

MUSIC WORCESTER presents
Mechanics Hall | Saturday, January 10, 2026 | 7 pm

AMERICAN SPIRITUAL ENSEMBLE

Dr. Everett McCorvey, music director & founder

Walk Together, Children	arr. W. Henry Smith	Anchored in the Lord	arr. M. Roger Holland, II <i>Jeryl Cunningham-Fleming, soprano</i>
I Stood on the River of Jordan	arr. Moses Hogan	God is a God	arr. Shawn Okpebholo <i>Kenneth Overton, baritone</i>
I Can Tell the World	arr. Moses Hogan	Great God Almighty	arr. Stacey V. Gibbs
In Bright Mansions Above	arr. Roland Carter	Every Time I Feel the Spirit	arr. Jacqueline Hairston <i>Juba (Lyric Suite)</i> <i>Hope Koehler, mezzo-soprano</i> <i>Alicia Helm, soprano</i> <i>Grace Ashley, soprano</i> <i>Jeryl Cunningham-Fleming, soprano</i>
Come Down, Angels	arr. Undine Smith Moore <i>Alicia Helm, soprano</i>	Lord, I'll Go	arr. Jacqueline Hairston <i>Darryl Taylor, counter-tenor</i>
City Called Heaven	arr. Terence Blanchard <i>Kenneth Overton, baritone</i>	Three Spirituals	arr. Jacqueline Hairston <i>Tshilidzi Ndou, bass</i> <i>Nathan De'Shon Myers, bass</i> <i>Nathaniel Thompson, bass</i>
Lord, How Come Me Here	<i>Angela M. Brown, soprano</i>	Stand the Storm	arr. Timothy Amukele <i>Jeryl Cunningham-Fleming, soprano</i>
Witness	arr. Hall Johnson <i>Nathan De'Shon Myers, baritone</i>	Ol' Man River (Show Boat)	Jerome Kern & Oscar Hammerstein II <i>Nathaniel Thompson, bass-baritone</i>
No More Auction Block		Ol' Time Religion / When the Saints	arr. Everett McCorvey & Keith McCutchen <i>Hope Koehler, mezzo-soprano</i>
Go Down, Moses	arr. Johnnie Dean <i>Martin Hargrove, bass</i> <i>Nathaniel Thompson, bass</i>	Circle of Life (The Lion King)	Elton John & Tim Rice <i>John Wesley Wright, tenor</i> <i>Dominique Cooper, mezzo-soprano</i> <i>Mariah Graves, soprano</i>
I Know I've Been Changed	arr. Damon Dandridge <i>John Wesley Wright, tenor</i>		
Crossing Ovah	Richard Jackson <i>David Pelino, tenor</i>		
Wanna Die Easy, When I Die	arr. Ysäye Barnwell <i>Dominique Cooper, mezzo-soprano</i> <i>Frank Espinosa, counter-tenor</i>		
You Must Have That True Religion	arr. Roland Carter <i>Angela M. Brown, soprano</i>		

— INTERMISSION —

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This presentation is also made possible by the Brose Hie Hill Foundation

MUSIC WORCESTER'S 2026-2027 ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCY PROGRAM

A message from the Executive Director

Dear Music Worcester Patrons & Supporters:

Tonight's concert marks a very special occasion - the formal launch of Dr. Everett McCorvey as Music Worcester's next Artist-in-Residence.

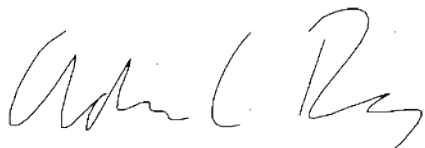
Over the next 18 months Everett will spend multiple weeks in Worcester conducting public concerts, leading extended rehearsal periods, visiting area schools, mentoring aspiring high school instrumentalists and vocalists, and connecting with Music Worcester's partners in the health and human service sector. This third Artist-in-Residence program, following Simone Dinnerstein in 2018-2019 and Vijay Gupta in 2023, will serve as the longest and most in-depth one thus far.

