



# *Swimming in Dark Waters: Other Voices of the American Experience*

Featuring **Rhiannon Giddens,**  
**Bhi Bhiman** and **Leyla McCalla**

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

In celebration of Black History Month, this concert delves into the profound, yet often overlooked, history of protest, subversion, and cultural resistance by musicians of color in the United States, from the original inhabitants to recently arrived immigrants.

## RHIANNON GIDDENS, VOCALS

Greensboro, N.C. native Rhiannon Giddens is an American original — an artist with an unforgettable voice who culls the music of our collective past to point the way to the future. Best known as a member of the Grammy-winning Carolina Chocolate Drops, reviving, interpreting, and recasting traditional material from varied sources has been central to her career. An extraordinary star-is-born moment occurred at the 2013 T Bone Burnett-curated *Another Day, Another Time* concert at New York City's Town Hall. Performing Odetta's "Water Boy," she brought the celebrity-studded audience to its feet, resulting in a stunning collaboration with Burnett: the album *Tomorrow is My Turn*, which deftly incorporates folk, jazz, gospel, and the blues. Giddens' buzz-generating Town Hall performance was preserved in a Nonesuch recording and a Showtime documentary.

## BHI BHIMAN, VOCALS/GUITAR

Singer/songwriter Bhi Bhiman has drawn a diverse range of comparisons, from Rodriguez and Woody Guthrie to Nina Simone and Bill Withers. He credits his upbringing — the son of Sri Lankan immigrants, growing up in suburban St. Louis — as an important role in his songwriting. An accomplished guitarist and clever lyricist, his unique voice sets him apart. His debut album, *BHIMAN*, was released to critical acclaim, followed by a performance on the BBC's *Later...with Jools Holland* and a North American tour with Soundgarden frontman Chris Cornell. Other highlights include his appearance at Carnegie Hall in tribute to Prince, which *Rolling Stone* called the most memorable performance of the night. Bhi has co-written with Stax Records staple William Bell and The Coup's Boots Riley, among others. His latest LP is *Rhythm & Reason*, produced by Sam Kassirer (Lake Street Dive, Josh Ritter).

## LEYLA MCCALLA, VOCALS/CELLO

Leyla McCalla's music reflects her eclectic life experiences. Born in New York City to Haitian immigrant parents, she relocated to Accra, Ghana for two years. Following studies in cello performance and chamber music at New York University, she moved to New Orleans to play cello on the streets of the French Quarter. There she caught the attention of Music Maker Relief Foundation director Tim Duffy, who introduced her to the Carolina Chocolate Drops. She appeared on the band's Grammy-nominated album *Leaving Eden* and toured extensively with them. Her debut album *Vari-Colored Songs: A Tribute to Langston Hughes* (2014) features compositions she wrote to Langston Hughes poetry, Haitian folk songs, and original pieces. The album features Rhiannon Giddens and Hubby Jenkins of the Carolina Chocolate Drops, Don Vappie on tenor banjo and Luke Winslow King on guitar.

## ▶ CONNECTIONS ◀

*This performance is presented in collaboration with UNC's The Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History and The Center for the Study of the American South.*