

For Immediate Release



**LARA DOWNES AND NPR MUSIC ANNOUNCE
AMPLIFY WITH LARA DOWNES,
A NEW VIDEO CONVERSATION SERIES WITH LEADING BLACK
MUSICIANS**

The bi-weekly series, created and hosted by Downes, will offer intimate, personal conversations with visionary artists of color making art that is both in, and of, this time of transformation, turmoil, representation and reflection

Guests to include Rhiannon Giddens, Anthony McGill, Helga Davis, Davóne Tines, and Sheku Kanneh-Mason and family

*Series premieres Saturday, October 17 on NPR Music.org
and NPR's YouTube and social media platforms*



Introducing "Amplify With Lara Downes" on NPR Music

OCTOBER 16, 2020 - [NPR Music](#) and [Lara Downes](#) announce the launch of **AMPLIFY With Lara Downes**, a new bi-weekly series of intimate and deeply personal video conversations with visionary Black musicians who are shaping the present and future of the art form, premiering Saturday, October 17 on NPRMusic.org, YouTube, and social media platforms.

Created and hosted by pianist and artist/citizen Lara Downes, and co-produced by NPR Music's Tom Huizenga, this series invites viewers to experience raw, revealing, and open-hearted conversations reflecting on how artists are responding and creating in this time of profound

challenge and change. Downes and her guests—initially including MacArthur Fellow vocalist and multi-instrumentalist Rhiannon Giddens, 2020 Avery Fisher Prize-winning clarinetist Anthony McGill, multidisciplinary artist Helga Davis, and boundary-breaking vocalist Davóne Tines, with other guests such as Sheku Kanneh-Mason and family to follow—connect and reflect on highly relevant themes ranging from music and mission, legacy and lineage, to transformation and change.

Says Downes of the series: “In this time of our collective reckoning about historical inequities in American life and art, I’m excited to amplify the voices of extraordinary artists of color, shining a bright light on a diverse and rich future that is, in the words of James Weldon Johnson, *‘full of the hope that the present has brought us.’*”

ABOUT LARA DOWNES

Pianist Lara Downes has been called “an explorer whose imagination is fired by bringing notice to the underrepresented and forgotten” (*The Log Journal*). An iconoclast and trailblazer, her dynamic work as a sought-after performer, a Billboard Chart-topping recording artist, a producer, curator, activist and arts advocate positions her as a cultural visionary on the national arts scene.

Downes’ musical roadmap seeks inspiration from the legacies of history, family, and collective memory, excavating the broad landscape of American music to create a series of acclaimed performance and recording projects that serve as gathering spaces for her listeners to find common ground and shared experience.

Downes is the inaugural Artist Citizen in Residence for the Manhattan School of Music, as well as a Fellow of the Loughaven Artist Residency. Her work has been supported by the Mellon Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Sphinx Organization, the Classical Recording Foundation Award, the University of California Innovator of the Year Award, and the Center for Cultural Innovation, among others.

Downes’ artistry has been called “a musical ray of hope” by *NBC News*, “luscious, moody and dreamy” by *The New York Times*, and “addicting” by *The Huffington Post*. She is equally at home on major stages including the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Boston Symphony Hall, the Ravinia Festival, Tanglewood, and Washington Performing Arts, and clubs and intimate venues including Joe’s Pub, National Sawdust, Yoshi’s, and Le Poisson Rouge.

Downes’ fierce commitment to activism and advocacy see her working with organizations including Feeding America, the ACLU, the Lower Eastside Girls Club, the Sphinx Organization, and Watts Learning Center. She is an Artist Ambassador for Headcount, a non-partisan organization that uses the power of music to register voters and promote participation in democracy.

ABOUT NPR MUSIC

For more than a decade, NPR Music’s robust music journalism and award-winning original video programming has delighted millions of music fans from all genres. NPR Music collaborates with NPR’s news magazines, public radio Member stations and the passionate listener community to celebrate exceptional music and discover emerging artists. Visit [NPRMusic.org](https://www.nprmusic.org) to find the complete Tiny Desk concert series, music feature stories, extensive archives of performances, interviews and music reviews. Connect with NPR Music on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

AMPLIFY With Lara Downes

Every other Saturday on NPRMusic.org, YouTube, and social media platforms

Schedule of Initial Guests

- October 17: [Rhiannon Giddens](#)—singer/songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, Artistic Director of the Silk Road Ensemble
- October 31: [Anthony McGill](#)—principal clarinet of the New York Philharmonic, 2020 Avery Fisher Prize winner, and activist
- November 14: [Helga Davis](#)—multidisciplinary artist, actress, singer, composer, and host of WNYC’s “Helga” podcast
- November 28: [Davóne Tines](#)—bass-baritone, innovator, composer, co-creator of *The Black Clown*

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