

THE THOMAS S. KENAN INSTITUTE FOR THE ARTS & THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL OF THE ARTS HOST  
**THE BLACK SACRED MUSIC SYMPOSIUM & CONCERT XVII**  
DR. OLLIE WATTS DAVIS, FOUNDER & DIRECTOR  
FEBRUARY 15-18, 2024



# HAVEN



Dr. Ollie Watts Davis



Symposium Faculty Artists: Dr. K. Edward Copeland, Berris Bolton, L'Tanya Moore-Copeland, Kimberly Fullerton-Smith, and Dr. Alonza Lawrence

**SYMPOSIUM XVII**

February 15-18, 2024

Watson Hall

University of North Carolina School of the Arts

**CONCERT**

February 18, 2024

4:00pm

Gerald Freedman Theatre

University of North Carolina School of the Arts



UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SCHOOL OF THE ARTS



Dear Friends,

Welcome to the Seventeenth Black Sacred Music Symposium hosted by the Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts and the University of North Carolina School of the Arts for its first-ever regional gathering!



*From the Founder/  
Director*

*My heart is steadfast,  
O God! I will sing and  
make melody with all  
my being! For Your  
steadfast love is great  
above the heavens;  
Your faithfulness  
reaches to the clouds.  
Psalm 108:4*

Throughout our sojourn, the Sacred Music Tradition of Black Americans has served as a HAVEN with a singular purpose—to strengthen our hearts and steady our steps. Its efficacy is needed as much today as before. I am most grateful for this opportunity to advance its hallmarks of inspiration, instruction, navigation, and encouragement.

Symposium XVII is presented as an in-person offering and continues the tradition of corporate gathering for plenary sessions, panel discussions, and enthusiastic combined choir rehearsals. New this year, is a Liturgical Dance Workshop. I am thrilled to add this celebrated expression to the Symposium experience.

The Black Sacred Music Symposium must be experienced for it is beyond mere explanation. It is *a dedicated conference* for the study of the music, the methods, and the message of Black Sacred traditions, and it's more. It is a *formed community* where anyone—singers, dancers, orators, instrumentalists, and others with a passion for Black Sacred music traditions—gather for information, instruction, and inspiration. It's where you witness formation and growth within you and all around you. And it's yet more. It is *a culminating concert* where all who have participated in the conference form a combined choir with liturgical dancers and accompanying musicians, and present the music learned over three days. And it's more still. It's where many of those who come as audience members to witness the work are transformed into active participants in the performance offering with standing, clapping, swaying, rejoicing, singing, and joining the celebration!

I am extremely delighted to welcome you as an important part of Symposium XVII. Your presence is a gift. Sincere thanks to the Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts and the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, whose generous support has sustained this gathering.

Embracing HAVEN,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ollie Watts Davis".

Ollie Watts Davis, DMA  
Founder & Director



**Symposium XVII HAVEN Conference**  
**Schedule of Activities**

**Thursday, February 15, 2024**

All Conference activities are in the Bill and Judy Watson Hall,  
UNCSA

5:00pm-5:50pm **Registration, Lobby**

6:00pm **Opening Ceremony, Chamber Music Hall**  
*"Ever OnWarD: Advancing the Sacred Trust"*  
**Dr. Ollie Watts Davis, presenter**

6:30pm **Plenary Session I: "A House is not a Home:**  
*The Black Sacred Music Tradition as Haven in Light of its*  
*Continuing Relevance in a Society not built for its Creators"*  
**Dr. K. Edward Copeland, presenter**

7:30pm **Combined Rehearsal**

9:00pm **Instrumentalists' Rehearsal**

**Friday, February 16, 2024**

All Conference activities are in the Bill and Judy Watson Hall,  
UNCSA

5:00pm **Registration, Lobby**

6:00pm **Gathering, Chamber Music Hall**

6:15pm **Plenary Session II: "Doing Business on Great Waters: Examining the Global Impact of the Black Sacred Music Tradition and Its Implication for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and Beyond"**