This evening's presentation of the American Spiritual Ensemble will be followed by a soon-to-be-announced June concert where Everett will serve as tenor soloist for Brahms' *Liebeslieder Waltzes*. The announcement of the 2026-2027 Season later this spring will contain three additional major concerts under Everett's leadership, ranging from a concert version of Gershwin's *Porgy & Bess* to Music Worcester's America 250th programming. We aim to have a newly commissioned work serve as a final concert led by Everett in March 2027. Music Worcester will also be sure to inform all patrons of a performance of Vivaldi's *Gloria* that Everett will direct with a choir assembled from across Worcester Public Schools.

When thinking of artists to approach for Music Worcester's Artist-in-Residence program, we specifically prospect visionary individuals who might bring new programming ideas, artists, and perspectives to the organization's long-standing concert series and increasingly active community engagement work. From his work founding the American Spiritual Ensemble to serving as the director of the University of Kentucky's Opera Program, or from guest conducting regularly around the globe to still teaching a robust studio of voice majors, Everett's unique background as a singer, conductor, program director, and concert curator will all figure prominently in his work over the next year-and-a-half. I wish to express the organization's immense gratitude towards the George I. Alden Trust for their support of Music Worcester's Artist-in-Residence program and overall educational activities in recent years. We could not have approached Everett for this Residency without their involvement.

Please watch for upcoming announcements of Everett's concerts, and please visit Music Worcester's Residency landing page at [**musicworcester.org/residency**](https://musicworcester.org/residency) or by using the QR code below.

Thank you,



Adrien C. Finlay, Executive Director
Endowed by the McDonough Charitable Foundation

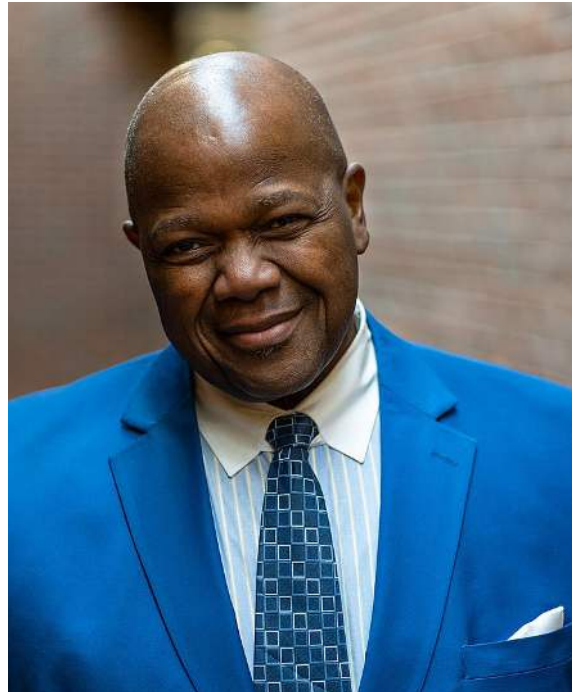


ABOUT EVERETT

EVERETT MCCORVEY, D.M.A is a native of Montgomery, Alabama. He received his degrees from the University of Alabama, including a Doctorate in Musical Arts. McCorvey's career has spanned all areas of the performing arts business, from performer to musical & stage director, voice professor, producer, orchestra conductor, union representative, administrator, and mentor.

Vocal excellence is a hallmark of Dr. McCorvey's work. He is the founder and Music Director of the American Spiritual Ensemble, a group of 24 professional singers performing spirituals and other compositions of African-American composers dedicated to keeping the American Negro Spiritual alive. In its 30-year history, the group has presented over 600 concerts, including 20 tours of the United States and 17 tours of Spain. Presently, the American Spiritual Ensemble is the only professional ensemble of its kind dedicated solely to the American Negro Spiritual.

