



CHRISTOPHER KOELSCH, SEBASTIAN PAUL AND MARYBELLE MUSCO PRESIDENT AND CEO  
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PRESENTS

# Russell Thomas in Recital

with

## Members of the LA Opera Orchestra

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### **Four Romantic Love Songs**

Music by Adolphus Hailstork (b. 1941);  
New orchestration by Adolphus Hailstork  
commissioned by LA Opera

My Heart to Thy Heart  
Invitation to Love  
Longing  
Goodnight

Text by Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906)

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### **Nightsongs**

Music by H. Leslie Adams (b. 1932)  
Arranged by Friedrich Heinrich Kern

Prayer  
Drums of Tragedy  
The Heart of a Woman  
Night Song  
Sence You Went Away  
Creole Girl

Text by Langston Hughes (1902-1967)  
Text by Langston Hughes  
Text by Georgia Douglas Johnson (1880-1966)  
Text by Clarissa M. Scott Delany (1901-1927)  
Text by James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938)  
Text by Leslie Morgan Collins (1914-2014)

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### INTERMISSION

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### **To Harlem, with Love \***

Music by Dave Ragland (b. 1978)

Beauty Never Old  
The Dance of Love  
Sonnet 2  
Remember Not  
Length of Moon

Text by James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938)  
Text by Countee Cullen (1903-1946)  
Text by Gwendolyn Bennett (1902-1981)  
Text by Helene Johnson (1906-1995)  
Text by Arna Bontemps (1902-1973)

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### **Annunciation \***

Music by Damien Geter (b. 1980)  
Conducted by Lucas Nogara

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Text by Joshua Banbury (b. 1995)

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### **Love and Light \***

Music by Jasmine Barnes (b. 1991)

Shadow Play  
Gathering Parts  
Ain't I a Man?

Text by Deborah D.E.E.P Mouton (b. 1985)

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\* world premieres commissioned by Russell Thomas

LA Opera Orchestra generously underwritten by **Terri and Jerry Kohl**  
LA Opera's 2022/23 season generously underwritten by **GRoW @ Annenberg**  
Piano provided by **Yamaha, Official Piano of LA Opera**

Stage Manager: Barbara Donner      Supertitles created and cued by Linda Zoolalian

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## PROGRAM

*"My goal for this program was to expand the vocal chamber repertoire by Black composers, to increase representation in this corner of recital music. I commissioned texts that focus on themes close to my own heart: queer sensuality, romance and the beauty of the Black male form. Damien Geter, Jasmine Barnes and Dave Ragland have created moving new works that celebrate the Black experience across gender, sexuality and religious lines." —Russell Thomas*

## ARTISTS

### Russell Thomas

TENOR



**From:** Miami, Florida.

**LA Opera:** Pollione in *Norma* (2015, debut); Cavaradossi in *Tosca* (2017); Titus in *The Clemency of Titus* (2019); title role in *Oedipus Rex* (2020); Signature Recital (2021); Radames in *Aida* (2022). Upcoming: title role in *Otello* (2023); Calaf in *Turandot* (2024); *Fire and Blue Sky* (2024). He has been Artist in Residence since 2020.

**About:** His engagements for the

2022/23 season include three Verdi title roles in major international venues, appearing as Ernani at Lyric Opera of Chicago, as Don Carlo at the Metropolitan Opera, and as Otello at LA Opera. In December, he performed another Verdi leading role, Don Alvaro in *La Forza del Destino*, for his highly anticipated Paris Opera debut, and in January he joined conductor James Conlon for the Verdi *Requiem* at the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. The season's upcoming engagements include a return to the Royal Opera House Covent Garden as Calaf in *Turandot*, a return to San Francisco Opera in a concert celebrating that company's 100th anniversary, and a tour with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, singing Otello opposite Renée Fleming at Carnegie Hall, Festspielhaus Baden-Baden, and further European locations to be announced.

