

Pioneering conductor and composer Odaline de la Martinez leads the eighth
London Festival of American Music



Monday 13 September – Saturday 18 September 2021
The Warehouse, Waterloo, London

The 8th London Festival of American Music

With works by Florence Price, Daniel Asia, Margaret Bonds, Augusta Read Thomas, Odaline de la Martinez and the UK premiere of Laura Kaminsky's transgender opera *As One*

Odaline de la Martinez Artistic Director
Lontano Ensemble
Laura Kaminsky composer
Simone Ibbett-Brown mezzo-soprano
Samantha Ege piano
Lin-Linder Duo

Pioneering Cuban-American conductor-composer **Odaline de la Martinez** celebrates diversity past and present in her eighth biennial London Festival of American Music, to be held this year from **Monday 13 – Saturday 18 September** at The Warehouse, London.

The highlight of the Festival is the **UK premiere of Laura Kaminsky's 2014 opera *As One***, with its transgender protagonist sung by two voices. Further concerts will celebrate the Black Renaissance of Harlem and Chicago with pianist **Samantha Ege**, a focus on the composer **Daniel Asia** with the **Lin-Linder Duo**, and works by **Augusta Read Thomas** and **Fred Lerdahl** performed by Lontano Ensemble and mezzo-soprano **Simone Ibbett-Brown**.

The week-long **London Festival of American Music** created by Odaline de la Martinez aims to promote the work of outstanding American composers who are well established in America but less well known to UK audiences. **Fourteen UK premieres** will be presented at this year's Festival. Continuing the Festival's long-standing commitment to equality, over half of the composers featured are women, and three quarters come from an ethnic minority background.

This year's Festival is headlined by three performances (15, 17 & 18 September) of American composer Laura Kaminsky's critically-acclaimed 2014 opera, **As One**. The chamber opera, written for string quartet and two voices – Hannah after (mezzo-soprano) and Hannah before (baritone) – sharing the part of a sole transgender protagonist. Starring Carolyn Dobbin and Simon Wallfisch as Hannah, the production will be conducted by Odaline de la Martinez and directed by Sarah Chew.

Fifteen songs comprise the three-part narrative; with empathy and humour, they trace Hannah's experiences from her youth in a small town to her college years – and finally traveling alone to a different country, where she realises some truths about herself. The 2014 work has had more than thirty productions across the US and will be presented for only the second time in Europe during the Festival.

"with its approachable score and winning protagonist, As One is a striking and deceptively simple look at identity, honesty and the human condition."

Opera News on *As One's* 2019 recording

"As One is everything that we hope for in contemporary opera: topical, poignant, daring, and beautifully written."

New York Classical Review on *As One's* premiere

In recital on Thursday 16 September, British pianist and musicologist **Dr Samantha Ege** traces the lives and legacies of a vibrant creative network of Black composers in the transformative Black Renaissances of Harlem and Chicago, including Florence Price, Margaret Bonds, William Grant Still, Nora Holt, and Zenobia Powell Perry. Ege's programme includes the **first public performance** of the complete set of all four of Florence Price's virtuosic *Fantasia Nègre* showpieces, following her discovery and restoration of Price's *Fantasia Nègre No. 3* following research in Arkansas. The four Fantasies were recorded and released by Ege on Odaline de la Martinez's LORELT label in March 2021 to glowing reviews:

"Ege is adept at revealing the contours of the melody underneath the profusion of Price's rich harmonies, and moulds the beautifully judged transitions between sections with a sure hand ... a fine introduction to Florence Price's music, but is only a glimpse of a life's-work we've barely begun to appreciate."

★★★★ The Telegraph

Opening the Festival on Monday 13 September, mezzo-soprano **Simone Ibbett-Brown** joins **Lontano** to give the world premiere of Odaline de la Martinez's *Four Afro Cuban Poems* by *Nicolas Guillén* as part of a programme of contemporary works also featuring Fred Lerdahl and Augusta Read Thomas, winner of the Ernst von Siemens Composer's Prize in 2000. Ibbett-Brown also sings settings of the African American poet Langston Hughes in works by Margaret Bonds and Florence Price. AfroCuban poet Nicolas Guillén's poems were greatly influenced by the "negritude" (blackness) movement begun by Langston Hughes in Harlem, a movement that reached Europe and the Caribbean.