**Dr. K. Edward Copeland, presenter**

7:00pm **Plenary Session III: "Faculty Artists' Panel / Liturgical Dance Workshop"**

*Chamber Music Hall & Studio 298*

**Endalyn Taylor-Outlaw, Dean, School of Dance, UNCSA**

8:00pm **Combined Rehearsal, Chamber Music Hall**

9:30pm **Instrumentalists' Rehearsal, Chamber Music Hall**

## **Saturday, February 17, 2024**

All Conference activities are in the Bill and Judy Watson Hall & Studio 298, UNCSA

10:00am **Instrumentalists' Rehearsal, Chamber Music Hall**

**Liturgical Dance Workshop, Studio 298**

**Endalyn Taylor-Outlaw, Dean, School of Dance, UNCSA**

11:15am **Conference Gathering, Chamber Music Hall**

11:30am **Plenary Session IV: Vertical Talks**

*"Glad to be of Good Service: Building an Engaged Music Ministry"*

**Ashley M. Davis, MBA, presenter**

*"The Music Minister's Toolkit"*

**Kimberly Fullerton-Smith, presenter**

*"The Worshipper: Tuning the Heart to Sing"*

**L'Tanya Moore-Copeland, presenter**

*"Singing Gospel the Healthy Way"*

**Dr. Alonza Lawrence, presenter**

1:00pm **Combined Rehearsal / Dress Rehearsal, Chamber Music Hall**

3:00pm **Closing Session, Chamber Music Hall**

**Dr. Ollie Watts Davis, presenter**

3:15pm **Processional**

**Members of the UNCSC Afro-Cuban Drumming Class**

with alumnus **Dante' Thomas**

**John R. Beck, coordinator**

4:00pm **Fellowship Reception, Second Floor, Library**

**Black Sacred Music Symposium Conference**

## **Sunday, February 18, 2024**

UNCSCA

All Conference activities are in the Gerald Freedman Theatre,

1:00pm **Technical Rehearsal**

2:00pm **Combined Choir and Dance Rehearsal**

4:00pm **Black Sacred Music Symposium XVII HAVEN Concert**

6:00pm **Reception, Lobby, Gerald Freedman Theatre**

# Black Sacred Music Symposium XVII Concert

## "HAVEN"

Dr. Ollie Watts Davis, Founder and Director

Gerald Freedman Theatre

University of North Carolina School of the Arts

Sunday, February 18, 2024

4:00pm

Program\*

Welcome & Greetings

George Walker  
(1922-2018)

**String Quartet No. 1** (1946)  
II. Molto adagio (*"Lyric for Strings"*)

University of North Carolina School of the Arts, String Quartet

Sebastian Leczky, *violin*

Yaali Mamerud, *violin*

Joshua Forbes, *viola*

Donovan Vega, *cello*

University of North Carolina School of the Arts, School of Dance

Endalyn Taylor-Outlaw, *Dean & choreographer*

Tim Amukele, arr.  
(b. 1976)

**Stand the Storm**

Ollie Watts Davis, *soprano*

Nancy Johnston, *piano*

Margaret Bonds  
(1913-1972)

**Spiritual Suite for Piano**

III. *Troubled Water*

Myron D. Brown, *piano*

Stacey V. Gibbs  
(b. 1962)

**Keep Your Eyes on the Prize/Rockin' Jerusalem**

Singing Rams

Winston-Salem State University

D'Walla Simmons-Burke, *director*

Roland Carter **Lift Every Voice and Sing** (James Weldon Johnson)  
(b. 1942)

Combined Chamber Choir  
Winston-Salem State University Singing Rams  
University of Illinois Black Chorus  
University of North Carolina School of the Arts Voice Students  
Myron D. Brown, *piano*  
Ollie Watts Davis, *conductor*

