
LINCOLN CENTER PRESENTS

LEGACIES OF SAN JUAN HILL FESTIVAL

SAN JUAN HILL: *A NEW YORK STORY*

By Etienne Charles

Featuring the University of Miami Frost Symphony Orchestra under the direction of
Maestro Gerard Schwarz

OCTOBER 23, 2025 AT 7:30 PM

ALICE TULLY HALL

Approximate run time: 80 minutes, with no intermission

Commissioned by Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts

ETIENNE CHARLES (b. 1983)

San Juan Hill: A New York Story (2022)

Lenape

Where Two or More are Gathered

Zora & Percy

Swing Culture

The Destroyer

Riot 1905

Negro Enchantress — The Story of Hannah Elias

Charleston at the Jungles

Urban Removal — 1949–1959

House Rent Party

ETIENNE CHARLES Composer, Trumpet & Percussion

CREOLE SOUL

Godwin Louis Alto & Soprano Saxophones

Tori Trinity Flute

Christian Sands Piano

Alex Wintz Guitar

Lino Piquero Bueno Bass

Brenten Handfield Drums

SPECIAL GUESTS

DJ Logic Turntables

Eljon Wardally, Carl Hancock Rux Spoken Word

CREATIVE TEAM

Maya Cozier Film Director

Bayeté Ross Smith 3D Media Artist

Andrew Grant Lighting Design

Marc Urselli Sound Design

Hollis King Photography

Wicked GF (Gary Fritz) Graffiti Artist

Julia Foulkes Historian

PRODUCTION TEAM

Joanna Trebelhorn Associate Producer

Billy Banks Stage Manager

Special thanks to Lana Turner, Mario Borrero, Cal Jones, Kamau Adilifu, Leah C. Johnson, Rasheed Ali, Ray Matias, Hilma Carter, Maxine Gordon, Robin DG Kelley, Cliff Matias, and Melanie Punter for sharing their stories and personal histories about the San Juan Hill neighborhood.

Live audio description by Eddie Maisonet

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University of Miami**

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Frost Symphony Orchestra

Gerard Schwarz,
Music Director
Yun Xuan Cao,
Associate Conductor

Flute

Chi Ting, *principal*
Abrielle Scott
Rodrigo Rodriguez

Oboe

Alexis Porcaro, *principal*
Ellen Dahlstrom
Daniel Rodriguez

Clarinet

Santiago Oviedo Reina,
principal
Zih Syuan Hsiang
Gabriel Vaca

Bassoon

Lilian Vo, *principal*
Aaron Lanning
Benjamin Eisenberg

Horn

Judeny LeBron, *principal*
Elliott Fus
Joe Morrione
Taylor Bowen-Longino

Trumpet

Gabriel Gutierrez, *principal*
Stefan Filip
Amy Batchelder

Trombone

Thomas McKee, *principal*
Jianlin Sha
Ben McLaughlin

Tuba

James Knight, *principal*

Percussion

Mingyu Son, *co-principal*
Yeonju You
Zach Gutierrez *co-principal*
Anna Dunford
Karl Lee

Harp

Morgan Short, *principal*

Violin I

Angela Wang, *concertmaster*
Haoge Wang,
asst. concertmaster
Justin Kinchen,
assoc. concertmaster
William Ryan
Angela Ramirez
Erika Liu
Naeun Ju
Georgia Burt
Xinwen Chen
Tiffany Lim
Raveena Cherry
Andrea Ramirez-Salazar
Alex Cameron
Ashley Wang

Violin II

Jiaqi Yu, *principal*
Nicholas Whitely
Sansa Wang
Angelina Santana-Herrera
Alyssa Lucente
Misha Grossman

Xiaomeng Ma
Lilian Franqui
Elena Ventura
Jose Della Casa
Yoanna Joseph
Ian Loo

Viola

Alex D'Amico, *principal*
Miguel Misa
Seongwoo Jeong
Haixiang Ge
Angie Bolivar
Eddy Graul
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Ana-Sofia Canchola
Marcos Ikino
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Cello

Arielle Mack, *principal*
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ABOUT SAN JUAN HILL: A NEW YORK STORY

BY MARK BURFORD

When Trinidadian trumpeter Etienne Charles was commissioned by Lincoln Center to write a piece for him, the New York Philharmonic, and his jazz sextet Creole Soul — his first orchestral composition — he had a deep reservoir of musical expertise from which to draw. He also knew the story that he wanted to tell.

Born in Port of Spain in 1983, Charles comes from a long line of musicians who steeped him in West African drumming, calypso, brass bands, and jazz. Shadowing his father, a member of an elite steelband and the owner of an extensive record collection, only piqued his curiosity further. When Etienne was ten, an uncle gave him his first trumpet, and, having honed his chops in school ensembles, he came to the United States as a teenager to throw himself fully into jazz, first at the Berklee College of Music and then at Florida State University, where he was closely mentored by pianist Marcus Roberts.

