

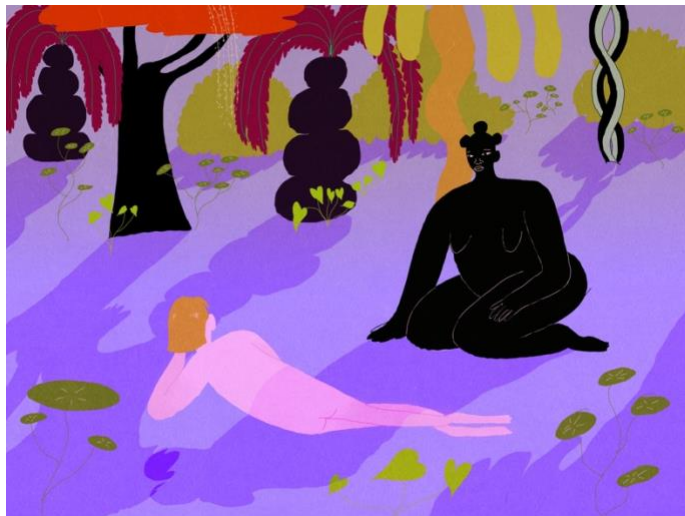
# NEWS

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## Walker Art Center to Premiere Newly Commissioned Multimedia Work by Grammy-Award winning jazz vocalist and composer Cécile McLorin Salvant

*Ogresse: Envisioned* Tells a Poignant Story of Power, Race, Gender, and Love

February 24 and 25, 2023



Cécile McLorin Salvant and Lia Bertels © 2021 Ogresse LLC.

**MINNEAPOLIS, February 8, 2023**—On February 24 and 25, the Walker Art Center will premiere *Ogresse: Envisioned*, a new multimedia work that explores power, gender, race, body diversity, and love through music, song, and immersive animated projections. The darkly humorous and poignant fairy tale is driven by the acclaimed, genre-defying score and 15-song cycle composed and performed by Grammy Award-winning jazz vocalist, composer, and visual artist [Cécile McLorin Salvant](#) and a 13-piece chamber orchestra, arranged and conducted by [Darcy James Argue](#). For its presentation of the

musical work, the Walker commissioned Salvant and Belgian animator **Lia Bertels** to bring the narrative to life through striking large-scale, projected imagery. The forthcoming performance marks the first time the multimedia visual components will be shared with audiences. Ticket information can be found on the [Walker website](#).

Over the course of her illustrious career, Salvant has developed a passion for storytelling and working across a wide range of musical forms, including jazz, vaudeville, blues, baroque, and folk. The development of *Ogresse*, which combines folk, classical, jazz, and Broadway-influenced music into a new seamless whole, beautifully captures her distinct approach and challenges preconceived musical boundaries. The concert version of *Ogresse* first premiered in 2018 to widespread critical acclaim. With *Ogresse: Envisioned*, Salvant embraces the full

spectrum of her creative vision, developing new visual components that enhance the overall impact of the story and experience.

*Ogresse* is in part inspired by a painting in Salvant's apartment of a Haitian female Goddess giving birth to the world as well as by the true story of Sarah Baartman (stage-named "the Hottentot Venus"), a South African woman who was exhibited in Europe as a freak due to the shape of her body and who was later embalmed and displayed in a museum until the 1970s. Drawing on these inspirations as well as Caribbean folklore, gothic fairy tales, and her own bracing imagination, Salvant created the story of *Ogresse*—an outcast, mythical creature who lives in the forest on the outskirts of a small town. The 80-minute musical event traces *Ogresse*'s experiences with the people from the town and speaks to her own journey through power, beauty, and self-conception. Although fictitious, the narrative of *Ogresse* is deeply relevant and resonates in ongoing contemporary dialogues about racism, sexism, colonialism, and the dynamics of power.

"We are thrilled to premiere this major new musical-visual-digital artwork by Cecile, long known for her exquisite vocal and compositional talents, but not yet as well known for her visual and interdisciplinary artistry," said Philip Bither, McGuire Director and Senior Curator, Performing Arts at the Walker. "This is the largest commission in the Performing Arts Department's history and represents a bold and essential vision, musically and visually."

The Walker is recognized for its multidisciplinary program and its collaborative work with artists to create new and expansive projects. Additionally, over the past two decades, the institution has carved out a distinct role within the landscape of jazz by encouraging and supporting experimentation among artists, allowing them to push the genre into the future with new approaches. The development of *Ogresse: Envisioned* encapsulates this defining institutional vision and speaks to the incredible work that can be produced when institutions and artists come together.

The presentation of *Ogresse: Envisioned* was commissioned by the Walker Art Center with support provided by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. The original *Ogresse* song-cycle was co-commissioned by Metropolitan Museum of Art, New Jersey Performing Arts Center, and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Program support provided by Nor Hall and Roger Hale and Leni and David Moore, Jr./The David & Leni Moore Family Foundation.

## **ABOUT THE WALKER ART CENTER**

The Walker Art Center is a renowned multidisciplinary arts institution that presents, collects, and supports the creation of groundbreaking work across the visual and performing arts, moving image, and design. Guided by the belief that art has the power to bring joy and solace and the ability to unite people through dialogue and shared experiences, the Walker engages communities through a dynamic array of exhibitions, performances, events, and initiatives. Its multi-acre campus includes 65,000 sq. ft. of exhibition space, the state-of-the-art McGuire Theater and Walker Cinema, and ample green space that connects with the adjoining Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. The Garden, a partnership with the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, is one of the first urban sculpture parks of its kind in the United States and

home to the beloved Twin Cities landmark *Spoonbridge and Cherry* by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen. Recognized for its ambitious program and growing collection of more than 15,500 works, the Walker embraces emerging art forms and amplifies the work of artists from the Twin Cities and from across the country and the globe. Its broad spectrum of offerings makes it a lively and welcoming hub for artistic expression, creative innovation, and community connection. Visit [walkerart.org](http://walkerart.org) for more information about upcoming presentations, programs, and opportunities to experience the art of our time.

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