*PAUSE*

### **Instrumental Medley of Black Sacred Music**

Myron D. Brown, *director*

### **Congregational Singing**

*Symposium Program (order and selections to be announced)*

### **Black Sacred Music Symposium XVII Faculty Artists**

Berris Bolton, Quandra Clark, Dr. K. Edward Copeland,  
Ashley M. Davis,  
Kimberly Fullerton-Smith, Dr. Alonza Lawrence, L'Tanya  
Moore-Copeland

### **Reflections**

University of North Carolina School of the Arts  
Wake Forest University School of Divinity  
Winston-Salem State University  
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

### **Remarks**

Kevin Bitterman, *Executive Director, Thomas S. Kenan Institute  
for the Arts*  
Ollie Watts Davis, *Symposium Founder and Director*

Ollie Watts Davis  
(b. 1957)

**Blessing** (2018)

*\*Program is subject to change.*

## Program Notes

The Sacred Music of Black Americans, with humble beginnings, created on the soil of the southern states of America, was born out of hardship, yet filled with hope—the hope that is *fuel* for endurance—the hope that waits eagerly, and with anticipation. This music and this hope still speak. This music speaks as shelter—a refuge in times of storm. It speaks as a shield—armor for trauma. It speaks as a system—a lexicon containing the experiences of the elders as an emotional navigational tool. It serves as a soundtrack—as a major character that captures the sojourn and releases strength that informs, sustains, and supports the journey. The Sacred Music of Black Americans is a HAVEN.

The spirituals, hymns, art songs, anthems, and gospel songs on this concert represent a continuum of suffering and glory, longing and resolve, tension and release. This music carries the markings of a community looking for and finding escape, freedom, rest, dignity, faith, and hope. This is music to enliven the spirit and soothe the soul. The legacy of performing these melodies is being carried forward with nobility, energy, generosity, and excellence. We are deeply indebted to this faith journey. For the joy that is set before us empowers us to endure!



# **The Black Sacred Music Symposium**

## **A Brief History**

Founded in 1991 by Dr. Ollie Watts Davis, the Black Sacred Music Symposium is a four-day national conference dedicated to the study of the sacred music traditions of Black Americans. It has sustained a 32-year uninterrupted legacy of presentation at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

The Black Sacred Music Symposium provides participants with viable methods necessary to expand both their performance of the music and understanding of its message. Participants learn from distinguished faculty and perform with them in concert. Seminar topics include the history and development of African American sacred music traditions: congregational singing; folk and concert spirituals; metered and improvised hymns; anthems; and traditional and contemporary gospel expressions; as well as solo singing, choral ensemble, instrumental accompanying, and conducting techniques.

The conference structure consists of plenary addresses, vertical presentations, and panel sessions; evening rehearsals and interludes led by guest artists; and lightning talks and testimonials from scholars who are actively engaged through research, service, and practice. In February 2024, Dr. Davis, the Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts, and the University of North Carolina School for the Arts will host the first-ever regional gathering of the celebrated Black Sacred Music Symposium.

## **Black Sacred Music Symposium XVII HAVEN**

### **Co-Producers**

#### **Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts**

Kevin Bitterman, Executive Director

Lynda Lotich, Associate Director

Liza Vest, Business Manager

### **University of North Carolina School of the Arts Administration and Deans**

Brian Cole, Chancellor

Patrick Sims, Provost

Saxton Rose, Dean of Music

Endalyn Taylor Outlaw, Dean of Dance

Dr. Afeni McNeely Cobham, Associate Vice Chancellor and Vice Provost  
for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging

