

Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth

presents

Difficult Grace

Seth Parker Woods, cello

Roderick George, choreographer and dancer

Christopher Botta, sound engineer

Thomas Dunn, lighting designer

Saturday, June 25, 7:30 pm

The Moore Theater • Dartmouth College • 2022

Program

Approximate duration: 90 minutes including intermission

<i>Difficult Grace</i> (2019) (with artwork by Barbara Earl Thomas)	Fredrick Gifford
<i>Dam Mwen Yo</i>	Nathalie Joachim
<i>Winter Tendrils</i> (2014/2020) (with film by Zoë McLean)	Monty Adkins
<i>The Race: 1915</i> (2019) (with projected images of Jacob Lawrence's <i>The Migration Series</i>)	Nathalie Joachim
<i>My Heart Is A River</i> (2020) i. <i>Opening Out</i> ii. <i>Seeping In</i>	Freida Abtan

Intermission

<i>Lamentations: Black/Folk Song Suite for Solo Cello</i> (1973) iii. <i>Calvary Ostinato</i>	Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson
<i>Against Heaven</i> (2022)	Ted Hearne
<i>asinglewordisnotenough 3 [invariant]</i> (2015)	Pierre Alexandre Tremblay

Program Notes

Difficult Grace (2019)

Images: Barbara Earl Thomas (b.1948) *GRACE*, 2019
Text: *Primitives*, by Dudley Randall

As Seth Parker Woods and I brainstormed a project that would simultaneously feature his voice and cello playing, I asked if he would be willing to share several authors and works that were important for him. In reading through these, I was struck by Dudley Randall's poem, "*Primitives*—and *Difficult Grace* began. I wanted to create a musical process, a kind of sonic network of relations that would set Randall's original poem in dialogue with itself in musical time, both verbally and sonically. In *Difficult Grace*, I hoped to create a work where aspects of Randall's poem (rhythms, durations, phonetic timbre, syntax and

meaning) would generate each musical gesture (even the title is a line from this poem); and Seth's voice and cello would be the instrument—all of the sounds in the live electronics layers are untransformed recordings of his performance.

Fredrick Gifford

Dam Mwen Yo

Dam mwen yo in Haitian Creole simply translates to "my ladies." In Haiti, the cultural image of women is one of strength. They are pillars of their homes and communities, and are both fearless and loving, all while carrying the weight of their families and children on their backs. As a first generation Haitian American, these women—my

mother, grandmothers, sisters, aunts, cousins—were central to my upbringing and my understanding of what it means to be a woman. In Dantan, Haiti-Sud, where my family is from, it is rare to walk down the countryside roads without hearing the voices of women—in the fields, cooking for their loved ones, gathering water at the wells with their babies. This piece and the voices within it are representative of these ladies—my ladies. And the cello sings their song—one of strength, beauty, pain and simplicity in a familiar landscape.

Nathalie Joachim

Winter Tendrils for cello and electronics (2014/2020)

Film: Zoe McLean

Winter Tendrils was commissioned by the Swedish Arts Council for cellist Seth Parker Woods. The work is inspired by an image by the composer of freshly fallen snow on the fragile bare branches of a tree. This image was subsequently processed and overlaid on itself several times. The composition follows a similar model. In the first part the solo cello presents the main musical line. In the second part the ‘tendrils’ from this line are superimposed. These lines are transposed and fragmented. As a result, five canonic lines (tendrils) spin off from the initial line and are heard simultaneously. The canons are strict, but not heard in their entirety. This creates a rich harmonic web akin to the final processed image. The second section of the work draws on materials from the first, creating further tendrils from the harmonic, timbral and melodic implications of the opening movement.