As a tenor, Dr. McCorvey has performed in theaters across the country and around the world, including the Metropolitan Opera, the Kennedy Center, Aspen Music Festival, Radio City Music Hall, Birmingham Opera Theater, Teatro Comunale in Florence, Italy, Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, England, as well as various venues throughout Spain, the Czech and Slovak Republics, Austria, Japan, China, Brazil, Ireland, Poland, Portugal and Hungary, Mexico, Peru and France. His operatic roles have included Don Jose in *Carmen*, Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*, Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, Fenton in *Falstaff*, Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus*, and Puck in *La Grande Duchesse de Gerolstein*. Orchestra and Oratorio works include the Beethoven Symphony no. 9, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Verdi's *Requiem*, Handel's *Messiah*, Bach's *Mass in B Minor* and the *St. Matthew Passion*, among others.



In addition to performing, Dr. McCorvey has built a successful career as a voice teacher and professor. He has served on the faculty of the New York State Summer School of the Arts in Saratoga Springs, New York where he was Artist-in-Residence and Associate Conductor, and he is also a frequent advisory panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts Opera/Musical Theatre program. He has been a faculty member of the University of Kentucky since 1991, and currently holds the Lexington Opera Society Endowed Chair in Opera Studies at the school. He has given masterclasses and vocal workshops throughout the United States, Europe, South America, China, Japan, and Poland.

Recent conducting activity for Dr. McCorvey has included productions with Kentucky Opera, Opera Columbus, Bay View Opera, Virginia Symphony, Virginia Opera, Opera Orlando, and Handel's *Messiah* at the newly renovated David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center. In the spring of 2024, he was named the Principal Guest Conductor for Opera Columbus. Dr. McCorvey is also in his 10th season as the Artistic Director of the National Chorale of New York City. Celebrating 57 years of great choral singing, the National Chorale is a symphonic choir which performs at Lincoln Center in New York City. The National Chorale is well-known in New York and around the region for its performances, as well as for the popular *Messiah Sing-In* at Lincoln Center, which is one of the oldest sing-ins in the country. The US Public Broadcasting Station (PBS) has produced seven films featuring McCorvey's conducting work, including a recent performance of *The Stars of Tomorrow Opera Gala* (2023) which is currently running on PBS channels throughout the United States. Other film credits include *Impresario* (2002); *A Tribute and a Toast to Opera* (2005); *The Spirituals* (2007); *The American Spiritual Ensemble in Concert* (2017); and *It's a Grand Night for Singing 25th Anniversary* (2017).

Dr. McCorvey believes that every citizen in the country should find ways to give back to their community, city or country. He remains very active in his volunteer activities, and currently serves on several local, regional and national boards for the arts. In his home state of Kentucky, he is Chairman of the Kentucky Arts Council Board, and nationally he is on the Sullivan Foundation Board of Trustees, an organization dedicated to supporting young professional singers with career grants and study awards for continuing development. He is married to soprano Alicia Helm, with whom he has three children.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

GRACE ASHLEY, soprano, is a passionate performer and voice teacher. Her work both onstage and in the voice studio is driven by her belief that music is a universal and necessary tool for communication and human connection. Ms. Ashley is currently a DMA candidate at the University of Kentucky and studies under Dr. Everett McCorvey. She recently made her Kentucky Opera debut in Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*.

ALI BARR, percussionist, was born in Philadelphia. He has been playing percussion instruments and jazz trumpet, from childhood under the guidance of his father, Dr. James Barr, and master drummer, Bobby Crowder. A graduate of Temple University in Philadelphia, Ali has recorded and performed extensively with various artists, including Grammy® nominated Russell Gunn, the legendary Roy Ayers, and Jamaleddeen Tacuma.

Soprano **ANGELA BROWN**'s multi-award-winning career has been lauded on the front page of *The New York Times*, on CNN and CBS, in Oprah Magazine and Reader's Digest. Angela is featured on the two-time Grammy Award® winning recording *Ask Your Mama* by Laura Karpman. Her voice is the inspiration for multiple new works.