Acclaimed for his "voice of intrinsic warmth and refined sense of style" (*Opera News*), Mr. Thomas has enjoyed a string of operatic triumphs in key Verdi roles, including debuts as Otello at Canadian Opera Company and Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Manrico in *Il Trovatore* at the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, Radames in *Aida* at Houston Grand Opera, Stiffelio at Opera Frankfurt, and Don Alvaro in *La Forza del Destino* at Deutsche Oper Berlin. An alumnus of the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Program, he recently returned there as Rodolfo in *La Bohème*. Other important appearances include Cavaradossi in *Tosca* at Lyric Opera of Chicago, Idomeneo at the Salzburg Festival, Roberto Devereux at San Francisco Opera, Florestan in *Fidelio* at San Francisco Opera and Cincinnati Opera, and Adorno in *Simon Boccanegra* at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden. (RussellThomasTenor.com)

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generously underwritten  
by **Terri and Jerry Kohl**

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## H. Leslie Adams

COMPOSER OF *NIGHTSONGS*



**From:** Cleveland, Ohio.

**About:** H. Leslie Adams has composed in numerous classical genres including orchestral music, chamber music and opera, and he is best known for his art songs and choral compositions. He has composed over 40 songs for solo voice, including four song cycles. His dramatic works include the operas *Blake*, completed in 1985, and *Slaves*, completed in 2005. His works have been performed by the Prague Radio

Symphony, Iceland Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, Indianapolis Symphony and New York City Opera, among others. He has been commissioned by the Cleveland Orchestra, Ohio Chamber Orchestra and Cleveland Chamber Symphony, among others. He earned degrees from Oberlin College, Long Beach State University and Ohio State University. In December, he was honored by the city of Cleveland on the occasion of his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. One of his earliest works, *Nightsongs* was begun in 1955, while he was a student at Oberlin, and premiered in 1961 in New York. It is his most frequently performed work. (HLeslieAdams.com)

## Jasmine Barnes

COMPOSER OF *LOVE AND LIGHT*



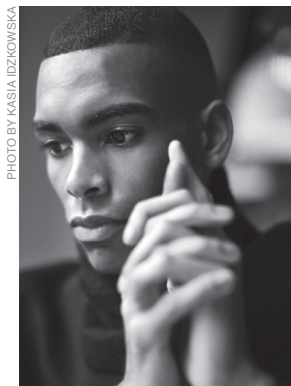
**From:** Baltimore, Maryland.

**About:** Jasmine Barnes embraces a variety of genres, formats and instrumentations, with a specialty in writing for the voice. She is composer-in-residence for American Lyric Theater, and was previously a composer fellow at Chautauqua Opera and composer-in-residence with All Classical Portland. Recent commissions include works for Washington National Opera, Bare Opera, Resonance Ensemble, Tapestry

Choir, LyricFest Philadelphia, Burleigh Music Festival, Symphony Number One, Baltimore Musicales, The Voic(ed) Project, amongst others. Upcoming premieres include an arrangement of spirituals commissioned by Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, to be performed at Carnegie Hall by soprano Karen Slack and baritone Will Liverman. Other recent commissions include *Might Call You Art* for CityMusic Cleveland, *Portraits: Douglass & Tubman* for Baltimore Choral Arts Society, *Maternità* for soprano Takesha Meshé Kizart and Anima Mundi Productions, and *I Will Follow You into the Dark* for American Lyric Theatre. (JasmineBarnesComposer.com)

## Joshua Banbury

LIBRETTIST OF *ANNUNCIATION*



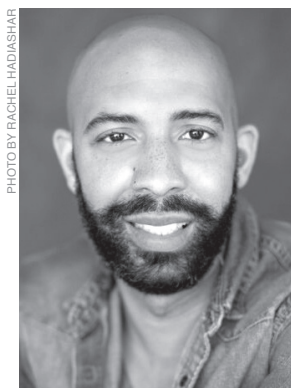
**From:** Austin, Texas.

**About:** Joshua Banbury is a vocal artist and librettist working in opera and jazz. In January, he presented a recital at the Phillips Collection with pianist Aaron Diehl. In 2022, he made his solo debut at Lincoln Center with the New York Philharmonic and the National Black Theatre. He is a fellow with the American Lyric Theatre in New York City and served as the first Julius Eastman Fellow at Looking Glass Arts in the summer of 2022.