Monty Adkins

The Race: 1915 for cello and electronics (2019)

Images: Jacob Lawrence (1917-2000) Selections from *The Migration Series*, 1940-41

The Race: 1915 is inspired by the colorful vibrancy and nostalgic realism of visual artist Jacob Lawrence’s *The Migration Series*, which depicts images of African Americans as they embarked on one of the most expansive migratory movements in history. The work, for solo cello and electronics, combines blues-inspired melodies (including a quote from *Praise God We Are Not Weary* by Tom Brown and Tom Lemonier) with the angst and uncertainty of transient movement, against a colorfully active and vibrant electronic palette. It addresses at once the uprooting and resilience of black people in America.

The work calls for the performer to recite text sourced from *The Chicago Defender*, one of the most important and historic black newspapers. Weekly issues of *The Chicago Defender* played an essential role in promoting The Great Migration, and all of the text set within this musical work is excerpted from editions published in 1915—the year marking the beginning of the movement which would span nearly six decades. By citing the atrocities faced by African Americans in the oppressive and violent Jim Crow south, and providing resources for those seeking freedom, millions were compelled to embark on incredibly challenging journeys, leading to the development of the northern and western city centers of the United States. The publication adopted the term “the Race”, which was used in lieu of the terms negro or black—a significant and powerful statement of self.

“Nine human beings hanged within 24 hours
...and today, a lynching party is pursuing a tenth member
of the race. Look at it: see these men hanging from a limb
of a tree

Then look at the other race farmers who were made to
come and look at them. Race woman slain like cattle on
public street

...she begged for help, but not a hand was turned.
The race that has slated for the country, felled the trees,
built its railroads, labored day and night
was not given opportunity
No person identified with this intelligent and progressing
race should allow this. Any effort to deprive us of our
rights
should be referred to the authorities
because such is against the Constitution of these
United States.”

The following images from *The Migration Series* by Jacob Lawrence courtesy of The Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence Foundation and The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.

Panel 1: During World War I there was a great migration North by southern African Americans.

Panel 6: The trains were crowded with migrants.

Panel 16: After a lynching the migration quickened.

Panel 32: The railroad stations in the South were crowded with northbound travelers.

Panel 46: Industries boarded their workers in unhealthy quarters. Labor camps were numerous.

Program Notes *continued*

Panel 58: In the North the African American had more educational opportunities.

Nathalie Joachim

My Heart Is A River for cello, electronics and film (2020)
Opening Out
Seeping In

In memory of Raphael Abtan

My Heart is a River is a piece for video, live cello and pre-processed accompaniment. Narratively, the piece traces the borders between dreams and identity. A cello player performs, and stories emerge from his instrument. In these dreams, he shares a picnic with a friend and they plan an adventure. They sail through rough waters using the cello as a boat. At their destination, they mirror movement against an invisible barrier.

The music in the piece uses spectral processing to transform the sounds of a cello into physical materials such as water and skipping rocks. The live cellist, Seth Parker Woods, plays with a click track for tight synchronization with the pre-recorded electronic accompaniment.

My Heart is a River was a commission by the Seattle Symphony for its 2020 season. It was composed by Freida Abtan using Seth Woods' improvised material and was premiered in the Octave 9 surround audiovisual concert hall. The video features performances by both Seth Woods and Tamzin O'Garro.

Freida Abtan

Lamentations: Black/Folk Song Suite for Cello (1973)

Although Perkinson expressed his supreme enjoyment for writing for large ensembles, he often seemed most at home when composing with a specific player in mind. Perkinson wrote *Lamentations*, a suite for solo cello, in 1973 for cellist Ronald Lipscomb, who gave the premiere performance at New York's Alice Tully Hall. The piece is subtitled "Black/Folk Song Suite;" the composer explained, "the common denominator of these tunes is the reflection and statement of a people's crying out." The first movement, labeled "Fuguing Tune," draws on both the traditional fugue, as developed by J.S. Bach (one of Perkinson's favorite composers and primary influences), and a type of composition called "Fuging Tunes," popularized by 18th-century American composer William Billings. Perkinson composed the second movement, *Song Form*, in an AABA format, a parallel to the similarly

titled movement of his *Sinfonietta* (if not to the earlier work's tone and texture). The third movement features another trope of the Calvary spiritual. Titled *Calvary Ostinato*, the movement features a repeating pizzicato bass line over which Perkinson composed another form of the Calvary melody. In the virtuosic final movement, Perkinson has the cello maintain a constant pulsing pedal note (alternately D and C) while creating intricate melodies around the repeated note, including a brief quotation of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*.

