



The Visiting Artist Series presents

ALICIA OLATUJA, voice (USA)
INTUITION: SONGS FROM THE MINDS OF WOMEN

THURSDAY, MAY 2, 2019 . 7 & 9PM

MilkBoy ArtHouse

UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND

ARTIST PARTNER PROGRAMS

VAS

VISITING ARTIST SERIES

*The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center's
Visiting Artist Series presents*

ALICIA OLATUJA, voice
INTUITION: SONGS FROM THE MINDS OF WOMEN

Alicia Olatuja, vocals

Jon Cowherd, piano

David Rosenthal, guitar

Richie Goods, bass

Ulysses Owens Jr., drums

PROGRAM

Works to be announced from the stage

*We would like to acknowledge the **Holiday Inn-College Park** as a
season sponsor and preferred choice hotel for the Visiting Artist Series.*

Once you have listened to acclaimed vocalist, composer and arranger **Alicia Olatuja**, you won't soon forget her. Praised in *The New York Times* as "a singer with a strong and luscious tone," Olatuja combines the earthy with the sublime, bringing a grounded relatability to genres as lofty as classical, as venerated as jazz and as gritty as R&B. On her stunning Resilience Music Alliance debut, *Intuition: Songs From The Minds Of Women*, Olatuja lends her distinctive approach to celebrating the artistic output of noted female composers.

Olatuja's vocal excellence stunned a global audience of millions during the second inauguration ceremony for President Barack Obama in 2013 with a soaring featured solo during the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir's rendition of *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*. Though most didn't know her name, her pristine voice and poise made a visible impact on the dignitaries in attendance, with reporters and social media lavishing her with praise.

Since this historic performance, opportunities to expand her repertoire and earn fans have only snowballed. Olatuja has performed extensively with The Juilliard School's various jazz ensembles, shared the stage with Chaka Khan, BeBe Winans, Christian McBride, Dr. Lonnie Smith, Billy Childs and others, and appeared at national and international music festivals with her own band, earning accolades from fans and the press. She released a previous music collection, *Timeless*, independently in 2014.

Intuition features songs by Sade, Angela Bofill, Brenda Russell, Linda Creed, Imogen Heap, Tracy Chapman, Kate Bush and others. Produced by Olatuja, Kamau Kenyatta and Ulysses Owens Jr., with arrangements by noted jazz musicians, *Intuition* is a showcase for Olatuja's broad vocal range, deft lyrical interpretation and elegant phrasing, a sound that may draw comparisons to current soul-pop finds like Ella Mai and H.E.R. while evoking such treasured soul divas as Grammy winners Lalah Hathaway, Rachele Ferrell and Dianne Reeves.

Intuition is a perfect musical commentary for the times, as women reassert their rights, gain more political clout, and speak out against harassment, abuse and exploitation in all walks of life.

"When we hear the word 'intuition' we think of a woman's intuition, that inner, gut-instinct thing that goes beyond mere information," says Olatuja of the album's title concept. "There is something powerful and beautiful and something to be celebrated in that. The subtitle *From the Minds of Women* reminds people that we're not just intuitive, emotional beings. We are intellectual as well. We do know how to connect the emotional and the rational. And when we do that, especially through our work, beautiful and unimaginably creative things are made."



Olatuja is perfectly suited to deliver a meditation on the depth of women's musical expression. She puts her distinctively soulful stamp on every track, giving beloved South American anthem *Gracias A La Vida* by Violeta Parra a funky update with Memphis-style horns while acing the Spanish lyrics; building bridges to the Motherland with African choruses on Angela Bofill's *Under The Moon And Over The Sky*, and adding a Caribbean jump-up beat to the Linda Creed co-composition *People Make the World Go Round*. Olatuja's creative approach also reimagines Brenda Russell's *So Good, So Right*, the focus track Sade Adu's *No Ordinary Love*, Joni Mitchell's *Cherokee Louise*, Tracy Chapman's *Give Me One Reason*, Kate Bush's *This Woman's Work* and Imogen Heap's *Hide And Seek*. The set includes an original tune by Olatuja, as well as compositions by a new composer and an Australian colleague.

The striking vocalist made sure to pick songs that represented a variety of themes, perspectives and ages, as well as geographic areas, emphasizing the power of diversity.

Many of the tracks begin either a cappella or with a single instrument accompaniment for the first few bars. This technique spotlights the classically trained artist's vocal control and interpretive abilities. "I enjoy when people speak of my voice as if it's an instrument, because it's just as valid and legitimate as piano, bass or guitar," Olatuja notes. "But the voice also has the power to communicate text, and that's what I want, to communicate my interpretation of the song to the listener."

