



Quodlibet Ensemble & Reginald Mobley Coming Together

Digital World Premiere | October 1, 2020

QUODLIBET ENSEMBLE

REGINALD MOBLEY, Countertenor and Narrator

Edited and produced by KATIE HYUN and PASTOR ISAAC SCOTT

Audio engineering by NORIKO OKABE

Video concept by KATIE HYUN

Videography by PASTOR ISAAC SCOTT and PASTOR KAIRI CHAPMAN

Lighting design by JOE LEVASSEUR



Co-presented by Five Boroughs Music Festival, Baryshnikov Arts Center,
Tippet Rise Art Center, and Bay Chamber Concerts

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PROGRAM

Coming Together (1972)

FREDERIC RZEWSKI (b. 1938)

Based on a text by Samuel Melville

Reginald Mobley, narrator

Rebecca Anderson, violin; Alex Fortes, violin; Katie Hyun, violin; George Meyer, violin; Ben Russell, violin; Beth Wenstrom, violin; Ayane Kozasa, viola; Kyle Miller, viola; Hannah Collins, cello; Paul Wiancko, cello; Joe Magar, electric bass

Edited and produced by Paul Wiancko and Katie Hyun

Bewilderment

FLORENCE PRICE (1887–1953)

Langston Hughes, arr. Alex Fortes

My Soul's Been Anchored In De Lord

Spiritual, arr. George Meyer

Rise Mourner

Spiritual, arr. George Meyer

I'm Going To Lay Down My Heavy Load

Spiritual, arr. Alex Fortes

Reginald Mobley, countertenor

Alex Fortes, violin; Katie Hyun, violin; George Meyer, violin; Dorothy Kim, viola; George Meyer, viola; Michael Unterman, cello; Max Zeugner, bass; Jeffrey Grossman, organ

Cantata BWV 54, Widerstehe doch der Sünde

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

- I. Aria: Widerstehe doch der Sünde
- II. Recitative: Die Art verruchter Sünden
- III. Aria: Wer Sünde tut, der ist vom Teufel

Reginald Mobley, countertenor

Alex Fortes, violin; Katie Hyun, violin; George Meyer, violin; Dorothy Kim, viola; George Meyer, viola; Michael Unterman, cello; Max Zeugner, bass; Jeffrey Grossman, organ

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

By Michael Unterman, 5BMF Artistic Director

Frederic Rzewski (pron. JEV-skee) (b. 1938): *Coming Together*

"I think the combination of age and the greater coming together is responsible for the speed of the passing time. It's six months now and I can tell you truthfully few periods in my life have passed so quickly. I am in excellent physical and emotional health. There are doubtless subtle surprises ahead, but I feel secure and ready. As lovers will contrast their emotions in times of crisis, so am I dealing with my environment. In the indifferent brutality, incessant noise, the experimental chemistry of food, the ravings of lost hysterical men, I can act with clarity and meaning. I am deliberate – sometimes even calculating – seldom employing histrionics except as a test of the reactions of others. I read much, exercise, talk to guards and inmates, feeling for the inevitable direction of my life."

This is the text set by Frederic Rzewski in his piece *Coming Together*, taken from a letter written by Sam Melville, one of the leaders of the riot at Attica Prison in 1971. Over 1000 inmates took part in the uprising, spurred by the prison's inhumane living conditions; they took 42 staff hostage and released a list of 28 demands that included improvements to health care, sanitation, and food, and an end to beatings. When negotiations broke down over the question of amnesty for the prisoners who took part in the riot, state police were sent in and the ensuing chaos left 43 dead, including Melville.

In his piece, Rzewski sets up a structure for the performers that is at once rigid and confining, but that also allows room for individual choices and personal expression. All the performers read from the same 16th-note bass line, executed in full by a single player, often on electric bass or piano. The rest of the ensemble play their parts as determined by a shifting set of rules that change section by section, either specifying specific notes for the ensemble players to strike or allowing them to construct melodies comprised of notes played simultaneously with the bass line.

Almost 50 years later, the piece's message still feels timely, calling to mind Rzewski's other work dedicated to this tragic event, simply titled *Attica*, which sets the following text:

"A few months after the Attica uprising, another prisoner, Richard X. Clark, was set free. In the car that was taking him to Buffalo, a reporter from the New York Times asked him as they left how it felt to leave Attica behind him. He said: 'Attica is in front of me.'"

Florence Price (1887–1953): Songs

Florence Price's songs, in the context of this program, are a welcome release from the tension of the Rzewski. Price, a Black American composer, has received much-belated and -deserved attention in recent years after being largely forgotten for decades, an oversight undoubtedly due in large part to the fact that she does not fit the racial and gender norms of the traditional mainstream of classical composers.