Since graduating from The New School in 2020, he has enjoyed a blossoming career as a vocalist, appearing with Jazz at Lincoln Center, National Sawdust, Annapolis Symphony Orchestra and Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, among others. His opera libretti have been presented by Washington National Opera, American Lyric Theater, Fort Worth Opera and the Coalition for African Americans in the Performing Arts. In 2022, his ten-minute opera *The Burning Bush*, composed by Jasmine Barnes, premiered at Washington National Opera, and was celebrated as “surrealist, clever, and precisely imagined” by *The Washington Post*. (JoshuaBanbury.com)

## Damien Geter

COMPOSER OF *ANNUNCIATION*



**From:** Matoaca, Virginia.

**About:** Damien Geter infuses classical music with various styles from the Black diaspora. Recent premieres include *Cantata for a Hopeful Tomorrow* for the Washington Chorus with numerous subsequent performances nationwide, as well as *The Justice Symphony* (University of Michigan, The Washington Chorus at the Kennedy Center, upcoming at Fort Worth Opera), *Buh-roke* (Portland

Baroque Orchestra, upcoming at Seattle Symphony), *Invisible* (Opera Theater Oregon) and *String Quartet No. 1, Neo-Soul* (All Classical Portland, On-Site Opera). His large work *An African American Requiem* premiered in 2022 in partnership with Resonance Ensemble and the Oregon Symphony, with subsequent performances at the Kennedy Center. *I Said What I Said* for Imani Winds, co-commissioned by Anima Mundi Productions, Chamber Music Northwest and the Oregon Bach Festival, also premiered in 2022. His second opera, *Holy Ground*, premiered in 2022 at the Glimmerglass Festival. (DamienGeterMusic.com)

## THE CREATORS

### Adolphus Hailstork

COMPOSER OF *FOUR ROMANTIC LOVE SONGS*



**From:** Cleveland, Ohio.

**About:** Adolphus Hailstork's most recent major work, the choral requiem *A Knee on the Neck* (a tribute to George Floyd) premiered in 2022, performed by the National Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorale under conductor Piotr Gajewski with mezzo-soprano J'Nai Bridges, tenor Norman Shankle and baritone Kenneth Overton. The New York Choral Society will present the New York premiere this summer. James

Conlon conducted the premiere of his *Earthrise* at the Cincinnati May Festival and *Rise for Freedom* was premiered by the Cincinnati Opera. Other recent works include *Set Me on a Rock* (about Hurricane Katrina) for the Houston Choral Society; *Still Holding On* for the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 2019; and Symphony No. 4 ("Survive") for the Louisville Orchestra in 2022. Tenor Roderick George sang the world premiere of *Four Romantic Love Songs* at the 2012 African American Art Song Alliance. He is Professor of Music and Eminent Scholar at Old Dominion University in Norfolk. (AdolphusHailstork.com)

### Dave Ragland

COMPOSER OF *TO HARLEM, WITH LOVE*



**From:** Chattanooga, Tennessee.

**About:** Dave Ragland received an Emmy nomination for composition and music direction for Frist Art Museum's *Nick Cave: Feat. Nashville*. He received a second Emmy nomination for *I'm Troubled*, a musical collaboration with Nashville Ballet's Gerald Watson and violinist Chandler Custer. He arranged "Lift Every Voice and Sing" for tenor Lawrence Brownlee for Washington National Opera's Concert for

Inauguration Day. In Nashville Opera's first ever commission, he collaborated with librettist Mary McCallum to create *One Vote Won*, an opera commemorating the centennial of women's suffrage. In collaboration with Inversion Vocal Ensemble, shackled feet DANCE!, and Diaspora Orchestra, he premiered his opera *Steal Away* as Artist-in-Residence for OZ Arts. Additional compositional credits include works for the Nashville Symphony, Nashville Ballet, Memphis Symphony Orchestra, chatterbird, Intersection Contemporary Ensemble, and Grammy-nominated ALIAS Chamber Ensemble. (DaveRagland.com)

### Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton

LIBRETTIST OF *LOVE AND LIGHT*



**From:** Riverside, California.

**About:** Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton is an internationally known writer, educator, activist, performer and the first Black Poet Laureate of Houston, Texas. Her work has appeared in *Houston Noir* by Akashic Press (2019), *Black Girl Magic* by Haymarket Books (2019), the *Texas Observer* and *Fjords Journal*, and on such platforms as NPR, BBC, ABC, Apple News, Blavity, Upworthy, and across the

