

DR. AND MRS. WHARTON TRIBUTE CONCERT

Sep 14, 2025 | Cobb Great Hall

Featuring:

Norm Lewis; Joseph Joubert, piano

Carmen Bradford

MSU Symphony Orchestra

Aaron Diehl Trio

"The Calling" performed by Zsilas Michael Hughes



View the digital program at
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PROGRAM

Fanfare for the Common Man (A. Copland)

MSU Symphony Orchestra;

Zongheng Zhang, Guest Conductor

Opening Remarks

Eric Olmscheid, Wharton Center Executive Director

Violin Concerto, op. 47 in D minor (Mov. III) (Jean Sibelius)

MSU Symphony Orchestra; featuring Runqi Weng, violin

"Embraceable You" (Gershwin/Riddle)

Carmen Bradford with MSU Symphony Orchestra

"But Not For Me" (Gershwin/Riddle)

Carmen Bradford with MSU Symphony Orchestra

Remarks

Kevin Guskiewicz, Michigan State University President

"Bit of Bedlam" (Billy Taylor)

Aaron Deihl Trio

"À Bientôt" (Billy Taylor)

Aaron Deihl Trio

"A Grand Night for Swinging" (Billy Taylor)

Aaron Deihl Trio

Symphony No. 3, op. 78 in C minor (Part III)

"Organ Symphony" (Camille Saint-Saëns)

MSU Symphony Orchestra

INTERMISSION

"The Calling" choreographed by Jessica Lang

Performed by Zsilas Michael Hughes

Remarks

Bruce Wharton

Norm Lewis; Joseph Joubert, piano

ABOUT DR. AND MRS. WHARTON

DR. CLIFTON R. WHARTON JR. (1926–2024)

Dr. Clifton Wharton was born in 1926 in Boston, Massachusetts. He attended Boston Latin School, & entered Harvard University at age 16, where he earned a B.A. honors degree. In September 1945, Dr. Wharton graduated from the Tuskegee Army Air Primary School in the 46A class.

Dr. Wharton held an M.A. from the School of Advanced International Studies of Johns Hopkins University, a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Chicago, & was awarded 61 honorary doctorates. He had careers in philosophy, foreign economic development, higher education, & business. He served as the chairman & CEO of TIAA-CREF, the world's largest pension fund, & became the first Black person to become CEO of a Fortune 500 company.

When elected president of Michigan State University (serving from 1970-78), he became the first Black person to lead a major predominantly white university in the United States. During his tenure, Dr. Wharton strived to make MSU a community for everyone, stewarding efforts to broaden educational access, and leading the first capitol campaign which included funds for Wharton Center.

Dr. Wharton also served as chancellor of the State University of New York System from 1978-87, the nation's largest university system. He served six U.S. Presidents in foreign policy advisory posts, including an appointment by President Clinton to deputy secretary, the second-highest position in the U.S. Department of State.

Dr. and Mrs. Wharton were married on April 15, 1950, sharing over 70 years together. Together they had two sons: Clifton R. Wharton III (1952–2000) and Bruce Wharton.

DOLORES DUNCAN WHARTON (1927–2025)

Mrs. Dolores Wharton was born in 1927 in New York City. After earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Chicago Teachers College, Mrs. Wharton went on to receive nine honorary doctor of humane letters in recognition of her significant contributions to society.

Mrs. Wharton was a corporate director, foundation executive, & arts advocate. She was the chairman & chief executive officer of The Fund for Corporate Initiatives, Inc., a non-profit organization devoted to strengthening the role of minorities & women in the corporate world.

Throughout her life & career, Mrs. Wharton focused on creating spaces for women, people of color, & was a strong supporter of the arts. She was appointed by President Gerald Ford to the National Council on the Arts of the National Endowment for the Arts from 1974-80. She was also a trustee of the Museum of Modern Arts from 1977-87, & a director of the Albany Institute of History and Arts from 1980-87.

Mrs. Wharton was the first Black woman elected to the board of the Phillips Petroleum Company, the Kellogg Company, & Michigan Bell Telephone Company.