CHRISTON CARNEY, tenor, and native of Nashville, TN, received his Master of Music in Vocal Performance from the New England Conservatory. He's performed various roles with Nashville Opera, Nashville Symphony, Nashville's Heimermann Chorale, Boston Lyric Opera, and the Rhode Island Civic Chorale and Orchestra. He is currently Education and Community Programs Coordinator at the prestigious Mechanics Hall and is a vocal instructor at the Pakachoag Community Music School in Worcester.

DOMINIQUE "DIDI" COOPER, mezzo-soprano, is a vibrant singer, who recently graduated with a Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance at the University of Louisville. Throughout her career, she has performed works by Juliana Hall, H. Leslie Adams and Gioachino Rossini in concert; and has recently performed as the title role in *Carmen*, Sylvia in *Rapture*, and as Sarah's Friend in *Ragtime the Musical*.

JERYL CUNNINGHAM-FLEMING, soprano, and Assistant Director of the American Spiritual Ensemble, has performed in more than ten countries and on four continents. She has recorded extensively with ASE and other artists. Her solo CD, *Stand the Storm: Anthems, Hymns, and Spirituals of Faith and Hope* was released in 2016. She is a featured soloist on Courtney Carey's 2023 recording, *I Wanna Be Ready*. For more information, visit www.jerylcunningham.com.

EDWIN JHAMAAL DAVIS, bass from Utica, Mississippi, is praised by Voce di Meche for his "juicy, booming and room-filling bass" and "mesmerizing, fully immersed acting." He has performed at major opera houses in the United States and abroad. Recent highlights include soloist in Verdi's *Requiem* and appearances at Carnegie Hall and the Metropolitan Opera.

FRANK ESPINOSA, countertenor, is a nationally awarded vocalist and teacher from Los Angeles, CA. He holds a Master of Music Degree from Boston University and has performed in many operatic works by Handel to the titular role of Floyd's *Susannah*. He was a past Regional Encouragement Award winner of the 2022-2023 Laffont Competition.

MARIAH GRAVES, soprano, is a dynamic performer studying Vocal Performance at the University of Kentucky. She has excelled in opera, musical theater, and art song, having competed nationally and in Europe. Her versatility has showcased in her performances of roles ranging from Madame Flora to *The Medium* to Mrs. Page in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* to her portrayal of Nicki Marron in *The Bodyguard the Musical*.

ALICIA HELM, soprano, has performed with the Metropolitan Opera, Opera Carolina, Aspen Music Festival, Chautauqua Opera, Miami Opera, Acadiana Symphony Orchestra/Opera-Louisiana, toured with the American Spiritual Ensemble and given concerts in Spain, England, Brazil, the Czech Republic and Japan, and many more. She is also the Artist in Residence at The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Lexington, KY.

A dynamic conductor, tenor, and educator, **BRYAN ANTHONY IJAMES, D.M.A** serves as Assistant Professor of Music Education and Associate Director of Choral Activities at Florida Gulf Coast University. Passionate about championing diverse voices, mentoring aspiring musicians, and revitalizing overlooked works, his

dedication to artistry, innovation, and equity inspires students, empowers colleagues, and fosters growth within the choral arts community.

HOPE KOEHLER, soprano, has performed in opera, concerts, and recitals in the USA, Canada, South America, Europe, and Asia. She is a featured soloist on several CDs with the American Spiritual Ensemble, and her two solo recordings, *The Songs of John Jacob Niles* and *Lost Melodies* are available through ASE and on Amazon. She is the owner/founder of High Hopes Music Academy in Tullahoma, TN.

