

ONSTAGE

CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS AT PENN STATE

IMANI WINDS WITH SPECIAL GUEST STEFON HARRIS

underwritten by
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Chamber Music Endowment



CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

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The Center for the Performing Arts at Penn State is a proud member of Music Accord, the commissioning organization for Stefon Harris' composition *The Anatomy of a Box: a sonic painting in wood, metal, and wind*.

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Since its formation in 1997, Music Accord has commissioned more than twenty-five works through its collaborations with leading American composers, performing artists, and ensembles.

CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
AT PENN STATE

presents

IMANI WINDS

VALERIE COLEMAN, flute
TOYIN SPELLMAN-DIAZ, oboe
MARIAM ADAM, clarinet
JEFF SCOTT, French horn
MONICA ELLIS, bassoon

WITH SPECIAL GUEST

STEFON HARRIS

vibraphone and marimba

7:30 p.m. Wednesday, September 30, 2009
Schwab Auditorium

The concert includes one intermission.

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The 2009–2010 season of the Center for the Performing Arts is supported, in part, by grants from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

IMANI WINDS PROGRAM

Red Clay Mississippi Delta Valerie Coleman
(b. 1970)

Homage to Duke Jeff Scott
(b. 1967)

Quintette Jean Françaix
(1912–1997)

I. *Andante tranquilo – Allegro assai*

II. *Presto*

III. *Tema – Andante*

Var. 1: *Listesso tempo*

Var. 2: *Andantino con moto*

Lento

Vivo

Andante

IV. *Tempo di Marcia francese*

[INTERMISSION]

*The Anatomy of a Box:
a sonic painting in wood, metal, and wind* Stefon Harris
(b. 1973)

With special guest Stefon Harris, vibraphone and marimba

Commissioned by Music Accord for Imani Winds and Stefon Harris.
Co-commissioned by the Center for the Performing Arts at Penn State.

Imani Winds recordings are available on Koch International Classics.

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Stefon Harris being true to himself in *The Anatomy of a Box*

By John Mark Rafacz

Stefon Harris defies the stereotype that men are not good listeners. Indeed, listening is so important to the vibraphonist and composer that one of his regular activities is trying to hear how many independent sounds he can identify in a given environment.

“The first way we interact with sound is through our ears. So for me the most important element to being a musician, especially as it pertains to being an improviser, is your ability to listen first and foremost,” Harris says. “Once you can hear what’s coming in, you can interpret it and figure out how to create something that would complement that which has already been said.”

The Music Accord, a national chamber music consortium of which the Center for the Performing Arts is a member, commissioned Harris to compose a work for him to perform with Imani Winds. The result is tonight’s featured piece, *The Anatomy of a Box: a sonic painting in wood, metal, and wind*.

“The process of composing this piece involved a log drum, which is just a small box with several slits in it that are pitched,” Harris says. “I essentially started the loop with just a few pitches and composed everything in the entire piece based on this loop of the log drum.”

This project marks the first time Harris has worked with Imani Winds, but the musicians have long been familiar to him.

“I’ve known them for quite some time,” he says. “In fact, I went to college with a few of them.”

Harris, who grew up in Albany, New York, earned an undergraduate diploma in classical music and a graduate degree in jazz performance at New York City’s Manhattan School of Music.

“[Imani oboist] Toyin [Spellman-Diaz] and I were in orchestra together,” he recalls.

For Harris, the process of collaborating with the woodwind quintet has been as important as the musical work itself.

“We got together, and I talked to them about what I could bring to the table. They told me about what they had already done, what they may be interested in, and where we could meet in the middle. The topic of improvisation came up a lot. I decided to create a piece—and a system of improvisation—to help them get started with this. So the piece involves a lot of improvisation.”

Although *The Anatomy of a Box* incorporates improvisation, the majority of the music is written.

“I’d say 95 percent of it is written down. There are small sections where each musician will be highlighted for improvisation,” he says. “The parts are written for me, but I’m pretty spontaneous, so I’m not even sure that I’ll play my part the same way every time.”

The new work, performed by Imani Winds with Harris joining in on vibraphone and marimba, debuted September 25 at the University of Iowa’s Hancher Auditorium.

Harris is most closely associated with jazz, but he also has a background in classical music. He does not, however, see the collaboration with Imani Winds as an overt blending of the two types of music.