Gregory Weinstein

Against Heaven (2022)

Against Heaven is a suite of songs set to poems by Kemi Alabi, from their first full length poetry collection of the same name. Xan Phillips calls Alabi's poems "a sacrament to the underworld, ushering in a vast network of ritual and erotic apertures." These words honor the wounds of inheritance while simultaneously activating their magic. My musical setting of Kemi's poetry for Seth seeks to reflect this vast network and duality through soulful singing, a patchwork of sharp musical juxtapositions and references, and vocal processing that evokes a multiplicity of voices.

Ted Hearne

asinglewordisnotenough 3 [invariant] for cello and electronics (2015)

"Traduttore, traditore," says the Italian proverb. "Traduire, c'est avoir l'honnêteté de s'en tenir à une imperfection allusive," nuances the translator Pierre Leyris. This series of pieces looks at the impossibility of translating, firstly, the text, then, the context. The multiple nuances of words and images, flatten, lost, unseizable.

Moreover, it is also a reflection on the inexpressible, where music and silence, allow some states/sentiment/experience to be expressed with more power/precision/nuances. Therefore, this suite of pieces should be taken as different expressions of a single impression, whose sense is multiplied by their common/composed/remembered past. Explain/comment/multiply the music by music, or as Harold Bloom says so elegantly: "The meaning of a poem can only be another poem."

This third piece/iteration/instance is the first with a live/acoustic instrument/source. Whereas the original electronic explores the gestural/embodiment limits

of fixed media, here the cello reaches for a world of articulated transients/noises/textures/splices. Ideas are expanded/shrank /distorted at the limit of recognition, to allow/free their essence from their broken shell.

Thanks to Seth Parker Woods for his faith, his talent, his enthusiasm and his patience; to Lydia Rilling and Andreas Pysiewicz for the TU Berlin session; to Alex Harker for his patient MSP support.

Pierre Alexandre Tremblay

About the Artists

Seth Parker Woods, Cello

Recipient of the 2022 Chamber Music America Michael Jaffee Visionary Award and hailed by *The Guardian* as “a cellist of power and grace” who possesses “mature artistry and willingness to go to the brink,” cellist Seth Parker Woods has established a reputation as a versatile artist straddling several genres. In addition to solo performances, he has appeared with the Ictus Ensemble (Brussels, Belgium), Ensemble L’Arsenale (Italy), zone Experimental (Switzerland), Basel Sinfonietta (Switzerland), Ensemble LPR, Orchestra of St. Luke’s, and the Atlanta and Seattle Symphony’s. A fierce advocate for contemporary arts, Woods has collaborated and worked with a wide range of artists ranging from the likes of Louis Andriessen, Elliott Carter, Heinz Holliger, G. F. Haas, Helmut Lachenmann, Klaus Lang and Peter Eötvös to Peter Gabriel, Sting, Lou Reed, Dame Shirley Bassey, and Rachael Yamagata to such visual artists as Ron Athey, Vanessa Beecroft, Jack Early, Adam Pendleton and Aldo Tambellini.

Woods’ 2021-22 season will include debuts at the Aspen Music Festival, The Britt Festival, 92nd Street Y, Harbourfront Theatre, Chamber Music Society of Virginia, Ojai Festival, Washington Performing Arts, The Strathmore, The Weisman Art Museum and Harvard. This season of performances will also include concertos by Rebecca Saunders and Tyshawn Sorey, and chamber music with violinist Hilary Hahn and pianist Andreas Haefliger. Woods will serve as Artist in Residence at the University of Miami’s Frost School of Music and Northwestern University - Center for New Music.

