

# UNSAID PRAYERS

Friday, February 25, 2022  
7:30PM

*Cailin Marcel Manson, baritone*  
*Katherine Saik, soprano*  
*Jordan Thomas, harp*

Genius Child *from Mortal Storm*

**Robert Owens (1925 – 2017)**  
*Poetry by Langston Hughes*

*Mr. Manson and Mr. Thomas*

Clear Water

**Nadine Shanti (born 1953)**

*Ms. Saik and Mr. Thomas*

*from Border Line*

**Robert Owens (1925 – 2017)**  
*Poetry by Langston Hughes*

*Dustbowl*  
*Beale Street*

*Mr. Manson and Mr. Thomas*

Clorindy: Origin of the Cake Walk  
*Medley-Overture*

**Will Marion Cook (1869 – 1944)**

*Mr. Thomas*

*Pause*

## WORLD PREMIERE

UNSAID PRAYERS

*For Soprano, Baritone, and Harp*

**Nicolas Gutierrez (born 1993)**  
*To the Poetry of Jana Lillie*

- I. *A Prayer For The Weary (soprano, baritone and harp)*
- II. *What Number Is Mine (soprano and harp)*
- III. *They Don't Know (baritone and harp)*
- IV. *Comes For My Soul (soprano, baritone and harp)*
- V. *The Devil's Sympathy (baritone and harp)*
- VI. *A Prayer (soprano and harp)*
- VII. *Beautiful Soul (baritone and harp)*
- VIII. *Unsaid Prayers (soprano, baritone and harp)*

*This project, commissioned by Cailin Marcel Manson,  
was made possible by a grant from the Higgins School of Humanities at Clark University.*

## Artist Biographies



**Cailin Marcel Manson, baritone and conductor**, is currently Associate Professor of Practice in Music and Director of Music Performance at Clark University, Music Director of The Keene Chorale, Music Director of Barn Opera, and Artistic Director of the New England Repertory Orchestra. Cailin, a Philadelphia native, has toured as a soloist and master teacher at major concert venues throughout the United States, Europe and Asia with many organizations, including the Radio-Sinfonieorchester Stuttgart, SWR Sinfonieorchester, Taipei Philharmonic, Bayerische Staatsoper - Münchner Opernfestspiele, Choral Arts Society of Philadelphia, Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, Teatro La Fenice, Teatro San Carlo, Konservatorium Oslo, and the Conservatoire de Luxembourg.

Mr. Manson has held positions as Music Director of the Vorarlberger Musikfest, Music Director and Conductor Laureate of the Chamber Symphony of Atlantic City, Artistic Director and Conductor of the Montgomery County Youth Orchestra, Chair of Vocal Studies at the Hazleton Conservatory for the Performing Arts, Director of Music at The Putney School, and as the Music Director of the Bennington County Choral Society. He has served as a member of the faculty of the Vermont Governor's Institute on the Arts and the Performing Arts Institute of Wyoming Seminary. Cailin also founded and directed the Germantown Institute for the Vocal Arts and the Germantown Concert Chorus. Mr. Manson is a frequent guest conductor, clinician, presenter, panelist, and adjudicator for conventions, conferences, competitions, and music festivals. He studied voice performance at Temple University, and opera performance and orchestral conducting at the Universität Mozarteum Salzburg.

**Soprano Katherine Saik** is an in-demand teacher and performer based in Western Massachusetts. Ms. Saik received her Bachelor of Music in Voice Performance from UMass Amherst, and a Master of Music in voice performance from the Manhattan School of Music. She regularly appears in recital and as a soloist with different orchestras and choirs across New England. Ms. Saik currently serves as Lecturer in Voice at Smith College, where she has taught since 2016.



**Jordan Thomas, harpist**, won first place in the 2013 American Protégé International Concerto Competition, and then appeared as a guest artist on the Composer's Forum of the USA International Harp Competition. Mr. Thomas received his Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from the Peabody Institute at Johns Hopkins University, and an Professional Diploma in Orchestral Studies from the Chicago College of Performing Arts. He has been a guest soloist for the World Harp Congress Hong Kong and held the principal harpist position of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago for three seasons. During his tenure with the Civic, Mr. Thomas was personally chosen by the internationally renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma to participate in his chamber music intensive. As a member of the Matt Jones Orchestra, Mr. Thomas is cited on a Grammy-Award winning album with Kirk Franklin.