Today, Charles is on the jazz faculty at the University of Miami and earns international plaudits for his sumptuous tone, his creativity as an improviser, and his vision as a bandleader. His discography includes folk-influenced early albums and subsequent projects, like his 2016 album *San Jose Suite*, that explore historically resonant places shaped by colonialism and migration. For his 2022 composition *Greenwood*, which memorialized the Black Oklahoma neighborhood destroyed by a notorious 1921 race massacre, Charles drove to Tulsa to conduct research and interviews, and started writing the piece in a local jazz club.

While earning his master's from The Juilliard School, Charles studied orchestration with jazz composer Richard DeRosa, which sent him down a rabbit hole of close study of Johnny Mandel, Quincy Jones, and other arrangers from the worlds of film and pop. His first exposure to large ensemble sound through immersion in competitive steelbands, which can include as many as 100 players, was similarly formative. "I come from a culture of arrangers," says Charles, who grew up observing Lennox "Boogsie" Sharpe, Rachel Palmer, Clive Bradley, and other musicians whose stunningly intricate steelpan arrangements made them living legends back home. It is this wide-ranging experience, complemented by the expansion of Creole Soul through added flute, turntables, and spoken word, that Charles brought to the composition of San Juan Hill: *A New York Story*, premiered in 2022 with the New York Philharmonic. Tonight, the piece is heard in its second-ever performance—by the University of Miami's Frost Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Gerard Schwarz—as part of Lincoln Center's Legacies of San Juan Hill Festival.

The work originated at the intersection of Charles's interests in music, migration, and historical research. The seed was planted in 2007 at his Upper West Side apartment, where Jamaican pianist Monty Alexander casually observed that the music of Thelonious Monk "has a Caribbean feel to it." Charles began to connect the dots after reading about Monk's childhood relocation from North Carolina to San Juan Hill, the Manhattan neighborhood once bounded by West 60th and 64th Streets, to the south and north, and West End and Amsterdam Avenues, to the west and east. Though predominated by Black southerners at the turn of the 20th century, it was also home to a mix of Cuban, Puerto Rican, West Indian, Italian, Irish, and Jewish New Yorkers living symbiotically, though often turbulently. The ethnic rivalry between the Sharks and the Jets in *West Side Story*, Leonard Bernstein's 1957 musical set in the waning days of San Juan Hill, recalls some of this history. The 1949 Housing Act gave a green light to "slum clearance" and "urban renewal" projects in cities across the country, including the one that bulldozed San Juan Hill and initiated the construction of Lincoln Center in May 1959.

A committed storyteller, Charles has crafted a work that looks both inward and outward, backward and forward. He conjures an intimate yet dynamic community whose residents gathered in churches, drum circles, and street gangs (that considered themselves "social clubs") while also resurrecting a more extended, though faded, history of Black Manhattan. The latter stretches back to the 19th century, encompassing serially displaced communities in Wall Street, Five Points, Little Africa (now Little Italy), the Tenderloin, and San Juan Hill that over time drifted uptown to Harlem.

Charles ultimately hopes to illuminate the tension between precarity and perseverance that characterizes marginalized communities like San Juan Hill. "You can't put those bricks back together. You can't nail that wood back together," he says. "But what you can do is show the legacy of people who have been moved all over New York, yet thrive and create."

THE WORK AT A GLANCE

San Juan Hill: *A New York Story* unfolds as a series of vignettes that summon the history, social life, and untold stories of a culturally important, if bygone, Manhattan neighborhood. Experienced in its entirety, the work calls to mind a double-sided album. Sketching the history of the area in broad strokes, "Side A" spotlights Creole Soul in a set bookended by a musical land acknowledgement of the indigenous Lenape and a final section depicting the duality of development and destruction through unsettled music that hovers ambiguously between coming apart and stubbornly holding together. The sound palette of the band is on full display ranging from the flute's nostalgic reverie, to tenor saxophone oratory over polyrhythmic percussion, to in-the-pocket swing driven by a propulsive walking bass.

The orchestra joins for "Side B," opening with "Riot 1905," which introduces new instrumental colors through clarinet and bassoon dialogue, dissonant brass, and xylophone. The movement remembers the recurring clashes between neighborhood occupants to the west and white New Yorkers to the east of what the composer calls the "Mason-Dixon line" of Amsterdam Avenue. San Juan Hill: *A New York Story* is a piece about place, but, even more, it is about people. "Zora & Percy" commemorates the mad love affair between Columbia graduate student Percy Punter and Zora Neale Hurston, a San Juan Hill resident in the 1930s who "tried to embalm all the tenderness of my passion for him" in her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Featuring lush, expressive, and at times enigmatic music for the orchestra backing Charles's solo trumpet, "The Negro Enchantress" is a meditation on the captivating beauty and soap opera intrigue of Hannah Elias, the Tenderloin sex worker who became the world's richest Black woman.