TedX circuit. Earlier this season, her play *Plumshuga: The Rise of Lauren Anderson* has its world premiere at STAGES Houston, which she also directed. Her recent play *The World's Intermission* debuted at Jones Hall in Houston in 2021. Her second book, *Black Chameleon*, will be published in March by Henry Holt & Co. For Houston Grand Opera, she wrote the libretto for composer Damien Sneed's *Marian's Song* and she created the storybook opera *Lula, the Mighty Griot*, which reinterprets one of the stories from *Black Chameleon*. (LiveLifeDeep.com)

## UP NEXT



MARCH

10

### Solomon

Conductor Harry Bicket and his sensational orchestra, The English Concert, return with another dazzling baroque masterpiece performed in concert.

LAOpera.org/Solomon



# Four Romantic Love Songs

Music by Adolphus Hailstork

Text by Paul Laurence Dunbar

## My Heart to Thy Heart

My heart to thy heart,  
My hand to thine;  
My lip to thy lips,  
Kisses are wine  
Brewed for the lover in sunshine and shade;  
Let me drink deep, then, my African maid.

Lily to lily,  
Rose unto rose;  
My love to thy love  
Tenderly grows.  
Rend not the oak and the ivy in twain,  
Nor the swart maid from her swarthier swain.

## Invitation to Love

Come when the nights are bright with stars  
Or come when the moon is mellow;  
Come when the sun his golden bars  
Drops on the hay-field yellow.  
Come in the twilight soft and gray,  
Come in the night or come in the day,  
Come, O love, whene'er you may,  
And you are welcome, welcome.

You are sweet, O Love, dear Love,  
You are soft as the nesting dove.  
Come to my heart and bring it to rest  
As the bird flies home to its welcome nest.

Come when my heart is full of grief  
Or when my heart is merry;  
Come with the falling of the leaf

Or with the redd'ning cherry.  
Come when the year's first blossom blows,  
Come when the summer gleams and glows,  
Come with the winter's drifting snows,  
And you are welcome, welcome.

## Longing

If you could sit with me beside the sea to-day,  
And whisper with me sweetest dreamings o'er and o'er;  
I think I should not find the clouds so dim and gray,  
And not so loud the waves complaining at the shore.

If you could sit with me upon the shore to-day,  
And hold my hand in yours as in the days of old,  
I think I should not mind the chill baptismal spray,  
Nor find my hand and heart and all the world so cold.

If you could walk with me upon the strand to-day,  
And tell me that my longing love had won your own,  
I think all my sad thoughts would then be put away,  
And I could give back laughter for the Ocean's moan!

## Goodnight

The lark is silent in his nest,  
The breeze is sighing in its flight,  
Sleep, Love, and peaceful be thy rest.  
Good-night, my love, good-night, good-night.

Sweet dreams attend thee in thy sleep,  
To soothe thy rest till morning's light,  
And angels round thee vigil keep.  
Good-night, my love, good-night, good-night.

Sleep well, my love, on night's dark breast,  
And ease thy soul with slumber bright;  
Be joy but thine and I am blest.  
Good-night, my love, good-night, good-night.

## LA OPERA PRODUCTION CREDITS

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## Nightsongs

Music by H. Leslie Adams

### Prayer

Text by Langston Hughes

I ask you this:  
Which way to go?  
I ask you this:  
Which sin to bear?  
Which crown to put  
Upon my hair?  
I do not know,  
Lord God,  
I do not know.

### Drums of Tragedy

Text by Langston Hughes

Beat the drums of tragedy for me.  
Beat the drums of tragedy and death.  
And let the choir sing a stormy song  
To drown out the rattle of my dying breath.  
Beat the drums of tragedy for me.  
And let the white violins whirl thin and slow,  
But blow one blaring trumpet note of sun  
To go with me to the darkness where I go.

