



Piedmont Blues: A Search for Salvation

Gerald Clayton

Concept and Composer

Christopher McElroen

Director

featuring

René Marie / *Vocals*

with

Gerald Clayton & The Assembly

Gerald Clayton / *Piano*

Godwin Louis / *Alto Saxophone*

Jimmy Greene / *Tenor Saxophone*

Dayna Stephens / *Baritone Saxophone*

Alan Hampton / *Guitar*

Rashaan Carter / *Bass*

Kendrick Scott / *Drums*

Maurice Chestnut / *Tap Dance*

and

Gospel Choir of Hope United Methodist Church

Alvin Waddles / *Director*

Wednesday Evening, March 14, 2018 at 7:30

Michigan Theater

Ann Arbor

71st Performance of the 139th Annual Season
Traditions and Crosscurrents

This evening's performance is supported by Michigan Medicine.

Funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Media partnership provided by WEMU 89.1 FM.

Special thanks to Taylor Renee Aldridge, Jenna Bacolor, Clare Croft, Nic Gareiss, Tariq Gardner, Jennifer Harge, Amanda Krugliak, Lynn Settles, Mark Siegfried, Ann Arbor Public Schools Community Education and Recreation, the Ann Arbor Y, ARTS.BLACK, and the U-M Institute for the Humanities for their participation in events surrounding this evening's performance.

Piedmont Blues: A Search for Salvation appears by arrangement with B Natural Management, Inc.

In consideration of the artists and the audience, please refrain from the use of electronic devices during the performance.

The photography, sound recording, or videotaping of this performance is prohibited.

CREATIVE TEAM

Text / Jaymes Jorsling and Lizz Wright

Projections Designer / Liviu Pasare

Lighting Designer / Becca Jeffords

Scenic Designer / William Boles

Sound Engineer / Adam Camardella

Production Manager / Will Bishop

Associate Production Manager / JJ Marquis

Producers / B Natural, Inc. and the american vicarious

Piedmont Blues: A Search for Salvation is approximately 75 minutes in duration and is performed without intermission.

PIEDMONT BLUES

Inspired by the personal discoveries that have unfolded through my artistic practice, I'm committed to continuing the search for truth and meaning in the creative process. I strive to make music that doesn't simply entertain, but also provokes reflection: inquiry-driven music that ruminates on the human condition. I'm honored to be part of a musical lineage that values art as an essential part of intellectual development and spiritual growth.

Piedmont Blues is an exceptional opportunity for me to manifest the emotional quality of the Piedmont blues through my compositions for The Assembly. The first music I can remember was piano-centric blues. The nuance of language and daily life that resides within the blues fascinates me. The blues feels close to home. The essence of the music is experiential in nature — a creative response to pain and suffering in daily life.

My aim with this project is to capture the arc of African American pain and triumph through the expression of the Piedmont blues, to both illustrate the artistry specific to the Piedmont tradition, and also to dig beneath the surface of the music to understand the core of the compositions and the struggle to overcome oppression, poverty, and pain.

— *Gerald Clayton*

ARTISTS

Gerald Clayton (*composer and piano*) searches for honest expression in every note he plays. With harmonic curiosity and critical awareness, he develops musical narratives that unfold as a result of both deliberate searching and chance uncovering. The four-time Grammy-nominated pianist/composer formally began his musical journey at the prestigious Los Angeles County High School for the Arts, where he received the 2002 Presidential Scholar of the Arts Award. Continuing his scholarly pursuits, he earned a BA in piano performance at USC's Thornton School of Music under the instruction of piano icon Billy Childs, after a year of intensive study with NEA Jazz Master Kenny Barron at The Manhattan School of Music. Mr. Clayton won second place in the 2006 Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz Piano Competition.