Dr. Tasha M. Myers, Director of Community and Belonging

### **Co-Partners**

#### **Winston-Salem State University Department of Music**

Dr. Myron D. Brown, Professor and Department Chair

Professor D'Walla Simmons-Burke, Director of Choral and Vocal Studies

#### **Wake Forest University**

Dr. Corey D. B. Walker, Dean, School of Divinity and Professor of Humanities

#### **Galilee Missionary Baptist Church**

Dr. Nathan E. Scovens, Senior Pastor

#### **Union Baptist Church**

Bishop Sir Walter Mack, Senior Pastor

#### **Triad Cultural Arts, Inc.**

Cheryl Harry, Programs

#### **City of Winston-Salem Human Relations / Department of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

Erika Simon, Human Relations Outreach Analyst

## **Black Sacred Music Symposium XVII HAVEN Staff**

Berris Bolton, *music director*

Carlton Bruett, *creative director*

Quandra Clark, *associate music director*

Geraldine Dzifa Dagher, *director of client relations*

Ashley Michelle Davis, *conference chair & director of development*

Charity Davis, *director of hospitality & personal assistant to Dr. Davis*

Ciobhan Dunn, *director of logistics & infrastructure*

Matthew Eaglin-Daniels, *photographer & videographer*

Jasmine Henderson, *director of human resources & training*

Reginald Payne, II, *director of marketing and*

*transportation & assistant to Dr. Davis*

Nicholas Pickett, *bass*

Darren Warren, *percussion*

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Black Chorus Ambassadors

Nekaybaw Blunt

Isaiah Calaranan

Ethan Chalmers

Meg Ciko

Eghonghon Eromosele

Stephen Ford

Molly Moomaw

Demia Simon

Brandon Young-Eleazar

## **Acknowledgements**

Black Sacred Music Symposium XVII HAVEN gratefully acknowledges our supporters. We recognize the participation of members of the Winston-Salem cultural, faith, government, and academic communities, along with friends who traveled significant distances to be with us. We appreciate the work of Dr. Myron D. Brown and the local instrumentalists who joined us, and we applaud the masterful performance of the Afro-Cuban Drummers and John R. Beck, Coordinator for Arts & Health Partnerships, for signaling a fitting close to our conference. Manifold grace to each of you!

## Biographies



**Berris Bolton** is a three-time American Grammy-nominated, Soul Train Award-winning Record Producer and Songwriter. He has been in the music industry for over 20 years gaining a considerable amount of experience as a writer, producer, musician and recording engineer. He has worked with numerous artists and labels including Tyrese Gibson, Avant, Stevie Wonder, Brandi, Tank, Ginuwine, Ludacris, Smokie Norful, Darius Books, Ricky Dillard & New Generation, and Sony Records, Universal Records, and Warner Brothers Records. He is currently the owner of the music production company, 4747 Entertainment, and the founder & director of “The CE-B Foundation of Performing Arts,” an inner-city youth mentoring program with a focus on Music Production & The Performing Arts. He studied at the Electric Lounge studio with Edward Heidenreich and respected recording engineer, Larry Strum, and is certified as a Pro Tools Engineer.



Pianist **Quandra L. Clark** is a signature voice, principal accompanist, and Assistant Director of the University of Illinois Black Chorus. A graduate of Millikin University in Decatur Illinois (BS) and Illinois (EdM), Quandra is the co-founder and co-director at The Well Experience, a nonprofit organization that provides mental health services to marginalized populations in the Champaign-Urbana community.



Musician, author, and attorney, **Rev. Dr. K. Edward Copeland** is a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and is recognized for his unique ability to teach the Bible with clarity and simplicity. At Symposium XVII, he posits that the Black Sacred Music tradition offers a “haven,” and addresses the biblical, cultural, and practical possibilities of exiles finding haven here and in the hereafter. Dr. Copeland is the Senior Pastor of New Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Rockford, Illinois and holds degrees from Illinois (BA); UC-Berkeley (JD) ; Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in California (MDiv); and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois (DMin).



Mezzo-soprano **Geraldine Dzifa Dagher** is a signature voice in the University of Illinois Black Chorus and Grace Fellowship Church. She earned the Bachelor’s degree in Human Development and Family Studies and is a board-certified Occupational Therapy Assistant. She is currently pursuing her Master’s degree in Labor and Employment Relations at the University of Illinois and is the Director of Client Relations for Dr. Ollie Watts Davis.



