

Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth

presents

This is America: Part IV

Johnny Gandelsman, violin

Featuring special guest,
flamenco dancer Mariana Gatto

Saturday, July 20, 6 pm

The Church of Christ at Dartmouth College • 2024

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From Johnny Gandelsman

This is America was born in 2020, during a profoundly difficult time in American history. COVID-19 took the lives of 385,000 people. Racism and police brutality took the lives of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, igniting nationwide and eventually worldwide protests. In California, the 4.2 million acres burned in 2020 were the most in a single year since records were kept, and more than the previous three years combined. Vicious election cycle rhetoric was boiling over, and conversations dominating cable news focused on what this country was, is or should be. Unemployment skyrocketed. People were isolated, sick, scared and exhausted.

My family and I had the opportunity to spend the first six months of the pandemic in the idyllic White Mountains region of New Hampshire. Although we were safe, I missed our home in New York and felt disconnected from our Brooklyn community. I missed performing for live audiences, which was so abruptly taken away from us during that phase of the pandemic. It was strange to sit on the sidelines and be an observer as our world was falling apart.

In thinking about ways one person could make a small difference, it occurred to me that in many ways amplifying the voices of others, whether it's those of centuries past, or ones of today, is an essential part of being a classical musician. I decided to commission new works for violin from American and US-based composers, asking each one to reflect in some way on the time we were all living through. Some, like Kinan Azmeh, Layale Chaker and Christina Courtin, have been dear friends for decades; others like Maya Miro Johnson, Ebun Oguntola, and Anjna Swaminathan, were new connections; all were musicians whose artistry I respected and admired.

I reached out to presenters across the country, looking for commissioning partners. One of the very first presenters who came on board was Dartmouth's Hopkins Center, commissioning a new work from

Kojiro Umezaki, an alum of Dartmouth College and another dear friend. Having the trust of one of the country's most respected presenting organizations gave me the needed push to pursue the idea further. As more parties signed on, the project grew—22 new works were funded, written and recorded. Rising to the surface were themes like loss and uncertainty, but also joy, friendship, gratitude and love.

Because of the pandemic-era nature of this project, I recorded many of these works before I ever had the opportunity to perform them for a live audience. In that context, the invitation from the Hop to present the full anthology for the first time, now expanded with additional Hop commissions from guest artists Gabriel Kahane, Carla Kihlstedt and Gonzalo Grau, was all the more remarkable. Once again the Hop is in the lead in taking a leap of faith with me, exploring uncharted territory and at the same time bringing *This is America* home to New Hampshire, where it began.

Presenting *This Is America* to you over the course of this season has been a wonderfully fulfilling, eye-opening and ear-opening experience. Four years have passed, yet the works which encapsulated moments of 2020 remain relevant and are inscribed with new meaning as they are heard in community. Being together in a room, listening to the composers' own thoughts, feelings and journeys, created a therapeutic place for individual reflection in a collective space, filled with only sound. I am adding this shared experience to the very long list of surprises from this project.

I'm deeply grateful to Mary Lou Aleskie and Karen Henderson and everyone at the Hop for their support in bringing this project to life. I'm also deeply grateful to you and to everyone who responded to the invitation to extend your ears, open your imaginations and join me on this journey.

Johnny Gandelsman

Program

Approximate duration: 80 minutes

Pallavi–A Meditation on Care Akshaya Tucker

Rhapsody Tomeka Reid

a current took her away Dana Lyn

Flamenco Suite Gonzalo Grau

A Hopkins Center commission and world premiere

- I. Soleá (Prelude)
- II. Tangos (Allemande)
- III. Fandango (Courante)
- IV. Martinete (Sarabande)
- V. Sevillanas (Menuet)
- VI. Bulerias (Gigue)

New To the Session Rhiannon Giddens

Order of program subject to change

Program Notes

Pallavi-A Meditation on Care

Pallavi-A Meditation on Care is about recovery. It takes inspiration from a bhajan (devotional song) about death. The first line of this song roughly translates from Hindi to, “One day, Mother Kali, we will go together in light.” I created a fantasy on this melody, like a theme and variations, developing it as if it was a Pallavi in Odissi dance. Pallavis involve the repetition of one melody, and they move from slow and sensuous, to fast and trance-like, even virtuosic. For me, dancing a Pallavi provides a sense of care and well-being. They are pure sweetness; a means of becoming absorbed in the raga; and feeling comfortable in my own body. This is what I’ve tried to represent musically. This Pallavi extolls the strength of women, especially my mom. If the music in Pallavi feels like a dear friend giving you a hug as you listen, then I will be very happy!

