

Minnesota Orchestra

Jonathan Taylor Rush, conductor

Steven Campbell, tuba | Marc Bamuthi Joseph, librettist and spoken word artist  
Minnesota Chorale | Twin Cities Choral Partners | 29:11 International Exchange  
Kathy Saltzman Romey and Shekela Wanyama, choral preparation

Thursday, May 18, 2023, 11 am | Orchestra Hall  
Friday, May 19, 2023, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall  
Saturday, May 20, 2023, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

We gratefully recognize **Al and Kathy Lenzmeier** for their generosity as lead sponsor of these concerts.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor	Petite Suite de Concert, Opus 77 La caprice de Nanette Demande et réponse Un sonnet d'amour La tarantelle frétilante	ca. 15'
Wynton Marsalis	Concerto for Tubist and Orchestra Up! Boogaloo Americana Lament In Bird's Basement Steven Campbell, tuba	ca. 22'
	I N T E R M I S S I O N	ca. 20'
Carlos Simon/ Marc Bamuthi Joseph	brea(d)th * Prologue Breath Elegy Bread Breadth [The final three movements are played without pause.] Marc Bamuthi Joseph, spoken word artist Minnesota Chorale and Twin Cities Choral Partners 29:11 International Exchange	ca. 35'

\* World premiere; commissioned by the Minnesota Orchestra.

multi-media installation	Juxtaposition Arts Exhibit From May 11 to 20, the Orchestra Hall lobby will be home to a multi-media installation created by teaching artists and youth apprentices from Juxtaposition Arts, inspired by Carlos Simon and Marc Bamuthi Joseph's <i>brea(d)th</i> .
thank you	The Minnesota Orchestra is grateful to The Daniel N. and Constance B. Kunin Fund for supporting the commissioning of <i>brea(d)th</i> .

Minnesota Orchestra concerts are broadcast live on Friday evenings on stations of [YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio](#), including KSJN 99.5 FM in the Twin Cities. The May 19 concert will also be broadcast live on [Twin Cities PBS \(TPT-2\)](#) and available for streaming at [minnesotaorchestra.org](#) and on the Orchestra's social media channels.



**Jonathan Taylor Rush**, conductor

Hailed as a continually rising talent in the conducting world, Jonathan Taylor Rush brings passion, unique interpretation and a refreshing energy to the orchestral experience. In fall 2020 he was appointed as assistant conductor of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. This past fall he was promoted to associate conductor. Previously he served as music director of the Buckeye Philharmonic Orchestra, as well as conducting fellow for the Baltimore Symphony Youth Orchestras. In 2018, he was a Project Inclusion Conducting Fellow with the Chicago Sinfonietta and in 2019 was named assistant conductor. With the Chicago Sinfonietta, Rush worked alongside music professionals and fellow conductors to help redefine classical music, by changing its face and encouraging diversity in orchestras across the U.S. At age 22, as winner of the 2018 Respighi Prize in Conducting, he made his professional orchestra debut with the Chamber Orchestra of New York at Carnegie Hall. He continues to conduct both nationally and internationally, with notable debuts including concerts with the Chicago Symphony, Detroit Symphony, Chicago Sinfonietta, Baltimore Symphony and Nairobi Philharmonic. His debuts in 2023 include this week's concerts with the Minnesota Orchestra and the premiere of Jeanine Tesori and Tazewell Thompson's *Blue* with Washington National Opera. More: [jonathanrush.com](http://jonathanrush.com).



**Steven Campbell**, tuba

Steven Campbell, the Minnesota Orchestra's principal tuba since 2005, has performed several times as soloist with the Orchestra, including in the 2018 world premiere of James Stephenson's low brass concerto *Pillars*, Ralph Vaughn Williams' Tuba Concerto in 2015 and Torbjörn Iwan Lundquist's *Landscape* in 2011. He has also been featured as soloist several times at Young People's and Family Concerts and performs often with his Orchestra colleagues in the Uptown Brass quintet. A native of Texas, he counts his parents as early musical inspirations. His first teacher was his father, who is also a tuba player. He later studied at the University of Houston with David Kirk and at New England Conservatory with Chester Schmitz. While in Boston, he performed and toured regularly with the Boston Symphony and Pops orchestras. He has been a member of the Milwaukee Symphony, New Mexico Symphony and Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia in Spain, as well as a frequent guest of the Philadelphia Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra and Seattle Symphony, among others. He has given master classes and lectures in the U.S. and abroad and is on faculty at the University of Minnesota, where he has frequently performed as soloist with the University Wind Ensemble, most recently in April. More: [minnesotaorchestra.org](http://minnesotaorchestra.org).