TEDRIN BLAIR LINDSAY, a pianist, composer, and musicologist from Rome, Italy has been a professional performer since the age of ten. He currently serves on the opera faculty at the University of Kentucky, where he earned a Ph.D. In 2009, and at FIO-Mondo (Festival of International Opera) in Urbania, Italy. He performs throughout the world as a collaborative pianist and soloist, and has produced two solo albums, *Tedrin* (2015) and *It Is Well with My Soul* (2016).

NATHAN DE'SHON MYERS, American singer/conductor, has an international hybrid career that spans more than 26 years. He has been a soloist with opera companies and orchestras throughout the United States and across Europe. A former fest soloist with the Deutsche Oper Berlin, he is now an associate Professor of Voice at Arizona State University and remains an active solo artist.

TSHILIDZI NDOU, South African baritone, performs internationally, winning awards in the George Shirley Vocal Competition and Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. Recent roles include Escamillo, Samual, and Schaunard, with upcoming performances as Prince Yamadori in 2025.

KENNETH OVERTON, baritone, is a 2021 Grammy® Award Winner, and a two-time Billboard Top 10 Recording Artist. Career highlights include appearances with The Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, New York City Opera, Royal Danish Opera, Welsh National Opera, L'Opera Montreal, Palacio Bellas Artes, Deutsche Oper Berlin, and a Broadway debut in Baz Luhrman's Production of *La Bohème*. Kenneth's recent recording, *The Living Spiritual*, released in 2025. For more information: www.KennethOverton.com

DAVID PELINO, tenor, has performed with music organizations and professional ensembles across the country. Praised for his "powerful tenor" voice (*South Florida Classical Review*) on the concert and opera stage, some of his credits include being the tenor soloist masterworks such as Handel's *Messiah*, Haydn's *The Creation*, Hailstork's *I Will Lift Up Mine Eyes*, and Bach's *St. John Passion*. Recent role debuts include Sam in Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah* and Wesley Harris in Paul Moravec's *Sanctuary Road*.

PEGGY STAMPS, Business Affairs, is the founder/owner of The SquarePeg Group, Inc. (SPG), a New York City based talent management company. SPG represents performers who have appeared in major feature film, television, and Broadway productions. Peggy is a graduate of Purdue University Schools of Engineering and retired from a Fortune 100 high tech corporation in 2010.

NIGEL SANGSTER, bass, has sung the lead role in Dubois' *Seven Last Words of Christ*, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Jersey City. He has been featured on BBC in performances with The Mile Long Opera Company, New York City. Also to his credit is the 2020 Winter Tour with The American Spiritual Ensemble. In spring 2022, performed and filmed Mozart's *Requiem* with the National Chorale, New York City.

NATHANIEL E. THOMPSON, Bahamian American bass-baritone, has performed in many countries including those in Europe, Asia and South America. Most recently, Mr. Thompson performed as the Undertaker, in Cincinnati Opera's production of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*. He has degrees from Kentucky State University and the University of Kentucky in Liberal Arts, Vocal Arts, and M.A. in Arts Administration.

ANDREW TRAN, tenor, is a recent graduate of the University of Kentucky pursuing a Bachelor of Music degree in Voice Performance from Louisville, Kentucky. Recently, he joined the Louisville Orchestra in debuting Oswald Huynh's *A Different Pond* as narrator. With the University of Kentucky, he has performed "Basilio" from W.A. Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* and "Elder Hayes" in Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah*.

JOHN WESLEY WRIGHT, D.M.A., tenor, is known for his soulful interpretations of music from baroque to Broadway. Holding degrees from Maryville College and the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, Wright has performed throughout the United States, Europe and Japan. Winner of the American Traditions Competition 2000, John is a native of Rome, GA, and coordinates the voice program at Salisbury University in Maryland.



The **AMERICAN SPIRITUAL ENSEMBLE** was founded by Everett McCorvey in 1995. The mission of the American Spiritual Ensemble is to keep the American Negro Spiritual alive. Its members have sung in theaters and opera houses around the world, including the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Houston Grand Opera, The Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, and abroad in Italy, Germany, Britain, Scotland, Spain, China, and Japan. In 2014, the American Spiritual Ensemble performed in the Folle Journée Festival in Nantes, where the reviewers commented that the musicians provided the audience with “a tremendous explosion of joy.”