BIOS

Zsilas Michael Hughes

Zsilas Michael Hughes is an African American non-binary dancer with Pacific Northwest Ballet, born in Flint, Michigan, and raised in the south of Little Rock, Arkansas. After joining the company in 2021, their career took flight as a dancer, originating and shining in spritely roles such as the soloist in 'Kehpri' choreographed by Annabelle Lopez-Ochoa. Through performing in works such as Justin Peck's 'Time's Are Racing' Principals Pas De Deux, Dwight Rhoden's World Premiere 'Catching Feelings', as well as their Pointe debut in Arabian Coffee as the Peacock from George Balanchine's 'The Nutcracker,' Hughes provides a new image of diversity in ballet.

This new image in ballet has impacted the masses, as Hughes is an example of "you can do anything." Their existence as a pointe dancer performing in works such as "Cracks" by Rena Butler as Pacific Northwest Ballet World Premiere, Peasant Pas Variation, and the Gold Fairy Variation at Ballet 22 showcase the ability to be transcendent within the art form.

Their work extends far from the home stage of Pacific Northwest Ballet in Seattle, Washington. Hughes' career presence is acknowledged nationally as they have touched some of the most iconic stages from coast to coast. Gracing the Kennedy Center in a new work of Kiyon Ross and Jennifer Archibald, as well as the new staging of Donald Byrd's work "From Other Suns". Flying through the wondrous space that is Jacob's Pillow and the Performance Arts Center in Los Angeles, California.

When off stage, Zsilas enjoys the wonders of problem-solving solving, also known as choreographing. Since the age of twelve, a total of 22 works has been created, from solo works to ensemble pieces, ranging from lethargic to contemporary ballet. Known works include 'Dream' an award-winning solo, 'Break The Mold' performed by the students of Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet, and the upcoming world premiere of 'Symphonic Piano Concerto Apassionata,' performed by the Professional Division Students of Pacific Northwest Ballet.

AARON DIEHL TRIO

Grammy-nominated pianist Aaron Diehl has quietly redefined the lines between jazz and classical and built a global career around his nuanced, understated approach to music-making. Praised for his "melodic precision, harmonic erudition, and elegant restraint" (*The New York Times*) and his "traditional jazz sound with a sophisticated contemporary spin" (*The Guardian*), Diehl has performed with musical giants such as Wynton Marsalis, Cécile McLorin Salvant, Tyshawn Sorey, and Philip Glass. Diehl has been a soloist with the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, and the Cleveland Orchestra, and worked with conductors like Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Marin Alsop, and Alan Gilbert. In 2023, Diehl was named the Artistic Director of 92NY's Jazz in July Festival, succeeding the legendary Bill Charlap.

Joining Diehl is Philip Norris, who recently graduated from The Juilliard School of Music with a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Jazz Studies. He first began his music path in his hometown of Raleigh, North Carolina, on the piano and French horn before developing his passion for bass at age 13. His collaborations encompass esteemed names such as Wynton Marsalis, The Jazz

At Lincoln Center Orchestra, Joshua Redman, David Sanborn, Veronica Swift, and, more recently, Emmet Cohen.

Rounding out the trio is Aaron Kimmel, who, for nearly two decades, resided in New York working as a freelance drummer. Kimmel holds a Bachelor of Music degree from The Juilliard School, where he studied with Kenny Washington and Billy Drummond. He frequently appears at Smalls and Dizzy's Club, as well as venues all around the world. Kimmel has played with such jazz luminaries as Harry Allen, Ken Peplowski, Eric Alexander, Joe Magnarelli, Grant Stewart, Terrell Stafford, Ryan Kisor, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Ann Hampton Callaway, Mary Stallings, and Jon Faddis.