Pallavi-A Meditation on Care was generously commissioned by the Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music (Booneville, California)

Akshaya Tucker

Rhapsody

Rhapsody for solo violin was commissioned for violinist Johnny Gandelsman. Composed during the pandemic in 2021, the piece opens with an emotionally reflective yet lyrical statement that returns in various forms throughout the composition. Initially, the statement seems to ask a question. It repeats itself higher yet, there is still no response. Continuing, the theme becomes a bit manic and anxious. Throughout, there is a sensation of “wheels spinning while stuck in place” and the piece ends with a sort of resolve that is neither sad nor without hope.

Rhapsody was generously and jointly commissioned by the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania); the Portland Chamber Music Festival (Portland, Maine); and Laura & David Freid, in loving memory of Christopher Marrior

Tomeka Reid

a current took her away

The “her” in this case is a plankter (singular for plankton). Plankton are micro-organisms whose main function is to convert sunlight into chemical energy; they are the base of the marine food chain. Decreasing sea ice has caused plankton blooms to happen earlier and further north each year, affecting the feeding and migration cycles of all of the animals that depend on them for survival. This piece is describing a lone plankter, drifting along a warmer than usual Arctic current, for much longer than expected.

a current took her away was generously commissioned by the Portland Chamber Music Festival (Portland, Maine)

Dana Lyn

Flamenco Suite

This suite for solo violin is a fundamental mix of personal influences of mine. As a cellist myself, you can imagine my deep connection to, and endless passion and respect for Johan Sebastian Bach’s music.

Years after studying these suites, I realized they were essentially baroque “dances.” Dances with different tempos and moods, dances with influences of their own, sometimes connecting with folkloric and traditional musics, and following specific baroque compositional structures. The suites have different tempos and moods, all of them with specific structures within, each brilliantly introduced with a prelude and ending with a fast and flashy “gigue.”

Many years after my cello days, I was introduced to the world of “Flamenco”. This beautiful art form from the gypsies of Andalusia (Southern Spain), with Indian, African, Sephardic, Spanish traditions and many more influences (including more recent and modern ones), invaded my music world.

Flamenco Suite for solo violin is a suite that pays tribute to both Bach and Flamenco traditions, trying

to follow baroque structures but using different flamenco dances. I open *Flamenco Suite* with what they call in Spanish “la madre de todos los palos” (mother of all flamenco styles) a “soleá.” Then, following our baroque structure, our moderate-tempo movement is called “tangos,” followed by a “fandango,” contrasting to a deep song called “martinete,” to a fun and playful “sevillana,” finishing with a flashy “bulería” (also known as “fin de fiesta” or end of the party).

With this suite, my goal was to connect these two worlds, honoring the traditions of flamenco but portrayed in a baroque frame. A suite where a solo violin becomes a “cantaor,” a guitarist and sometimes a dancer.

Flamenco Suite was generously commissioned by The Hopkins Center for the Arts (Hanover, New Hampshire)

Gonzalo Grau

New To the Session

I began my fiddling journey as an apprentice to a dance musician, and pretty late in life, as violinists go—so my repertoire and style is rhythmic and melodically simple, and always with a dancer in mind. They say write what you know—so when this opportunity came to create a piece for Johnny Gandelsman, I was thrilled to see what came out of my strings and off my bow. It’s called *New to the Session* because as a beginner fiddler I would sit in on Irish sessions sometimes and feel like I was in a whirlwind—no more than twice through each tune and it seemed like everybody knew everything but me; I wanted to capture a bit of that feel with the journey through the melodies.