Her orchestral and instrumental chamber works have drawn the most present-day attention, but her songs and vocal music are gems without exception: sensitively set, impactful, and displaying a razor-sharp wit. This concert's set of four songs begins with "Bewilderment," a setting of a text by Langston Hughes, that captures a feeling of deep disillusionment that grows progressively in intensity. Next are three settings of

Black spirituals: the confident “My Soul’s Been Anchored In the Lord” (written for the contralto Marian Anderson), the comforting consolation of “Rise Mourner,” and the gentle, joyful “I’m Goin’ To Lay Down My Heavy Load.” Far from being straightforward adaptations, Price’s arrangements of these songs are full of deft touches and enriched harmonies. For this concert, these songs have been beautifully transcribed and arranged for alto and strings by two members of Quodlibet: Alex Fortes and George Meyer.

J.S. Bach (1685–1750): Cantata 54

Rounding out this program, Bach’s Cantata No. 54 acts as a call to action, with a text that urges its listeners to choose the path of righteousness. Its message recalls Matthew 7:13-14: “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

Written for the Weimar court somewhere between 1711 and 1714, the work is Bach’s earliest known solo cantata, comprising two arias and an intervening recitative, all for alto voice. The first aria begins with a shock: a bracing tonic chord with a major 7th stacked on top, a tooth-rattling semitone away from a full octave, effectively grabbing the listener by the lapels. Throughout this first movement, the juxtaposition of virtue and sin is symbolized by a split in the ensemble, the continuo and violas holding steady staccato eighth-notes, pitted against the violins and alto soloist whose lines are much sweeter and sinuous, occasionally enticing the violas to join their camp as well.

The explicit biblical reference in the cantata is to 1 John 3:8 “He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning” which is the opening text of the second aria. Bach, here, is firmly in his contrapuntal wheelhouse, weaving strands of a theme that begins as a classic *lamento* gesture, the descending chromatic tetrachord found in Dido’s “When I am laid in earth,” among many others, but it’s interrupted before it reaches its end, instead spinning off into torrents of melismatic 16th notes. This might represent the escape from the sinful path, as the arias text goes on to say: “if one is able, with virtuous devotion, to withstand [sin’s] contemptible bonds, it is already done away with.”

Special thanks to Pedja Muzijevic, Katie Hyun, Alex Fortes, Rebecca Anderson, Kristen Miles, Katy Salomon, Melissa Moore, Manuel Bagorro, and everyone whose efforts made this project possible.

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

Cantata No. 54: *Widerstehe doch der Sünde*

Johann Sebastian Bach

ARIA

Widerstehe doch der Sünde,
Sonst ergreifet dich ihr Gift.
Laß dich nicht den Satan blenden;
Denn die Gottes Ehre schänden,
Trifft ein Fluch, der tödlich ist.

Stand firm against sin,
lest its poison seize you.
Do not let Satan blind you;
for those who desecrate God's honor
will incur a curse that leads to death.

RECITATIVE

Die Art verruchter Sünden
Ist zwar von außen wunderschön;
Allein man muß
Hernach mit Kummer und Verdruß
Viel Ungemach empfinden.
Von außen ist sie Gold;
Doch, will man weiter gehn,
So zeigt sich nur ein leerer Schatten
Und übertünchtes Grab.
Sie ist den Sodomsäpfeln gleich,
Und die sich mit derselben gatten,
Gelingen nicht in Gottes Reich.
Sie ist als wie ein scharfes Schwert,
Das uns durch Leib und Seele fährt.

The nature of vile sins
is indeed outwardly very beautiful;
however one must
afterwards with sorrow and frustration
experience much hardship.
On the outside it is gold;
yet, going further in,
it is shown to be only an empty shadow
and a whitewashed grave.
It is like the apples of Sodom,
and those who join with it
will not reach God's kingdom.
It is like a sharp sword,
that pierces through body and soul.

ARIA

Wer Sünde tut, der ist vom Teufel,
Denn dieser hat sie aufgebracht.
Doch wenn man ihren schnöden Banden
Mit rechter Andacht widerstanden,
Hat sie sich gleich davongemacht.