Expansion has become part of Mr. Clayton's artistic identity. His music is a celebration of the inherent differences in musical perspectives that promote true artistic synergy. Inclusive sensibilities have allowed him to perform and record with such distinctive artists as Diana Krall, Roy Hargrove, Dianne Reeves, Ambrose Akinmusire, Dayna Stephens, Kendrick Scott, Ben Williams, Terrell Stafford & Dick Oatts, Michael Rodriguez, Terri Lyne Carrington, Avishai Cohen, and the Clayton Brothers Quintet. He has also enjoyed an extended association with saxophone legend Charles Lloyd, touring and recording together since 2013. 2016 marked his second year as musical director of the Monterey Jazz Festival On Tour, a project that features his trio along with Ravi Coltrane, Nicholas Payton, and Raul Midón on guitar and vocals.

Mr. Clayton's discography as a leader reflects his evolution as an artist. His debut recording, *Two Shade* (ArtistShare), earned a 2010 Grammy nomination in the "Best Improvised Jazz Solo" category for his arrangement of Cole Porter's "All of You." "Battle Circle," his composition featured on The Clayton Brothers' recording, *The New Song and Dance* (ArtistShare), received a Grammy nomination for "Best Jazz Instrumental Composition" in 2011. He received 2012 and 2013 Grammy nominations in the "Best Jazz Instrumental Album" category for *Bond: The Paris Sessions* (Concord) and *Life Forum* (Concord), his second and third album releases.

Capturing the truth in each moment's conception of sound comes naturally to Mr. Clayton. The son of beloved bass player and composer John Clayton, he enjoyed a familial apprenticeship from an early age. Mr. Clayton honors the legacy of his father and all his musical ancestors through a commitment to artistic exploration, innovation, and reinvention. For this piece, he turns his imaginative curiosity toward uncovering the essence of the Piedmont blues experience and expression in early 20th-century Durham.

Christopher McElroen (*director*) is a Brooklyn-based theater artist and the artistic director of the American Vicarious. Mr. McElroen received a 2013 Helen Hayes Award for his direction of the world premiere stage adaptation of Ralph Ellison's iconic novel *Invisible Man*. Alongside visual artist Paul Chan and Creative Time, he co-produced and directed *Waiting for Godot in New Orleans*, a community development through the arts initiative that staged Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* outdoors in the Lower





Ninth Ward and Gentilly communities of post-Katrina New Orleans. The *New York Times* listed the project as one of the “Top 10 National Art Events of 2007.” The archives from the production have been acquired into the permanent collection of The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) and were on exhibit at MOMA in May 2010 through September 2011. He had the honor of directing the world premiere of *51st (dream) State*, the final work of poet, musician, and activist Sekou Sundiata. *51st (dream) State* was a multimedia exploration of American empire that premiered in New York at Brooklyn Academy of Music’s Next Wave Festival before touring internationally. Mr. McElroen co-founded the acclaimed Classical Theatre of Harlem (CTH) where from 1999–2009 he produced 41 productions yielding 18 AUDELCO Awards, six Obie Awards, two Lucille Lortel Awards, a Drama Desk Award, and being named “One of Eight Theaters in America to Watch” by the Drama League. His work has been recognized with the American Theatre Wing Award (“Outstanding Artistic Achievement”), Drama Desk Award (“Artistic Achievement”), Edwin Booth Award (“Outstanding Contribution to NYC Theater”), Lucille Lortel Award (“Outstanding Body of Work”), two Obie Awards (“Sustained Achievement” and “Excellence in Theatre”), and a Helen Hayes Award (“Outstanding Direction”).

In a span of two decades, 11 recordings, and countless stage performances, **René Marie** (*vocals*) has cemented her reputation as not only a singer but also a composer, arranger, theatrical performer, and teacher. Guided and tempered by powerful life lessons and rooted in jazz traditions laid down by Ella Fitzgerald, Dinah Washington, and other leading ladies

of past generations, she borrows various elements of folk, R&B, and even classical and country to create a captivating hybrid style.