NORM LEWIS

Norm Lewis recently appeared onstage, starring in the off-Broadway production of *Ceremonies In Dark Old Men* as well as the national tour of the Tony Award® winning production of *A Soldier's Play*, and starred in Andrew Lloyd Webber's award-winning West End Concert of "Love Never Dies." Mr. Lewis last appeared on Broadway in the Fall of 2021, starring in *Chicken and Biscuits* at the Circle In The Square Theatre. He received several award nominations for his performance as Porgy in the Broadway production of *The Gershwins' Porgy & Bess* and, in 2014, made history as the first Black "Phantom" in *The Phantom Of The Opera*. He is an Emmy, Grammy, Tony®, and SAG Award nominee for his work onstage, screen, and in music. Mr. Lewis is a proud founding member of Black Theatre United.

JOSEPH JOUBERT

Joseph Joubert is a Grammy-nominated musician who's well known as a pianist, arranger, orchestrator, Broadway conductor, and music director. Mr. Joubert could recently be seen on

Broadway as the co-orchestrator & co-arranger, music director, and conductor of "Pirates! The Penzance Musical", as well as the music supervisor, orchestrator, and co-arranger for the most recent Broadway revival of "The Wiz". In addition, he's the co-orchestrator of Alan Menken's "Hercules". His Broadway orchestration credits include: "Caroline or Change", "The Color Purple" (Drama Desk Nomination), "Disaster", "Violet" (Drama Desk Nomination) and "Leap of Faith" He was Musical Director for Berry Gordy's "Motown The Musical "and was assistant conductor for Nice Work If You Can Get It and Billy Elliot. He was the guest conductor for Encore's "Tap Dance Kid".

As a record producer and arranger/orchestrator, he has worked with Diana Ross, George Benson, Patti LaBelle, Whitney Houston, Cissy Houston, Jennifer Holliday, Dionne Warwick, Luther Vandross, Norm Lewis, and Diane Reeves. He is a founding member of MUSE - musicians united for social equity.

CARMEN BRADFORD

Carmen Bradford is jazz royalty, a 2024 Grammy Award winner for "Basie Swings the Blues – the Count Basie Orchestra." She's been nominated five times for Grammy Award and is the recipient of the Los Angeles Jazz Society's Jazz Vocalist Award. With her body of work, which reflects her vast experience, versatility, and technical brilliance, she has carved out her place in jazz history, and she continues to contribute to the preservation of this uniquely American art form.

Bradford was born in Austin, Texas and raised in Altadena, California. The daughter of legendary cornetist and composer Bobby Bradford and world-renown jazz vocalist, composer, and author Melba Joyce, and granddaughter of Melvin Moore (who

sang with Lucky Millender and his Big Band, Dizzy Gillespie's Big Band, and the Ink Spots), Bradford grew up with music in her home and in her heart.

She was discovered and hired by William "Count" Basie when she was just 22; she went on to be the featured vocalist with the legendary Count Basie Orchestra for nine years and has continued to perform with them regularly throughout her career. All four of her Grammy Award nominations are for albums with the Count Basie Orchestra, including two in the 1980s and a third, "Big Boss Band," with guitarist George Benson. (She and Benson performed the classic duet, "How Do You Keep the Music Playing," on the Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson.) The fourth is 2022's "Live At Birdland."

In 1992, Bradford released her first debut album, "Finally Yours" (Evidence Records), to critical acclaim. In 1995, the release of her second solo album, "With Respect" (Evidence Records), established Bradford as one of jazz music's most diverse and exciting vocal stylists.

Bradford has performed and/or recorded with Patti Austin, Tony Bennett, George Benson, Shelly Berg, James Brown, Benny Carter, Dori Caymmi, John Clayton and the Clayton-Hamilton Orchestra, Freddie Cole, Lena Horne, Kurt Elling, Wynton Marsalis, Jeremy Monteiro, David Murray, Willie Nelson, James Newton, Kenny Rankin, Lou Rawls, Doc Severinsen, Frank Sinatra, Byron Stripling, Tierney Sutton, Jeff Tyzik, Joe Williams, Nancy Wilson, Liz Wright, and countless other artists around the world.

She also has performed and/or recorded with the Dallas Symphony, the Dani Felber Big Band, the Detroit Symphony, the

DIVA Jazz Orchestra, the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, the National Symphony, the Philadelphia Pops, the Rochester Philharmonic, the Vancouver Philharmonic, and many other organizations.

