

# Kendrah Butler-Waters

P R E S S   K I T





# About Kendrah

Dr. Kendrah Butler-Waters is a Philadelphia-based pianist, violinist, vocalist, composer, and educator whose work transcends genre and expectation. A 2025 PEW Fellow, Butler-Waters blends jazz, classical, and gospel influences, she crafts a sound uniquely her own—one rooted in both technical mastery and emotional depth. A multi-instrumentalist with an academic foundation in political science and sociology from Temple University, a master's degree in elementary education from Drexel University, and a doctorate in Educational Leadership and Administration from Immaculata University, Butler-Waters brings a rare combination of intellectual rigor and artistic brilliance to every performance.

As a 2015–2016 Jazz Resident at the Kimmel Center, she captivated audiences and has since performed at Cape May and Lancaster Avenue Jazz festivals and collaborated with poet laureates Yolanda Wisher and Trapeta Mayson for Consensus focused on Black female and femme poets and notable Philadelphia based artists. Her compositions have been featured across NPR, PBS, WHYY, WRTI and other platforms, as well as with Levar Burton Read's Tour, further amplifying her voice in the jazz and arts landscape.

Butler-Waters' career is defined by ambitious projects that explore cultural memory and social justice. From composing powerful works that trace African American history, to tributes like her 2021 sacred jazz homage to Trudy Pitts, to composing works that honor famed visual artist Edward Loper, she consistently honors musical legacies while pushing creative boundaries. Her recent work includes scoring music for *Ascendance*, a permanent interactive sculpture commemorating West Philadelphia's Black Bottom, and leading *88 Time*, a Pew Grant-winning project uniting four pianists in advocacy-driven compositions written for 8 hands and 4 pianos. Having premiered in April 2025, *88 Time* will continue to tour, showcasing Butler-Waters' ability to merge artistry with purpose. With new works slated for 2026, she remains a visionary voice in music, composing with heart, intellect, and an unwavering commitment to storytelling through sound.



# Commissions / Residencies

## WHAT NOW 2026: PHILLY'S SEMIQUICENTENNIAL - HONORING PEPPERPOT SOUP - 2025-2026

Commissioned by V. Shayne Frederick and the late Homer Jackson, developing music to honor the legacy of Pepperpot Soup. An African and Caribbean soup made famous by Africans who sold the soup during colonial times and was eventually picked up by the Campbell Soup company. Writing a score that will feature all female artist and presented at Philly's bisequicentennial in May 2026.

### MULTITUDES RESIDENCY: PAFA AND WCL - 2022

Commissioned composer by PAFA (Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts) and WCL (World Cafe Live) to compose a body of work honoring famed American Artist Edward Loper

[Multitudes: Making American Artists Commission](#)

### REC PHILLY/WRTI/WXPN RESIDENCY - 2021

Grant Commission from Black Music City/WXPM/WRTI/Jazz Philadelphia - tribute to Philadelphia's legendary organist, pianist, composer Trudy Pitts.

[Pray for Me](#)

### KIMMEL CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS JAZZ RESIDENCY - 2015-2016

2015-2016 Kimmel Center Jazz Resident who composed a new body of work focused on Sacred Jazz honoring the African American experience from the Transatlantic Slave Trade to the Black Lives Matter movement of 2015. Composed music for a 10 piece ensemble that was performed live at the Kimmel Center and hosted a series of work in progress and workshop sessions.

[Kimmel Center](#)

### ASCENDANCE: 37<sup>TH</sup> AND CUTHBERT PERMANENT INSTALLATION - 2023-2024

Ascendance - Commissioned by architect/visual artist Nina Cooke-John and former poet laureate Yolanda Wisher. Permanent structure at 37th and Cuthbert Streets where Kendrah's music is featured that honors Philadelphia's Black Bottom Neighborhood

[Ascendance - Cooke-John/Wisher Commission](#)  
[uCity Ascendance](#)

### CONSENSIS: HONORING BLACK FEMALE/FEMME PHILLY POETS - 2023

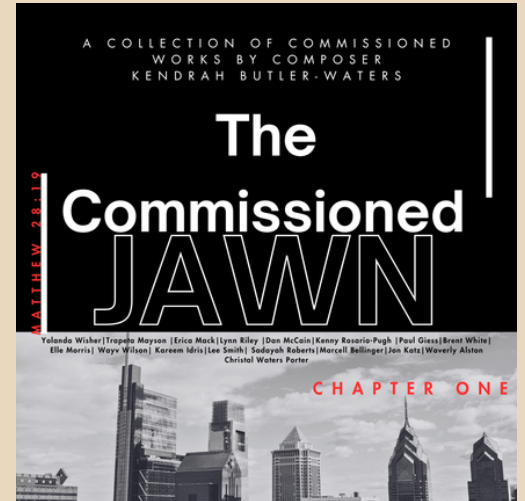
Commissioned composer for ConsenSIS - a score honoring black female and femme poets from Philadelphia. Commissioned by former poet laureates, Yolanda Wisher and Trapeta Mayson

[ConsenSIS - The Score](#)

