Massa's in the Cold Cold Ground," a song often sung in minstrel shows portraying an enslaved person as lamenting the death of his enslaver.

## **Federal Nations**

by Douglas Balliett, using "Why do the Nations so Furiously Rage" by George Frederic Handel

*The Federal Overture* by Benjamin Carr

*Federal Nations* combines two works of 18th-century music: Handel's rage aria from *Messiah* and Benjamin Carr's concert overture celebrating the birth of the Republic. Composer Douglas Balliett weaves both together to form an unhinged, madcap ride of rage and pomp. Carr's "Federal Overture" has all the elements you'd expect from one of the earliest uniquely American symphonic works: a yankee doodle fugue, folk song arrangements and late classical "sturm und drang."

## **"The House I Live In"**

Music by Earl Robinson, lyrics by Abel Meeropol (rev. Davóne Tines)

"The House I Live In" first appeared in a Broadway revue called *Let Freedom Ring!* in 1942 but was made an instant classic in 1945 when sung by Frank Sinatra in a short film of the same name. The film was created to oppose anti-Semitism in the post-war moment, but the song has been covered by many artists as a way of broadening the language of who should be considered an American. The second and third verses in this program were written by Tines, and this version appears on his album *ROBESON*.

## **Buddha**

Music by Julius Eastman

Julius Eastman has become an American icon of radical minimalism whose music is finally getting the platform it deserves. "Buddha" is presented to performers as a graphic score - a series of musical lines, mostly long tones, housed within a large oval (Is it an egg? The belly of The Buddha?). Any performer may take any line and react to the musical moment - creating a sustained and tense sonic meditation.

## **"This Bitter Earth"**

Music and lyrics by Clyde Otis, arrangement by Davóne Tines and Douglas Balliett

"This Bitter Earth" was popularized by Dinah Washington and was one of her final hits in her lifetime, rising to #1 on the Billboard Hot R&B charts.

## **"What is Your Hand in This?"**

Words and music by Davóne Tines

The idea for the song "What is My Hand in This" came from an invitation to be part of the entertainment at a Christmas party in one of New York City's wealthiest neighborhoods. Tines took this as an opportunity not to entertain, but to speak directly and imploringly to a room of the 1% with the subtext, "You in this room have the power to affect great change, so what is your hand in contributing?" The tune borrows from Black American folk tradition.

## **"Chester"**

Words and music by William Billings; published in *The Singing Master's Assistant*

"Chester" has always been an anthem of the American Revolution, functioning in its day as a way for New Englanders to demonstrate solidarity and to cry out together during a tumultuous and war-ravaged time. "Chester" existed in many forms, as a tune to be roared out or played in the streets, or as a four-part hymn to be sung in meeting houses, singing schools and churches.

## **Compassion Preludes**

By Douglas Balliett

Commissioned for the occasion, works from the *Compassion Preludes* were created for this program and interspersed throughout.

## PROGRAM TEXTS

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### **"Beautiful Dreamer" | Foster**

Beautiful Dreamer, wake unto me,  
Starlight and dewdrops are waiting for thee;  
Sounds of the rude world heard in the day,  
Lull'd by the moonlight have all pass'd away!

Beautiful dreamer, queen of my song,  
List while I woo thee with soft melody;  
Gone are the cares of life's busy throng  
Beautiful dreamer, awake unto me!  
Beautiful dreamer, awake unto me!

### **"The Four F's" from *The Compassion Preludes* | Balliett**

Evolutionary biologists are all agreed:  
that there are four basic needs,  
That every animal feels  
Though some will say the drive  
Is all from the genes.  
And these needs can be destructive  
When they when they collide with privilege and power  
But we live with these needs  
They're called the Four F's:  
We fight, We flee, we feed, and we F\*ind a way to keep  
reproducing  
And these truths are self-evident,  
that we are plagued by fear ...of one another  
...and want... of more...  
and desire... for acceptance.  
But America has always left somebody out.  
And we don't know how to make America...

### **"Be the Lover of My Soul" | Traditional, arr. Tines**

Be the lover of my soul,  
let me to thy bosom fly,  
while the nearer waters roll,  
while the tempest still is high;

Hide me, O my Savior, hide,  
till the storm of life is past;  
safe into the haven guide,  
O receive my soul at last!

### **"The Liberty Song" | Dickinson, arr. Balliett**

Come, join hand in hand, brave Americans all,  
And rouse your bold hearts at fair Liberty's call;  
No tyrannous acts shall suppress your just claim,  
Or stain with dishonor America's name.