“In general, I don’t think in terms of two different genres. I think in terms of authenticity, and really being who you are, and allowing whatever is inside of you to come out,” he insists. “I think from my life experience thus far, clearly Western music is a part of my development, so it comes out. But it comes out in a very organic manner.”



Harris views his collaboration with Imani Winds as an example of a new direction in small-ensemble music.

"I think it's culturally relevant that in this period in American history, in terms of chamber music, there is this idea that these boundaries are coming down—that you can take someone like myself, who's coming primarily from the jazz world, mix with Imani, coming primarily from the classical world, and find a middle ground," he says. "I think what results in the end is true American chamber music."

As a composer, Harris is more concerned about the journey than the destination.

"For me, music is not so much a process of creativity, it's more of a process of discovery," he points out. "So, it's not that I sit down, and I predetermine that I'm going to do this, this, and this. It's more that I sit down, I open my ears, and I take a look and see what's already there. So, for example, with the log drum concept, it's just a few notes. I took those few notes, and I found every harmonic possibility that would support those few notes ... and discovered a harmonic palette from which to write on."

As much as he enjoys the discovery of composing, Harris' chief thrill comes from playing music.

"I absolutely love performing. It's one of the reasons I get out of bed in the morning," he says. "I'm completely fascinated with the science of music itself. And then to study study study, get the opportunity to get on stage in front of an audience and to share your passion, that's what it's ultimately all about."

Harris is renowned for his enthusiasm and energy on stage.

"My basic definition of music is that it's the science of organizing sound and silence into emotion. So ultimately music is all about emotion ...," he says. "If I'm home alone, that's a very limited scope of emotion. To be on stage, and to share that energy, and to pull the energy back from the audience, it's an unbelievable experience—one of the greatest components of art."

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Harris started playing the vibraphone and the marimba when he was about 13.

"Even at that time, in middle school, I played basically all the band instruments. I played like twenty instruments at a time," he remembers. "I taught myself to read music at a very young age, so when I went to school and started taking lessons, I was more advanced than a lot of the other kids. So to keep me busy, the teachers would just give me different instruments to try on my own."

The major vibraphonists of jazz had an effect on his playing, Harris acknowledges, but they have not defined his style.

"I definitely feel that I'm playing my own music in my own way. In fact, I think that's inevitable. But, certainly Milt Jackson and Bobby Hutcherson, Lionel Hampton, these are all influences of mine," he says.

"In the end, I actually don't have a strong affinity for the vibraphone or marimba. I think that it's just a pile of metal and wood. It ultimately comes down to the story that's being told through the metal and wood. It's not so much about the instrument. If I weren't playing the vibraphone, I'd play something else."

John Mark Rafacz is the editorial manager of the Center for the Performing Arts.



**HEAR OUR INTERVIEW
WITH STEFON HARRIS.**

www.cpa.psu.edu/events/imani.html

BIO | IMANI WINDS

Imani Winds has established itself as more than a wind quintet. Since 1997, the Grammy-nominated ensemble has taken a unique path, carving out a distinct presence in the classical music world with its dynamic playing, culturally poignant programming, genre-blurring collaborations, and inspirational outreach programs. With two member composers and a deep commitment to commissioning new work, the group is enriching the traditional wind quintet repertoire while meaningfully bridging European, American, African, and Latin American traditions.

Imani Winds is in the midst of its Legacy Commissioning Project, an ambitious five-year endeavor launching the ensemble into its second decade of music making. The group is commissioning, premiering, and touring ten works for woodwind quintet written by established and emerging composers of various musical backgrounds. The select composers originate from different points on the globe and bring experience not only in classical music, but jazz, Middle Eastern, Latin, and harder-to-define sounds.

The Legacy Project kicked off in 2008 with world premieres by Alvin Singleton and Roberto Sierra. The following season, Jason Moran's *Cane* premiered at the Kimmel Center for the Arts in Philadelphia, followed by performances at Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall and Merkin Concert Hall. In 2009–2010, the group collaborates with Stefon Harris, premiering and touring his *The Anatomy of a Box: a sonic painting in wood, metal and wind*. The work premiered at the University of Iowa on September 25, with following performances scheduled at Penn State, Cal Poly Arts, and San Francisco Performances.