**Marc Bamuthi Joseph**, librettist and spoken word artist

Marc Bamuthi Joseph is a 2017 TED Global Fellow, an inaugural recipient of the Guggenheim Social Practice initiative and an honoree of the United States Artists Rockefeller Fellowship. His opera libretto, *We Shall Not Be Moved*, was named one of 2017's "Best Classical Music Performances" by *The New York Times*. His evening-length work created in collaboration with composer Daniel Bernard Roumain, *The Just and The Blind*, was commissioned by Carnegie Hall and premiered to a sold out house at Carnegie in March 2019. His upcoming opera *Watch Night* is inspired by the forgiveness exhibited by the congregation of Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, and will premiere at the Perelman Center in New York in fall 2023. While engaging in a deeply fulfilling and successful artistic career, he also proudly serves as vice president and artistic director of social impact at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. He is in high demand for his creative approach to organizational design, brand development and community mediation, and has been enlisted as a strategic partner or consultant for companies ranging from Coca-Cola to Carnegie Hall. His TED Talk on linking sport to freedom design among immigrant youth has been viewed more than a million times, and is a testament to his capacity to distill complex systems into accessible and poetic presentations.

His community development philosophy, called “The Creative Ecosystem,” has been implemented in dozens of cities across the U.S. and is the subject of several critical writings, including one of the seminal essays in *Cultural Transformations: Youth and Pedagogies of Possibility*, published by Harvard Education Press. He is the founding program director of the exemplary non-profit Youth Speaks, and is a co-founder of Life is Living, a national series of one-day festivals which activate under-resourced parks and affirm peaceful urban life. He has lectured at more than 200 colleges, and has carried adjunct professorships at Stanford and Lehigh, among others. A proud alumnus of Morehouse College, he received an honorary doctorate of fine arts from the California College of Arts in spring 2022. More: [sozoartists.com](http://sozoartists.com).



### William Eddins, broadcast host

For the concert on May 19, William Eddins serves as host and writer of the Twin Cities PBS broadcast and online livestream *This Is Minnesota Orchestra*. Eddins has a multifaceted musical career as a conductor and pianist. He is the music director emeritus of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, a former associate conductor of the Minnesota Orchestra and a frequent guest conductor of major orchestras throughout the world. In September 2022 he conducted the Orchestra’s season opening concerts for the first time in a program that included

the Minnesota premiere of Wynton Marsalis’ *Swing Symphony*, performed with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. More: [williameddins.com](http://williameddins.com).

### Minnesota Chorale and Twin Cities Choral Partners Kathy Saltzman Romey, artistic director and choral preparation Shekela Wanyama, choral preparation Barbara Brooks, accompanist and artistic advisor

The Minnesota Chorale, which is joined in this performance by choral partners from the Twin Cities community, is the principal chorus of the Minnesota Orchestra since 2004, has sung with the Orchestra for more than four decades, most recently in March and April 2023 performances of Haydn’s *The Creation*. Founded in 1972 and led since 1995 by artistic director Kathy Saltzman Romey, the Chorale is Minnesota’s preeminent symphonic chorus and ranks among the foremost professional choruses in the U.S. More: [mnchorale.org](http://mnchorale.org).

#### soprano

Rachael Acevedo-Hoffmann  
Erin Berg  
Kristi Bergland \*  
Catherine Crosby-Schmidt \*  
Alyssa Ellson \*  
Heather Ford  
Cheryl Friedrichs  
Grace Gonzalez  
Tricia Hanson  
Sarah Jennings  
Wendy Lukaszewski  
Amy Madson  
Anna Maher  
Meghan McCabe  
Shannon McGuire \*  
Linda Neuman  
Aja Parham  
Elizabeth Pauly \*  
Sara Payne \*  
Robyn Pfeifer  
Adriana Pohl  
Clara Elizabeth Sanders  
Ann M. Sather  
Emma Schiltz  
Natalie Scholz  
Delilah Jane Schuster

#### Shari M. Speer \*

Amara Strande  
Polly Strege  
Maya Tester  
Shekela Wanyama \*  
Jena Wilhelmi

#### alto

Jaime Anthony  
Jessica Belt  
Nan Buller  
Cherelle-Renee Childs \*  
Bridgette Cook-Jones  
Becky Dale  
Elizabeth M. Drost  
Kristina Dudley \*  
Dannia Edwards  
Nikki Darlene Frontz  
Debra Gilroy \*  
Mallory Harrington  
Kris Henderson  
Heather Hood \*  
Katy Husby  
Patricia Kent \*  
Maddie Kertson  
Claire M. Klein  
Maureen Long  
Celia McCoy  
Sherri Orr

Molly Palmer  
Krista J. Palmquist \*  
Sharon Cogely  
Paulson  
Krista Petersen  
Jamela Pettiford  
Joan Potter  
Barbara S. Prince  
Mitra Sadeghpour \*  
Mary Schultz  
Kristen Schweiloch  
Julia Udell

#### tenor

Samuel Baker \*  
Jason José Bendezu  
Drew Brooks  
Jonathan Burnett  
Patrick L. Coleman  
Benjamin Cooper  
Chris Crosby-Schmidt  
Charles Kim  
Andrew Kreye  
Rich Maier  
Andy McCullough \*  
Scott D. McKenzie  
David Mennicke \*  
Geoff Michael  
Warren Moe  
Kevin Navis  
Jeffrey Nielsen  
Mark Pladson  
Philip Reilly  
Patrick Romey \*  
Scott Sandberg