In its 30-year history, the group has given over 100 concerts in Spain, as well as performances in other parts of Europe, South America, and throughout North America. The repertoire of the American Spiritual Ensemble ranges from opera to spirituals to Broadway. The members of the American Spiritual Ensemble are soloists in their own right and have thrilled audiences around the world with their dynamic renditions of classic spirituals, jazz, and Broadway numbers highlighting the Black experience.

SOPRANO

Grace Ashley
Angela M. Brown
Jeryl Cunningham-Fleming
Mariah Graves
Alicia Helm

MEZZO-SOPRANO

Dominique Cooper
Frank Espinosa
Hope Koehler
Darryl Taylor

TENOR

Christon Carney
Bryan Ijames
David Pelino
Andrew Tran
John Wesley Wright

BASS

Edwin Jhamaal Davis
Nathan De'Shon Myers
Tshilidzi Ndou
Kenneth Overton
Nigel Sangster
Nathaniel Thompson

FOUNDER & MUSIC DIRECTOR

Everett McCorvey

ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR

Jeryl Cunningham-Fleming

**BUSINESS &
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AUDITIONS SUPPORT**

Kenneth Overton

LOGISTICS

Nathaniel Thompson

SALES SUPPORT

Amelia Groetsch

PIANO

Tedrin Blair Lindsay

PERCUSSION

Ali Abdul Barr

The American Spiritual Ensemble is represented in the United States by Alkahest Artists & Attractions, Inc.

(888) 728-8989
info@alkahestartists.net
alkahestartists.net

Represented in Europe by Quintana Artist Management,
Bob Quintana, Personal Representative
quintanaartists.com

VISIT THE AMERICAN SPIRITUAL ENSEMBLE WEBSITE AT:
americanspiritualensemble.com

MUSIC WORCESTER

Spring 2026 Season

INVITING YOU TO MAKE YOUR
NEXT MUSICAL DISCOVERY

Music Worcester's wide variety of events are for everyone— whether you're a passionate super fan or a curious newcomer. We offer a range of ticket prices with student and youth discounts available for most concerts. Plus, there are no ticket or order fees!

JAN 24

Bach Christmas Oratorio
Worcester Chorus & Winchendon Players
8 pm, Mechanics Hall

FEB 27

New York-based Jazz piano trio
AARON DIEHL TRIO
8 pm, The Prior Center at Holy Cross

MAR 1

Rachmaninoff, Bartók, & more
Refugee Orchestra Project
5 pm, Mechanics Hall



APR 17

Chopin, Beethoven, & Scriabin
Alexandre Kantorow, piano
8 pm, Mechanics Hall

MAY 9

Co-presented with The Hanover Theatre
Dance Theatre of Harlem
7:30 pm, The Hanover Theatre

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2025-2026 SCHEDULE,**
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Ticket sales cover only about **half of the cost** of bringing world-renowned performers and educational activities to our community. Music Worcester relies on the generous support of patrons like you to cover the behind-the-scenes expenses—transportation for musicians visiting schools, piano tuning, equipment rentals, and more—that make the music possible.



This season, **please consider joining Music Worcester's annual fund drive**, which supports all aspects of our organization. Your gift will enable us to continue our mission of providing inspiring musical experiences and education to Central Massachusetts.

Visit **musicworchester.org/support** or scan the QR code to make your tax-deductible donation today!

**MUSIC
WORCESTER**



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Program Book ads reach over 20-thousand people annually. Next season, Everett's work with Music Worcester will reach students of all ages, and feature works by artists like Gershwin and Ellington. Scan the code or visit **musicworchester.org/advertise** to learn how you can reach the Worcester community through advertising with Music Worcester.



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