

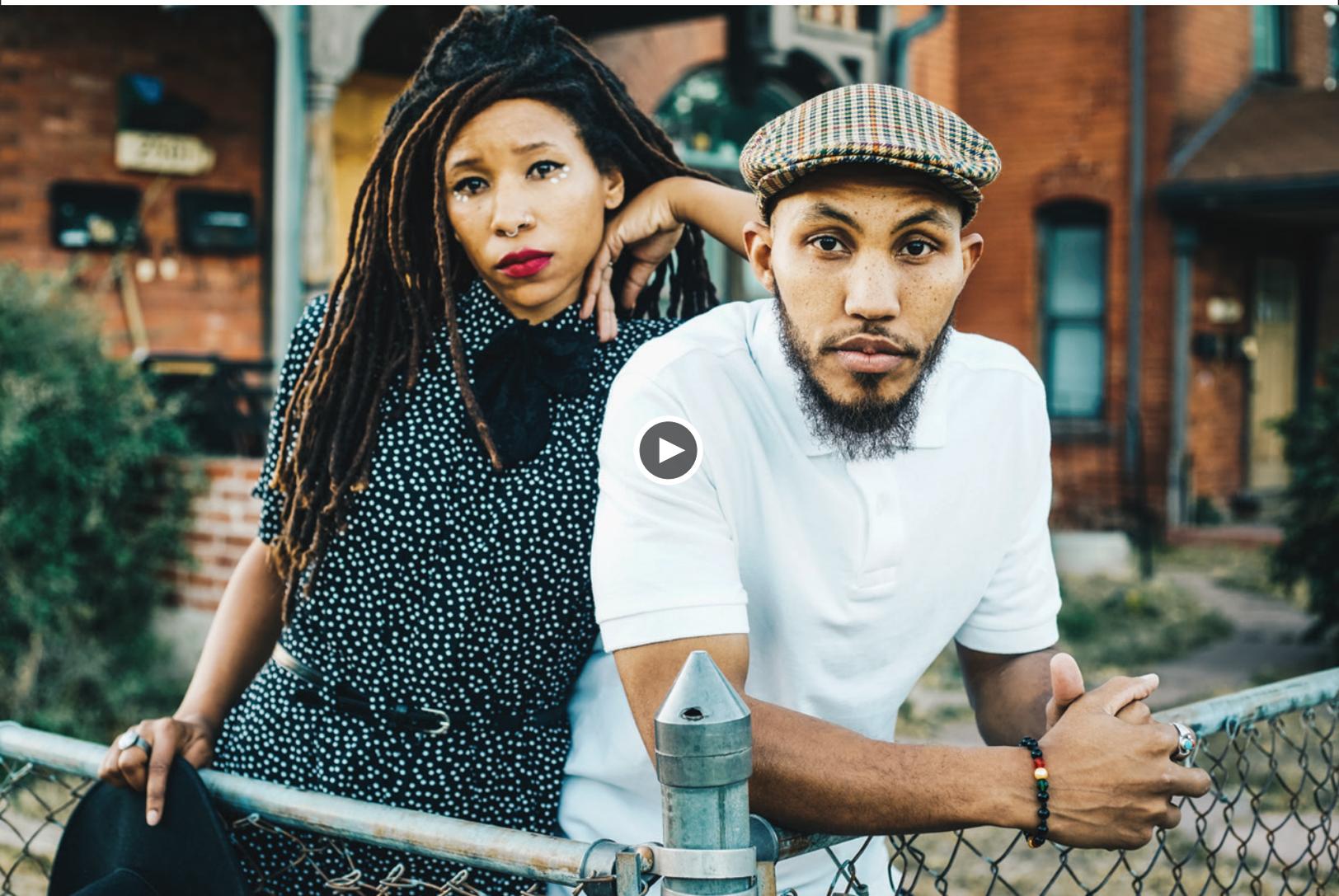
The Reminders

January 28 & 29, 2020



Applause Series Inquiry Guide

The Reminders



[Click here for a preview of the work.](#)