Luke Slivinski  
Linda Sloan  
Erick Sood  
Ty Wottrich

#### bass

Connor Buechler  
Scott Chamberlain  
Mark Countryman  
Steve Cramer \*  
Danté Dean  
Allen Effenberger  
John R. Henrich  
Thomas Jermann  
Eric Johnson  
Evan Clay Kelly  
Richard Kubista  
Jon C. Lahann \*  
Philip Lowry  
Bob Magil  
Nathan Oppedahl  
Bob Peskin \*  
Steve Pratt  
Jerry Rubino \*  
Benjamin Shermock  
Marcus A. Simmons \*  
Bob Simon  
William B. Smale  
Michael R. Tomlinson \*  
Rick Wagner \*  
Jacob Hurley  
Weindling

\* Section leader

### 29:11 International Exchange Brendon Adams, artistic director

The members of musical ensemble 29:11 come from the areas of the Cape Flats in Cape Town, South Africa. They have been trained by world-renowned musician Camillo Lombard and are currently under the direction of Brendon Adams, co-founder of New Hope International Exchange. They performed at Orchestra Hall most recently in May 2022 performances of Joel Thompson’s *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed*. More: [2911intl.org](http://2911intl.org).

#### soprano

Gaylene Adams  
Megan Charles  
Cheryl Lottering  
Nisa Mlondleni  
Baetile Sebastian

#### tenor

Manasse Kaoma  
Roshane Solomon

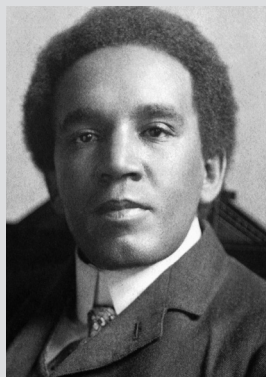
#### bass

Brendon Adams  
Elijah Ileana  
Xolisa Ngclu  
Gilmore Van Rooyen

#### alto

Nomvula Maneli  
Ayanda Nxumalo





### Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

**Born:** August 15, 1875,  
London, England

**Died:** September 1, 1912,  
London, England

### *Petite Suite de Concert*, Opus 77

**Composed:** ca. 1911

In recent years, Minnesota Orchestra audiences have had many opportunities to become familiar with the works of British composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. This season, his music has already been featured three times: at the October 2022 iteration of the Orchestra's Listening Project concert-and-recording series, which featured his *Idyll*; this past January, in two performances of his *Solemn Prelude* just four months after its U.S. premiere; and at a chamber music concert in March that included his Five Fantasy Pieces for String Quartet. The *Petite Suite de Concert* featured this week is the 12th work by Coleridge-Taylor to be programmed by the Orchestra since 2016.

### parallel legacies

The life, career and legacy of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor is similar in its arc to many of the other Black composers who have historically been ignored by many Western institutions, but are being increasingly programmed by the Minnesota Orchestra and other ensembles in recent seasons. Like French composer Joseph

Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges—whose two symphonies, as well as a violin concerto, were performed by the Orchestra for the first time in 2021—or William Dawson in the U.S., whose *Negro Folk Symphony* was heard earlier this year, Coleridge-Taylor achieved a considerable amount of recognition and popularity during his lifetime in his home country and abroad. But once each of these three composers passed away, their works languished and remained unprogrammed by major ensembles for decades because their creators were Black. It is only within the past few years, as many ensembles begin to rectify their role in systemic racism, that a wide audience is again hearing these underappreciated musical gems.

The success of Coleridge-Taylor's best-known work, a cantata called *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, led to the composer's three tours to the U.S. and a personal meeting with President Theodore Roosevelt at the White House in 1904. Despite his publisher, Novello, selling thousands of copies of the work's score, Coleridge-Taylor remained in a dire financial predicament for most of his life; the rights were purchased outright for 15 shillings with no royalties to be paid to the composer.

### advocacy through music

Throughout most of his life, Coleridge-Taylor used his art as advocacy for the advancement of the rights of Africans and African-descended people around the globe. When his 24 *Negro Melodies* were published in 1905, he wrote: "What Brahms has done for the Hungarian folk-music, Dvořák for the Bohemian, and Grieg for the Norwegian, I have tried to do for Negro melodies." Many other works also sought to incorporate elements of African music, like his orchestral piece *Symphonic Variations on an African Air*. Additionally, Coleridge-Taylor was friends with

### one-minute notes

#### Coleridge-Taylor: *Petite Suite de Concert*

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's *Petite Suite de Concert* offers a variety of charming ideas in each of its brief yet affective four movements, showcasing the composer's immense talents in capturing the romanticism and sentimentality of early 20th-century British musical tastes.

#### Marsalis: *Tuba Concerto*

The rarely spotlighted tuba takes center stage in a recent concerto by the eminent composer, jazz trumpeter and bandleader Wynton Marsalis—fusing traditions ranging from classical to bebop to boogaloo. Of note are a passage in which the soloist plays the tuba and sings simultaneously, and a blistering finale that nods to bebop saxophonist Charlie "Bird" Parker.

