



TRUE BLUES

Corey Harris & Eric Bibb

PROGRAM

There will be an intermission.

Sunday, February 26 @ 7 PM

Prince Theatre

AFRICAN ROOTS, AMERICAN VOICES

Part of the African Roots, American Voices series.

PROGRAM NOTES

Blues is at the center of their artistry, and the blues takes center stage in True Blues featuring MacArthur “Genius” Award recipient Corey Harris and American folk and blues musician Eric Bibb. This concert chronicles the extraordinary living culture of the blues in an uplifting evening of music and storytelling.

Guitarist, vocalist and songwriter Corey Harris has carved out his own niche in blues music. He began his career as a New Orleans street singer and, thanks to a Fulbright Scholarship, lived in Cameroon, West Africa, for a year, which had a profound effect on his future. He was also prominently featured in the Martin Scorsese film series *The Blues: A Musical Journey*. With one foot in tradition and the other in the human condition, Harris is a truly unique voice in contemporary blues music.

A Grammy® Award nominee and familiar face and voice across the U.S. and Europe, Eric Bibb has been nominated for nine W.C. Handy Blues Music Awards and is the winner of the Best Newcomer title in the British Blues Awards. Appropriately described as “discreetly awesome” and “a total original,” Bibb’s rich, sensitive vocals and lyrics provide a perfect balance to his fine finger picking techniques. These techniques meld a traditional rootsy American style with a subtle, contemporary sensibility.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Eric Bibb

A career spanning five decades, 36 albums, countless radio and television appearances and non-stop touring has made Eric Bibb one of the leading bluesmen of his generation. A progressive preservationist, Bibb is a fiery singer rooted in true soul, gospel and folk. Both enjoyable and accessible, his blues are honest and powerful.

Born in New York City, he is the son of Leon Bibb, a senior figure on the New York folk scene of the 1960’s. Eric Bibb’s godfather was actor/singer and activist Paul Robeson, and his uncle the composer and jazz pianist John Lewis, founder of the Modern Jazz Quartet. His parents’ house was a center of artistic life, and “getting to meet Rev. Gary Davis, Dylan, Judy Collins or Odetta had a profound effect on me,” reminisced Bibb.

At 19, Bibb moved to Paris, where a meeting with American guitarist Mickey Baker focused his interest in blues guitar. A few years later, Bibb settled in Stockholm, Sweden, where he found a creative environment that reminded him of his teenage days in Greenwich Village. He made a handful of albums, starting in 1972, and began meeting and playing with local musicians, as well as other American expatriates. His breakthrough album, *Spirit & The Blues*, was released in 1994. This release led to tours of the UK, the U.S., Canada, France, Sweden and Germany, as well as contracts with new labels.

Over the course of many years, Bibb has managed to gather a faithful and multinational “tribe” of musicians with whom he has recorded and performed on stage. The list includes such luminaries as his idol, Taj Mahal, as well as standout musicians Pops and Mavis Staples, Charlie Musselwhite, Guy Davis, Hubert Sumlin, Rory Block, Maria Muldaur, Bonnie Raitt, Mamadou Diabate, Toumani Diabate, Djelimady Tounkara, Amar Sundy, Glen Scott, Staffan Astner, Chuck and Darick Campbell, Dirk Powell, Solo Cissokho, Cedric Watson, Larry Crockett, Andre De Lange, Jerry Douglas and Habib Koité.

Bibb on his new album, *Jericho Road*: “Musically, we decided we were just going to follow our hearts. It’s an album that combines all of our pet sounds: classic soul, gospel, world music flavors and some strings, as well. It’s more adventurous than ever before.”

Corey Harris

Harris was born in Denver, Colorado to parents from Texas and Kentucky. He is a guitarist, vocalist, songwriter and band leader who has created his own niche in the blues. A powerful singer and accomplished guitarist, he has appeared at venues throughout North America, Europe, Brazil, the Caribbean, West Africa, Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

Harris began his career as a New Orleans street singer, travelling throughout the southern U.S. In his early twenties, he lived in Cameroon, West Africa for a year, which had a profound effect on his later work. He has recorded many old songs in the blues tradition while also creating an original vision of the blues by incorporating influences from reggae, soul, rock and West African music. His 1995 recording, *Between Midnight and Day*, is a tribute to the tradition of acoustic blues. Subsequent recordings, such as *Greens From the Garden* (1999), *Mississippi to Mali* (2003) and *Daily Bread* (2005) demonstrate Harris' maturation from interpreter to songwriter. Some of his imaginative compositions are marked by a deliberate eclecticism; other works stay true to the traditional blues formula of compelling vocals and down-home guitar. With one foot in tradition and the other in contemporary experimentation, Harris is a truly unique voice in contemporary music.

Harris has performed, recorded and toured with many of the top names in music such as B.B. King, Taj Mahal, Buddy Guy, Henry Butler, R.L. Burnside, John Jackson, Ali Farka Touré, Dave Matthews Band, Tracy Chapman, Olu Dara, Wilco, Natalie Merchant, and others. His additional recordings include *Fish Ain't Bitin'* (1996), *Vu-Du Menz* (with Henry Butler, 2000), *Downhome Sophisticate* (2002), *Zion Crossroads* (2007) *Blu.Black* (2009), *DC Blues* (2010), *Father Sun-Mother Earth* (2011), *Fulton Blues* (2013), *True Blues* (with Taj Mahal, Shemekia Copeland, Guy Davis, Alvin Hart and Phil Wiggins, 2013).

In 2003, Harris was a featured artist and narrator of the Martin Scorsese film, *Feel Like Going Home*, (part of *The Blues* film series) which traced the evolution of blues from West Africa to the southern U.S. In 2007, he was awarded a \$500,000 MacArthur Fellowship – commonly referred to as a “genius award” – from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The annual grant recognizes individuals from a wide range of disciplines who show creativity, originality and commitment to continued innovative work. The grant described Harris as an artist who “forges an adventurous path marked by deliberate eclecticism.” That same year, he was also awarded an honorary Doctor of Music degree from Bates College, in Lewiston, Maine.