Bradford teamed with singer/composer Kenny Rankin for the Benny Carter Songbook Project, performing with him the duet, "And All That Jazz." Other notable artists on the album include Ruth Brown, Jon Hendricks, Shirley Horn, Diana Krall, Peggy Lee, Diane Reeves, Bobby Short, Joe Williams, and others. At the request of Benny Carter, Bradford also sang "Key Largo" on this Grammy Award-winning album.

Bradford's 2004 release, "Home With You" (Azica Records), is a warm and beautiful collection of vocal and piano duets with jazz great Shelly Berg. In 2008, with the release of "Live from Jazz at Lincoln Center's Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola: Sherrie Maricle & The DIVA Jazz Orchestra featuring Carmen Bradford," Bradford returned to her big band roots. That recording ultimately brought her back to her first big band family, as well: She continues to tour with the Count Basie Orchestra, always grateful to Count Basie for opening the door for her. "When the Count Basie Orchestra calls me," she says, "I go."

The 2015 release of "Invisible Design," with jazz great John Mills, showcases Bradford's versatility. 2015 also saw the release of "A Very Swingin' Basie Christmas" with the Count Basie Orchestra (conducted by Scotty Barnhart). The album features Bradford, Ledisi, Ellis Marsalis, and Johnny Mathis.

In 2016, Bradford's was the voice on the album "Imagination Nation," a tribute to Nelson Mandela by South African trumpeter

Darren English. This critically-acclaimed album won the Pledge for Peace award from the Global Peace Song Awards, and was named Best in Jazz.

MSU Symphony Orchestra

The MSU Symphony Orchestra, directed by Octavio Más-Arocas, was established in 1927 and has performed for the Music Educators National Conference in Indianapolis on two occasions. It has presented the gala opening concert of the Music Educators Midwestern Conference in Ann Arbor and performed the opening concert to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Midwest International Conference of Bands and Orchestras in Chicago. The Symphony Orchestra has recorded for Koch International Classics, Arizona University Records, GIA Records, and PBS specials. In addition, the orchestra's performance of "The Birth of a Symphony," Symphony No. 4 ("The Gardens") by Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, was videotaped by PBS for nationwide distribution.

OCTAVIO MÁS-AROCAS

Octavio Más-Arocas serves as Director of Orchestras at the Michigan State University College of Music. He is a versatile and dynamic conductor whose achievements demonstrate his talent and musicianship. Más-Arocas was previously the Director of Orchestras and Professor of Orchestral Conducting at Ithaca College in New York, Music Director and Conductor of the Mansfield Symphony Orchestra in Ohio, Principal Conductor of the Marquette Symphony Orchestra in Michigan, Conductor-in-Residence at the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music in California.

Mr. Más-Arocas served as Principal Conductor of the Green Bay Symphony Orchestra, Wisconsin, and held the positions of

Director of Orchestral Studies and Opera Conductor at the Lawrence University Conservatory of Music in Wisconsin, Director of Orchestral Studies and Associate Professor of Conducting at the Baldwin Wallace University Conservatory of Music in Ohio, Director of Orchestras at the Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan, Resident Conductor of the Sewanee Summer Music Festival in Tennessee, and Assistant conductor of the National Repertory Orchestra in Colorado. In 2013, simultaneously to his work with the Lawrence Symphony Orchestra, Mr. Más-Arocas was the Resident Conductor of the Unicamp Symphony Orchestra in Campinas, Brazil, where he also was a Visiting Professor of conducting at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas. Mr. Más-Arocas spends part of his summers in the Grand Traverse area, where he continues his association as conductor at the Interlochen Center for the Arts.

An award-winner conductor, Mr. Más-Arocas won the Robert J. Harth Conducting Prize at the Aspen Music Festival, the Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy Award, given by Kurt Masur, is the recipient of the Thelma A. Robinson Award from the Conductors Guild, a prize winner of the Third European Conductors Competition, and a winner of the National Youth Orchestra of Spain Conductors Competition. Mr. Más-Arocas was selected by the League of American Orchestras to conduct the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra in a showcase event during the League's National Conference in Dallas.