#### Simon/Joseph: *brea(d)th*

In this week's world premiere of *brea(d)th*, with music by Carlos Simon and libretto by Marc Bamuthi Joseph—who performs as spoken word artist—the murder of George Floyd is situated in the context of the United States' centuries-long oppression of Black Americans, asking the audience to consider how we heal and what comes next. Joseph's libretto, which "considers *bread*, as in value, *breath*, as in life force, and *breadth*, as in the radius of American promise," is tightly woven with Simon's music of great emotional range—at turns solemn, bluesy, heart-rending and dissonant, with an instrumental *Elegy* movement for strings placed at the center.



influential poet and novelist Laurence Dunbar and set many of Dunbar's poems to music. In 1900, he was the youngest attendee of the Pan-African Conference in London, where he met influential American writer W.E.B. Du Bois. The two formed a friendship and through Du Bois' writing, Coleridge-Taylor gained fame in America as a beacon of success in a prominently white field. Before his life was cut short by pneumonia at age 37, he wrote nearly 90 orchestral, chamber and solo works.

### a light-hearted affair

The *Petite Suite de Concert* is charming and entertaining fare, light on the drama and packed with memorable themes reminiscent of Edward Elgar. Written in 1911, the suite is cast in four movements, and a complete performance takes approximately 16 minutes.

**la caprice de Nannette.** The first movement opens with a curtain-raising theme pronounced by the entire orchestra, punctuated by the percussion. After this opening section gets repeated, primary and secondary themes are presented by the first violins and flutes. Cast in a triple meter, this movement retains a waltz-like feeling throughout. After the briefest of developments, the main themes return before a triumphant close.

**demande et réponse.** Against the gently pulsing syncopations in the lower strings, the first violins present the second movement's tender melody. The woodwinds then join, with the flutes, piccolo, oboes and clarinets having their turn at the melody with the first violins. A playful call-and-response section comprises the middle of the movement before the return of the opening material. The violins are instructed to play the reprise with mutes, making this delicate material even more ethereal. The melody of this movement proved so popular that it was adapted and published as a song called *Question and Answer*, with lyrics by Arthur Stanley.

**un sonnet d'amour.** The third movement retains the beauty and elegance of the second, featuring fluttering figures which introduce the songful main theme initially presented by the first violins. The movement's primary key is A major, but the development section shifts to A minor, darkening the mood, but not for long; it lasts only 20 measures before we hear a reprise of the main theme, gorgeously presented by the violas.

**la tarantelle frétilante.** Roughly translated, the title of the closing movement is "the quivering tarantella." Historically, tarantellas were dances originating in 15th- to 17th-century Italy meant to be danced by victims of tarantula bites to cure oneself of tarantism. Tarantellas are lively, quick dances set in 6/8 time, and Coleridge-Taylor's is no different, featuring a flurry of notes and themes that get passed among the orchestra at a fast pace. As in the preceding movements, a short middle section offers contrasting material before the piece races to an exuberant close.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbal, triangle, glockenspiel and strings

Program note by **Michael Divino**.



### Wynton Marsalis

**Born:** October 18, 1961,  
New Orleans, Louisiana

### Concerto for Tuba and Orchestra

**Premiered:** December 9, 2021

Wynton Marsalis is on a bit of a concerto streak: the success of his Violin Concerto, completed in 2015, prompted the Philadelphia Orchestra to commission another for the relatively neglected tuba. Just last month, the Cleveland Orchestra and its Principal Trumpet Michael Sachs premiered a concerto for trumpet, Marsalis' own instrument as a performer.

The Tuba Concerto was written for the Philadelphia Orchestra's Principal Tuba Carol Jantsch, who premiered it with that ensemble in December 2021. Like many of Marsalis' compositions, it is a prism through which the conventions of Western classical music and various Black musical traditions are refracted, reimagined and recombined. *Blood on the Fields*—Marsalis' 1997 Pulitzer Prize-winning jazz oratorio—is perhaps the most famous example of his hybrid aesthetic, one that uses the symphony orchestra as the vehicle for the performance and adaptation of jazz and other Black musical idioms. In this respect, Marsalis' music can be heard as a 21st-century continuation of the musical and political projects begun by such works as Scott Joplin's opera *Treemonisha* of 1911, William Grant Still's *Afro-American Symphony* of 1931 and Florence Price's *Symphony No. 3*, which premiered in 1939.

### the sound of virtuosity

Marsalis' Tuba Concerto invites listeners to consider the ways in which the sound of virtuosity of that instrument has changed according to historical and cultural circumstances. Concertos have long served as vehicles through which the soloist could display their technical prowess. Romantic-era composers such as Niccolò Paganini and Franz Liszt helped establish what is now perhaps the most familiar paradigm for virtuoso performance, featuring bravura

displays of showmanship through the execution of breathtaking passagework and hair-raising extended techniques. Yet virtuosity has not always been synonymous with musical pyrotechnics; a soloist's skill can be just as easily showcased in the performance of daringly simple textures and delicate turns of phrase.

