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Concert: Women of the Calabash

Women of the Calabash

Yayodele Nelson

Marsha Perry Starkes

Mayra Casales

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*“It is
my plan
to build
a school
of music
second
to none.”*

—William
Grant Egbert
(1867–1928)
Founder,
Ithaca
Conservatory
of Music

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

ITHACA

**REVERBERATIONS:
MUSIC OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA**

WOMEN OF THE CALABASH

Yayodele Nelson Marsha Perry Starkes Mayra Casales

Women of the Calabash is Madeleine Yayodele Nelson—founder and artistic director, composer, arranger, vocalist, percussionist, teacher, and instrument maker; Marsha Perry Starkes—vocalist, percussionist, and teacher; and Mayra Casales—vocalist and percussionist. Formed in 1978, this trio gives birth to new music idioms, resulting from the assimilation of their cultural heritage and contemporary life as African-American women in the United States.

The trio's use of different varieties of percussion instruments—all made from natural materials such as calabash (a type of dried gourd), bamboo, and wood—explodes into the air with harmonious percussive beauty. Combining traditional instruments, lush vocals, and musical forms with contemporary influences, Women of the Calabash has enchanted audiences of all ages for over two decades, performing music from Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Black America.

The free-flowing performance of these three artists is interwoven with informal dialogue highlighting the history and playing techniques of the various instruments used. Their performances have brought audiences to their feet in Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Berkeley's Zellerbach Hall, Town Hall, and The Walker Art Center. In support of liberation struggles and environmental concerns, they have performed for the presidents of West Africa and Haiti. Over the years, Women of the Calabash has shared the stage with many great performers, including Philip Glass, Ashford and Simpson, The Temptations, and Max Roach, to name a few.

Cited as "Musicians Extraordinaire" by the National Council for Culture and Art, Women of the Calabash received the Council's prestigious Monarch Merit Award in 1987. HBO featured Women of the Calabash in a Black History Month profile in 1997. The 16-minute video, "Women of the Calabash," was awarded a blue ribbon for Best Music Video of 1988 by the American Film Festival.

**Ford Hall
Saturday, September 9, 2000
10:00 a.m.**

Reverberations: Music of the African Diaspora

Ithaca College invites you to embark upon a critical exploration of the African contribution to musical expression and to consider with us the significance of this contribution in all of its variety across time and space. We hope that this series will be a catalyst for making far-reaching revisions to our curriculum and the first step toward a serious intellectual inquiry into the music, history, art, literature, and experiences of the African Diaspora that so greatly influenced the defining of the Americas.

This series, devoted to Africa's considerable influence in the Caribbean and the Americas, is the result of the collaboration of the Ithaca College Center for the Study of Culture, Race, and Ethnicity and the Ithaca College School of Music with guidance provided by a steering committee.

As the steering committee discussed and planned for the series, it became increasingly clear that so much needed to be studied, that the richness of expression was more than we could address in many years. Our knowledge, too, was constrained by our allegiances both to other disciplines and to other musical traditions. Nevertheless, the importance of this area of inquiry, an often unacknowledged but critical source of creativity and intellectual vitality, lent urgency to our formal recognition and action in the development of this series.

What we present, then, is the result of preliminary rather than comprehensive study, an introduction to African-derived cultural wealth in "new world" currency. We invite those of you who know more to make recommendations for our consideration as we build future programming in this area, whether in the form of public events such as this series, curriculum development for our students in music and in other disciplines, or new interdisciplinary paths for the revitalization of the academy.

This lecture and performance series is sponsored by the
Center for the Study of Culture, Race, and Ethnicity, and the
School of Music

The members of the steering committee are:
Julian Euell, Naeem Inayatullah, Colleen Kattau, Jamal Rossi,
Tanya R. Saunders, Elizabeth Simkin, Gordon Stout, Debra Vialet,
and Dana Wilson

A list of suggested readings about the music of the African diaspora is available at: www.ithaca.edu/reverberations

Reverberations: Music of the African Diaspora

Friday, September 8, 2000

Dr. Kazadi wa Mukuna, ethnomusicologist
"Dimensions of African Music in the New World"
Pre-concert Lecture, Recital Hall 7:00 p.m.
Women of the Calabash
Performance, Ford Hall 8:15 p.m.

Saturday, September 9, 2000

Women of the Calabash
Percussion Workshop, Recital Hall 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, October 29, 2000

Horace Clarence Boyer, ethnomusicologist
"Old Ship of Zion: African American Gospel Music"
Lecture and Performance, Recital Hall 7:00 p.m.

Monday, October 30-Friday, November 3, 2000

Horace Clarence Boyer, ethnomusicologist
Presentations and Discussion: "The History of Gospel"
Five Part Lecture Series, Clark Lounge 12:15 p.m.

Wednesday, November 1, 2000

Horace Clarence Boyer, documentary contributor
The Story of Gospel (BBC, 1996)
Park Hall Auditorium 8:00 p.m.

Thursday, November 2, 2000

Horace Clarence Boyer, conductor
Ithaca Community Gospel Choir Concert 8:15 p.m.
Participation is open to the public

Sunday, November 12, 2000

Ithaca College Concerts 2000-2001*
SoVoSó, World Jazz A Cappella
Performance, Ford Hall 8:15 p.m.

Monday, November 13, 2000

SoVoSó, World Jazz A Cappella
Vocal Jazz Workshop, Ford Hall 6:00 p.m.

* Admission Charge