# Album Releases / Published Works

## THE COMMISSIONED JAWN - 2025 NEW RELEASE

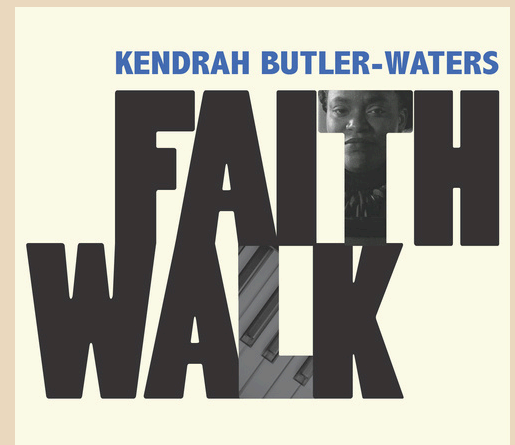
The Commissioned Jawn presents original compositions and collaborations drawn from Kendrah's three recent commissions: REC Philly/WRTI (2021), ConsensSIS (2022), and Ascendance (2024). Highlights include a tribute to sacred jazz pioneer Trudy Pitts, the collaborative soundscape "Sisterly Affection" with poetry and oral histories by Black women and femme artists, and "From the Bottom to the Top," created for a permanent public art installation honoring West Philadelphia's Black Bottom neighborhood. More than an album, it is a living archive of collaboration, memory, and place, available for **free** digital download at [www.kendrahbw.com](http://www.kendrahbw.com), as well as on SoundCloud and Bandcamp.



## FAITH WALK - 2020 RELEASE

"Faith Walk" is Kendrah's 2020 debut album release and features arrangements for both piano trio and quartet. Kendrah produced and composed all of the originals and arrangements for the album.

Faith Walk features the following musicians: Nimrod Speaks (bass), Darryl Jackson (Drums), Jeff Scull (Guitar), Justin Sekelewski (Bass), Gusten Rudolph (Drums), and V. Shayne Frederick (vocals)

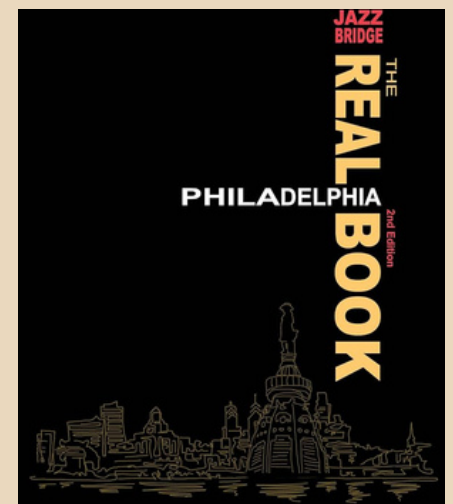


[CLICK TO LISTEN TO FAITH WALK](#)

## ["THE NEGRO SPIRITUALS" - FEATURED MUSIC VIDEO](#)

## PUBLISHED WORKS - THE PHILADELPHIA REAL BOOK

Compiled by Philadelphia based organization, Jazz Bridge and editors David Dzubinski and Suzanne Cloud, The Philadelphia Real Book is a collection of more than 200 original jazz and blues compositions and features two of Kendrah's original compositions.



# Featured Performances

## **PAUL GIESS LIVE ALBUM RELEASE - 2021**

*Featured pianist on Paul Giess' "Hymns Vol.1" live album release recorded at Bump Jazz.*

[VIDEO LINK](#)

## **WE SHALL PERFORMANCE - TRIBUTE TO MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.**

*Musical tribute to the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at the Museum of the American Revolution*

[VIDEO LINK](#)



## **WHYY HOME CONCERT SERIES**

*Featured artist as part of WHYY's Home Concert Series featuring artists from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Delaware*

[VIDEO LINK](#)

## **NPR / WRTI LIVE PERFORMANCE**

*Live performance featuring the Kendrah Butler-Waters trio recorded live in WRTI's studio*

[VIDEO LINK 1](#)

[VIDEO LINK 2](#)

## **PHILLY CAM TV RECORDING WITH BARBARA MONTGOMERY**

*Performance crafted through Philadelphia jazz Project and the organizations collaboration with Philly CAM and Comcast*

[VIDEO LINK](#)

## **MUSIC DIRECTOR FOR DIVA NATION**

*Philadelphia Jazz Project Music Director for 4 vocalists – crafted music and arrangements for vocalists and band*

[VIDEO LINK](#)

## **JEFF SCULL PERFORMANCE OF ORIGINALS**

*Jeff's concert with the Philadelphia Library and the Philadelphia jazz project performing a complex Chick Corea tune*

[VIDEO LINK](#)

# In the Media/Press

2025 PEW FELLOW

[@PewCenterfortheArts](#)

[Philadelphia Tribute Article](#)

[Glenside Local](#)

[Hatboro-Horsham News](#)

[WRTI](#)

**88 TIME PRESS**

[88 Time](#)

[6 ABC Feature](#)

[Philadelphia Tribune](#)

[PEW Center for Arts and Heritage](#)

[Meet Kendrah Blog Post](#)

**DELAWARE ART MUSEUM**

Featured solo pianist performer at the Delaware Art Museum

[LINK TO PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHT](#)

**ASENDANCE - COOK-JOHN/WISHER  
COMMISSION UNVEILING**

[MURAL ARTS PRESS](#)

[uCITY PRESS](#)

**WRTI HOMETOWN HERO**

[ARTICLE AS WRTI's Hometown HERO](#)



**PHILHARMONIA**

[PhilHarmonia](#) - featuring the Kendrah Butler-Waters Quartet honoring the legacy of Mary Lou Williams Mass

**MONUMENT LAB WORKSHOP**

[Music as Monument Public Workshop](#)

[LINK TO WORKSHOP](#)