Originally from St. Louis, MO, Olatuja focused her relentless energy on music at a young age. Singing in her church choir and in various school ensembles, she was exposed to everything from gospel anthems, R&B grooves and pop fare to Latin oratorios and a cappella harmonies. Though she had planned a career in veterinary medicine while at the University of Missouri-Columbia, her music interests led to being cast as the lead in an operetta commemorating the bicentennial of the Lewis & Clark Expedition. Preparations included more than two years of intense vocal training, workshopping and live performances that only sharpened her prodigious gifts. With a Master's degree in Classical Voice/Opera from the Manhattan School of Music in New York City, the singer has performed in regional theater, opera companies, gospel conclave and jazz festivals across the globe, returning often to Brooklyn, the culturally diverse, artistically progressive enclave that has influenced dozens of successful neo-soul, jazz, hip-hop and rock talents.

In *Intuition*, Olatuja decided to celebrate the musical contributions of women composers by reinterpreting their songs through her own lens of classic, jazzy soul. As such, it is a dazzling journey through time, tempo, genre, language and culture from some of the most respected women artists of our generation. With the recording initially supported through a crowdfunding campaign, the project was picked up in 2018 by the Resilience Music Alliance label and is launching in the first quarter of 2019.

Thanks to her diverse musical choices and gorgeous musical interpretations, Olatuja's *Intuition* is a carefully crafted statement of female empowerment at a pivotal moment in our cultural history.



Artists lead complicated lives. They collect material for new work, they often teach and engage with community groups and they are always developing their craft.

In **SIDE NOTES**, we are providing good reads and fun facts to give you a sense of who our visiting artists are and what makes them do what they do. Contributing writers include students, faculty, staff and alumni from the extended Clarice family.



A Conversation with Alicia Olatuja

Q: You just released your second album, *Intuition: Songs from the Minds of Women*. Can you tell us what inspired the concept for this record?

Alicia: I feel like women are really stepping to the forefront and being more vocal these days, and that society is ready to hear what women have to say in a new way. **I've been influenced by so many women, not just artists, and I'm very much aware of the shoulders on which I stand.** I really wanted to do an album that celebrated and championed women composers and expressed this intuition that is associated with women: that gut instinct

that can at times transcend the logical or rational. Sometimes we just trust this unspoken thing that drives us and motivates us to make decisions. But I also wanted to express that women ARE intellectual beings, and **when you marry these things, the gut instinct, the heart and the mind, artistically amazing things can be created.**

Q: You stepped beyond jazz in this album in your choice of composers and songs for the project, finding some terrific works by women artists from multiple genres. What was your thought process for choosing the material for the album?

Alicia: I wanted *Intuition* to be a celebration of women composers across the board, to really express their heart and artistry, but put it into the instrumentation of jazz and give it a new context. I wanted to express through MY voice what these incredible composers are trying to say.

I also wanted to cover the gamut of the female experience. It's amazing the number of issues that were happening when some of these songs were written, in the 70's and 80's, that are still recurring today. *Cherokee Louise* by Joni Mitchell, for example, tells the story of a girl who is suffering from racism and abuse in her life; **these are issues that we still have to stand up and fight against now. The problems aren't going away.**

Some of the songs talk about other things that women can identify with—love and passion and loss: these are human experiences. **We are all about putting things in categories and genres, but the human experience cannot be categorized like that.**

So I included composers of different backgrounds and genres, and pulled it all together to where I am as an artist. So you will hear some Sade, some Tracy Chapman, some Imogen Heap. All of these different composers have incredible things to say.

Q: Where there any surprises as you started translating these great compositions into the jazz idiom?

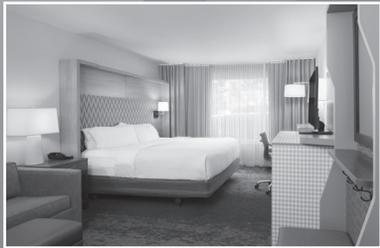
Alicia: Honestly I felt like it wasn't that much of a challenge to translate them into jazz. I've always been a bit of a sponge, attracted to a variety of music and genres, and never felt like I had to hold back artistically just because I wanted to sound a certain way. **I think with music, you have to let it flow through you, let it influence you, then you take your hands off of overworking it too much. When you do that, it really isn't that difficult to make it your own.**



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ABOUT THE VISITING ARTIST SERIES

The Clarice's **VISITING ARTIST SERIES** curates a season of regional, national and international artists in dance, music, theater and performance. Beyond the stunning work these artists bring to the stage, the Visiting Artist Series is also committed to providing extensive campus and community engagement opportunities that extend the academic learning and cultural opportunities for UMD students as well as the community that surrounds the university. Through creative partnerships, we believe that artists can be catalysts for community change, leadership and empowerment. The Visiting Artist Series is part of the Artist Partner Programs that include the NextNOW Fest, the National Orchestral Institute + Festival, NextLOOK at Joe's Movement Emporium and MilkBoy ArtHouse.