Marsalis' Tuba Concerto combines these different approaches to virtuosity from the European classical tradition with hallmark features of craftsmanship and skill from a range of Black and Latin musical idioms. Within improvisatory genres such as jazz and the blues, soloists often showcase their talents not only through audacious technical feats but also by the deft interpolation of quotations, allusions and paraphrases of other pieces. This concerto offers the soloist numerous opportunities to showcase their mastery of these different kinds of virtuosity. In addition to both lyricism and bravura, the soloist must also perform in a kaleidoscopic array of idioms, ranging from bebop to boogaloo. The concerto thus presents a tour de force that demonstrates the comprehensive musical knowledge of both soloist and composer.

### the music: spotlighting many traditions

**Up!** The first movement comes closest to what one might expect from a contemporary classical concerto. Accompanied by marcato exclamations in the orchestra, the solo line hops about in odd-angled intervals and features three cadenzas requiring the performance of multiphonics, a technique in which the performer plays one pitch while singing a different pitch.

**Boogaloo Americana.** The title of the second movement clearly signals Marsalis' hybrid aesthetic. Originating in New York City during the 1960s, boogaloo is a style of dance music that mixes the rhythm and blues rooted in African American tradition with Latin idioms such as mambo and son montuno. Through the use of hand claps and agogo bells, this movement adapts some aspects of boogaloo's musical language to the symphonic orchestral palette, with occasional pivots to the open-fourth harmonies that characterize the so-called Americana aesthetic popularized by Aaron Copland during the 1940s.

**Lament.** During the third movement, the tuba is given some of the most melodically arresting material in the entire concerto. After the brooding dissonances of the opening section, the movement presents several dirge-like marches before turning to a "gospel shuffle" in the final section. Notated with instructions such as "shout as if wailing wasn't enough," the tuba line carries much of the emotional weight of the movement's climax.

**In Bird's basement.** Replete with blisteringly fast solo lines and raucously unstable harmonic progressions, the final movement, the title of which references the nickname of bebop saxophonist Charlie "Bird" Parker, brings the piece to an energetic close while

providing one final opportunity for the soloist to showcase their stylistic versatility.

**Instrumentation:** solo tuba with orchestra comprising 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons (1 doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, timpani, snare drum, 3 bass drums, cymbals, hi-hat cymbal, ride cymbal, splash cymbal, suspended cymbal, agogo bells, bongos, cabasa, castanets, cha-cha bell, cowbells, gong, tambourine, tom-toms, triangle, wood block, xylophone, marimba, vibraphone, glockenspiel and strings

Program note by **Sean Colonna**.



**Carlos Simon**

**Born:** April 13, 1986, Washington, D.C.

**Marc Bamuthi Joseph**

**Born:** November 20, 1975, New York City

### ***brea(d)th***

**Premiering:** May 18, 2023

The summer of 2020 will remain in our region's cultural memory for decades, even generations, to come. The murder of George Floyd on a south Minneapolis street corner was not a singular incident: Black people have been killed in state-sanctioned violence throughout our country's history. Floyd's brutal death ignited protests against police brutality in the Twin Cities and around the world both because it was horrific and because it was captured on film, in widely shared footage taken by witness Darnella Frazier. Carlos Simon and Marc Bamuthi Joseph's *brea(d)th*, which receives its world premiere performances this week, situates George Floyd's story in the context of this country's centuries-long oppression of Black Americans, and asks us to consider, "what comes next?"

### visionary collaborators come to Minnesota

Composer Simon and librettist Joseph regularly explore and illuminate Black American cultural expression through their

work. Some of Simon's recent orchestral pieces include *Four Black American Dances* (2023), a classical interpretation of dance types common in Black communities; *Requiem for the Enslaved* (2021), commemorating the 272 people enslaved and sold by Georgetown University, where Simon is now an assistant professor; and *Warmth from Other Suns* (2020), a string quartet reflecting the stories of Black Americans during the 20th century's Great Migration from the South to urban centers in the northern and western United States. Joseph's recent works include *The Just and the Blind* (2019), which examines fatherhood in a time of mass incarceration; and the libretto to the opera *We Shall Not Be Moved* (remounted this month at the Pittsburgh Opera), in which five teenagers in current-day Philadelphia are confronted with the 1975 bombing of the MOVE headquarters. Simon and Joseph previously collaborated on Kennedy Center projects *it all falls down* (2022) and *The Road Ahead* (2022).

Whether working together or separately, Simon and Joseph are among the most in-demand creators in the classical field in the U.S. today. Simon is the composer in residence for the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and his newest album, *Requiem for the Enslaved*, earned him a 2023 Grammy nomination. His music is already familiar to Minnesota Orchestra audiences, with his works *An Elegy: A Cry from the Grave*—which has been incorporated as the third movement of *brea(d)th*—and *Fate Now Conquers* receiving performances at Orchestra Hall in recent seasons. In addition to composing concert music for large and small ensembles, he has scored films and toured as a music director and keyboardist. An Atlanta native, he earned degrees from the University of Michigan, Georgia State University and Morehouse College, and has compared his musical work to that of a preacher, stating: "Music is my pulpit. That's where I preach." (Joseph's achievements and background are detailed in a separate profile that precedes this concert's program notes.)