**Nicolas Gutierrez** is an emerging composer that embraces his heritage and infuses elements of his Colombian upbringing into his music. Mr. Gutierrez has served as composer in residence for the Barcelona Festival of Song in both 2014 and 2019. In March of 2018, Nico was invited to conduct his compositions with the Youth Orchestra of Centro Fox in Guanajuato, Mexico for Former President of Mexico, Vicente Fox Quesada. His *Soledad* for Symphony Orchestra was a nominee for Best Overall Composition in the 2019 London Composition Awards. As a multimedia composer, Mr. Gutierrez has worked on several films and television series for A&E, CBS, CBS All Access, and companies like Huawei and Netflix. Mr. Gutierrez is a graduate of Texas Christian University and Columbia College Chicago, and is currently pursuing a doctorate in music composition at Florida State University.



**Jana Lillie** is a bi-racial poet and theater professional from Bennington, Vermont and author of the newly published collection of poems, *Unsaid Prayers* (Northshire Books). Some these poems were written from the day of the killing of George Floyd through the following three months. These poems speak directly from Ms. Lillie's layered processing of racial violence, gun violence, and social unrest during the global standstill of the pandemic, leaning into both the lenses of her blackness and her whiteness, and how she perceived the disparate reactions of either community. Eight of these poems were chosen for the work **Unsaid Prayers**.

## Texts

### *Owens: Mortal Storm* (Langston Hughes)

#### Genius Child

*This is a song for the genius child.  
Sing it softly, for the song is wild.  
Sing it softly as ever you can -  
Lest the song get out of hand.*

*Nobody loves a genius child.*

*Can you love an eagle,*

*Tame or wild?*

*Can you love an eagle,*

*Wild or tame?*

*Can you love a monster*

*Of frightening name?*

*Nobody loves a genius child.*

*Kill him - and let his soul run wild.*

### *Owens: Border Line* (Langston Hughes)

#### Dustbowl

*The land wants me to come back  
to a handful of dust in autumn,  
To a raindrop  
in the palm of my hand  
in spring.*

*The land wants me to come back  
to a broken song in October,  
To a snowbird on the wing.  
The land wants me to come back.*

#### Beale Street

*The dream is vague  
And all confused  
with dice and women  
and jazz and boogie.  
The dream is vague  
without a name,  
yet warm and wavering  
and sharp as flame.*

*The loss  
of the dream  
leaves nothing  
the same.*

# UNSAID PRAYERS

*(Jana Lillie)*

## I. A Prayer For The Weary

This is a prayer  
Or a poem  
This is for the weary  
The bone tired  
The “Can’t take  
another step”  
You are heard  
You are seen  
Your answer is in the  
next step  
Your answer is in your  
strength  
You are not alone

This is for the scared  
The confused  
Those searching for  
answers  
For who they are For  
the problems they can’t  
solve  
You don’t seek alone  
You are not alone You  
are surrounded by the  
love you cannot see  
That you must believe  
is there

This is for the lonely  
The isolated  
The unheard in a  
crowd  
You are seen  
You are heard  
You are in good  
company

This is for abused The  
injured  
Those who hope for  
someone to see them  
See their bruises See  
their anguish Your  
bruises are not invisible  
You are seen and loved  
And comforted

Someone is always with  
you

This is a prayer  
For you  
For me  
For whatever your  
journey is  
However broken you  
may be  
However lost you are  
You may in the depths  
of despair  
Or fully in the light  
You must only  
Think it to be seen To  
be heard  
To be known  
You have never been  
alone  
You have never been  
unknown  
Keep going  
Believe  
Have faith

## II. What Number Is Mine

It happened again Who  
can be surprised We  
changed nothing but  
increased hate  
Someone took a gun  
and  
It’s not shot into a  
crowd  
It’s killed people And  
my first thought was to  
write a poem But what  
new words could I  
possibly say When the  
second shooting  
Came before my first  
line  
I am shocked pained  
This hurts too much  
My brain ceases trying  
to wrap itself around  
the grief  
Still I want to write

But the words are far  
too familiar  
Insert my pains here  
Insert the inability to  
rationalize here  
My cry of sorrow goes  
here

I stop writing as I  
think When will it be  
my turn  
Oh it hasn’t happened  
near me  
Yet  
Odds say since we are  
too fearful to change  
it will happen  
When it’s my number  
Here’s what I want

Keep your thoughts  
and prayers  
Dear politician so an so  
Keep your sorrow for  
my daughter  
Who will never fully  
understand  
Why I am not here  
Keep your  
condolences for my  
mom  
Who will now have to  
be  
Mom, Dad, and  
grandparents  
Assuming she survived  
it