In recent years, Woods has appeared in concert at the Royal Albert Hall—BBC Proms, Snape Maltings Festival, the Ghent Festival, Musée d’art Moderne et Contemporain, Le Poisson Rouge and the Bohemian National Hall, Cafe

OTO, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, Klang Festival-Durham, INTER/ actions Symposium, ICMC-SMS Conference (Athens, Greece), NIME-London, Sound and Body Festival, Instalakcje Festival, Virginia Tech, La Salle College (Singapore), and FINDARS (Malaysia), amongst others. Recent awards include a DCASE artist grant, Earle Brown/ Morton Feldman Foundation Grant, McGill University-CIRMMT/IDMIL Visiting Researcher Residency, Centre Intermondes Artist Residency, Francis Chagrin Award, Concours [Re]connaissance-Premiere Prix, and the Paul Sacher Stiftung Research Scholarship.

His debut solo album, *asinglewordisnotenough* (Confront Recordings-London), has garnered great acclaim since its release in November 2016 and has been profiled in *The New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *LA Times*, *The Guardian*, *5against4*, *I Care If You Listen*, *Musical America*, *Seattle Times* and *Strings Magazine*, amongst others.

Woods recently joined the faculty of the Thornton School of Music at The University of Southern California as Assistant Professor of Practice, Cello and Chamber Music. He previously served on the faculties of the University at Buffalo, University of Chicago, Dartmouth College and the Chicago Academy of the Arts. He holds degrees from Brooklyn College, Musik Akademie der Stadt Basel and a PhD from the University of Huddersfield. In the 2020-21 season he was an Artist-in-Residence with the Kaufman Music Center, and from 2018-2020 he served as Artist-in-Residence with Seattle Symphony and Creative Consultant for the interactive concert hall, Octave 9: Raisbeck Music Center.

Seth Parker Woods is a Pirastro Artist and endorses Pirastro Perpetual Strings worldwide.

About the Artists *continued*

Roderick George, Choreographer and Dancer

Roderick George was born in Houston, Texas and studied dance at Ben Stevenson's Houston Ballet Academy. Roderick continued to develop his skill by exploring other techniques at The Alvin Ailey School, Miami City Ballet, LINES Professional Program and the High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Houston. Before starting his professional career, he was a bronze winner of the Youth American Grand Prix in New York City in 2005 and was elected as a Presidential Scholar under the YoungArts Foundation in 2003, where he performed for the US President. Roderick joined Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet in 2005. Roderick decided to move abroad to work with Basel Ballet/ Theater Basel in 2007 and later to guest with the Goteborg Opera DansKompani. Roderick joined The Forsythe Company in Frankfurt, Germany. Where he learned and shared his greatest moments with William Forsythe and the artists of TFC. His career has embraced the collaborations of his work and other great choreographers such as Peeping Tom, Jorma Elo, Jerome Bel, Jacopo Godani, William Forsythe, Johan Inger, Jiří Kylian, Sharon Eyal, Ohan Naharin, Benoit Swan-Pouffer, Richard Wherlock, Tino Seghal, and many others.

Christopher Botta, Sound engineer

Christopher Botta is a Brooklyn-based producer and

engineer. He runs Fer Sound, a mixing, mastering and production studio in Bushwick Brooklyn. Chris works closely with non-profit organizations such as Found Sound Nation (OneBeat, Mosaic, Dosti Music Project, Broken Orchestra), JACK Quartet, the Metropolis Ensemble and Hear Her Song. He's worked closely with artists such as Yaeji, Emily Wells and Shahzad Ismaily. His interests are positioned uncomfortably between contemporary chamber, electronic and popular music forms.

Thomas Dunn, Lighting designer

Thomas Dunn designs lighting throughout US and abroad. Dunns' approach to lighting stems from years of investigative work with light, treating it as both a sculptural medium and a facet of stage design. Selected design credits includes works with; JoAnne Akalaitis, Jonathan Bepler, Wally Cardona, Steve Cosson, Annie Dorsen, DD Dorvillier, Daniel Fish, Beth Gill, Trajal Harrell, Ted Hearne, Jennifer Lacey, Noémie Lafrance, David Levine, Molly Lieber, Ong Keng Sen, Zeena Parkins, Tina Satter, Jay Scheib, Eleanor Smith and Muna Tseng. Thomas is the recipient of a Kevin Kline Award for Outstanding Lighting Design, *The Little Dog Laughed*, The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis as well as a Bessie Design Award, *Notttthing Is Importantttt*, DD Dorvillier/human future dance corps.