Ms. Marie was born in November 1955 into a family of seven children in Warrenton, Virginia. While neither of her parents were formally trained musicians, radio and records of all kinds — blues, folk, bluegrass, and classical — made up the soundtrack to her childhood. She had just one year of formal piano training at age nine, then another year of lessons at age 13 after her parents divorced and she moved with her mother to Roanoke, Virginia. During her teenage years, she sang in a few R&B bands at musical functions in her community. She composed and sang her first piece with a band when she was 15.

Putting her musical aspirations aside to make room for the obligations and responsibilities of adulthood, she married a former bandmate when she was 18, and by the mid-1990s, she was the mother of two and working in a bank. When she was 41, her older son convinced her to start singing again, and she took a few tenuous steps into her local music scene, singing for tips one night a week in a hotel bar. Her husband was initially supportive of her reboot to her musical career, but he later issued an ultimatum: stop singing or leave their home. Tension over the issue escalated from emotional abuse to domestic violence, and she left the house and the marriage behind. She left her bank job, moved to Richmond, Virginia, divorced her husband of 23 years, produced her first CD, signed onto the MaxJazz label, and took the title role in the world premiere production of *Ella and Her Fella Frank* at the Barksdale Theatre in Richmond.

Ms. Marie’s recordings include the self-produced CD *Renaissance* (1999). In 2000,

she signed onto the MaxJazz label and recorded *How Can I Keep from Singing?* (2000), *Vertigo* (2001), *Live at Jazz Standard* (2003), and *Serene Renegade* (2004). She parted ways with the label and recorded and co-produced her sixth CD, *Experiment in Truth*, in 2007. Ms. Marie appeared in a one-woman stage show, *Slut Energy Theory: U'Dean*, a play about overcoming abuse and incest, in 2009, and released the soundtrack that year.

Ms. Marie joined the Motéma label with the 2011 release of *Voice of My Beautiful Country*, followed later that same year by *Black Lace Freudian Slip*. Her 2013 follow-up, *I Wanna Be Evil: With Love To Eartha Kitt*, earned a Grammy nomination in the “Best Jazz Vocal Album” category. Her latest release is *Sound of Red* (Motéma, 2016), her first album of all-original material.

The **Gospel Choir of Hope United Methodist Church** (also known as Southfield Hope) was formed in 1990 under the pastorate of Dr. Carlyle F. Stewart, III. Two of its charter members, Johnetta Christopher and the late Florence Richardson, were instrumental in its formation. The first director of the Choir was Dr. Murray Morrow. The Choir presented its first concert in February 1991 under the direction of Charles Garner who was then the director of music at Hope UMC. The Choir has been under the direction of Alvin Waddles since 1994. During that time, the Choir has performed throughout the Metropolitan Detroit area as well as in Chicago and Indiana. Though traditional and contemporary gospel music accounts for the majority of its repertoire as its name suggests, the Choir also performs spirituals and anthems and has been praised for its polished and spirited performances.

Pianist, singer, composer, and director **Alvin Waddles** (*director, Gospel Choir of Hope United Methodist Church*) has delighted audiences in over a dozen countries with his dazzling technique, fluid versatility, and unique musical style. A native of Detroit and a graduate of the Interlochen Arts Academy and the U-M School of Music, Theatre & Dance, Mr. Waddles is equally at home in the worlds of classical piano, opera, theater, jazz, and gospel. He has performed at the Detroit International Jazz Festival; with the Detroit, Rochester, and Michigan Opera Theater symphony orchestras; is the featured piano soloist in annual productions of *Too Hot to Handel* in Detroit and Chicago; and can frequently be heard performing his own Fats Waller Revue. He has performed across the country as musical director and pianist for Cook, Dixon, and Young (formerly of the Three Mo' Tenors) and has been blessed to work with some of the world's finest musicians including Robert Shaw, Margaret Hillis, Brazeal Dennard, Minister Thomas Whitfield, Aretha Franklin, Anita Baker, Plácido Domingo, George Shirley, Marcus Belgrave, Jack Jones, Haley Westenra, Stephanie Mills, and Tramaine Hawkins.