Whosoever sins is of the devil,
for it is he who has produced them.
Yet if against its contemptible bonds
one stands firm with righteous devotion,
it shall at once take flight.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

REGINALD MOBLEY is one of the most sought after countertenors on both sides of the Atlantic, noted for his “crystalline diction and pure, evenly produced tone” (*Miami Herald*). Highlights include extensive tours around Europe singing a repertoire encompassing Bach’s *St. Matthew* and *St. John Passions* with the Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque Soloists led by Sir John Eliot Gardiner. He has also recently been invited to perform with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Academy of Ancient Music, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Internationale Bachakademie Stuttgart, Balthasar-Neuman Choir, Wiener Akademie, Freiburger Barockorchester and Orkiestra Historyczna in Poland. The remainder of the 2019/20 season would have seen Mobley embark on his first Australian tour to perform with Bach Akademie Australia and Canberra International Music Festival, now postponed to 2022. A recording of Spirituals with piano will be released on the French label, ALPHA CLASSICS. In the United States, Mobley has recently been engaged in recorded concerts with the Washington Bach Consort, Quodlibet Ensemble for the Five Boroughs Music Festival in New York, Pacific MusicWorks in Seattle, Cantata Collective in Berkeley, Bach Collegium San Diego and Agave Baroque. Mobley has been appointed as the first Programming Consultant with the Handel and Haydn Society in Boston, MA.

QUODLIBET is a collective of creators and string players with the aim to produce creative musical experiences that engage, entertain, and invite people to invest in their communities. To reflect this, Quodlibet has partnered with VOTESart and committed to raising awareness on voters’ rights and registration. The players pursue careers as performing artists in both solo and prominent chamber ensembles that cover a wide range of musical styles, including ACRONYM, New Morse Code, Aizuri Quartet, Diderot String Quartet, Founders, A Far Cry, American Contemporary Ensemble, NOVUS Trinity and Trinity Baroque Orchestra. In addition to their performing careers, the members also hold teaching positions at the University of Kansas School of Music, visiting artist at the Crane School of Music in SUNY, and Musicambia, an organization dedicated to bringing music education into correctional facilities. Quodlibet Ensemble has performed at the Baryshnikov Arts Center, Rockefeller University, the Essex Winter Series, Yale University British Arts Center and Dwight Chapel, the Maxwell Shepherd Arts Fund in Collinsville, CT, and Spring Glen Church in Hamden, CT. Their debut CD, *Quodlibet Ensemble: Concerti Grossi*, in which all players adapted gut strings, was released in the fall of 2014.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

A winner of Astral Artists’ 2016 National Auditions, violinist **KATIE HYUN** has been described as “a virtuoso by anyone’s measure” (*The Berkshire Review*). She has appeared in numerous festivals, including most recently the American Bach Soloists, Bravo! Vail, Chamber Music Northwest, Tippet Rise Arts Center, the Outer Banks Chamber Music Series, and Mostly Mozart. Ms. Hyun is the founder and director of Quodlibet Ensemble, a collective of string players dedicated to engaging and inviting audiences to invest in their communities. To further that cause, Quodlibet has partnered with VOTESart to raise awareness about voters’ rights and voter registration. Katie also serves on the faculty of Musicambia, an organization that brings music education to correctional facilities. Ms. Hyun recently made her debut recital with Astral Artists in Philadelphia, where she featured a program that showcased both the Baroque and modern violins. On modern violin, Ms. Hyun serves as concertmaster for NOVUS Trinity Wall Street and regularly performs both solo and chamber music in the New York and Philadelphia area. On Baroque violin, she

appears frequently with the Trinity Baroque Orchestra and Seraphic Fire. She has made solo appearances with NOVUS Trinity Wall Street, the Houston Symphony, the Dallas Chamber Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the Columbia Festival Orchestra, among others.

PAUL WIANCKO has led an exceptionally multifaceted musical life as a composer and cellist. As a performer, he has collaborated with Midori, Yo-Yo Ma, Richard Goode, Mitsuko Uchida, Nico Muhly, and members of the Guarneri, Takács, JACK, Parker, Orion, and Juilliard quartets. Chosen as one of Kronos Quartet's "50 for the Future," Paul's own music has been described as "dazzling", "compelling" (*Star Tribune*) and "vital pieces that avoid the predictable" (Allan Kozinn). His 25-minute quartet *LIFT* is featured on the Aizuri Quartet's Grammy-nominated album *Blueprinting*, one of NPR's Top 10 Classical Albums of 2018.

PASTOR ISAAC SCOTT is an award-winning social impact multimedia artist and human rights activist. He is a Fellow at the Center for Institutional and Social Change at Columbia Law School and Founder & Lead-Artist for The Confined Arts at the Center for Justice at Columbia University, where he spearheads the promotion of justice reform through the transformative power of the arts. His research at Columbia investigates social and institutional methods of dehumanization in the carceral system to decrease punitive triggers in the US criminal justice system. Pastor Scott's passion for equal human rights runs deep, and comes as a result of being directly affected by the criminal justice system and its disenfranchising nature. Since returning to society in 2013, he's combined fine art, graphic design, and film and media to counter the existing negative narratives of people in prison and of those formerly incarcerated and directly impacted. As a result of the impactful work of The Confined Arts, Pastor Scott received the 2018, 2019, and 2020 Change Agent Award from the School of General Studies at Columbia University, where he currently studies Visual Arts and Human Rights as a Justice in Education Scholar. Today, Pastor Scott holds the esteemed title of Associate Pastor at God's Touch Healing Ministry, located in East Harlem, NY, where he serves on Manhattan Community Board 11 on the nomination of City Council Bill Perkins.