UPCOMING ARTIST PARTNER PROGRAMS EVENTS

VISITING ARTIST SERIES: DANCE
DANCENORTH/LUCY GUERIN INC./SENYAWA
(Australia/Indonesia)

ATTRACTOR

SAT, MAY 4 . 8PM

\$25 PUBLIC / \$10 STUDENT/YOUTH / UMD STUDENTS FREE

Dancenorth and Lucy Guerin Inc. collaborate with tour-de-force Indonesian music duo Senyawa to fuse contemporary choreography with Indonesian folk ritual idioms, western metal music and the Javanese spiritual tradition of entering trance through dance and music. Ensemble members conclude the performance by selecting audience members to co-create an unparalleled shared experience.

NATIONAL ORCHESTRAL INSTITUTE + FESTIVAL & WOLF TRAP OPERA:
GERSHWIN'S PORGY & BESS

SAT, JUNE 1 . 8PM

TICKETS STARTING AT \$20 / \$10 STUDENT/YOUTH / UMD STUDENTS FREE

Cincinnati Pops Conductor John Morris Russell opens the 2019 festival in a concert anchored by Gershwin's great American opera, Porgy and Bess. The performance pairs the opera with rarely heard contemporaneous works by black composers, including Nathaniel Dett, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Florence Price and James Europe.

NATIONAL ORCHESTRAL INSTITUTE + FESTIVAL:
DVOŘÁK'S SYMPHONY NO. 8

SAT, JUNE 8 . 8PM

TICKETS STARTING AT \$20 / \$10 STUDENT/YOUTH / UMD STUDENTS FREE

Maryland-native Andrew Grams returns home to lead a tour-de-force program including Anna Clyne's *Abstractions* (based on Baltimore Museum of Art works), Mozart's intimate Concerto for Bassoon and Antonin Dvořák's masterful Symphony No. 8.

VISITING ARTIST SERIES: THEATRE
ANDREW SCHNEIDER (USA)

AFTER

MAY 10 - MAY 11

\$25 PUBLIC / \$10 STUDENT/YOUTH / UMD STUDENTS FREE

"Hallucinatory. Psychotropic. Miraculous" (*The New York Times*). Andrew Schneider's technical theater masterpiece examines the last burst of human thought before entering the afterlife. AFTER commands mind-bending light and sound effects, and physical performances riddled with humor and intelligence. This journey engages all the senses to determine where the human experience stops, how it gets there and what comes after.

NURTURE THE FUTURE OF THE ARTS

We believe artists can be catalysts for community change, leadership and empowerment.

This season, our Visiting Artists will:

- **CREATE** opportunities for young audiences to experience live performances and creative conversations through the K-12 School Partner Program
- **ENHANCE** our understanding of the world through Do Good Dialogues, exploring social justice and the ways the human spirit informs art
- **SUPPORT** creation and development of new work by UMD students through master classes, coaching and performances of their work by visiting artists
- **ENGAGE** students through intimate, unplugged performances in residence halls throughout the year, creating connections through art, food, and shared experiences

Immerse yourself in a world of artistic discovery with our 2018-2019 visiting artists and strengthen the future of the arts by making your gift today.

To support the Visiting Artist Series visit theclarice.umd.edu/make-gift. Or call 301.405.4517.

YEAR OF IMMIGRATION

Every community owes its existence and vitality to generations from around the world who contributed their hopes, dreams, and energy to making the history that led to this moment. Some were brought here against their will, some were drawn to leave their distant homes in hope of a better life, and some have lived on this land for more generations than can be counted. Truth and acknowledgment are critical to building mutual respect and connection across all barriers of heritage and difference.

In this Year of Immigration at UMD, which seeks to transform dialogue into impact on urgent issues related to immigration, global migration and refugees, the Artist Partner Program at The Clarice, which believes that artists can be catalysts for community change, leadership and empowerment, has chosen to begin the effort of building bridges across cultures by acknowledging what has been buried by honoring the truth.

We are standing on the ancestral lands of the Piscataway People, who were among the first in the Western Hemisphere to encounter European colonists. We pay respects to their elders and ancestors.

Please take a moment to consider the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that bring us together here today.

Immigrants Make the University of Maryland Stronger.

Join us for a #YearofImmigration as we create community and conversations around immigration, global migration and refugees.

yearofimmigration.umd.edu

THE CLARICE

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