

# NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 7, 2026

## The Philadelphia Orchestra Presents 36th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr., FREE Tribute Concert January 19, 2026

*First Martin Luther King, Jr., Tribute Concert to take place at the Kimmel Center since the dedication of Marian Anderson Hall*

*Free tickets available at [philorch.org](https://philorch.org)*

(Philadelphia, January 7, 2026)—In partnership with Global Citizen’s Greater Philadelphia Martin Luther King Day of Service, The Philadelphia Orchestra will present its 36th annual **Martin Luther King, Jr., Tribute Concert**, led by conductor **Thomas Wilkins**, on **Monday, January 19, at 3:00 PM in Marian Anderson Hall** at the **Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts**. Tickets are free and available at [philorch.org](https://philorch.org).

“The annual Martin Luther King, Jr., concert has become a cornerstone of The Philadelphia Orchestra’s free community programming, and we are thrilled to host the concert this year in Marian Anderson Hall, bringing additional significance to the occasion,” said Ryan Fleur, president and CEO of The Philadelphia Orchestra and Ensemble Arts. “The Philadelphia Orchestra shares Dr. King’s belief that music has the unrivaled power to unite people and bring about positive change in the world. We look forward to demonstrating this belief and furthering our commitment to creating welcoming spaces that build belonging and community connection through the arts.”

“Presenting the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Tribute Concert in Marian Anderson Hall allows us to recognize the legacies of these two trailblazers,” said Doris Parent, chief IDEAS (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access Strategies) officer for The Philadelphia Orchestra and Ensemble Arts. “Dr. King and Marian Anderson share a history rooted in social justice and activism. A 10-year-old Dr. King heard Anderson’s landmark 1939 performance at the Lincoln Memorial steps, and 24 years later, Anderson sang from the Lincoln Memorial again as part of the March on Washington. Now, we honor the lives of these remarkable leaders through music as we strive to make real their shared vision of a society free of prejudice.”

The performance will showcase works by Black composers, including John Rosamond Johnson and James Weldon Johnson’s anthem “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” Richard Smallwood’s “Total Praise,” and Carlos Simon’s “Ring Shout” and “Holy Dance” from *Four Black American Dances*. The program will also feature John Rutter’s “The Lord Is My Shepherd” and Roderick Giles’s “Love Is What We Need,” featuring the Choir of the Philadelphia High School for Creative and Performing Arts and the Girard College High School Choir. Pianist Clayton Stephenson will join Wilkins and the Orchestra for a performance of the first movement from Gershwin’s *Piano Concerto in F*. Stephenson is a recipient of the 2025 Sphinx Medal of Excellence, the highest honor bestowed by the Sphinx Organization, recognizing extraordinary leaders in classical music who are transforming lives while addressing the systemic obstacles within Black and Latino communities. Continuing a cherished tradition, Imasogie Storyteller, Narrator, and Host Charlotte

Blake Alston will deliver a moving recitation of excerpts from Dr. King's historic "I Have a Dream" speech, accompanied by Barber's Adagio for Strings.

The concert will be broadcast live on WRTI 90.1 FM.

Coinciding with the Martin Luther King Day of Service and the Tribute Concert, and in partnership with Philabundance, The Philadelphia Orchestra and Ensemble Arts will launch a food drive on January 19 at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts. New or recently purchased, shelf-stable donations are encouraged. Items low in sugar and sodium and free of high-fructose corn syrup are preferred. The most-needed items during this period are peanut butter and jelly, cooking oil, canned goods, oatmeal and breakfast cereals, whole-grain pasta, rice, 100% juice, and boxed, non-refrigerated milk.

The Martin Luther King, Jr., Tribute Concert is supported by Performance Sponsor PECO. Additional funding for this concert is provided by Lead Community Engagement Sponsor Independence Blue Cross and the Annenberg Foundation.

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### **Martin Luther King, Jr., Tribute Concert**

January 19 at 3:00 PM—Monday afternoon—Marian Anderson Hall at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts

**Thomas Wilkins** Conductor

**Clayton Stephenson** Piano

**Charlotte Blake Alston** Speaker

**Choir of the Philadelphia High School for Creative and Performing Arts**

**Lauren Thomas-Moyett** Director

**Girard College High School Choir**

**Paul M. Eaton** Director

**Johnson** "Lift Every Voice and Sing"

**Simon** "Ring Shout" and "Holy Dance," from Four Black American Dances—FIRST PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA PERFORMANCE

**Gershwin** First movement, from Piano Concerto in F

**Rutter** "The Lord Is My Shepherd"

**Barber** Adagio for Strings (with narration based on the words of Martin Luther King, Jr.)

**Giles** "Love Is What We Need"

**Smallwood** "Total Praise"

The concert is free, but tickets are required and available at [philorch.org](http://philorch.org). Seating is general admission and on a first-come, first-served basis. Doors will open at 2:30 PM.

The concert will be broadcast live on WRTI 90.1 FM and available online at [wrti.org](http://wrti.org).

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[About The Philadelphia Orchestra](#)

About the 2025–26 Season

Our Commitment to Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access Strategies (IDEAS)

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CONTACTS:

Geoff Cohen  
267.679.2414  
[gcohen@philorch.org](mailto:gcohen@philorch.org)

Victoria McCabe  
908.400.0344  
[vmccabe@philorch.org](mailto:vmccabe@philorch.org)

Jake Rogan  
215.790.5870  
[jrogan@philorch.org](mailto:jrogan@philorch.org)