After the Minnesota Orchestra commissioned Simon and Joseph to create a new piece in the wake of George Floyd's murder, the composer and librettist visited the Twin Cities twice in 2022 in preparation for writing *brea(d)th*. The visits were dedicated to learning about the region, meeting local artists and activists, and taking a pilgrimage to George Floyd Square. The visit to the Square was significant to Simon, who said he "wanted to feel the energy in that space, in that particular part of town," and found that the presence of neighbors sitting on their porches and sharing stories "felt like home." Conversations with Angela Harrelson, George Floyd's aunt and a daily presence in the Square, enabled the creative duo to learn more about Floyd as a person and his family's history. Details gleaned from the visits appear throughout *brea(d)th*, weaving a powerful connection between the expanse of African American history and the conditions of Floyd's life and death. An inscription at the top of

the score to *brea(d)th* reads "Commissioned by the Minnesota Orchestra for George Floyd," but the piece also examines the centuries of what Joseph calls "transgressions against Black dignity" wrought by the United States. Joseph himself, in the role of honored culture-bearer and griot—a West African storyteller-poet-historian—delivers the spoken word component of *brea(d)th* in these premiere performances.

### the artists' statement

Joseph and Simon provided the following artists' statement on *brea(d)th*, written by Joseph.

"*Brea(d)th* is a classical work, inspired by the enduring presence of George Floyd the Ancestor, asking America to consider an equitable future. We come to the resilient and root-rich Twin Cities as outsiders, but we composed this work from within the walls of Black emotion, curiosity, and dignity. The piece explores a historical timeline that stretches from the pre-colonial to the present condition, and perhaps further, into a post-pandemic America. Who would we be if we used covid-19 as an opportunity to focus on both public health **and** public healing? Our entire country has endured a trauma...how do we publicly heal?...

"*Brea(d)th* is a work in five movements, ranging from the Pentecostal to the monastic. I created a libretto that considers *bread*, as in value, *breath*, as in life force, and *breadth*, as in the radius of American promise. Encoded within the work is a reverence for local intelligence, sacrifice, loss, and strength. The Minnesota Orchestra is a citizen institution, and thus the work has an implied and imbued civic import. Truthfully, though, our commitment was to make a work that emanated from and responded to a local experience, while recognizing the hollowing hope that vastly stretches across the body of African America.

"*Brea(d)th* is a moving, yearning, admonition for repair. It was made by two American sons in honor of George, and in reflection of the fellowship of the gone too soon..."

### *brea(d)th*: a powerful message in words and music

**prologue.** The first movement begins solemnly with triplet gestures and a melody comprised of three ascending, then descending pitches that wend through the orchestra. The choir then enters, putting words to the emerging theme: "Give us this day, our daily bread." An oscillating tritone motif provides a restless backdrop to Joseph's text as he guides the listener through reminders of lives lost and the resilience of a people who have endured centuries of oppression. Joseph connects George Floyd's murder to a broader historical context when he uses "bread" to mean both money and value: he speaks of the "...armed robbery of breath / over some bread and / the wide genocidal breadth of / our country's racial timeline/ our country's



daily bread..." The movement ends as quietly as it started, the final prayer chanted by the choir, then treble instruments, and at last in the low brass.

**breath.** Movement two is a meditation on life after death. It opens with the low rumbling of the surdo, a bass drum common in Brazilian samba music, and a bluesy sweep of strings. "Breathe in relief," Joseph says, "the moon is sweet," but soon remarks that "the night smells strangely of fruit to me"—a reference to the 1939 song *Strange Fruit*, written by Abel Meeropol and popularized by Billie Holiday. Melodies for trumpet, trombone and piano float on the breeze as the surdo plays on, illuminating the text that says "Breath is drum." When the surdo stops playing, Joseph reflects that those we call Ancestors have gained in the afterlife a sense of dignity not afforded them when they lived: "Breath becomes / the way Ancestors pay at the gates / in heaven breath is bread."

**elegy.** The last three movements of the piece—*Elegy*, *Bread* and *Breadth*—proceed *attacca*, one into the next without pause. *Elegy* is a previously existing piece for strings that Carlos Simon composed in 2015. Subtitled *A Cry from the Grave*, the song of lamentation is dedicated "to those who have been murdered wrongfully by an oppressive power; namely Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner and Michael Brown." *Elegy* features melodic fragments that travel between sections, dramatic changes in texture and volume, and heart-rending soli for viola and cello. The piece ends on a major chord—unexpectedly clear harmony in comparison to anything before or after it. The Minnesota Orchestra performed this piece in a broadcast and livestreamed performance on May 28, 2021, just over one year after the murder of George Floyd.