*Chorus:*

*In Freedom we're born and in Freedom we'll live.  
Our purses are ready. Steady, friends, steady;  
Not as slaves, but as Freemen our money we'll give.*

Our worthy forefathers, let's give them a cheer,  
To climates unknown did courageously steer;  
Threw' oceans to deserts for Freedom they came,  
And dying, bequeath'd us their freedom and fame

*Chorus*

How sweet are the labors that free men endure,  
that men shall enjoy the sweet profit secure.  
No more sweet labors Americans know,  
If British shall reap what Americans sow.

*Chorus*

### **"What Mean Ye?" | Clark**

What mean ye that ye bruise and bind  
My people, saith the Lord,  
And starve your craving brother's mind,  
That asks to hear my word?

What mean ye that ye make them toil  
Through long and dreary years,  
And shed like rain upon your soil  
Their blood and bitter tears?

What mean ye that ye dare to rend  
The tender mother's heart;  
Brothers from sisters, friend from friend,  
How dare you bid them part?

What mean ye, when God's bounteous hand  
To you so much has given,  
That from all those who till your land  
You keep both earth and heaven?

When at the judgement God shall call,  
Where is thy brother? say,  
What mean ye to the Judge of all,  
To answer on that day?

### **"To The White People of America" | Simpson**

O'er this wide extended country,  
Hear the solemn echoes roll,  
For a long and weary century,  
Those cries have gone from pole to pole;

See the white man sway his sceptre,  
In one hand he holds the rod—  
In the other hand the Scripture,  
And says that he's a man of God.

Hear ye that mourning? 'Tis your brothers' cry!  
O! ye wicked men take warning,  
The day will come when you must die.



Lo! Ten thousand steeples shining  
Through this mighty Christian land,  
While four millions slaves all pining  
And dying 'neath the Tyrant's hand.

See the "blood-stained" Christian banner  
Followed by a host of saints  
While they loudly sing Hosannah,  
We hear the dying slave's complaints:

Hear ye that mourning? Anglo-sons of God,  
O! ye Hypocrites take warning,  
And shun your sable brothers blood.

**"The House I Live In" | Meeropol and Robinson,  
arr. Tines and Balliett**

The house I live in, the friends that I have found,  
The folks beyond the railroad and the people all around,  
The worker and the farmer, the sailor on the sea,  
The folks who built this country, that's America to me.

But we know this country will always have its way  
With people sleeping soundly, while their rotting dreams  
decay  
It lays its trap full willing to justify the killing  
While wracking up the billing on a debt to never pay

While truth becomes banished and justice never won  
Our hopes to find some freedom, still just raisins in the sun  
It's sad to see it failing, it's the way it's always been  
To never cleanse the staining of its bloody primal sin

Cause that's America, What's America? Who's America?  
Where's America?  
Find America... for me

**"Why do the Nations so Furiously Rage" from  
*Messiah* | Handel**

Why do the nations so furiously rage together:  
why do the people imagine a vain thing?  
The kings of the earth rise up,  
and the rulers take counsel together:  
against the Lord, and His anointed.

**"This Bitter Earth" | Otis, arr. Tines and Balliett**

This bitter earth  
Well, what a fruit it bears  
What good is love  
That no one shares?  
And if my life is like the dust  
That hides the glow of a rose  
What good am I?  
Heaven only knows

Oh, this bitter earth  
Yes, can it be so cold?  
Today you're young  
Too soon you're old  
But while a voice  
Within me cries  
I'm sure someone  
May answer my call  
And this bitter earth,  
May not, be so bitter after all

**"What is My Hand in This?" | Tines**

What is my hand in this?  
As you go about your day,  
Do you ever stop and say,  
What is my hand in this?

What is my hand in this?  
As you fret upon your woes  
And cast the blame upon your foes, please ask  
What is my hand in this?

What is my hand in this?  
While you listen to this song,  
Will you try to right your wrong, asking,  
What is my hand in this?

**"Chester" | Billings**

What grateful Off'ring shall we bring?  
What shall we render to the World?  
Loud Halleluiahs let us Sing,  
And praise the name on ev'ry Chord.

**"A Change is Gonna Come" | Cooke, arr. Balliett**

I was born by the river  
In a little tent  
Oh, and just like the river, I've been running  
Ever since  
It's been a long  
A long time coming, but I know  
A change gon' come  
Oh yes, it will

It's been too hard living  
But I'm afraid to die  
'Cause I don't know what's up there  
Beyond the sky  
It's been a long  
A long time coming, but I know  
A change gon' come  
Oh yes, it will

I go to the movie  
And I go downtown  
And somebody keep telling me  
"Don't hang around"  
It's been a long  
A long time coming, but I know  
A change gon' come  
Oh yes, it will

Then, I go to my brother  
And I say, "Brother, help me, please"  
But he winds up knockin' me  
Back down on my knees, oh

There been times that I thought  
I couldn't last for long  
But now, I think I'm able  
To carry on  
It's been a long  
A long time coming, but I know  
A change gon' come  
Oh yes, it will

### **"Nunc Dimiitis" from *The Compassion Preludes* (2025) | Balliett**

We will finally be in peace  
When the promise is fulfilled  
My eyes will see the glory  
Of the coming of the day  
When a light will reveal to the nation  
The error of his ways.  
Glory to the Father and to the Son  
And the Mother and the Daughter and actually  
To everyone  
What could have been in the beginning is beginning now,  
What will be your hand in this?