The Reminders are a musical duo that seamlessly bends genre, infusing roots, soul spoken word, and rap. Big Samir, and Aja Black, are a collective creative force. Big Samir weaves intricate rhythmic patterns with a bilingual French/English flow and Queens-born emcee/ vocalist, Aja Black's, vocal style is both honest and uplifting. Having shared the stage with artists such as Les Nubians, Snoop Dogg, Fishbone, Barrington Levy, Nas, Mos Def, Big Boi, KRS-One, Rakim, K'Naan and touring with Lauren Hill, the Reminders have established a firm place in today's ever-evolving music scene, garnering international acclaim while paving a path all their own.

On why they are named The Reminders

BS: In our belief system, we believe that we are "reminders" to each other.

AB: Whether you are doing something good or bad, if you're making a mistake and someone sees you, you are a reminder to them to not make similar mistakes. When you do something good, you remind others to do something positive. We were just talking about how everybody has to be a reminder for each other . . . Anything and everything people do serves as spiritual reminders to the rest of us to take care of ourselves and to make sure we're on the right track.

The Artists



Big Samir (Antoine Zamundu) and Black (Aja Zamundu) are based in Colorado and met in Colorado Springs in the late 1990s. Aja is from New York but some of her family is from Puerto Rico and the other half from Jamaica. Antoine is from Belgium but was raised in the Congo.

On their roots

BG: Our roots are so strong being from many different places, and we incorporate that in the music we create and in the messages that we bring.

AB: With our music, we are committed to our spiritual and cultural identity, it's not something that we compromise for any reason.

They got married in 2005, the same year they started the Reminders. They now have three children together along with a growing career in the music industry. Together Samir and Black are balancing full-time careers as musicians (which includes touring, writing, management, and booking) along with full-time jobs as parents (which includes making lunches, working as crossing guards and belonging to the PTA).

The Music

With a hip-hop backbone, the Reminders pull in world influences from Reggae vocals, French-language rapping (Samir's first language) and lyrical themes from underground rap. They have made waves in the hip-hop scene because of their thoughtful approach to crafting social-conscious and meaningful messages through their work. Their presence and their performance values family, community and kindness and that unifying message invites listeners to consider what they can add to the collective, musically or through their own expression.

The Reminders take turns leading and following in writing music. Sometimes Black brings a guitar riff to the table, or Samir offers up a beat on the djembe. They both draw from their experiences, and fully believing in each other's creativity allows the partnership to work. And they aren't afraid to grow - challenging each other, their partnership and their music to evolve.

On musical growth

"We're definitely trying to take more risks now. Once you grow, that growth has to show; otherwise, you're just repeating the same thing. You're not going any place further."



[Click here for a video of The Reminders](#)

Glossary of Terms

Choose among the list below a few terms to focus on during the Che Apalache performance. Invite reflection about how the chosen terms were demonstrated in the music/performance.

ARTICULATION:

Characteristic way in which musical tones are connected, separated, or accented; types of articulation include legato (smooth, connected tones) and staccato (short, detached tones)

BEAT:

Underlying steady pulse present in most music

BODY PERCUSSION:

Use of the human body as an instrument to create percussive/rhythmic sounds such as stomping, patsching (patting thighs), clapping, clicking, snapping

COMPOSER:

One who creates music compositions

CONNECTION:

Relationship among artistic ideas, personal meaning, and/or external context

CONTEXT:

Environment that surrounds music, influences understanding, provides meaning, and connects to an event or occurrence

CULTURAL CONTEXT:

Values, beliefs, and traditions of a group of people that influence musical meaning and inform culturally authentic musical practice
Culturally authentic performance: Presentation that reflects practices and interpretation representative of the style and traditions of a culture

CULTURE:

Values and beliefs of a particular group of people, from a specific place or time, expressed through characteristics such as tradition, social structure, religion, art, and food

