

*Fourth Concert, August 22, 2022*

### **Avery Sharpe Group with Voices**

Avery Sharpe, bass; Matt DeChamplain, piano

Haneef Nelson, trumpet/flugelhorn

Charles Langford, saxes; Royal Hartigan, drums

Maya Sharpe, violin/voice

Wanda Sharpe-Rivera, Robert Rivera, Kevin Sharpe, voice

### *400: An African American Musical Portrait*

Avery Sharpe (b. 1954)

1. Arrival
2. Is There a Way Home?
3. Colonial Life
4. Fiddler
5. Antebellum
6. A New Music
7. Harlem and the War to End All Wars
8. The Blues and World War II
9. Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around
10. 500

Bassist Avery Sharpe was born in Valdosta, Georgia, and his first instrument was the piano. “I started playing when I was eight years old,” he recalls. “My mother was a piano player/choir director in the Church of God in Christ, and she gave lessons to everybody in the family—I’m the sixth of eight children—but it didn’t stick until it got to me.” He moved on to accordion and then switched to electric bass in high school, after his family had relocated to Springfield, Massachusetts.

Avery studied economics at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where he played electric bass in gospel, funk, and rock groups. With encouragement from renowned bassist Reggie Workman, he learned acoustic bass and soon was performing with Archie Shepp and Art Blakey.

Avery is considered a major force of his generation. He worked with piano jazz legend McCoy Tyner for over twenty years, playing hundreds of gigs worldwide and appearing with Tyner on more than twenty recordings.

Sharpe’s credits also include sideman stints and recordings with jazz greats like Dizzy Gillespie, Wynton Marsalis, Yusef Lateef, Bobby McFerrin, Pat Metheny, Billy Taylor, and many more. In 1994 he started his own artist record label, JKNM Records. To date he has more than thirteen titles as a leader on that label.

Sharpe is equally adept at songs and longer compositional forms. He wrote and conducted the soundtrack for the movie *An Unremarkable Life*. His six-movement piece *America’s Promise*, a work for Gospel Choir, jazz quintet, symphony orchestra, and chorus, debuted with the Springfield Symphony Orchestra. Sharpe received a commission by the classical ensemble Fidelio to write three extended works. He wrote a musical portrait for the stage for Chamber Music Plus. The stage production *Raisin’ Cane* has been touring since 2007 and features the actress Jasmine Guy and Sharpe’s trio. He was commissioned by the Springfield Symphony to write a concerto for jazz trio and orchestra, which premiered featuring his trio with Kevin Eubanks on acoustic guitar.

Avery Sharpe was the Sterling Brown ’22 distinguished visiting artist in residence in music at Williams College and was an artist associate in jazz bass, jazz coach, and faculty advisor for the Williams Gospel Choir and an affiliated faculty member for Africana studies at Williams.

His awards include the NAACP Martin Luther King Jr. Special Achievement Award and several National Endowment for the Arts Grants. Avery Sharpe is a TMO Entertainment artist.