### The Heart of a Woman

Text by Georgia Douglas Johnson

The heart of a woman goes forth with the dawn  
As a lone bird, soft winging so restlessly on.  
Afar o'er life's turrets and vales does it roam.  
In the wake of those echoes, the heart calls home.

The heart of a woman falls back with the night  
And enters some alien cage in its plight,  
And tries to forget it has dreamed of the stars  
While it breaks, breaks on the sheltering bars.

### Night Song

Text by Clarissa M. Scott Delany

The night was made for rest and sleep,  
For winds that softly sigh;  
It was not made for grief and tears;  
So then why do I cry?  
The wind that blows through leafy trees  
Is soft and warm and sweet;  
For me the night is a gracious cloak  
To hide my soul's defeat.  
Just one dark hour of shaken depths,  
Of bitter black despair  
Another day will find me brave  
And not afraid to dare!

### Sence You Went Away

Text by James Weldon Johnson

Seems lak to me de stars don't shine so bright,  
Seems lak to me de sun done loss his light,  
Seems lak to me der's nothin' goin' right,  
Sence you went away.

Seems lak to me de sky ain't half so blue,  
Seems lak to me dat ev'ything wants you,  
Seems lak to me I don't know what to do,  
Sence you went away.

Seems lak to me dat ev'ything is wrong,  
Seems lak to me de day's jes twice as long,  
Seems lak to me de bird's forgot his song,  
Sence you went away.

Seems lak to me I jes can't he'p but sigh,  
Seems lak to me ma th'oot keeps gittin' dry,  
Seems lak to me a tear stays in my eye,  
Sence you went away.

### Creole Girl

Text by Leslie Morgan Collins

When you dance, do you think of Spain,  
Purple skirts and clipping castanets, Creole Girl?  
When you laugh, do you think of France,  
Golden wine and mincing minuets, Creole Girl?  
When you sing, do you think of young America,  
Grey guns and battling bayonets?  
When you cry, do you think of Africa,  
Blue nights and casual canzonets?  
When you dance, do you think of Spain...

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## To Harlem, with Love

Music by Dave Ragland

### Beauty Never Old

Text by James Weldon Johnson

When buffeted and beaten by life's storms,  
When by the bitterness of life oppressed,  
I need no surer haven than your arms,  
I want no happier shelter than your breast.

When o'er my way there falls the sudden blight  
Of sunless days, and nights of starless skies;  
Enough for me the ever steadfast light  
I know is always shining in your eyes.  
The world, for me, and all the world can hold  
Is circled by your arms; for me there lies,  
Within the lighted shadows of your eyes,  
The only beauty that is never old.

### The Dance of Love

*Text by Countee Cullen*

All night we danced upon our windy hill,  
Your dress a cloud of tangled midnight hair,  
And love was much too much for me to wear  
My leaves; the killer roared above his kill,  
But you danced on, and when some star would spill  
Its red and white upon you whirling there,  
I sensed a hidden beauty in the air;  
Though you danced on, and my heart stood still.  
But suddenly a bit of morning crept  
Along your trembling sides of ebony;  
And I saw the tears your tired limbs had wept,  
And how your breasts heaved high, how languidly  
Your dark arms moved; I drew you close to me;  
We flung ourselves upon our hill and slept.

### Sonnet 2

*Text by Gwendolyn Bennett*

Some things are very dear to me—  
Such things as flowers bathed by rain  
Or patterns traced upon the sea  
Or crocuses where snow has lain ...  
The iridescence of a gem,  
The moon's cool opalescent light,  
Azaleas and the scent of them,  
And honeysuckles in the night.  
And many sounds are also dear,  
Like the winds that sing among the trees  
Or crickets calling from the weir  
Or negroes humming melodies.  
But dearer far than all surmise  
Are sudden teardrops in your eyes.

### Remember Not

*Text by Helene Johnson*

Remember not the promises we made  
In this same garden many moons ago.  
You must forget them. I would have it so.  
Old vows are like old flowers as they fade  
And quickly vanish in a feeble death.  
There is no reason why your hands should clutch  
At pretty yesterdays. There is not much  
Of beauty in me now. And though my breath  
Is quick, my body sentient, my heart  
Attuned to romance as before, you must  
Not, through mistaken chivalry, pretend  
To love me still. There is no mortal art  
Can overcome Time's deep, corroding rust.  
Let Love's beginning expiate Love's end.