The composer pays homage to jazz musicians who called the neighborhood home, including James P. Johnson, Benny Carter, Ram Ramirez, and Herbie Nichols. The inner movements "Charleston at the Jungles" and "Urban Removal" showcase the orchestra through historically disparate idioms, the former leaning toward a big band sound with hints of stride piano and the latter more modernist in style. Charles's score is heard in counterpoint with video projection that includes archival footage and voiceover testimony highlighting the convergences and collective rituals that form and sustain communities. San Juan Hill: *A New York Story* concludes with "House Rent Party," an exuberant romp drawing on dance music ranging from the Antillean waltz to the Charleston and swing, to mambo and calypso, to disco and hip-hop. As Charles says, "I wanted to end it with joy because the antithesis of removal is survival."

Mark Burford, R.P. Wollenberg Professor of Music at Reed College; the author of Mahalia Jackson and the Black Gospel Field, he writes about African American popular music, European concert music, and opera.

IN THE COMPOSER'S WORDS

As a child, my dad would always take things apart and put them back together to see what was on the inside. When I think about how I do research for my own projects, it's kind of the same thing. I want to know what is on the inside because that is where I can create compositional nuance. The story told about Black New York is basically limited to Harlem. San Juan Hill: *A New York Story* is a multimedia work that immerses listeners in the culture of the neighborhood and in the influences on Black New York, whether it's Gullah people, people from the South, people from the Caribbean, or people from West Africa. From the earliest of the migrations, there were different perspectives that came together, and that's why New York is such a magical place.

In this piece, there is literally a new orchestra, where Creole Soul is a section, comparable to woodwind, string, and percussion sections. As the son of a DJ, I didn't want to stop at 1959. DJ Logic is in my band because turntable culture is a statement in itself about another form of urban removal: when they stopped public school music education. That is really what caused turntable culture, drum machine culture, and hip-hop as we know it. There have been multifaceted challenges, but people have always had multifaceted responses, ways of taking what is given and turning it into beauty, turning it into joy, and turning it into things we can build our communities with.

— Etienne Charles

MEET THE ARTISTS

PHOTO CREDIT: LAWRENCE SUMILONG



ETIENNE CHARLES, *Composer, Trumpet, Percussion*

Trinidad-born Etienne Charles is a performer, composer, and storyteller continuously searching for untold stories and sounds with which to tell them. His lush trumpet sound, varied compositional textures, and pulsating percussive grooves enable him to invoke trance, soothing and exciting listeners while referencing controversial subjects. A 2015 Guggenheim Fellow and 2022 Creative Capital Awardee, he researches his compositions by traveling to the regions on which he is focused, meeting with musicians and cultural leaders, then observing and participating in rituals to be fully immersed in the culture. As an Afro-descendant, his work connects the diaspora and draws lines to regions at the roots of migrations. Highlighting marginalized communities has been his mission, evident in projects such as *Carnival: The Sound of a People, Vol. I*; *San Jose Suite*; *Creole Soul*; and *Folklore*. His concerts engage, enlighten, and enrich audiences with energized, multidisciplinary performance using original composition, thematic improvisation, dance, short films, and spoken word to create a holistic experience. Etienne Charles has been featured as a bandleader at major festivals, including the Newport Jazz Festival and Monterey Jazz Festival, and he is an associate professor of studio music and jazz at the University of Miami.

Creole Soul is a band of global citizens that explores grooves, song forms, and rituals of the Caribbean and greater African Diaspora through original compositions and improvisation. Through the themes of the compositions, the group's performances spark thought, newfound interest, and sometimes debate regarding historical events and their effects on society. The goal is engagement with audiences — on spiritual, intellectual, and primal levels. The ensemble is made up of interpreters and improvisers who, in addition to their adept musicianship, are connected to the immigrant experience and with the cultures from whence their families came. Creole Soul can be heard recorded on *Carnival: The Sound of a People, Vol. I*, by Etienne Charles. As a group these musicians have been featured at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Koerner Hall, Monterey Jazz Festival, Newport Jazz Festival, Atlanta Jazz Festival, and Java Jazz Festival (in Indonesia). The members have performed with a plethora of luminaries of the idiom, including Wynton Marsalis, Pat Metheny, Herbie Hancock, Madonna, Roberta Flack, and SFJAZZ Collective.