ELEMENTS OF MUSIC:

Basic characteristics of sound (pitch, rhythm, harmony, dynamics, timbre, texture, form, and style/articulation) that are manipulated to create music

ENSEMBLE:

Group of individuals organized to perform artistic work, includes traditional, large groups such as bands, orchestras, and choirs as well as chamber or smaller groups, such as duets, trios, and quartets

EXPRESSIVE INTENT:

The emotions, thoughts, and ideas that a performer or composer seeks to convey by manipulating the elements of music

FUSION:

Type of music created by combining contrasting styles into a new style

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Conditions of the time and place in which music was created or performed and that provide meaning and influence the musical experience

LYRICS:

Words of a song

PERSONAL CONTEXT:

Unique experiences and relationships that surround a single person and are influenced by personal life, family, habits, interest, and preferences

RHYTHM:

Duration or length of sounds and silences that occur in music; organization of sounds and silences in time

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

Environment surrounding something or someone's creation or intended audience that reflects and influences how people use and interpret the musical experience

STAGE PRESENCE:

Performer's ability to convey music content to a live audience through traits such as personal knowledge of the repertoire, exhibited confidence, decorum, eye contact and facial expression

STYLISTIC**EXPRESSION:**

Interpretation of expressive qualities in a manner that is authentic and appropriate to the genre, historical period, and cultural context of origin

TEMPO:

Rate or speed of the beat in a musical work or performance

TIMBRE:

Tone color or tone quality that distinguishes one sound source, instrument, or voice from another
Excerpt From the National Core Arts Standards on Music

Excerpt From the National Core Arts Standards on Music

Enduring Understandings

Overarching (aka, “big”) ideas that are central to the core of the music discipline and may be transferred to new learning beyond the music.

Artists use their personal/political/cultural/historical perspectives and experiences to shape their musical compositions and performances.

When we understand elements, structures and context of music we can “read” the music to understand the intent of the performance and ask deeper questions about purpose.

Seeking to understand a musician’s expressive intent is important for appreciating the work and creating personal meaning.

Compelling Questions

Compelling Questions deal with curiosities about how things work; interpretations and applications of disciplinary concepts; and unresolved issues that require students to construct arguments in response.

Inquiry Research

Check out the resources on page 5 for articles and websites with information relevant to The Reminders and to address the questions below.

- What do we know about the history and context of the type of music being performed? How does this performance add to the conversation in the genre? Does it replicate a tradition or do something new?
- What musical clues can you use to discern the intent or meaning of the music? Consider: volume, tempo, major or minor chords, facial expression and posture of the performer(s)?
- What can you “read” about the performance before/outside of the lyrics? How do the lyrics change/reaffirm your understanding of the music?
- What are the motivations of the musicians performing? How is their musical expression informed by their personal experiences? The influence of other art forms? Their racial, ethnic, religious, geographic, familial, sexual, and/or gender identities?

Connect

Consider the questions below in written reflection and discussion. Do responses change after discussion? Do any shifts occur after the performance?

- What music do you respond to/like to listen to? What about that music connects you to it? If you perform music, what influences your decisions as a performer? How can others “read” your expressive intent when you are creating music?
- Who is in charge of the “meaning” of a piece of music? The listener, the performer, the composer, the song-writer, and/or the sound technician?
- Only people who are part of a religious/racial/cultural/ethnic group should be able to participate in the music of that group. Agree or disagree?
- Music is a good way to learn about culture. Agree or disagree?
- Music can be a factor in societal change. Agree or disagree?

Guide Sources

Explore

The Reminders Website

<http://www.theremindersmusic.com/>

The Reminders Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/TheReminders/>

Inity: Interview with The Reminders

<https://www.inity.co/blog/the-reminders-hip-hop>

Watch

The Reminders YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5jYRU694n5NmsqEXLL349A>

Listen

The Reminders on Spotify

<https://open.spotify.com/artist/7CF1PZ7693KXR7kTdXzk6i>