New To The Session was generously commissioned by the 2021 Vail Dance Festival, Damian Woetzel, Artistic Director (Vail, Colorado)

Rhiannon Giddens

About the Artists

Grammy award-winning violinist and producer **Johnny Gandelsman**’s musical voice reflects the artistic collaborations he has been a part of since moving to the United States in 1995. *The New Yorker* has called Johnny “revelatory,” placing him in the company of “radically transformative” performers like Maurizio Pollini, Peter Serkin and Christian Zacharias. As a founding member of Brooklyn Rider and a former member of the Silkroad Ensemble, Johnny has closely worked with such luminaries as Bela Fleck, Martin Hayes, Kayhan Kalhor, Yo-Yo Ma and Mark Morris. Gandelsman integrates a wide range of creative sensibilities into a unique style amongst today’s violinists. Johnny’s recording of the complete Bach Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin, which reached #1 on the Billboard Classical Chart, and made it onto *NY*

Magazine and *NY Times* Best of the Year lists. A passionate advocate for new music, Johnny has premiered dozens of new works and has been producing records since starting his label, In a Circle Records in 2008. Recent credits include the Silkroad Ensemble’s critically-acclaimed recording of Osvaldo Golijov tone poem in voices *Falling out of Time* (In a Circle Records); Brooklyn Rider’s *Healing Modes* and *The Wanderer* (In a Circle Records); and *Sing Me Home*, a Grammy-award winner for Best World Music album (Sony). Johnny also produced music for Ken Burns, Lynn Novick and Sarah Bottstein’s film *The U.S. and the Holocaust*. Johnny was born in Moscow into a family of musicians. His father Yuri is a violist, his mother Janna is a pianist, and his sister Natasha is a violinist as well. He lives in New York.

About the Artists *continued*

Mariana Gatto traces her origins to the Gypsy communities of Bulgaria. As a disciplined and determined dancer who began performing flamenco in adult venues at age six, she rapidly became passionate about ballet, flamenco and other forms of dance and the performing arts. Awards include the Grand Prix at the Vienna International Ballet Experience and international scholarships.

Miss Gatto has performed alongside renowned flamenco dancer and choreographer Rafael Amargo in Dionisio: *la vid y mil noches* in Barcelona, in Sonia Dorado's Spain *Spectacular* at Teatro Calderón in Madrid, in Nérida Tirado's *Dime Quién Soy* at Jacob's Pillow and Queen's Theatre, in Jesús Muñoz's Flamenco en Cabaret in Albuquerque, in Omayra Amaya's *Tiempo Flamenco* at The Dance Complex in Boston, in Farruca with cellist José López "Marqués" at the Former Spanish Ambassador's Residence in DC, and with the Gipsy Kings in their U.S. tours. Currently she teaches flamenco at Séber Method Academy in DC and ballet at CityDance Conservatory in Maryland.

Akshaya Tucker is a composer, cellist and Odissi dancer, whose work is inspired by the music and dance traditions of South Asia. Her recent commissions include solo works for Johnny Gandelsman and Robert Howard, and chamber works for invoke and Density512. Her music has been performed by the Refugee Orchestra Project at National Sawdust, and by Vent Nouveau, Johnny Gandelsman and Joshua Roman. She is a current Composer Fellow at the Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music. Akshaya holds an MM in Composition from the University of Texas at Austin and a BA in Music from Brown University. In 2018, she received honorable mentions from National Sawdust's Hildegard Competition and the ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Awards. In 2017, she received a Rainwater Innovation Grant from the University of Texas to collaborate with Hindustani vocalist Saili Oak. Akshaya has performed Odissi dance worldwide with Nataraj Dance Company under

Guru Ranjanaa Devi. She is Programs Manager at Shastra, an organization dedicated to connecting the musical communities of India and the West.

Described as a "New Jazz Power Source" by the *New York Times*, cellist and composer **Tomeka Reid** has emerged as one of the most original, versatile and curious musicians in Chicago's bustling jazz and improvised music community over the last decade. Her distinctive melodic sensibility, always rooted in a strong sense of groove, has been featured in many distinguished ensembles over the years. Reid has been a key member of ensembles led by legendary reedists like Anthony Braxton (ZIM SEXTET) and Roscoe Mitchell (ROSCOE MITCHELL QUARTET, ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO), as well as a younger generation of visionaries including flutist Nicole Mitchell (BLACK EARTH ENSEMBLE, ARTIFACTS), vocalist Dee Alexander (EVOLUTION ENSEMBLE), and drummer Mike Reed (LOOSE ASSEMBLY, LIVING BY LANTERNS, ARTIFACTS). She co-leads the adventurous string trio HEAR IN NOW, with violinist Mazz Swift and bassist Silvia Bolognesi, and in 2013 launched the first Chicago Jazz String Summit, a semi-annual three-day international festival of cutting edge string players held in Chicago. In the Fall of 2019 Tomeka Reid received a teaching appointment at Mills College as the Darius Milhaud chair in composition. Reid was a 2023/24 Roth Visiting Scholar at Dartmouth.

