

2009  
2010

# Merkin Concert Hall

KAUFMAN

# Russell Saint John

**Fordham  
United Methodist Church**  
Bronx, New York  
Rev. Leo W. Curry, Pastor  
presents

**Russell Saint John**  
Baritone

## **A "Witness" to Hall Johnson**

A concert of Spirituals by  
the legendary African  
American composer  
Hall Johnson

**Thursday**  
**February 25, 2010**  
7:30pm

**Merkin Concert Hall at  
Kaufman Center**  
129 West 67th Street  
New York City 10023  
212-501-3330  
[www.merkinconcerthall.org](http://www.merkinconcerthall.org)

Tickets: \$25  
Discounts available for  
students and seniors



## About the Artists

Described as possessing ... "an assured, soothing baritone" by *The New York Times*, **Russell Saint John's** lyric voice and compelling interpretations of the solo, operatic and oratorical repertoire have brought him critical acclaim in the United States and Europe.

He has worked with some of the great conductors of our day including Zubin Mehta, Andrew Litton, Willie Waters, John DeMain, David Gilbert, Julius Williams and James Levine at the Metropolitan Opera. He has also been featured in recitals and as soloist with orchestras in many international music festivals including the Ruins of Pompeii Festival in Sicily and both the Bregenz and Salzburg Festivals in Austria.

His large repertoire is diverse, ranging from Lieder, Art Songs and Spirituals to the great oratorios and major concert works of Bach, Handel, Mozart, and Mendelssohn. Operatic roles include Valentin in *Faust* (Gounod), Di Luna in *Il Trovatore* (Verdi), Rodrigo in *Don Carlo* (Verdi) Amonasro in *Aida* (Verdi) and the title roles in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Rossini) and *Porgy and Bess* (Gershwin).

A major exponent of new music, he actively performs the works of living composers and has given the world premieres of *Death* by Luis Andrei Cobo, and *Spiritual Suite* by Tonia León, narrated by Levar Burton and the legendary Marion Anderson.

He has also been fortunate to have collaborated with Betty Allen, Richard Alston, and Grace Bumbry, and has performed with some of the most distinguished artists of our day including, Kathleen Battle and Jessye Norman.

Mr. Saint John is currently a baritone soloist with the Fordham United Methodist Church Choir, Bronx, New York. In that capacity, he has served as the baritone soloist on nine occasions for Fordham's annual Christmas performance of Part I of *The Messiah* (Handel). In 2008 he served as the baritone soloist for Fordham's performance of Part III of *The Messiah*. Mr.

Saint John's most recent concert was a solo recital at Fordham Church in tribute to Paul Robeson's famed October 29, 1927 Paris Concert of Negro Spirituals and folk songs.

Pianist and organist **Douglas Drake** is currently in his 14th season serving Broadway United Church of Christ in New York City as its music director. As chapel organist for St. Hilda's & St. Hugh's School, he plays daily chapel services for students and faculty. Mr. Drake is also organist at Eighth Church of Christ, Scientist, in Manhattan. For 10 years, he was also associate musician at St. Michael's Church where he helped to organize and perform in a series of all-Bach recitals on the church's famous Rudolf von Beckerath organ. It was on that occasion that the *New York Times* commented on his "lucid touch." Much in demand as a recitalist, accompanist, and guest music director, Mr. Drake has performed previously in Merkin Concert Hall and a variety of New York City's houses of worship. A graduate of the College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati, he studied organ with David Mulbury.

## About the Composer

African American composer and arranger **Hall Johnson** (1888 - 1970) was a musical genius who was fluent in German and French and studied at Julliard in New York City. His many musical gifts included playing the violin, viola and piano. He elevated the Negro Spiritual to an art form comparable in its musical sophistication to European classical compositions. His work was also featured in Hollywood films and on the Broadway stage. Hall Johnson directed many famed choral groups during his professional life and, most importantly, produced well known arrangements of Spirituals and folk songs. Many of his compositions have been performed and recorded by soloists and choirs the world over.

## Merkin Concert Hall

Thursday, February 25, 2010 at 7:30 pm

## Russell Saint John *baritone*

Douglas Drake, *piano*

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### A Witness to Hall Johnson\*

Swing dat Hammer! (Negro "Chain-gang" Song)

Honor! Honor!

Take My Mother Home

*(By Hall Johnson based on a fragment of an old Negro folk-song from the collection of Wm. A. Logan.)*

My Good Lord Done Been Here

Witness

I'm Gonter Tell God All o' My Troubles

His name So Sweet

Wade In De Water

My Lord, what a mornin'

Let de Heb'n-light shine on me

Stan' still, Jordan

Keep a-inchin' along

I Got to Lie Down

Heaven is One Beautiful Place

My God Is So High

Oh, Glory!

\* Arranged by Hall Johnson unless otherwise indicated.

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Steinway is the official piano of Merkin Concert Hall

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### ETHEL Plays Jacob TV

The high-octane post-classical string quartet **ETHEL** teams up with Dutch avant-pop composer JacobTV for two U.S. PREMIERES. A *New Sounds Live* presentation hosted by WNYC's John Schaefer

THURSDAY • APRIL 22, 2010 • 7:30 PM

### Lark Portraits in 4x5: Lark Chamber Artists & Jeremy Denk, piano

WORLD PREMIERE by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Paul Moravec. *Contemporary Contexts* series

THURSDAY • MAY 20, 2010 • 7:30 PM

### New Songs: Elizabeth & the Catapult and singer/pianist Ed Pastorini

WORLD PREMIERE by Elizabeth and the Catapult. A *New Sounds Live* presentation hosted by WNYC's John Schaefer

THURSDAY • MAY 27, 2010 • 7:30 PM

### SIGNAL

Brad Lubman, Conductor

WORLD PREMIERE by Nico Muhly & AMERICAN PREMIERE of Sir Harrison Birtwistle's *The Corridor*. Kaufman Center's **Face the Music** youth ensemble will perform works by Nico Muhly at 6:30 pm. *Contemporary Contexts* series

Tickets and information at 212 501 3330 or [kaufman-center.org](http://kaufman-center.org)

Single tickets: \$25 / 30



Nico Muhly



Todd Palmer of  
Lark Chamber Artists



ETHEL

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Photos: Samantha West (Muhly),  
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