**Ashley Michelle Davis** is a signature voice, instrumentalist, and the Assistant Conductor of Black Chorus at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where she earned the Bachelor of Science and Master of Business Administration degrees. A sought-after emcee, Ashley is the founder of The Ashelle Group, proprietor of Waffle Baby, and Chief of Staff for Dr. Ollie Watts Davis. Ashley serves as Minister of Music at Grace Fellowship Church Champaign and is the Program Director of the Business Administrative Technology Department and a member of the Business faculty at Parkland College in Champaign, Illinois.



**Charity Davis**, personal assistant to Dr. Ollie Watts Davis, has delighted audiences as a vocalist since her appearance as a finalist on MTV’s “Making His Band” reality show. Extensive performance credits include world tours with Demi Lovato, Selena Gomez, Lady Gaga, and Robin Thicke; appearances at the American Music, Billboard, and Grammy Award Shows; and a performance at The White House for President Barack and First Lady Michelle Obama. In addition to serving as a signature voice, vocal coach, and choreographer for Black Chorus, Charity is the Director of Hospitality for the Black Sacred Music Symposium. She is also the President/Executive Director of the TALKS Leadership Movement.



Soprano **Ciobhan J. Dunn** is a signature voice in the Black Chorus at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where she earned the Bachelor of Arts in Communication. Ciobhan is the Assistant Director of Career Education and Outreach at her Alma Mater, UIUC, and she is a core member of the Black Sacred Music Symposium conference team.



**Matthew Eaglin-Daniels** is a multi-talented media-professional, musician, and entrepreneur. He is a proud graduate of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign College of Media. Matthew was a faithful and committed member of Black Chorus while at Illinois, and at Grace Fellowship Church in Champaign (Illinois), where he served as principal drummer under the tutelage of Dr. Ollie Watts Davis.



Singer, songwriter, educator **Kimberly Fullerton-Smith** was born into a musical family and has been active as a church musician since age 11, playing for the adult choir and training voices. During her tenure at Illinois, she served as Assistant Conductor, signature voice, and the only female instrumentalist. Kimberly is a music educator at South Holland District 151 and the Director of the Lewis University Gospel Choir in Romeoville, Illinois. She also serves at churches in Chicago as a musician and worship leader. Kimberly earned the BA in Music History at Illinois and the Master of Music Education from DePaul University in Chicago. While she has studied many genres of music, gospel music is dear to her heart. In March 2018 she released her solo project “Garment of Praise,” an encouraging project of contemporary and traditional gospel styles.



A native of the westside of Chicago, **Jasmine Henderson** earned the Bachelor of Music and the Master of Music Education with K-12 Licensure from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She is currently the General Music Teacher/Choir Director at Franklin STEAM Academy in Champaign, Illinois and she serves on the Board of Directors for The Well Experience, a non-profit community organization that provides services that Heal, Engage, Restore and Empower historically disadvantaged, marginalized, and oppressed populations in our communities, with focused support for women and children.



**Dr. Alonza Lawrence** has extensive experience as a vocal performer and studio teacher and has led several school, community, and church choruses. Past teaching experiences include serving as the Associate Instructor for the African-American Choral Ensemble of Indiana University; vocal coach, rhythm coach, accompanist, and soloist for the Emmy award-winning “Amen, Music of the Black Church!” PBS concert documentary; music educator and chorus director in the Virginia public schools; Artistic Director of the Boys Choir of Hampton Roads (Virginia), and the Minister of Music for several churches in Virginia and Indiana. He has also performed with the Virginia Symphony, the I. Sherman Greene Chorale, and the Virginia Opera. Since joining the Voice Faculty at the University of Illinois as a Postdoc, he has served as a professor of voice and contemporary vocal performance, Gospel studies, and as a vocal coach for the Lyric Theater. Alonza earned both his Doctorate of Music and Master of Music from the Jacobs School of Music of Indiana University, and he holds a Bachelor of Music Education from Norfolk State University.