**bread.** *Bread*—the most programmatic of the movements—includes details specific to the Twin Cities. In addition to acknowledging land stolen from Indigenous people, Joseph references the intersection of 38th Street and Chicago Avenue (now known as George Floyd Square); the historic 24 Demands for Justice drawn up by Minneapolis residents; and biographical details about George Floyd's life, including that he had 13 siblings and loved to make music in church. At the mention of a "counterfeit bill"—relating both to the broken treaties between Native communities and colonizers, as well as the \$20 bill George Floyd had on the day he was murdered—an eruption of pitches based on the interval of an open fifth with added dissonance breaks the reflective atmosphere. A cello solo undergirds Joseph's question, "If not justice for all America / then how do you choose? / Who wins America? / Does somebody invariably lose?" Increasingly disjunct intervals paint an auditory response to this rhetorical question, before returning to more reflective and sustained harmonies. The movement ends with the chorus' prayer

of conscience: "May we feast on the bread that brought us one more day to get it right."

**breadth.** The fifth and final movement begins with a percussive building of tension releasing into a theme that moves through the ensemble in an insistent, fugue-like manner. "So much work has been done," cries the chorus, "Who does the work that's still left?" The first iteration of a representative governing body in the colonies that would later become the United States met in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619. There was no mention during the six-day long assembly of the practice of enslavement, though the capture, enslaving and trading of Africans was underway in the Americas by then. A huge breadth of history—244 years—passed before the Emancipation Proclamation ordered the end of enslavement, and another five years went by before the ratification of the 14th Amendment in 1868 granted some African Americans—the vast majority descendants of slavery—legal voting rights. Joseph revisits that figure of 244 years, reminding us that it will be the second decade of the 22nd century, 244 years after 1868, "by the time there is a parity of Black enslavement and Black political agency," and at that point, "NO one in this room will be alive." The strings and winds pulse the passage of time before the fugue theme returns and the chorus asks repeatedly, "Who does the work that's still left?"

The movement ends as it began: with a pedal point in low strings illustrating, perhaps, the expansive weight and breadth of the labor necessary for equity, and an inexorable building of tension that signifies—what? A horrific injustice? A roar of questions? An uprising of emotion? A defiant challenge? Simon has left it to the individual listener to choose.

**Instrumentation:** spoken word narrator and SATB mixed chorus with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, ride cymbal, suspended cymbal, bell tree, crotales, surdo, tamtam, vibraphone, chimes and strings

*Program note by Shekela Wanyama. Wanyama, along with Kathy Saltzman Romey, prepared the choirs for this week's performances of brea(d)th and sings in the soprano section.*



# brea(d)th

Music by Carlos Simon | Libretto by Marc Bamuthi Joseph

## I. PROLOGUE

### CHORUS

Give us this day our daily bread

### NARRATOR

We  
Pledge co-llegiance  
To the facts  
That the United States of America  
Is racially healing in public  
So you could understand  
How some in this nation  
Wonder, God  
Could dignity be afforded to  
All?

### CHORUS

Give us this day our daily bread

### NARRATOR

The breadth of the task  
The asking for bread  
The expiring breath  
The black odor of dread

Give us this day

Respect for the breadth of the ask  
With an expiring breath he called  
for a dead woman several years  
past

Give us this day

Respect for the ghosts  
And the murmurs of a man with a  
speck of bread  
Singed like the lord's prayer  
singing in his chokeheld throat  
sitting flat like a scar  
sustaining like bread  
a grown man ticking like a  
trumpeter's fingers playing valves  
that only exist in his head  
the breadth of the loss and the  
bitter and the lonely  
the breath of a winded man whose  
allies have left to struggle alone

gone homey

go on

give us this day the breadth of  
repair  
the breadth of the labor  
the held breath of the witness  
watching life progress to death

I too, am a witness...

Shook my head  
Tried to make some sense

This miracle of political bread  
The manna that is the folklore of  
American promise

And the breadth of our common  
belief in the premise of justice  
for all

The falling breath of a man who's  
heart is failing  
The rising blood of a people with  
scotch tape and ancestral will  
keeping their American Hearts  
from breaking

Breaking the breath  
Fasting with water and incessant  
prayer for bread

Give us this day

The breadth of what's due

What would you kneel for  
Assume the posture of casual  
prayer  
A genuflection while levitating  
buoyed by the neck of a man you  
are actively robbing of air  
Armed robbery of breath  
Over some bread and  
the wide genocidal breadth of  
our country's racial timeline  
our country's daily bread  
our injurious history written in  
lightning  
the animating factors that  
authorize violence

give us this day  
a shot at peace  
a day when you don't have to  
function knowing the night  
before a young woman was state  
sanctioned murdered in her sleep

lord

the breadth of the task

give us this day...one more  
breath...  
lord solemnly hear the underlying  
desperation of the ask  
give us this day  
our bread  
enough to feed our ancestors when  
we pay them respect  
give us this day  
the breadth of our american stake  
restore the debt of stolen breath...