### Length of Moon

*Text by Arna Bontemps*

And the golden hour will tick its last  
And the flame will go down in the flower.  
A briefer length of moon  
Will mark the sealine and its yellow dune.  
Then we may think of this, yet  
There will be something forgotten  
And something we should forget.  
It will be like all things we know:  
A stone will fail; a rose is sure to go.  
It will be quiet then and we may stay  
Long at the picket gate,  
But there will be less to say.

## Annunciation

*Music by Damien Geter*

*Text by Joshua Banbury*

Into my room, he reascends.  
Into my room and it begins.  
All at once. Like some fever dream.  
He comes in to engender me.  
Into my room, he reascends.  
Into me... And it begins.

See the egg that broke. See the pool of yolk.  
Morphing. Mounting. Into mortal flesh.  
Man in man. Morphing. Mounting.  
Endowed above the rest.  
See the egg that broke. See the pool of yolk.

How the fruitful form moves in mine.  
Man in man together. Limp in ecstasy divine.

Now on midnight skin lies the golden chain again  
Lapped round his sweaty nape...

"I will take you to a lake.  
Undress in the morning light.  
Leave nothing in our wake.  
Undress beloved. Let nothing remain.  
Undress beloved. Leave only your chain."

And so as sunlight burned on the lake,  
He moved in me. Ah...  
The golden chain dangled on my face.

Was I seeing things?  
Was I seeing things in this fever dream?  
May the music never end.  
Into my room, I pray he reascends.

## LYRICS

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### *Love and Light*

*Music by Jasmine Barnes*

*Text by Deborah D.E.E.P Mouton*

#### **Shadow Play**

I've mastered being the darkness.  
I've mastered hiding my light.  
Perfected the disappear  
A shadow of fear  
Not allowed to shine.  
I've mastered threat in silhouette.  
Reason to clutch their bags tight.  
Cross the street to get away  
Consumed by the rage,  
Giving in every time.  
Unable to be loved without fear of destruction.  
They won't let me hold success  
No matter how many ladders I scale.  
Indestructible soldier in a one-sided war  
Just looking for rest.  
Does that make me a shadow?  
Unbelievable ghost?  
A shadow at play, a beast locked away  
From the love I want most.  
Does that make me a shadow?  
A dangerous thief?  
Emotional prisoner with no visitors.  
They can't see me.

#### **Gathering Parts**

When I'm alone there is a light  
Behind the wall of my heart.  
Safeguards built wide and tall  
I'm all alone. Far from the fight.  
A face caught in the mirror  
All the fear put aside.  
There is love here. I can see it.  
The proof is here that God  
Smiled through his hands when he fashioned me.  
Their expectations fall away.  
Consuming rage not blinding any more.  
There is love here. I can feel it.

When I'm alone there's a peace  
I fall apart just to rebuild.

Welcome the cleansing tears  
Me and myself  
Gathering parts  
A pinhole bending the void.  
A shadow fading to man.  
There is love here. I can hear it.  
The proof is here that God poured from his soul  
When he looked at me.  
Their suspicions mute and leave  
Sweet relief. Unbridled release.  
There is love here. Can you see it?

#### **Ain't I a Man?**

My love, look close. Closer. Closer still.  
Touch my soul  
Don't believe me a shadow  
Make my heart and your hand into music.  
I need to be wanted.  
Want to be needed.  
My spirit is naked  
Open for you to see.

Lips together  
Heat turned luminescent  
Blessed midnight  
Transforming to bright eclipse  
Breaths building in tandem.  
This Black bodied brilliance  
Imperfect wonder  
Blueprint of the divine  
And ain't I a man?  
Cracking wide open.  
Ribs in percussion  
Worthy of melody?  
Ain't I a vessel?  
Sweat kissed and thirsty  
Parched for your liquor  
Bursting at every seam.  
Feel my soul.  
Tell me I'm not a shadow  
Hold me close.  
Can you feel all the warming light?  
Closer. Closer still.

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*In fond memory of **Tara Colburn**, supertitles are underwritten by **Dunard Fund USA**.*

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