About the Composers

Freida Abtan (b. 1976) is a Canadian multi-disciplinary artist and composer living in London, UK. Her music falls somewhere in between musique concrète and more modern noise and experimental audio and both genres are influential to her sound. Her work has been compared to bands such as Coil and Zoviet France, because of her use of spectral manipulation and collage. Freida primarily works with samples of both musical and non-musical objects that she records herself and then manipulates, often beyond recognition, through techniques derived from musique concrète and through successive layers of digital signal processing. She uses structures reminiscent of popular music and more abstract compositional variants to sequence these sounds into melodic songs before incorporating her own treated voice. As well as having created visual shows for and performed with the internationally renowned group Nurse with Wound, Freida

has presented her own sound and visual work at festivals across North America and Europe. Her first album *subtle movements* is available on United Dairies/Jnana Records. Her second *the hands of the dancer* is available on finite state and through Jnana Records.

Monty Adkins (b. March 29, 1972) is a composer and performer of experimental electronic music. He primarily creates digital audio works and installations. Since 2008, his sound works have become increasingly minimal and introspective, characterized by slow shifting organic instrumental and concrete soundscapes, focusing on encouraging a deeper immersive listening experience. Using a reduced sonic palette, he draws together elements from ambient, minimal electronica, acousmatic and experimental electronic music often combining instrumental and electronic sound. His works have been

performed at and commissioned by leading international festivals and institutions (including INA-GRM, IRCAM, BBC Radio 3, SpACE-Net, ZKM Karlsruhe, Sonic Arts Network, Visionas Sonoras, Bourges Festival, Akousma, IOU Theatre and the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation) and released on labels worldwide including Audiobulb (UK), empreintes DIGITales (Québec), Crónica (Portugal), Signature (France), Eilean (France) and LINE (USA).

I care if you listen calls the music of **Fredrick Gifford** (b. 1972) “a world of characters and colors that explode from the stage.” His works explore different kinds of openness to create pieces that are never the same twice. He has received commissions and grants from international institutions and his music has been performed in concerts, festivals and radio broadcasts in Europe, Asia and the Americas. His music has been recorded by Numérica (2012), Hasco Duo (2014), Mabel Kwan (2015) and Ben Melsky and Ensemble Dal Niente (2019) and published by Tetractys (UK). www.fredrickgifford.info

Ted Hearne (b.1982, Chicago) is a composer, singer, bandleader and recording artist. He creates multi-dimensional works that are challenging, personal and rooted in a spirit of inquiry.

The New York Times has praised Mr. Hearne for his “tough edge and wildness of spirit,” and “topical, politically sharp-edged works.” *Pitchfork* called Hearne’s work “some of the most expressive socially engaged music in recent memory—from any genre,” and Alex Ross wrote in *The New Yorker* that Hearne’s music “holds up as a complex mirror image of an information-saturated, mass-surveillance world, and remains staggering in its impact.”

Hearne’s *Sound From the Bench*, a work for choir, electric guitars and drums about corporate personhood setting texts from US Supreme Court oral arguments, was a finalist for the 2018 Pulitzer Prize. *Place*, Hearne’s work written with poet Saul Williams and director Patricia McGregor, was nominated for two 2021 Grammy Awards and named a finalist for the 2021 Pulitzer Prize.

Ted’s ongoing collaboration with legendary musician Erykah Badu pairs new music with arrangements of Badu’s works for orchestra, most recently presented with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. His album *The Source* sets the words of former US Army Private Chelsea Manning

alongside classified documents from US Department of Defense cables that she was responsible for leaking to Julian Assange and WikiLeaks. *The New York Times* called *The Source* “a 21st Century masterpiece.”