This should be the first  
line spoken at my  
funeral  
“She is so pissed she’s  
not here!” Then pick  
up the banner, the  
gauntlet Because  
obviously I failed to  
change anything

Keep your hunting  
rifles, I don’t want  
them  
Keep hunting deer,  
bear, turkey  
Tofu for all I care Stop  
hunting people

In this inherent fear  
that anytime someone  
says gun control  
You clutch your gun  
closer to you  
You make the bullets  
in the hand of the  
insane, the hate filled,  
people  
Maybe as long as the  
shooting is away for  
you  
You think it’s fine

I can never express  
how this hurts and  
terrifies me  
I could write poem  
upon poem  
But maybe I have this  
question instead When  
did you stop being  
surprised at a shooting  
happening Was it  
today?  
The last shooting And  
if you aren’t surprised  
anymore And you  
don’t want to change  
anything to stop them  
Then exactly what are  
your thoughts and  
prayers about?

### III. They Don't Know

They don't know I realize  
What I do  
What so many do  
Everyday of our lives

I saw a post  
About a young man playing  
He saw a cop car, hid behind a car, and then  
Only after he thought he was "safe" began to play again  
It was described as heartbreaking  
I thought it was sadly wise  
I am sure there are those who will think "Well, he must have been doing something wrong" Of course, he was acting like he had the right to play

Read an article how the constant need to explain is exhausting It is  
It takes everything out of me when I do it As I talk I try hard no think about how they don't know

I get a receipt almost always  
Proof in hand I paid for what I have.  
Except for a few places where I get coffee  
I know they know me and I believe they would back me up  
If ever accused Once I have items in my hand in a store

I don't put my hands in my pocket  
I don't engage when given dirty looks  
Especially if I am with a white friend  
I won't throw them in the mix

I defend my skin  
I take the "Not Black Enough" comments I am not just black Then again  
NO ONE IS JUST BLACK  
I am Biracial  
I fade without sunlight  
I tan in seconds in the summer  
I had a fro when I was a kid  
I prefer blue hair now  
I have always looked "other"  
And I have had to answer the question "What are you?"  
Knowing they didn't want to know my job  
Just my ethnic makeup

Which is funny  
Because I have never asked that question  
Without asking about someone's costume I have answered that question before with Human  
But I always get "No, you know what I mean"

Yes I do  
Do you though

We are in the time of great turmoil Forced isolation And the precipice to make great change

But first we the People of Color  
Are going to have to probably talk a lot To our allies Because to put it simply  
It most cases  
They don't know What we do  
How we live  
How we have almost swallowed our tongues  
To just get home safely  
Or how we have always known  
They don't know

### IV. Comes For My Soul

Everything breaks my heart right now  
So many dying alone with no family  
No hand holding by a love one

Children trying to cope  
While being taught by parents trying to cope  
Trying to maintain a semblance of normalcy  
That just doesn't exist anymore

The isolation is like a bitter cold wind Being alone never bothered me  
Being isolated from basic connections  
Breaks my heart farther

The news has killed my heart  
I avoid social media

Peaking at it  
Until i realize tears are running down my face

But this week they came for my soul  
My heart must be too broken for them  
The anger and death  
The injustice  
The racism everyone tells us no longer exists  
Followed by the unfettered rage of too many being killed The fear that walking down the street alone makes you dangerous Came roaring up

I have no tape left for my heart  
So now my soul takes the beating  
It shatters and falls  
It weeps  
There is no comfort in isolation  
There is no answer today  
Nor was there yesterday  
Or last month  
Last year  
Or the century before that

I look at hands that seem to wither Making sure I know I can do nothing to change this  
Mine is yet another voice being swallowed up  
Being labeled and vilified  
By those who need us to believe the lie  
Racism doesn't exist anymore

My hope is as bloodied  
as my heart And soon  
my soul will be  
As I sink into the dark  
That will become the  
nothingness

Maybe one day  
Our voices will breach  
the noise  
Our lights will find the  
way  
Maybe one day they will  
come for the next  
George  
And a wall of light and  
strength will turn the  
tide  
A life will be saved

Will my soul live to see  
it  
I don't know  
But it is worth pinning  
my hope to

### **V. The Devil's Sympathy**

Is it better to be hated  
than loved?  
Is it easier to exist sans  
any warmth  
Or affection  
Is it harder to be cared  
for  
Then left out  
Left in the cold  
Is the heart better iced  
over  
Calloused  
Used only for  
delivering blood to the  
body  
Than beating in time  
with another soul  
Is it better to resign  
yourself to hell  
Than to dream of  
heaven

