

Mallarmé Chamber Players will release their newest CD, *Songs for the Soul*, on May 23 2010 on Albany/ Videmus Records in conjunction with a concert at the Carolina Theatre in Durham at 3:00 pm.

When the Mallarmé Chamber Players premiered William Banfield's mini-opera *Soul Gone Home* in 2003, then artistic director, Anna Wilson, was determined that this work be professionally recorded. The work, with lyrics by Langston Hughes, portrays a mother mourning for her recently deceased 16-year-old son. As she sits in her living room waiting for the undertaker, her son visits her from the "spirit world" and chides her for not being a better parent. Banfield's setting combines classical form infused with jazz, blues and even a bit of hip-hop with an unusual instrumentation of cello, flute, saxophone, piano, percussion and jazz vocalist. The resulting work is both powerful and poignant.

Anna tried for many years to find an opportunity to record this work and eventually teamed up with Louise Toppin, director of Videmus Records, who was excited about the possibility of producing the CD. Videmus is a non-profit organization committed to educational and collaborative projects on the repertoire of African American, women and under-represented composers. After several years of grant writing, Anna received funding for the project from the Copland Fund for Music. In the spring of 2008, Mallarmé recorded *Soul Gone Home*, as well as works by Undine Smith Moore, T.J. Anderson and Anthony Kelley representing four generations of African American classical composers. The recording sessions took place at Zenph Studios and Edenton Street United Methodist Church in Raleigh. Artists performing on the CD are Nnenna Freelon, six-time GRAMMY®-nominated jazz vocalist; Bonnie Thron, principal cellist of the NC Symphony; Ira Wiggins, saxophone and director of jazz studies at NC Central University; Debra Reuter-Pivetta, principal flutist of the Greensboro Symphony; Nicholas Lewis, clarinet instructor at Howard University; Thomas Warburton, piano and retired musicologist from UNC-Chapel Hill and Jonathan Wacker, director of percussion studies at ECU.

Soon after the recording sessions, Anna Wilson retired from Mallarmé (after 25 years) and Suzanne Rousso took on the project in its second phase of editing the numerous takes and mastering the CD. Mallarmé also worked with Nnenna Freelon's talented professional artist daughter, Maya Freelon Asante, to provide the artwork on the CD cover. It is titled "Cute" which was created from an old family photograph and tissue paper watercolors to make a beautiful collage of colors and was featured in Asante's exhibition FREE at the Stone Center in Chapel Hill in 2009.

That takes us to May 23, 2010 and the official release of this exciting and unique CD. To celebrate the release, Mallarmé will give the last concert of the 2009-10 season, *Songs for the Soul*, at the Carolina Theatre in Durham. The concert features two of the works on the CD, Undine Smith Moore's *Afro American Suite*, a four movement work with each based on several well-known spirituals. It is scored for cello, flute and piano. *Soul Gone Home*, will follow and a second half of traditional spirituals arranged for Nnenna Freelon and Mallarmé by Brandon McCune. Brandon has been a long-time associate of Nnenna's and

frequently arranges music for her as well as being a fantastic jazz pianist. This performance is sure to have you singing out the door.

One other exciting aspect to this concert is that Mallarmé received a grant through the National Endowment for the Arts to be able to make free tickets available to people in the community who would normally not have the opportunity to attend an event like this. Vouchers for tickets are being distributed to area non-profit organizations, schools and churches.

The CD, Songs for the Soul, will be available for sale at the May 23<sup>rd</sup> concert as well as online through the Mallarmé website ([www.mallarmemusic.org](http://www.mallarmemusic.org)) and online retailers. Tickets for the concert on the concert are available on our website or by calling 919-560-2788.

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