Upcoming collaborations include a new work with poet Dorothea Lasky to be presented at Carnegie Hall, a new theatrical piece for Komische Oper Berlin and a new orchestral project with performance artist and singer-songwriter Taylor Mac. www.tedhearne.com

Nathalie Joachim (b. December 12, 1983) is a Grammy nominated flutist, composer and vocalist. The Brooklyn born Haitian American artist is hailed for being “a fresh and invigorating cross-cultural voice.” (*The Nation*). She is co-founder of the critically acclaimed urban art pop duo, Flutronix, and comfortably navigates everything from classical to indie-rock, all while advocating for social change and cultural awareness. Her authenticity has gained her the reputation of being “powerful and unpretentious.” (*The New York Times*)

As a composer, she is regularly commissioned to write for instrumental and vocal artists, dance, and interdisciplinary theater, each highlighting her unique electroacoustic style. Upcoming works include *Discourse*, an evening-length performance, community engagement and social change initiative commissioned by Carolina Performing Arts; new solo instrumental works for cellist Seth Parker Woods and violinist Yvonne Lam; and larger scale chamber works for So Percussion, Lorelei Ensemble and Duo Noire. *Fanm d’Ayiti*, Joachim’s evening-length work for flute, voice, string quartet and electronics, celebrates Haitian female artists and Joachim’s heritage. Grammy-nominated for Best World Music Album, the work is currently touring with Spektral Quartet, and is available on New Amsterdam Records.

Ms. Joachim is a 2020 United States Artist Fellow; Director of Contemporary Chamber Music at the Perlman Music Program and a guest teaching artist for The Juilliard-Nord Anglia Performing Arts Programme; holds rotating faculty positions at Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity and the Bang On A Can Summer Music Institute; and is the former flutist of contemporary chamber ensemble Eighth Blackbird.

About the Composers *continued*

Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson was principal conductor and Coordinator of Performance Activities at the Center for Black Music Research in Chicago. Mr. Perkinson (1932–2004) was an innovative American composer whose interests spanned the worlds of jazz, dance, pop, film, television, and classical music, and was one of the nation's foremost composers and conductors. He studied composition at the Manhattan School of Music and Princeton University; and he studied conducting at the Berkshire Music Center, at the Salzburg Mozarteum, and with Franco Ferrara and Dean Dixon. From 1965 to 1970, he was co-founder and associate conductor for the Symphony of the New World and was its acting music director during the 1972-73 season. He appeared as guest conductor with many orchestras around the world and served as music director for the Alvin Ailey Dance Company, Dance Theatre of Harlem, and for productions at the American Theatre Lab, the Denver Center for the Performing Arts, and the Goodman Theatre. He composed and conducted scores for numerous award-winning theatrical, television, and documentary films.

Pierre Alexandre Tremblay (b. Montréal, 1975) is a Canadian composer and an improviser on bass guitar and sound processing devices, in solo and within various ensembles. He is a member of the London-based collective Loop, and his music is also released on Empreintes DIGITALes and Ora. He formally studied composition with Michel Tétréault, Marcelle Deschênes and Jonty Harrison, bass guitar with Jean-Guy Larin, Sylvain Bolduc and Michel Donato, analysis with Michel Longtin and Stéphane Roy, studio technique with Francis Dhomont, Robert Normandeau and Jean Piché. Pierre Alexandre is Professor in Composition and Improvisation at the University of Huddersfield (UK). He previously worked in popular music as producer and bassist, and has a keen interest for creative coding. He enjoys spending time with his family, drinking oolong tea, gazing at dictionaries, reading prose and taking long walks. As a founding member of the no-tv collective, he does not own a working television set. www.pierrealalexandretremblay.com

Connecting Artists to the Community

Seth Parker Woods will take part in a discussion at the Upper Valley Music Center. He will also participate in a Q&A with the audience following his performance at the Hop.

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