Live with God's hate  
Than to trust God's  
love

Can love be that  
transforming?  
Can it heal a shattered  
past?  
Are you stronger in  
battle  
Alone, lonely, loved by  
no one  
Than tied to a  
community of hearts Is  
it better to live in the  
heat of Hell  
But dream of the  
comfort of Heaven Or  
better to reside in  
Heaven  
With nightmares of  
Hell

Is the backhanded slap  
More comforting than  
the kind touch  
If the first step  
towards change Takes  
all the strength you  
have  
How do you make the  
next step?  
Should you make the  
next step?  
When you bear already  
too much And you've  
been wounded so  
deeply You can't even  
heal anymore  
Are you even worth  
saving?

The answer eludes me  
Weights greatly on me  
And I am too afraid to  
ask  
For fear I am better  
cursed  
Than saved

Destined to wander  
unattached  
Easily forgotten  
Until one day I am just  
Not here

My story will be told by  
no one  
For there will be no  
one to miss me  
Perhaps the devil  
himself will be sad to  
welcome me Perhaps  
But when has the devil  
ever had sympathy

### **VI. A Prayer**

Dear God  
Why aren't you  
through with me  
Why do I matter to  
you still  
Haven't I caused  
enough sleepless nights  
Aren't you tired of  
following me down  
every dark path  
Alleyway  
Bad decision Haven't I  
tested your limits  
Haven't I cursed you  
too many times  
Yet come wailing at  
your feet

Dear God  
How can I matter to  
you anymore  
I must have reached  
my limit  
I've thrown bales of  
hay  
Onto my own camel's  
back  
Yet somehow you  
remain with me

I have proven myself  
unworthy a thousand  
times over  
And yet still I am  
welcomed in your  
house

Dear God  
How can I  
Someone discarded  
Left to the hands of  
mad men  
Merely surviving And  
spending my days  
Struggling to thrive  
How can I still be your  
child  
How can I not have  
used every ounce of  
love you allotted me  
How can I still  
Possibly  
In any manner at all  
Matter to you  
And how can I  
Knowing all of my  
faults  
My transgressions And  
history Somehow I still  
find comfort  
In knowing  
You  
Laugh at my questions  
And love me anyway

## VII. Beautiful Soul

Someone said I had a beautiful soul  
I have never thought that  
It gave me pause  
Broken soul  
Yes  
Darkest black  
Absolutely  
A shivering mess of hidden wounds  
Yes and yes  
But beautiful  
That adjective never entered my mind

I was ready with my arguments  
My counterpoint Not beautiful, messy yes  
Too broken to be whole  
More darkness than light  
Where is the beauty in a soul full of pit vipers?  
I however said none of this

Instead the words  
"Beautiful Soul"  
Slid around my brain It turned and churned It began to feel like something  
Far too grand, to pin one's hope to  
The word delusional cropped up  
As the thought warmed me Tempted to pull the corners of my mouth up  
I chastised myself  
Threw a few insults  
Reminded myself of my lacking

Including lack of worth  
  
Would it be wrong to believe it?  
Too prideful  
It feels like I would be trying to  
Make myself special  
Of course I'm not sure why that is wrong

Oh I hate things that lead me  
Out and in  
Damn, if it doesn't make me smile  
Wish it didn't  
It makes me feel dumb  
Old training begins to fill my mind

Must anything good be a fight, internally?  
Must a cliff appear before me  
With the chorus of "Jump" in my ears So maybe that needs to be a goal  
Beat the old training

I'm going to kinda, maybe believe it, you know  
Maybe it is a dark broken, messy, place with pit vipers Except maybe the pit vipers are cats having a bad day instead That means they could purr  
Purring is nice Maybe it's not completely black Only 99%  
That 1% down near the bottom  
Almost out of sight

Is hot pink, and a little purple rose  
And it's Beautiful  
Just like a soul I know

## VIII. Unsaid Prayers

If this is my unsaid prayer  
Then let the pain fade  
Let my scarred heart beat  
Let the unshed tears  
That shine in my eyes  
Flow free  
Let me let you  
Hold my hand

Tell me things will be fine  
Allow the cursed screams to erupt  
From my soul  
And quell this angst that I cannot shake

If this is my unsaid prayer  
Let me stay me  
Let me know you  
Let me build trust  
And let me know I matter

And if perchance I have asked for too much  
If I have laid too many hopes at your feet  
If I can get but one answer to these prayers  
Let me know you  
Or more importantly  
Let me know you know me.