

AT WAR WITH OURSELVES-

400 Years of You

A rhapsodic modern day song cycle
spun from the skin of history
for string quartet, chorus, and narrator

Miner Auditorium
SFJAZZ Center
San Francisco, California
May 7, 2022 at 7:30pm
May 8, 2022 at 7:00pm

Kronos Quartet

David Harrington, violin
John Sherba, violin
Hank Dutt, viola
Sunny Yang, cello

Music by Michael Abels
Text & Narration by Nikky Finney
Performed with the At War With Ourselves Chorus
Conducted by Valérie Sainte-Agathe

Produced by Janet Cowperthwaite
Production Management by Kronos Performing Arts Association

Brian H. Scott, lighting designer
Scott Fraser, sound designer
Cath Brittan, line producer

At War With Ourselves Chorus

Soprano
Yuhi Aizawa Combatti
Rabihah Davis Dunn
Ava Gaughan *
Ginger Jones-Robinson
Adela Kelemen *
Victoria Ko *
Angelyn Liu *
Sarah Liu *
Christabel Nunoo
Colby Smith
Isabel Yang *

Alto
Kristina Blehm
Katja Heuzeroth
Charlotte Kelly *
Sarah Kelly *
Nia Spaulding
Azaria Stauffer-Barney *
Susan Thampi
Alexis Walker
Heidi L. Waterman

Tenor
Joseph Bates
Johnnie J. Felder
Thomas Kim
Ryan S. Peterson
Sidney Ragland
Khris Sanchez

Bass
Joel Chapman
Glenn Healy
Avi Jacobson
Malcolm X Jones
Bradley Kynard
Edward Nunoo
Daniel Yoder

* Members of the San Francisco Girls
Chorus Premier Ensemble

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At War With Ourselves — 400 Years of You

Text by Nikky Finney

You are given 10 square feet of space to live and 3 vertical inches of air to breathe. Ankle iron is ordained for your frontal & temporal lobes. Their one desire: your black body in endless service

& performance. You are the new country's newest moving picture show. They will never be disinterested in what your arms, legs, lips, can do on their well-lit screens. The rest of you, the ravishing wondrous

veiled interior: your vermilion quiet, your indigo jar of morning whispers, the midnight calculations of your mother, every smokey algorithm your father ever dreamed, will be, right from the start, thrown overboard

with the sharks, and it will never not rise up through the waves. Your one desire: to stand beyond their brutality, in the same calendar of stars that your mother stood up in. In a flash of slave schooner moonlight,

in a cotton field peculiar, alongside the invention of the TV, the automobile, the camera, the lie, the 13th amendment, the washing machine, the basketball, the blackface, they will dismiss your wailing inventive

mouth, abolish any federal reconstruction projects focused on your wind and solar capacities, order and proclaim your blood to not be human, call for more federal studies that trumpet how your eyes possess no

tear ducts, yes, your heart beats, but with only three-fifths of the necessary four chambers, your neck is believed to be made of leather and it will be stretched & tested before the eyes of their children. {Black}

"skin is the largest organ in the {American} body - and the most erotic."¹
The ravishing wondrous innermost black islands of you, were never sunk, no matter the number of cannon balls sent to sink.

You have re-attached the legs and implanted the flying cells of millions just like you, back into your own. You have run, marched, and fought on behalf of the bones, the cerebellums, the spit, the eyelashes, of the

60 million or more swirling at the bottom of the sea. Your indefatigable zest & quiet has a 4 century strong heartbeat & pulse. With the laws and codes meant to eradicate you, you invented a clock, a better ironing

board, a third traffic light, a golf tee, a blood bank that everyone but you could use. You are *The Real McCoy* among other McCoys, but other names have instead stuck to your black skin. Refusing to halt their haunting

laughter and Wall Street minuets they reach for the chokehold of their muskets to march you back into place & position & performance every time you write *Senator* or *President* or *Gold Medal* or *thundering original musician*

in front of your name. Now is the great 400th anniversary of your presence in the Republic: you, 4 feet tall in a kerchief, with a shotgun, headed back into the swamp to free more of you, you, your black and balled

leather fists rising & splitting the Olympic air, you, your majestic lunations and almanacs spilling from your pockets like gold coins. The ravishing wondrous private inner bank of you never was on the auction block.