The range of programs offered by Imani Winds demonstrates its mission

to expand the wind quintet repertoire and diversify sources of new music. From Mendelssohn, Jean Françaix, György Ligeti, and Luciano Berio to Astor Piazzolla, Elliott Carter, and John Harbison—plus the unexpected ranks of Paquito D'Rivera and Wayne Shorter—Imani Winds actively seeks to engage new music and new voices in the modern classical idiom. Imani members Valerie Coleman and Jeff Scott both regularly contribute compositions and arrangements to the ensemble's expanding repertoire, bringing new sounds and textures to the traditional instrumentation.

Imani Winds performed the world premiere of *Terra Incognita*, the first commission for classical artists by jazz composer, performer, and legend Shorter. In recent seasons, Imani Winds has performed extensively with Shorter, including a summer European tour of jazz festivals in Vienne (France), Lubeck (Germany), Kongsberg (Norway), Copenhagen (Denmark), Limerick (Ireland), and the North Sea Jazz Festival (Netherlands), as well as in North America at venues such as Carnegie Hall and Walt Disney Concert Hall.

Through commissions and performances, the quintet regularly collaborates with other artists. *Josephine Baker: A Life of Le Jazz Hot!*, a collaboration with chanteuse René Marie and choreographer Christopher Huggins, has been performed in New York City, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and other cities to great acclaim. The ensemble shared the stage with Yo-Yo Ma for a rousing performance of Scott's arrangement of Piazzolla's *Libertango* and collaborated with bassist/trombonist Chris Brubeck, of the famed Brubeck family, for a performance and recording of music written especially for wind quintet and jazz quartet (released by Koch International Classics in 2008). The group's Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center residency culminated in a recital at New York City's Alice Tully Hall with renowned clarinetist/saxophonist/composer D'Rivera. The ensemble has also worked with luminaries such as bandoneonist Daniel Binelli, saxophonist Steve Coleman,



Photo: Eddie Collins

Valerie Coleman, Mariam Adam, Toyin Spellman-Diaz, Jeff Scott, Monica Ellis

clarinetist David Shifrin, and pianists Gilbert Kalish and Shai Vosner. A future collaboration features clarinetist David Krakauer.

Imani Winds' touring has brought the quintet to the Herbst Theatre for San Francisco Performances, Seattle's Meany Hall, the University of Illinois' Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, Ensemble Music Society of Indianapolis, La Jolla Music Society, and the Virginia Arts Festival. Additionally, the group has performed at Atlanta's National Black Arts Festival, Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, Chicago Symphony Musicians Residency Program, the Ravinia Festival, the Kennedy Center, and the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society.

Imani Winds enjoys frequent national exposure in all forms of media, including two features on National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* and appearances on American Public Media's *Saint Paul Sunday*, NPR's *Performance Today* and *News and Notes with Ed Gordon*, the *Bob Edwards*

Show on XM Satellite Radio, and BBC's *The World*. Major music magazines and newspapers have also published articles about the quintet.

The group has been recognized with numerous awards, including the 2007 American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) Award, 2002 Chamber Music America (CMA)/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming, and the CMA/WQXR Award for the self-released debut CD *Umoja*. At the 2001 Concert Artists Guild International Competition, Imani Winds was selected as the first Educational Residency Ensemble in recognition of the group's musical abilities and innovative programming.

Imani Winds has four releases on Koch, including the 2006 Grammy Award-nominated *The Classical Underground*. The most recent recording, *This Christmas*, found its way onto many holiday "best of" lists upon its release in 2008.

BIO | STEFON HARRIS

Vibraphonist-composer Stefon Harris is heralded as “one of the most important young artists in jazz” (*The Los Angeles Times*). He is unquestionably developing what will be a long and extraordinary career. His passionate artistry, energetic stage presence, and astonishing virtuosity have propelled him into the forefront of the jazz scene. Widely recognized and lauded by his peers and jazz critics alike, Harris is committed to both exploring the rich potential of jazz composition and blazing new trails on the vibraphone.

A graduate of Manhattan School of Music, Harris received a bachelor of music in classical music and a master of music in jazz performance. He is a recipient of the prestigious Martin E. Segal Award from Lincoln Center and has three Grammy Award nominations to his credit. *North Sea Jazz* (Netherlands) awarded Harris the International 2002 Bird Award for Artist Deserving Wider Recognition. He was voted best mallet player by the *JazzTimes Critics* Poll in 2004 and the Jazz Journalist Association each year from 2000 through 2005.

