



**AUGUST WILSON AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER LAUNCHES
AW STUDIO SESSIONS
MONTHLY VIRTUAL MUSIC SERIES**

**New Series Features Orrin Evans, Leela James, Roger Humphries,
Gerald Veasey and Carol Riddick, Lyndsey Morgan Smith & more**

November 23, 2020 – Pittsburgh, PA – The August Wilson African American Cultural Center (AWAACC), one of the largest non-profit cultural organizations in the country focused exclusively on the African American experience and the arts of the African diaspora, announced the launch of *AW Studio Sessions*, a new monthly virtual music series. Featuring some of today’s most talented jazz, blues, R&B, and traditional Brazilian musicians and vocalists, *AW Studio Sessions* were recorded live in a series of intimate studio sessions. These digital concerts will be streamed on the first Thursday of every month beginning December 3, 2020 and will run through April 2021, with a special added performance by **Leela James** on Thursday, December 17, 2020, who will perform an array of Gertrude “Ma” Rainey classics in honor of the release of Netflix’s film adaptation of August Wilson’s *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*. Including performances by **Roger Humphries, Gerald Veasey, Carol Riddick** and a special work entitled *Terreno Comun: The Brazilian Project* by **Orrin Evans** commissioned by the Center, *AW Studio Sessions* showcase the Center’s commitment to supporting artists through performance, educational and commission opportunities.

AW Studio Sessions offers a broad range of Black musical traditions. Over the course of the winter, the sessions will dive into varied styles from jazz, soul and more, and will explore the influence of Nina Simone, an artist who shared August Wilson’s passion for social justice. *AW Studio Sessions* expands the non-profit organization’s mission to offer programs that advance Wilson’s legacy, reflect the universal issues of identity that he tackled in his work, and to celebrate Black culture.

“The August Wilson African American Cultural Center is proud to champion these artists at a time when opportunities to perform are so limited. We have long served as a platform to support artists, and we are eager to share their work and bring joy during a year of uncertainty,” said **Janis Burley Wilson, President and CEO of August Wilson African American Cultural Center**. “Blues and jazz music were a great influence on Wilson’s writing and creative process, and I’m thrilled to share this series, which showcases the music he loved, along with other styles that draw inspiration from many artists that Wilson admired.”

Tickets for all sessions are \$12 and further details are below. For more information and to purchase tickets, please visit <https://aacc-awc.org/events/>.

December 3, 2020 – 8pm – Orrin Evans’ *Terreno Comun: The Brazilian Project*

Terreno Comun was born out of a commission by the August Wilson African American Cultural Center. In this project, Orrin Evans, who played piano for Bobby Watson and Duane Eubanks, serves as musical director, bringing together some of the most acclaimed musicians in modern jazz and Brazilian music to create powerful arrangements of Brazilian standards. The ensemble features

Alexia Bomtempo (vocals), Luques Curtis (bass), Leandro Pellegrino (guitar), and Clarence Penn (drums).

December 17, 2020 – 8pm – Leela James: *Ma Rainey Redux*

Produced by Rex Rideout and AWAACC President and CEO Janis Burley Wilson, *Leela James: Ma Rainey Redux* celebrates the December 18 release of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* on Netflix. Featuring an array of Gertrude “Ma” Rainey classics such as *Stack O’ Lee*, *Don’t Fish In My Sea*, *Booze and Blues*, as well as a series of blues inspired by James’ originals, James will be joined in the studio by Jairus Mozee (guitar and musical direction), Ethan Farmer (bass), and Brian Collier (drums), among others.

January 7, 2021 – 8pm – Roger Humphries

Legendary drummer Roger Humphries, who played for Ray Charles and Horace Silver and later formed his own group, R. H. Factor, will present a jazz and big band set, joined in studio by Dwayne Dolphin (bass), Yoko Suzuki (saxophone), Max Leake (piano), and James Moore (trumpet).

February 4, 2021 – 8pm – Gerald Veasley and Carol Riddick

I Got Life: The Music of Nina Simone pairs two legends of jazz and soul music to celebrate an iconic artist. Riddick (vocals) and Veasley (bass) share a deep appreciation for Ms. Simone, who wrote renowned civil rights song “Mississippi Goddam and who marched at Selma. Her music and desire for social justice still resonate today. *I Got Life*, consists of vocals from Carol Riddick, Gerald Veasley (bass), Aaron Graves (keyboards) and Tim Hutson (drums).

March 4, 2021 – 8pm – Lyndsey Morgan Smith

Vocalist Lyndsey Smith will bring soul music to her session with a full band. Dennis Garner (musical director/drums), Claude Flowers (keyboard), Spencer Geer (guitar), and Ryan Joseph (bass) are joined by the Steeltown Horns, made up of JD Chaisson (trumpet), Rick Matt (saxophone), and Reggie Watkins (trombone).

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About August Wilson African American Cultural Center

The August Wilson African American Cultural Center is a non-profit multidisciplinary arts center located in Pittsburgh’s cultural district that generates artistic, educational, and community initiatives that advance the legacy of Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright August Wilson. One of the largest cultural centers in the country focused exclusively on the African American experience and the celebration of Black culture and the African diaspora, the non-profit organization welcomes more than 80,000 visitors locally and nationally. Through year-round programming such as the annual Pittsburgh International Jazz Festival, Black Bottom Film Festival, AWCommunity Days, TRUTHSayers speaker series, and rotating art exhibits in its two galleries, the Center provides a platform for established and emerging artists of color whose work reflects the universal issues of identity that Wilson tackled and which still resonate today. Opening in 2021, the Center will continue to expand its commitment to August Wilson’s legacy with *August Wilson: A Writer’s Landscape*, the first-ever permanent exhibition dedicated to the life and work of August Wilson.

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