Classical soprano, worship director, recording artist and editor, **L'Tanya Moore-Copeland** understands the importance of being a good steward of spiritual gifts. She is the Director of Worship and Arts at Saint Philip AME Church (Atlanta), a post she has held for 28 years, where she also serves as a Connectional Worship Leader. She earned the BA with honors in Music from Morris Brown College in Atlanta and the MM from Illinois. Her concert credits are extensive, and include performances as soprano with orchestra, opera companies, and gospel artists; along with appearances as choir director at festivals and for televised programs. For Symposium XVII, L'Tanya addresses The Worshipper's Heart and the importance of connecting the physical and the spiritual aspects of singing.



Tenor and pianist **Reginald Earl Payne, II** is a signature voice and assistant to Dr. Ollie Watts Davis. He is an alumnus of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, earning the Bachelor of Science, Master of Education, and Master of Music. Reginald is currently a graduate student at Yale University studying music and theology, where he serves as co-director of the Institute of Sacred Music's Gospel Choir.



United States Army veteran **Nicholas Pickett** has played bass for 20 years. He earned the Bachelor of Science in Psychology from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in 2016 and has been a bassist for the Black Chorus since his undergraduate tenure. He earned the Master of Science in Forensic Psychology from Arizona State University, and he is currently employed by the United States Secret Service.



**Darren Warren** is a versatile and well-rounded drummer whose work covers many genres, from R&B, jazz, and gospel to country and contemporary. He has worked extensively with songwriters and conductors, V. Michael McKay, A. Jeffrey LaValley, K. Edward Copeland, and Dr. Ollie Watts Davis. His recording projects and tours include work with Crofton Coleman, Code R.E.D, and the University of Illinois Black Chorus. He has served as the principal drummer in numerous African American churches. He is currently serving at Colossians Baptist Church in Newport News, Virginia. Darren is married to Maura and they have three children: Olivia, Bryson, and Jacquelyn.



Described as “*a bubbling stream of a voice, remarkably smooth down into a resonant, rich low register*” (San Francisco Chronicle), **Ollie Watts Davis** earns superlatives wherever she sings. Since her New York debut at Carnegie Hall, she has appeared with many of the nation's leading orchestras, including the San Francisco, Minnesota, Houston, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, and Dallas Symphony orchestras; in opera with the San Luis Obispo Mozart Festival; the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis; Des Moines Metro Opera; Opera Theatre of Springfield; and Illinois Opera Theatre; and internationally for performances and classes in North, Central, and South America; Europe; Africa; and Asia.

Dr. Davis is passionate about performances of historic significance, and has performed in prestigious venues in Pakistan, Costa Rica, France, and throughout the United States. Her presentations include *I'm a Stranger Here Myself*, as part of the exhibit, *With Firmness in the Right: Lincoln and the Jews* at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum in Springfield (IL), where she also presented *The Concert that Shook the Establishment*, a re-creation of Marian Anderson's 1939 Easter morning concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. She completed a residency at the University of Arkansas as performing artist and master class clinician and was featured in the PBS documentary *The Caged Bird: The life and music of Florence B. Price*. She has released two recordings as conductor and soprano with the Black Chorus at the University of Illinois and is featured on *Rootsongs*, with the Jupiter Quartet. These come in addition to her solo recording of spiritual arrangements, *Here's One*, which was featured on National Public Radio.