Chosen by Kurt Masur, Mr. Más-Arocas was awarded the prestigious Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy Scholarship. Consequently, he worked as Maestro Masur's assistant with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and the Helsinki Radio Orchestra, and made his German conducting debut with the Leipziger

Symphonieorchester. The offer came after Mr. Más-Arocas' New York debut concert sharing the podium with Maestro Masur and the Manhattan School of Music Symphony.

In the last few years, Mr. Más-Arocas has conducted orchestras across North and South America and Europe, including the Filarmonica George Enescu in Romania, the Orquesta de Valencia and Granada City Orchestra in Spain, the Leipziger Symphonieorchester in Germany, the Orquestra Sinfônica da Unicamp in Brazil, the Green Bay, Traverse City, Bluewater, Catskill, Clinton, Fort Worth, Spokane, Toledo, Phoenix, Memphis, Kansas City, and San Antonio Symphonies, the National Repertory Orchestra, the Manhattan School of Music Symphony, the orchestras of Viana do Castelo and Artave in Portugal, the Interlochen Philharmonic, the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico Philharmonic, the Rosario Symphony in Argentina, Kharkov Symphony in Ukraine, the National Youth Orchestras of Portugal and Spain, the Pescara Symphony in Italy, the Amsterdam Brass in the Netherlands, and the Ciudad Alcala de Henares Symphony. In addition, Mr. Más-Arocas has served as assistant conductor at the Madrid Royal Opera House.

Mr. Más-Arocas was assistant conductor of the National Repertory Orchestra, which he conducted in subscription, family, and pops concerts. As the Resident Conductor at the Sewanee Summer Music Festival, he conducted the Festival, Symphony, and Cumberland Orchestras. Other festival appearances include the Aspen Music Festival, the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, the Festival Internacional Carlos Gomes in Campinas, Brazil, the Interlochen Music Festival, the Bach Festival at Baldwin Wallace University, and the MidAmerican Center for Contemporary Music.

His ability to work, inspire, and transform young talent has led him to be a frequent guest conductor with prominent music education organizations and ensembles around the world. He has worked with the World Youth Symphony Orchestra, the national youth orchestras of Portugal and Spain, has conducted All-State Honor Orchestras, and has been in residence with university orchestras in Chicago, Cornell University, Portugal, and Brazil. Mr. Más-Arocas has lead tours with the National Youth Orchestra "Templarios" of Portugal, the Interlochen Symphony, the Baldwin Wallace Symphony, and toured Argentina with the Silleda Wind Symphony.

In demand as conducting teacher, Mr. Más-Arocas has taught workshops and masterclasses in the U.S., Portugal, Brazil, and Spain and is currently on the faculty of two of the world most competitive conducting workshops, the Cabrillo Festival Conducting Workshop, which attracts the most talented conducting students from all around the world, and the Ithaca International Conducting Masterclass. He has taught at the Queens College Conducting Workshop in New York and leads the very selective graduate orchestral conducting program at Ithaca College.

Mr. Más-Arocas is an alumnus of the prestigious American Academy of Conducting at Aspen, where he studied with David Zinman. He completed doctoral studies and his main mentors include Kurt Masur, Harold Farberman, and Emily Freeman Brown.

RUNQI WENG, VIOLIN

Runqi Weng is an accomplished violinist currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) at Michigan State University under the mentorship of Professor Dimitri Berlinsky. She earned her

master's degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music, where she studied with renowned violinists Ilya Kaler and Olga Kaler.

Weng began her musical training at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing under Professors Lv Xu and Danan Liang. She has garnered numerous awards in international competitions, demonstrating exceptional artistry and technical mastery.