PHOTO CREDIT: BEN VANHOUTEN



GERARD SCHWARZ, *conductor*

Internationally recognized for his moving performances, innovative programming and extensive catalogue of recordings, American conductor Gerard Schwarz serves as Music Director of the All-Star Orchestra, Eastern Music Festival, Palm Beach Symphony and Mozart Orchestra of New York, and is Conductor Laureate of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra and Conductor Emeritus of the Mostly Mozart Festival. He is Distinguished Professor of Music;

Conducting and Orchestral Studies of the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami, and Music Director of the Frost Symphony Orchestra. Schwarz began his professional career as co-principal trumpet of the New York Philharmonic and has held Music Director positions with the Mostly Mozart Festival, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and New York Chamber Symphony. As a guest conductor, he has worked with many of the world's finest orchestras and has led the San Francisco, Washington National and Seattle Opera companies on many occasions. He is also a gifted composer and arranger with an extensive catalogue of works that have been premiered by ensembles across the United States, Europe and Korea. In his nearly five decades as a respected classical musician and conductor, Schwarz has received hundreds of honors and accolades including Emmy Awards, GRAMMY nominations, ASCAP Awards and the Ditson Conductor's Award.

FROST SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Frost School of Music at the University of Miami

As the premiere classical music ensemble of the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami, the Frost Symphony Orchestra continues to impress audiences and critics alike with its vibrant, world-class performances, under the direction of acclaimed conductor and Distinguished Professor of Music Gerard Schwarz. The orchestra is comprised of 80 to 100 gifted undergraduate and graduate student musicians, who entertain audiences across the U.S. with a repertoire that ranges from the greatest works of the traditional classical music canon to original pieces by acclaimed contemporary composers. Recently, the ensemble performed for a live recording of Beethoven's 9th Symphony and a multimedia presentation of Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition," both of which were broadcast on more than 200 PBS stations nationwide. *South Florida Classical Review* has praised the Frost Symphony Orchestra's "fully professional level" of performance, noting "not a single weakness in any section." Reviewers have highlighted the ensemble's "consistently excellent playing," and "rich string sonority, vibrant winds."

LEGACIES OF SAN JUAN HILL

San Juan Hill, and the broader Lincoln Square neighborhood of which it was a part, was a culturally diverse, densely populated, and largely working-class community. Many iconic and influential figures lived there over the years, and their contributions to scholarship, music and art, journalism, social work, and other fields still resonate today. Jazz legends including James P. Johnson, Benny Carter, and Thelonious Monk performed and honed their respective stride piano, swing, and bebop styles. Vaudeville acts, dramatic plays, and musicals enlivened stages. Residents danced “The Charleston,” and the musical *Runnin’ Wild* catapulted the popular dance style to international fame. Mambo and other Afro-Caribbean forms were a staple of the area. All this and more grew out of the vibrant theaters, clubs, and dancehalls that lined San Juan Hill and historic Lincoln Square.

In the 1950s, the area was targeted for “urban renewal”. The Lincoln Square Development Plan, one of many such programs implemented across the country at the time, displaced more than 7,000 families and 800 businesses, demolished hundreds of buildings, and replaced them with a series of superblocks, including Fordham University, Lincoln Towers, and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

The Legacies of San Juan Hill initiative was created to uplift the complex history, communities, and cultural legacy of this area through artistic programming, commissions, discussions, scholarship, and education.

The Legacies of San Juan Hill Festival is a multi-day festival celebrating the artistic legacy of this historic New York City neighborhood. Through live performance, film, interactive workshops, and talks, the festival uplifts the music, theater, and dance that thrived in San Juan Hill, shines a light on the artists who created there, and explores the ongoing cultural impact of their work. The festival offers audiences an experience of the artistry that transformed the area in the first half of the 20th century and continues to influence artistic work being made today—connecting the past to the future in a joyous celebration.

LEGACIES OF SAN JUAN HILL FESTIVAL

OCTOBER 14–29, 2025

San Juan Hill: Manhattan's Lost Neighborhood

A film by Stanley Nelson

Tuesday, October 14

Francesca Beale Theater, Film at Lincoln Center

San Juan Hill: Manhattan's Lost Neighborhood

A film by Stanley Nelson

Saturday, October 18

Relaxed virtual screening

San Juan Hill: A New York Story

By Etienne Charles

Featuring University of Miami Frost Symphony Orchestra
under the direction of Maestro Gerard Schwarz

Thursday, October 23

Alice Tully Hall

Dennis Hernández y su Conjunto Amalia

Part of ¡VAYA!

Friday, October 24

David Rubenstein Atrium

The Music of James P. Johnson

By Aaron Diehl

Saturday, October 25

Alice Tully Hall

Who is Thelonious Monk?

Presented by Jazz at Lincoln Center

Part of Lincoln Center's Open House

Sunday, October 26

Wu Tsai Theater, David Geffen Hall

A Nuyorican Tale

By Carlos Henriquez Nonet

Tuesday, October 28–Wednesday, October 29

Dizzy's Club, Jazz at Lincoln Center

Learn more about the history of San Juan Hill at LincolnCenter.org/SanJuanHill.

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