Harris has performed at many of the world’s most distinguished concert halls, including the Carnegie Hall debut concert of *African Tarantella: Dances with Duke* (2006 Blue Note Records), Lincoln Center’s Alice Tully Hall, the Kennedy Center, San Francisco’s Herbst Theatre, UCLA’s Royce Hall, Chicago’s Symphony Center, Detroit’s Orchestra Hall, and the Sydney Opera House. In 2007, his quartet performed a retrospective of his original compositions with the Jazz Sinfonica Orquestra in São Paulo, Brazil. He has toured and recorded with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and performed his original compositions with the Dutch Metropole Orchestra. Harris has toured throughout South Africa, Brazil, and Europe. He has performed at North Sea

Jazz Festival, Istanbul Jazz Festival, and the Umbria Jazz Festival, among others.

In 2001, Harris premiered *The Grand Unification Theory*, a full-length concert piece commissioned by the Troy Savings Bank Music Hall that was later presented at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center. He has also appeared at the legendary Playboy Jazz Festival, Montreal Jazz Festival, and Orange County Performing Arts Center. In 2005, Harris debuted *Suite Moments*, which was commissioned by the Wharton Center for Performing Arts at Michigan State University. In May 2006, he premiered *Portraits of the Promised*, a commission from Fontana Chamber Arts for People’s Church Sesquicentennial Celebration in Kalamazoo, Michigan. That work later became the subject of a WGVU (Grand Rapids, Michigan) public television special. He joined the San Francisco Jazz Collective in 2007, with which he tours in addition to leading his band Blackout and performing as part of special projects.

An active educator, Harris conducts clinics and lectures throughout the country. He teaches at New York University, and is artist in residence at Fontana Chamber Arts (Kalamazoo) and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He has had similar posts with San Francisco Performances, the Isabelle Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, and the Monk Institute in Los Angeles. He created a unique interactive program with poets from around the world at the University of Iowa’s International Writers’ Workshop. He returned to Iowa in September 2004 to participate in *The Life of Discovery*, a statewide celebration of arts and humanities. Harris has served on the Executive Board of Directors for Chamber Music America and the Board of Directors for WBG0-FM (Newark, New Jersey). He was also a Resource Leader for the International Association of Jazz Educators.

Jazz for the “here and now” is perhaps the best way to describe Harris’ August 2009 release *Urbanus*, his seventh CD as a leader, which also marks his Concord

Records debut. *Urbanus* picks up where 2004’s *Evolution* (Blue Note Records) left off in that it features Blackout, his band that’s as versed in modern jazz as it is with rhythms, melodies, and soundscapes associated with R&B, pop, hip-hop, and funk. *Evolution*, an acclaimed top ten recording, is a musical hybrid of acoustic and progressive sounds praised for “pursuing jazz on its own terms” (*Washington Post*). *Evolution* was named to the 2004 *JazzTimes* Top 50 CDs list.

Named one of the top ten CDs in 2006 by the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Harris’ *African Tarantella: Dances with Duke* features contemporary arrangements of Duke Ellington’s *New Orleans* and *Queen* suites along with selections from Harris’ *The Gardner Meditations*. The latter suite was part of a commission by the Wharton Center. The 2003 release of *The Grand Unification Theory* (Blue Note)—an eleven-movement suite featuring Latin, classical, African, and jazz influences—earned a Grammy nomination for Best Jazz Instrumental Album, a *Jazziz* Critics Choice, and four-star reviews from *Downbeat*, *Rolling Stone*, and the *Los Angeles Times*. His 2001 CD *Kindred* (Blue Note) earned a Grammy nod for Best Jazz Album. A quartet recording with the noted pianist Jacky Terrasson, *Kindred* is a follow-up to his sophomore release *Black Action Figure* (Blue Note). “There is No Greater Love” from *Black Action Figure* was nominated for a Grammy for Best Jazz Instrumental Solo. His premiere as a leader, *A Cloud of Red Dust* (Blue Note), was voted Best Debut Recording at the 1999 New York Jazz Awards.

In addition to leading his own band, Harris has recorded as part of the Classical Jazz Quartet, a series of jazz-interpreted classics with Kenny Barron, Ron Carter, and Lewis Nash. He has also recorded and toured with many of jazz music’s greatest artists, including Joe Henderson, Wynton Marsalis, David Sanborn, Cassandra Wilson, Buster Williams, Charlie Hunter, Kurt Elling, Cyrus Chestnut, Steve Coleman, and Steve Turre.

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