



Greg Miles

22|23 SEASON

 UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

presents

LEYLA McCALLA

WED, JAN 18, 7:30 pm

Ramsey Concert Hall

The program will be announced from the stage.

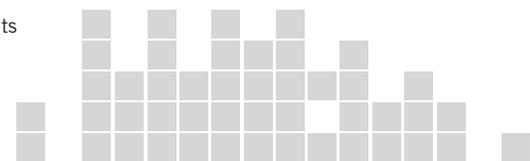
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#ugapresents



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

LEYLA McCALLA

Combining original compositions and traditional Haitian tunes with historical broadcasts and contemporary interviews, Leyla McCalla's remarkable new album, *Breaking The Thermometer*, offers an immersive sonic journey through a half century of racial, social, and political unrest as it explores the legacy of Radio Haiti — the first radio station to report in Haitian Kreyòl, the voice of the people — and the journalists who risked their lives to broadcast it.

McCalla's performances here are captivating, fueled by rich, sophisticated melodic work and intoxicating Afro-Caribbean rhythms, and the juxtaposition of voices— English and Kreyòl, personal and political, anecdotal and journalistic—is similarly entrancing, raising the dead while shining a light on the enduring spirit of the Haitian people.

McCalla isn't just some detached observer, though; she writes with great insight and introspection on the album, grappling with memory, identity, and her own experiences as a Haitian-American woman, unraveling layers of marginalization and generations of repression and resolve in search of a clearer vision of herself and her role as an artist. The result is at once a work of radical performance art, historical scholarship, and personal memoir, a wide-ranging and powerful meditation on family and democracy and free expression that couldn't have arrived at a more timely moment.

Born in New York City to a pair of Haitian emigrants and activists, McCalla developed an early fascination with the country and its culture thanks in part to the time she spent visiting her grandmother there as a child. After moving to Ghana for two years and later graduating from NYU, McCalla eventually drifted south to New Orleans, where she planned to make a living playing cello on the streets of the French Quarter.

Her dedication to illuminating the Black roots of American culture eventually led her to the Carolina Chocolate Drops, and after two years touring and recording with the Grammy Award-winning group, she left to pursue her own career as a solo artist. In 2014, she generated considerable buzz with her critically acclaimed debut, *Vari-Colored Songs: A Tribute to Langston Hughes*, which prompted the *New York Times* to rave that "her voice is disarmingly natural, and her settings are elegantly succinct."

Two more similarly celebrated releases followed, 2016's *A Day For The Hunter*, *A Day For The Prey* and 2019's *Capitalist Blues*, which yielded even more glowing reviews and profiles, as did her 2019 debut with *Our Native Daughters*, a collaborative project featuring Rhiannon Giddens, Amythyst Kiah, and Allison Russell.