Notable achievements include:

- Grand Prize, Michigan State University College of Music Concerto Competition (2025)
- Second Prize, International Grand Prix Competition (2025)
- Second Prize, Naftzger Young Artists Competition (2025)
- Third Prize, Korea-China International Music Competition (2020)
- Grand Prize, Oleh Krysa International Violin Competition (2019)
- Third Prize, Hong Kong International Violin & Chamber Music Competition (2018)

Weng has been highly praised by competition judges for her skillful and artistic performances. In 2020, she was invited to perform as second violinist with one of China's most renowned string quartets, the Amber String Quartet, during the Beethoven 250th Anniversary Commemoration Ceremony. She has further refined her craft through esteemed programs such as the Heifetz International Summer Institute (2022) and masterclasses with world-renowned artists including Pinchas Zukerman and Philippe Quint. These experiences have solidified her reputation as a promising and dynamic artist in the classical music world.

Zongheng Zhang is a first-year Doctoral student in Orchestral Conducting at Michigan State University, studying under

Professors Octavio Mas-Arocas and Kathrine Kilburn. He holds a Master's in Orchestral Conducting from UT Austin, where he served as Assistant Conductor for the UT Symphony Orchestra and Music Director of the UT University Orchestra. Zhang has worked with Austin Opera, Butler Opera Center, and Berlin Opera Academy. He has conducted operas like La Bohème and Carmen and premiered Le Falcon by Dmitry Bortniansky in 2024. From 2016 to 2021, Zhang was Concertmaster for The Orchestra Now and Bard Conservatory, collaborating with renowned conductors.

ORCHESTRA PERSONNEL

Violin I

I. Qingzhuo Li
Diya Dong
II. Farangiz Takhirova
Hannah Hsu
III. Thomas Shahbaghyan
Sarah Munson
IV. Min-Han Tsai
Arianna Argentieri
V. Hsin-Jen Yang
Tadan Baartz-Bowman
VI. You-Jung Hsu
Xinying Hu
VII. Yueyu Liu
Jungmin Lee
VIII. Dana Hardy
Mabel Ciske
IX. Ashwin Innuganti

Violin II

I. Leonid Tsoy
Daniella Greene
II. Chonghua Zuo
Amy Chang
III. Yulin Zhou
Wang Liang
IV. Layang Ka
Zenán Li
V. Fanhong Jiang
Wenjin Zhang
VI. Kieran Venugopal
Selin Samsar
VII. Lin Heng Ping
Chenghong Yin
VIII. Lyudmila Gofurova
Noah Walter
IX. Alison Birmingham

Pianos

Xiaoxiao Ouyang
Yi-Hui Chen

Violas

I. Yifei Wang
Tirian Cooper
II. Yu-Chieh Lin
Jamie Kasper
III. Mengyuan Song
Qiongwen Zhang
IV. Jiajing Fang
Aidan Chapman-Anderson
V. Jenna Small
Xinye Xu
VI. Meagan Turner

Cellos

I. Tung-An Chien
Weigen Jiang
II. David Au Yeung
Shaniah Cooper
III. Jingyuan Zhang
Cheng-Lin Yu
IV. Weian Gu
Nolan Wiebenga
V. Ruiyang Xie
Yi-Chen Ke
VI. Cheng-Hung Chung

Basses

I. Grant Phillips
Alexandria Kelley
II. Manyi Zhang
Grace Kovacs
III. Kaden Connell
Ariel LeBlanc
IV. Parker Duncan
Otto Krueger

Flutes

Morgan Page
Ivana Chacon
Alex Coble

Oboes

Brett Boyer
Geoffrey Madge
Ari Vanderlaan

Clarinets

Chang Shu
Jake Basil
Rafael Puga
Hourun Qu

Bassoons

Megan Frederick
Katherine Dahn
Rosalie Trueback

Horns

Reed Fitzpatrick
Caden Dennie
Alexander Delperdang
Aiden Leonard

Trumpets

Natalia Vela
Calvin Pfund
Kaylee Rodriguez
Evelyn Szilagyu

Trombones

Jordan Dove
David Grimes
Jonah Weller

Tuba

AJ Johnson

Percussions

Colin Chandler
Kayla Mears
Cadence Miller
Taryn Parry
Klair Thomas

Organ

Hae Won Jang

Rhythmic Section

Piano, Kevin Eisenberg
Guitar, Daniel Li
Bass, Langston Kitchen
Drums, Sarah Whitaker