

Sunday | March 5 | 3pm
Calderwood Studio at GBH Boston

FULL PROGRAM BOOK
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Lawrence Brownlee tenor
Kevin Miller piano

Rising

Robert Lee Owens III
Texts: Langston Hughes

Desire, Op. 13
Desire
Dream
Juliet
Man

Jeremiah Evans

April Rain Song (Langston Hughes)
Lost Illusions (Georgia Douglas Johnson)
Southern Mansion (Arna Bontemps)

Robert Lee Owens III
Texts: Langston Hughes

Silver Rain, Op. 11
In Time of Silver Rain
Fulfillment
Night Song
Silence
Carolina Cabin
Songs
Sleep

Margaret Bonds
Texts: Langston Hughes

Songs of the Seasons
Poème d'Automne
Winter Moon
Young Love in Spring
Summer Storm

INTERMISSION

Carlos Simon

Vocalise I

Jasmine Barnes

Peace (Georgia Douglas Johnson)
Invocation (Claude McKay as Eli Edwards)

Brandon Spencer

I Know My Soul (Claude McKay)
The Dance of Love (Countee Cullen)

Continued

Carlos Simon

Vocalise II

Damien Sneed

Texts: James Weldon Johnson

Beauty that Is Never Old

The Gift to Sing

To America

Shawn E. Okpeholo

Text: Claude McKay

Romance

Carlos Simon

Vocalise III

Joel Thompson

Supplication (Joseph Seamon Cotter, Jr.)

Compensation (Paul Laurence Dunbar)

My People (Langston Hughes)

Today's program will run approximately two hours,
including a 15-minute intermission.

2022/23 Season Sponsors **Amy & Joshua Boger**

Celebrity Series of Boston is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

ARTIST STATEMENT

“These past years have been a trial, both for humanity as a whole, and the African-American population here in the United States. But through all these many challenges we have faced, I have also seen moments of strength, inspiration, hope, and great beauty. It is those themes of uplift, elevation, and rebirth that we have tried to focus on with this new project Rising, taking poems from the giants of the Harlem Renaissance, and working with some of today’s most talented African-American composers, to create something that speaks not just to our struggles, but to our triumphs.”

- Lawrence Brownlee

Lawrence Brownlee tenor

Lawrence Brownlee (tenor) is a leading figure in opera, both as a singer on the world's top stages, and as a voice for activism and diversity in the industry. Captivating audiences and critics around the globe, he has been hailed as “an international star in the bel canto operatic repertory” (*New York Times*), “one of the world's leading bel canto stars” (*The Guardian*), and “one of the most in-demand opera singers in the world today” (NPR).

In January 2023, Brownlee performed a program with longtime friend, collaborator, and fellow Rossini expert Michael Spyres titled *Amici e Rivali* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. His newest recital program premieres today in Boston, featuring newly commissioned songs with texts drawn from great Black writers of the Harlem Renaissance. The program will also be performed at Carnegie Hall, the Kimmel Center, and the Schwartz Center for the Performing Arts at Emory University. This past September, he made his role debut as Rodrigo in Rossini's *Otello* as part of Opera Philadelphia's Festival O22. In November, Brownlee returned to Lyric Opera of Chicago for the title role of *Le comte Ory*, and as Elvino in Bellini's *La Sonnambula* at Teatro Real in Madrid in December. Brownlee performed one of his signature Rossini roles as Count Almaviva in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden last month. Brownlee's season ends with his return to the Metropolitan Opera as Tamino in a new production of *Die Zauberflöte*.

Amidst the challenges of COVID-19, Brownlee emerged as a pivotal voice in classical music's shift toward digital programming and the resurgence of conversations around racial justice. A passionate advocate for diversity initiatives, Mr. Brownlee works with companies and engages civic organizations in the cities he visits to create programs and experiences seeking to expand opera audiences. His critically-acclaimed solo recital program *Cycles of My Being*, a song cycle that centers on the black male experience in America today, has toured extensively, including performances at Opera Philadelphia, Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, and virtual broadcasts throughout 2020. Following the successful *Lawrence Brownlee and Friends* concert at Lyric Opera of Chicago in 2019, Brownlee performed *Giving Voice* at Houston Grand Opera, a concert created to celebrate Houston's diverse community, and reprised his concert at Lyric with the virtual performance of *Lawrence Brownlee and Friends: The Next Chapter in July 2020*.

In May 2020, Brownlee launched *The Sitdown with LB*, a weekly Facebook Live series exploring the experience of being an African-American opera singer. The series featured Brownlee in conversation with renowned artists like George Shirley, Denyce Graves, Martina Arroyo, J'Nai Bridges, Angel Blue, and others. In 2021 Brownlee expanded the series to include a segment titled “Inside the Industry” where he shifted the focus to a behind-the-scenes look at the opera industry, speaking with leaders such as Diane Zola (Metropolitan Opera), Francesca Zambello (Glimmerglass and Washington National Opera), Anthony Tommasini (New York Times), and Matthew Horner (IMG Artists).

Brownlee is the fourth of six children and first discovered music when he learned to play bass, drums, and piano at his family's church in Hubbard, Ohio. He was awarded a Master of Music degree from Indiana University and went on to win a Grand Prize in the 2001 Metropolitan Opera National Council auditions. In October 2019, he had the distinct honor of singing at Jessye Norman's funeral in her hometown of Augusta, Georgia.

Kevin J. Miller piano

American pianist and collaborator Kevin J. Miller is acclaimed for his dynamically artful performances. Recent collaborations include recitals with international tenor Lawrence Brownlee at Carnegie Hall and Houston Grand Opera, countertenor John Holiday at the Kennedy Center and the Barbican in London, Joseph Calleja and Nadine Sierra at the Supreme Court of the United States, as well as an appearance with Mr. Calleja on NPR's Tiny Desk Concert series. Mr. Miller prepared soprano Jessye Norman for performances of Laura Karpman's production of *Ask Your Mama*, which was performed at Carnegie Hall. He also collaborated with the acclaimed countertenor, David Daniels, in a recital at the Glimmerglass Festival. He can be heard on piano on the recording *Been in da Storm So Long*, which features baritone Kenneth Overton.

This New York native has been on the fast track to success since his days as a student at the Boys Choir of Harlem. Beginning his musical studies at age eight, Mr. Miller was a featured soprano soloist, most notably in Vivaldi's *Gloria* and Lake George Opera Association's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. While a student at the Boys Choir of Harlem, he studied piano with the late conductor and pianist Warren Wilson. It was also during these years that Mr. Miller began his work as an accompanist, having accompanied the choir on its tours of Europe, Israel, Austria, and Japan.

Mr. Miller studied at the Mannes College of Music, where he received a Bachelor of Music degree in Piano. He continued his studies at the University of Michigan School of Music, where he received both a Master of Music degree and the Artist Diploma in Collaborative Piano under the tutelage of Martin Katz.

In addition to his formal studies, Mr. Miller has been a participant in some of the country's most prestigious festivals and young artist apprenticeships that include the Tanglewood Music Center, Aspen Summer Music Festival, the Cleveland Art Song Festival, San Francisco Opera's Merola Opera Program, Washington National Opera's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program, and the Glimmerglass Festival. Upon completion of his apprenticeship at Glimmerglass, he was invited to serve as a vocal coach there.

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performance?
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