## **ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

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### **Davóne Tines** (Bass-baritone)

Heralded as an artist "changing what it means to be a classical singer (*The New Yorker*) and "[one] of the most powerful voices of our time" (*Los Angeles Times*), Tines is a pathbreaking artist whose work encompasses a diverse repertoire, ranging from early music to new commissions by leading composers, while exploring the social issues of today. A creator, curator and performer at the intersection of many histories, cultures and aesthetics, he is engaged in work that blends opera, art song, spirituals, contemporary classical, gospel and protest songs as a means to tell a deeply personal story of perseverance connecting to all of humanity.

Tines is a musician who takes full agency of his work, devising new programs and pieces from conception to performance. He reflects this ethos in his *Recital No. 1: MASS*, an examination of the liturgy, comparing Western European, African American and 21<sup>st</sup>-century traditions, as well as in his orchestral creations: *Concerto No. 1: SERMON*, a work he premiered with the Philadelphia and BBC Symphony Orchestras; and *Concerto No. 2: ANTHEM*, premiered with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Tines has also premiered operas by today's leading composers, including Terence Blanchard, Matthew Aucoin and most recently, John Adams's *El Niño* at the Met Opera. His concert appearances include performances of works ranging from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony to Kaija Saariaho's *True Fire*. Tines's first studio album, *ROBESON*, was released on Nonesuch Records in 2024. Through a diverse set of repertoire ranging from classical and gospel to Broadway and Black folk music, Tines explores his connection to legendary American baritone Paul Robeson, reimagining some of the music Robeson famously sang.

Tines is Brooklyn Academy of Music's Artist-in-Residence and Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra & Chorale's first-ever Creative Partner. He recently served as Artist-in-Residence at Detroit Opera—an appointment that culminated in his performance in the title role of Anthony Davis' *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* in 2022. Tines is featured on the Grammy®-nominated world premiere recording of the opera released on BMOP/sound in 2022. Tines is a member of AMOC and co-creator of *The Black Clown*, a music theatre experience commissioned and premiered by American Repertory Theater and coming to Opera Philadelphia in May 2026. He was *Musical*

America's 2022 Vocalist of the Year, a winner of the 2020 Sphinx Medal of Excellence, a recipient of the 2018 Emerging Artists Award from Lincoln Center and a recipient of the 2024 Chanel Next Prize. He is a graduate of The Juilliard School and Harvard University and is the recipient of the prestigious 2025 Harvard Arts Medal.

## Ruckus

Ruckus is a shapeshifting, collaborative baroque ensemble with a visceral and playful approach to early music. Described as "the world's only period-instrument rock band" (*San Francisco Classical Voice*), Ruckus' core is a continuo group, the baroque equivalent of a jazz rhythm section: guitars, keyboards, cello, bassoon and bass. The NYC-based ensemble aims to fuse the early-music movement's questing, creative spirit with the grit, groove and jangle of American roots music, creating a unique sound of "rough-edged intensity" (*New Yorker*) that's "achingly delicate one moment, incisive and punchy the next" (*The New York Times*). The group's members are among the most creative and virtuosic performers in North American early music.

Ruckus is the house band for Hudson Hall's baroque opera productions, directed by R.B. Schlather. The *New York Times*' Zachary Woolfe wrote: "Ruckus aptly describes itself as a band: it's that tight and that wild." Ruckus' next production at Hudson Hall will be Handel's final opera, *Deidamia*. In spring 2025, the band released *The Edinburgh Rollick* (featuring violinist Keir GoGwilt), bringing new life to the tunes of Neil Gow, one of Scotland's most important 18th-century composers. Praised as "a perfect meeting of folk repertoire and ancient instruments" (*Le Canard Folk*), it will be performed in NYC in April 2026 at Music Before 1800.

Ruckus' debut album, *Fly the Coop*, a collaboration with flutist Emi Ferguson, was *Billboard*'s #2 Classical album upon its release. Performances of *Fly the Coop* have been described as "a fizzing, daring display of personality and imagination" (*The New York Times*). The *Boston Musical Intelligencer* describes the group as taking continuo playing to "not simply a new level, but a revelatory new dimension of dynamism altogether... an eruption of pure, pulsing hoedown joy."

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