

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.