Dr. Davis's creative activity includes presenting at the National Association of Teachers of Singing 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Transatlantic Pedagogy Tour to Germany. In December 2020, her work with Black Chorus was featured on the WILL-PBS documentary, *American Portrait: Central Illinois, Lift Every Voice*, which also debuted her composition, *For My Good*, and in February 2023 she directed the 16<sup>th</sup> biennial Black Sacred Music Symposium at the University of Illinois. Additional engagements include directing Black Chorus IV @ Illinois Summer Youth Music, service as Artist-In-Residence for Elmhurst University (Illinois), and Illinois State University. In June 2021, she served as a Master Teacher for the 2020 NATS Intern Program at Georgia Southern University, and in January 2022 as guest conductor for the Illinois Music Educators Association Conference All-State Chorus. Her current project is a recital series titled: “*Toward Justice and Shared Humanity: Art Song of Black Americans as Lens, Language, Vision and Hope*, which she presented at the 2023 inaugural South Africa National Association of Teachers of Singing Conference at Stellenbosch University, Georgia Southern University, BayView Music Festival (Michigan), East Tennessee

University (Johnson City); and as *The Black Rose Salon Concert* for the Generation Venetian Arts Society (GENVAS) of Fort Lauderdale (Florida) and the Florida House on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, in honor of educator and activist Dr. Mary McCleod Bethune. Her performances have also received at Working in Concert/Black Voices in Cabaret, the Peabody Institute of Music, and SongFest.

In addition to her concert career, Dr. Davis uses her voice for important work as the writer of the mentoring curriculum, *Talks My Mother Never Had With Me*, and as a passionate mentor for young singers with **Studio: the Ollie Watts Davis Institute for Vocal Arts**. As author, composer, performer, and pedagogue, Dr. Davis, through her compelling performances and TALKS, *transfers a little knowledge systematically*. She is widely sought after as an inspirational speaker and delivered the keynote address for the televised 2020 Wisconsin Statewide Celebration honoring Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at the invitation of Governor Tony Evers from the Capitol Rotunda in Madison.

Dr. Ollie Watts Davis is the Associate Dean for Academic Programs in the College of Fine and Applied Arts, the Suzanne and William Allen Distinguished Professor in Music, Professor of Voice, and Artistic Director and Conductor of the Black Chorus at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. In 2018, she was awarded the Outstanding Faculty Leadership Award; her second Campus Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2014; the Illinois Student Senate Teaching Excellence Award in 2012; and was named a University Scholar in 2008, one of the highest honors bestowed upon a member of the faculty at the University of Illinois. Other campus awards include the UI College of Fine and Applied Arts Outstanding Faculty Award, a Recognition Award from the UI Alumni Association, and the Bronze Medallion of Honor by the UI Women's Association, where she was recognized as a woman who through example and service has used her talents to enrich the lives of others. She was honored with the 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Central Region of the National Association of Teachers of Singing and was recognized for her service and advocacy as a scholar, author, performer, composer, and pedagogue.

Additional awards include the Charles E. Walton Award presented by the Vivian G. Harsh Research Society of the Chicago Public Library for her "inestimable contributions" in 2016; the "Key to the City" for her musical contributions to the cultural life of Champaign, Illinois in 2015; the National Association for the Study and Performance of African American Music National Award in 2013; and the 40 North Lifetime ACE Award in 2012, which honors her accumulated successes for continued, outstanding support of the arts in the Champaign-Urbana community. Dr. Davis is a national honorary member of Sigma Alpha Iota; and holds honorary membership in the National Society of Arts and Letters, and Phi Beta Kappa.

A West Virginia native, Dr. Davis holds the Bachelor of Science (magna cum laude) from West Virginia Institute of Technology, where she was named Alumna of the Year; the Master of Arts from West Virginia University, and the Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts (Phi Beta Kappa) from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She and her husband, Rev. Dr. Harold Davis have five adult children, and three wonderful grandchildren.

For more biographical information, go to [www.blacksacredmusicsymposium.com](http://www.blacksacredmusicsymposium.com)



BLACK SACRED MUSIC SYMPOSIUM XVIII  
DR. OLLIE WATTS DAVIS. FOUNDER & DIRECTOR