American composer and professor at the University of Arizona **Daniel Asia** is highlighted on Tuesday 14 September by the **Lin-Linder Duo** – pianists Fanya Lin and Dan Linder – who perform four of his works, including *No Time*, *IRIS*, and *Ragreflections*. The programme

also includes works by Latinas Gabriela Lena Frank and Tanya Leon, together with Chinese American Yuanyuan He, who appears with Daniel Asia in a pre-concert talk.

The award-winning Cuban American composer-conductor **Odaline de la Martinez** is one of Britain's most dynamic and gifted musicians, in 1984 becoming the first woman in history to conduct a BBC Promenade Concert at the Royal Albert Hall, later conducting Ethel Smyth's *The Wreckers* there in 1994. Her chamber ensemble **Lontano** was formed in 1976 to commission, produce, perform and record the work of contemporary composers female composers and Latin American Classical music. In 2020, she co-curated Juilliard's Focus Festival to highlight *Pioneering Women Composers of the 20th Century* on the occasion of the centenary of women's suffrage in the USA.

Full Listings

Monday 13 September 2021, 19:30

The Warehouse, London

Margaret Bonds *Three Dream Portraits*
by Langston Hughes

Augusta Read Thomas *Dream Catcher*
UK PREMIERE

Augusta Read Thomas *Caprice* UK
PREMIERE

Odaline de la Martinez *Four Afro Cuban*
Poems by Nicolas Guillén WORLD PREMIERE

Fred Lerdahl *Three Diatonic Studies* UK
PREMIERE

Florence Price *Four Songs: Fantasy in*
Purple; Forever; Song to the Dark Virgin;
Travel's End

Lontano Ensemble

Simone Ibbett-Brown mezzo-soprano

Pre-concert panel on the Black
Renaissance in the US and abroad with
Joan Anim Addo

Tuesday 14 September 2021, 19:30

The Warehouse, London

Daniel Asia *No Time*

Daniel Asia *Piano Set II* UK PREMIERE

Daniel Asia *IRIS* UK PREMIERE

Yuanyuan He *Lost In Colors* UK PREMIERE

Gabriela Lena Frank *Seis Cantos de los*
Campos UK PREMIERE

Tanya Leon *Satiné* UK PREMIERE

Daniel Asia *Ragflections*

Lin-Linder Duo

Fanya Lin piano

Dan Linder piano

Pre-concert panel with Yuanyuan He,
Daniel Asia and Odaline de la Martinez

Wednesday 15, Friday 17 & Saturday 18 September 2021, 19:30

The Warehouse, London

Laura Kaminsky *As One* UK PREMIERE

Libretto by Mark Campbell and Kimberley
Reed

Simon Wallfisch Hannah before,
baritone

Carolyn Dobbin Hannah after, mezzo-
soprano

Sarah Chew director

Odaline de la Martinez conductor
Lontano String Quartet

Pre-concert panel on transgender opera

Thursday 16 September 2021, 19:30

The Warehouse, London

William Grant Still *Summerland* UK
PREMIERE

Florence Price *Fantasie Nègre No. 4*

Florence Price *Fantasie Nègre No. 3*
WORLD PREMIERE

Zenobia Powell Perry *Homage*

Betty Jackson King *Four Seasonal*
Sketches

Nora Holt *Negro Dance* UK PREMIERE

Florence Price *Fantasie Nègre No. 2*

Margaret Bonds *Spiritual Suite* UK
PREMIERE

Florence Price *Fantasie Nègre No. 1*

Samantha Ege piano

Pre-concert panel on the Black
Renaissance in Harlem and Chicago

The concert on 14 September is sponsored by Musical Elements and the University of Arizona; the concert on 16 September is sponsored by Trapeze Music and Entertainment Ltd.



Odaline de la Martinez



The award-winning Cuban American composer-conductor **Odaline de la Martinez** co-founded **Lontano**, her chamber ensemble, in 1976 whilst studying composition at the Royal Academy of Music, and the ensemble's impact on the perception of new music has been profound and enduring. With Lontano she commissions, produces, performs and records with the primary aim of bringing to the fore the work of living contemporary composers, female composers from all periods, and Latin American classical music. The ensemble's sphere of activity includes contemporary opera, music theatre, concerts, workshops, education projects, tours, broadcasts and recordings.

Always at the front of music innovation, Lontano was one of the first ensembles to form its own record company when in 1992 it established the **LORELT** label (Lontano Records Ltd). Now with a catalogue of 44 recordings, LORELT features soloists as well as other ensembles and is noted for its archive of important and often neglected composers.

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