KAIRI CHAPMAN, a Harlem, New York native, has been a lifelong artist. Chapman's disciplines are in the fine arts tradition with a focus on figurative illustrations using primarily acrylic paint on canvas. He has explored many disciplines in the arts, from watercolors to clay sculptures, body painting, even limited theater performances. Over the past 3 years, Chapman has explored film production as his latest medium – delving into a new frontier of storytelling.

NORIKO OKABE is a trained classical musician turned recording engineer, aiming to capture the magic of music making. She works with WQXR, and as the concert recording engineer for Marlboro Music Festival in Vermont, and Music From Angel Fire in New Mexico, as well as various clients in NYC and Philadelphia. She also freelances in audio related projects, including The Moth, Simon & Schuster Audio, Audible, and Pineapple Street Media.

Lighting designer **JOE LEVASSEUR** has collaborated with many dance and performance artists, including: Pavel Zuštiak, Jennifer Monson, John Jasperse, Sarah Michelson, Neil Greenberg, Beth Gill, Donna Uchizono, and Brian Brooks. His lighting design work has been seen throughout the United States, Europe, and South America. He has received two 'Bessie' Awards and a Knight of Illumination Award for his work on Meredith Monk's Cellular Songs.

ABOUT THE PRESENTERS

Since 2007, [FIVE BOROUGHES MUSIC FESTIVAL \(5BMF\)](#) has brought virtuosic chamber music performances of the highest caliber to every borough of NYC, cultivating new audiences for the genre and encouraging music lovers to look beyond Manhattan for outstanding performances. Lauded as “imaginative” by *The New York Times*, “enterprising” by *The New Yorker*, and “vital” by WQXR’s *Operavore* blog, 5BMF’s commitment to musical outreach and diverse programming has distinguished it as a standout presence in the New York City arts community from its earliest days.

5BMF’s artist roster of over 300 individual performers and ensembles is comprised of talented emerging artists and distinguished musicians alike, representing an incredibly diverse range of musical genres and styles. Its venues are just as eclectic, and have included performing arts spaces, cultural centers, and historic New York City landmarks such as Federal Hall, Pregones Theater, Flushing Town Hall, King Manor Museum, Brooklyn Historical Society, the Alice Austen House, and the Staten Island Museum, to name merely a few.

As champions of new music, 5BMF has commissioned over 50 composers and presented world premieres of their works all across New York City, most notably the two borough-wide tours of its *Five Borough Songbook* Volumes I and II. 5BMF’s outreach initiatives continue to expand every year, and have included program-related interactive lectures and discussions, public masterclasses with world renowned performing artists, and free public programming.

[BARYSHNIKOV ARTS CENTER \(BAC\)](#) is the realization of a long-held vision by artistic director Mikhail Baryshnikov who sought to build an arts center in Manhattan that would serve as a gathering place for artists from all disciplines. BAC’s opening in 2005 heralded the launch of this mission, establishing a thriving creative laboratory and performance space for artists from around the world. BAC’s activities encompass a robust residency program augmented by a range of professional services, including commissions of new work, as well as the presentation of performances by artists at varying stages of their careers. In tandem with its commitment to supporting artists, BAC is dedicated to building audiences for the arts by presenting contemporary, innovative work at affordable ticket prices.

[TIPPET RISE ART CENTER](#) is located in Fishtail, Montana against the backdrop of the Beartooth Mountains, roughly midway between Billings and Bozeman and just north of Yellowstone National Park. Set on a 12,000-acre working sheep and cattle ranch, Tippet Rise hosts classical music performances and exhibits large-scale outdoor sculptures. Tippet Rise is anchored in the belief that art, music, architecture, and nature are inextricably linked in the human experience, each making the others more powerful.

[BAY CHAMBER CONCERTS](#), based in Rockport, Maine, is dedicated to transforming lives through high-quality concert programs, music education and innovative community engagement. With a rich, 60-year history of presenting concerts in Mid-Coast Maine, Bay Chamber’s programming features renowned artists and ensembles throughout the year and in annual summer concert series and festivals. The organization also offers year-round lessons and classes for all ages through its community music school.

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