

Castle of our Skins Announces Season 11: Roots

Through music, poetry, and other arts, Castle of our Skins takes a close look at lineage, legacy, and the lessons born from a connection to the past



Boston, Massachusetts Sep 5, 2023 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - The late, great poet Maya Angelou poignantly remarked “you can’t really know where you are going until you know where you have been.” Through music, poetry, and other arts, [Castle of our Skins](https://www.castleskins.org) takes a close look at lineage, legacy, and the lessons born from a connection to the past in its 11th season titled Roots.

Beginning on Sunday, November 5th at Hibernian Hall in Roxbury, the season opens with a program centered on the question: *What does it mean to belong to a person, to a place, to yourself?* The program, aptly called Belonging, is curated by the [2023-2024 Shirley Graham Du Bois Creative in Residence, dancer Jenny Oliver](https://www.shirleygrahamdubois.com). In collaboration with local dancers, musicians and creatives, Belonging reflects on the concept of connection - belonging - through participatory imagination and performance.

Through its long-standing relationship with the Celebrity Series of Boston, Castle of our Skins presents *As I Heard When I Was Young* at the Bethel A.M.E. Church in Jamaica Plain (December 2nd). Featuring chamber music with African roots and Pan African ideals, the program centers concepts of unity, solidarity, and connections across the African diaspora.

Four its fourth year, the concert and education series dedicated to celebrating Black artistry through music will host a Black Composer Miniature Challenge, inviting composers who identify as Black and part of the African diaspora to compose 30 to 60-second pieces for solo saxophone inspired by Indigenous themes, stories, and symbols. New this season, the call will be shared as a sister project to Bahué Duo's Latinx Composer Miniature Challenge. Together, the like-minded, culturally-specific challenges will work to create greater visibility of the global majority and build even stronger networks of diverse creatives.

No stranger to deep community engagement, Castle of our Skins will invite musicians from select Boston-area conservatories' Black Student Unions to collaborate, learn, create, and build fellowship in its third annual Intercollegiate Black Student Union Fellowship. Centered around the theme of EmBODYment, the two week fellowship will conclude with a concert co-curated by the students to feature movement, spoken word, and works by African diasporic composers (January/February).

Funded with support by the Fellowes Trust, Castle of our Skins will launch a four-part Edutainment Work-shop Series of interactive, intergenerational, educational programs designed for youth and families at the Roxbury Branch of the Boston Public Library. All programs, which will take place on select Saturdays January through June 2024, will highlight Black history, culture, music, and arts through the organization's signature mix of education and entertainment.

Other season highlights include an immersive three-day residency at the Longy School of Music of Bard College - presented as part of Castle of our Skins' fifth year as a Music Ensemble in Residence - culminating in a portrait concert highlighting the rich body of music by composer Adolphus Hailstork (March 29th at Longy & March 30th at Brattleboro Music Center, VT); a reprise of The Wanderer's Tethering in collaboration with Boston Lyric Opera, Boston Poet Laureate Porsha Olayiwola and composer Mason Bynes (April 6); its fourth program at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum entitled Roots that explores the origins of inspiration with critically-acclaimed pianist Kyle P. Walker (April 21); and a venture back to England to perform with musicologist-pianist Dr. Samantha Ege to explore African Tales through music (May 23).

"Castle of our Skins is deeply aware of the lack of equity in composer representation on concert stages and the omission of important stories and figures related to not only Black history, but also American and world history" said Ashleigh Gordon, co-founder and Artistic Director. "It's this lack of equity that we seek to change — this season and all seasons — by centering a wide breadth of artistry, stories, voices, and cultures."

Castle of our Skins, born out of the desire to foster cultural curiosity, invites exploration into Black heritage and culture and spotlights both unsung and celebrated figures of past and present. It is a Black arts institution dedicated to celebrating Black artistry through music.

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