Brooklyn-based musician **Dana Lyn** has performed at New York's Lincoln Center, Beacon Theater, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Carnegie Hall and Town Hall, as well as folk festivals and dive bars the world over. A violinist/fiddler, violist, pianist and enthusiastic bass player, she is at home in a wide range of musical genres and has worked with Tony Award-winning musicians Stew and Heidi Rodewald, actor-directors Ethan Hawke and Vincent D'Onofrio, Imani Uzuri, Somi, D'Angelo and the Vanguard, 2017 MacArthur Fellow Taylor Mac, Bruce Springsteen, the Elysian Fields, Irish poet Louis de Paor, Killer Mike and the Walkmen.

As a composer, she has received commissions from the Brooklyn Rider, the National Arts Council of Ireland, the Inception Orchestra, the Apple Hill String Quartet, the Portland Chamber Music Festival, A Far Cry, the Irish Arts Center, Palaver Strings and the New Orchestra of Washington, among others. Her arrangements for fiddler Martin Hayes and the Brooklyn Rider were featured on WNYC's New Sounds and she contributed string arrangements to Catherine Russell's Grammy-nominated record *Alone Together* and Cherish the Ladies' PBS special *An Irish Homecoming*.

The composer, producer and multi-instrumentalist **Gonzalo Grau** began his musical studies at the age of three in Caracas. Along his musical journey he developed skills in many instruments, from the viola da gamba and the cello to the flamenco cajón and his principal instrument, the piano. His varied credits include performances with Venezuelan music projects like Maroa, Schola Cantorum de Venezuela, Camerata de Caracas and the Simón Bolívar National Youth Orchestra, jazz icon Maria Schneider and the Latin jazz giant Timbalaye. As a music director he leads two projects of his own, Plural (Latin jazz-Flamenco-Venezuelan fusion) and La Clave Secreta (salsa fusion), nominated for the 2008 Grammy in the Best Tropical Album category.

Wearing his composer and arranger hat, Grau's achievements include composition collaborations alongside Osvaldo Golijov for the opera *Ainadamar* and *La Pasión Según San Marcos*. Original works include the overture *Pregunta y Respuesta*

commissioned by the Atlanta Symphony; *Café con Pan*, commissioned by the Chicago Symphony for the MusicNow concert series; a Double Concerto for Yo-Yo Ma, Johnny Gandelsman and the Orchestra of the Americas; and a concerto for Venezuelan cuatro and orchestra, commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Gustavo Dudamel.

The acclaimed musician **Rhiannon Giddens** uses her art to excavate the past and reveal bold truths about our present. A MacArthur "Genius Grant" recipient, Giddens co-founded the Grammy award-winning Carolina Chocolate Drops, and she has been nominated for six additional Grammys for her work as a soloist and collaborator. She was most recently nominated for her collaboration with multi-instrumentalist Francesco Turrisi, *there is no Other* (2019). Giddens' forthcoming album, *They're Calling Me Home*, is a 12-track album, recorded with Turrisi in Ireland during the recent lockdown; it speaks of the longing for the comfort of home as well as the metaphorical "call home" of death, which has been a tragic reality for so many during the COVID-19 crisis.

Giddens's lifelong mission is to lift up people whose contributions to American musical history have previously been erased, and to work toward a more accurate understanding of the country's musical origins. *Pitchfork* has said of her work, "few artists are so fearless and so ravenous in their exploration," and *Smithsonian Magazine* calls her "an electrifying artist who brings alive the memories of forgotten predecessors, white and black."

Arts in the Curriculum & Community

Johnny Gandelsman is a 2023/24 resident artist. In the summer, he will visit a class in the music department. He is joined by composer Gonzalo Grau and dancer Mariana Gatto for a Flamenco Workshop that is open to the public on July 19. Johnny also performs Part IV of the anthology followed by a discussion with the artists at Avaloch Farm Music Institute on July 21.

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