UMS welcomes the artists of Piedmont Blues: A Search for Salvation as they make their UMS debuts this evening.



**UNLOCKING THE MYSTERIES OF ALZHEIMER'S
AND OTHER MAJOR DISEASES**



Drs. Henry Paulson and Andrew Lieberman have formed a unique coalition of more than 50 clinicians and scientists studying protein-folding disorders as a group, which holds the promise to establish new ways to prevent and treat these devastating conditions.

GOSPEL CHOIR OF HOPE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Alvin Waddles / Director

Soprano

Troi Abner
Stacey Barret
Samantha Fentress
Helen Jones-Jones
Chandra Lewis
Lorraine Love
Kathy Manuel
Jackie Massey
Patricia Nelson
Kyreesha Smith
Deborah Squirewell
Pat Swan-Brown
Deborah Thornhill
Earlene Traylor-Neal
Lori Waddles
Lori Wesby

Tenor

Beverly Coleman
Jackie Coleman
Faira Glenn
Develyn Hamilton
Alicia Kirk
Larry Kitchen
Aaron Squirewell
Melvin Stafford
Jennifer Troy

Alto

Loretta Brown
Beverly Burks
Jessica Harps
Gloria Hayes
Latricia Hemphill
Tish Higginbotham
Beverly Scarbrough
Debbie Smith
Yvonne Smith
Sharon Thomas
Johna Treadwell
Casandra Williams
Rosemary Williams

Duke Performances | Duke University is the lead commissioner of *Piedmont Blues*; co-commissioners include the Modlin Center for the Arts at University of Richmond, the Savannah Music Festival, and Strathmore.

Critical support for *Piedmont Blues* has been provided by Music Maker Relief Foundation — a nonprofit based in Hillsborough, NC — founded in 1994 to preserve the musical traditions of the South by directly supporting musicians, ensuring that their voices will not be silenced by poverty and time. For *Piedmont Blues*, Music Maker Relief Foundation connected Gerald Clayton with the elder artists and provided the archival music and photographs that inspired this compelling work. Select photos in *Piedmont Blues* by Timothy Duffy, Music Maker Relief Foundation. www.musicmaker.org.

Made possible, in part, with an award from the National Endowment for the Arts; a grant from the NC Arts Council, a division of the Department of Natural & Cultural Resources; and a grant from New Music USA.

Special thanks to the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Duke University, and the Southern Folklife Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, for serving as research sites for *Piedmont Blues*.

TONIGHT'S VICTORS FOR UMS:



Michigan Medicine

—

National Endowment for the Arts

*Supporters of this evening's performance of Piedmont Blues:
A Search for Salvation.*

MAY WE ALSO RECOMMEND...

- 3/17 Steve Lehman & Sélébéyone wsg Jamaal May, poetry
3/31 Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Chick Corea
4/13 *A Tribute to the Jazz Epistles*: Abdullah Ibrahim & Ekaya

Tickets available at www.ums.org.

ON THE EDUCATION HORIZON...

- 3/19 FRAME: A Salon Series on Visual Art, Performance, and Identity
(202 S. Thayer Street Building, Atrium, 7:00 pm)
- 3/20 Imagining in the Archive: Artist Interview with Jillian Walker
and Anita Gonzalez
(202 S. Thayer Street Building, 4:00 pm)
*Part of the 2017–18 UMS Education and Community Engagement
Research Residency*
- 3/23 *Tignon*: Work-in-Progress Reading
(Newman Studio, Walgreen Drama Center, 1226 Murfin Avenue,
4:00 pm)
*Part of the 2017–18 UMS Education and Community Engagement
Research Residency*

Educational events are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.