### CHORUS

Give us this day our daily bread

## II. BREATH

### NARRATOR

A soul to keep  
Breathe in relief  
The night is fruit  
The moon is sweet  
Take a piece  
Swallow the satellite  
Beyond your reach  
The night is dream  
But I'm not asleep  
Not woke  
Just awake  
I breathe in what I see  
I breathe in the night  
It smells strangely of fruit to me

Breathe in the chemical shift  
When I walk by the police  
The smell of all the probabilities  
played out on all of the screens  
Breathe in the scenes  
Breathe in the night and imagine  
the time you felt most free...  
When  
In your life  
Have you felt most free?...  
I sing america's longest notes  
I sometimes forget to breathe  
When I do  
My cultural differences haven't  
been tucked into the skirts of the  
queen  
I am free to access an  
infrastructure of hope  
Breathe in the night  
The moon is ripe with juice  
It smells like autonomy  
Smells like fruit beginning to  
bruise and rot  
Breathe in  
It's a lot  
Breathe out  
Let it go  
Imagine yourself living  
Knowing you only have one breath  
left before your soul let's go  
Breathe in mortality  
It is an inevitability  
And as such  
Shouldn't one's last breath be  
made with dignity  
Breathe in the idea  
That death is a lie  
That energy, not a human shell is  
the actual tell of a life  
Life is death  
as a vision  
as a lived permission  
Inception of an intuition of what to  
cosmically expect

Life is a just a set of lips to whisper  
Born to kiss our names back to the  
wind so our spirit might hear it  
And vibrate  
A mitzvah  
Incarnate

And back again  
Reciprocal energy  
Spirit and flesh  
These words rolling off my tongue  
The first breath of afterdeath in  
my lungs  
After life I just go back to where I  
came from  
Breath is drum  
Breathe in Light and smoke  
Breath is drum  
Breathe in the midnight sun where  
life never sets  
Breath is drum  
Ancestors know no death  
Breath becomes  
The way Ancestors pay at the gates  
In heaven breath is bread

The first breath of afterdeath in  
my lungs  
After life I just go back to where I  
came from  
Breath is drum  
Breathe in Light and smoke  
Breath is drum  
Breathe in the midnight sun where  
life never sets  
Breath is drum  
Ancestors know no death  
Breath becomes  
The way Ancestors pay at the gates  
In heaven breath is bread

## III. ELEGY

*Instrumental movement.*

## IV. BREAD

### CHORUS

What does the night say to you  
Before you lay your head down  
Does the night confide it's prideful  
truth  
Before the night falls does the  
pride fall too  
Or does the pride of the night rise  
like a hand in salute

What does the night say to you  
Before you lay your head down  
Does the night confide it's prideful  
truth  
Before the night falls does the  
pride fall too  
Or does the pride of the night rise  
like a hand in salute

### NARRATOR

Before it was a corner  
It was a boundless plain that never  
considered the square edges of  
man's myopia  
Over time  
The edges encroached  
And brought with them  
Paper and value



Before it was a constitution  
It was a hand written note  
Presented to a native woman  
As legal tender  
she held it to the light  
Squinted twice  
And laughed at the myopic man  
who tried to  
pass a counterfeit bill

before the sun rose that day  
the corner knew...

pride comes before the fall  
American avarice too

American pride consumes  
Like a starving cub hungry for food

If not Justice for all America  
Then how do you choose  
Who wins America  
Does somebody invariably lose

Before the sun rose that day  
The corner already knew

The corner had seen it before  
The block knows before the news

The block knows who  
America is likely to choose  
Before the sun rises  
The night tells America's truth

What does the night say to you  
Before you lay your head down  
Does the night confide it's prideful  
truth

Before the night falls does the  
pride fall too  
Or does the pride of the night rise  
like a hand in salute

What does the night say to you  
Before you lay your head down  
Does the night confide it's prideful  
truth

Before the night falls does the  
pride fall too  
Or does the pride of the night rise  
like a hand in salute

Before the sun rose that day  
The corner already knew

Before the sun rose that day  
The corner already knew

Before there was a cost  
There was bread

Before there was socially  
determined health  
We collectively cared for the sick  
and honored the dead

Before there was qualified  
immunity  
The laws and loyalty to community  
provided enough force to protect  
the peace

Before the man  
Was taken for some bread  
He had access to memory  
Of sharecropping in North Carolina  
Of making music in church  
Of 13 sisters and brothers  
Of challenges with sobriety  
Of a life before the fall

Before the fall  
There was bread

Before the sun rose that day  
The corner was already cursed and  
blessed

Weight of the body  
Wait for true equity  
Wavering feet  
Equally bruised legs

Of course there is before  
Much has happened to us  
But we, the people are more  
Than ill will be done  
Our kingdom once was and shall  
come

Give us this day  
Our bread

Before the fall  
Came a duty to keep our ancestors  
fed  
What is the equity owed to the  
people before American bread  
The people for whom the  
parchment of American purchase  
is counterfeit

God bless American bread and the  
hands that have prepared it...  
May the bounty be baked into  
24 demands  
Seasoned by 2,000 seasons  
True to our native land

Before the sun rise tomorrow  
May we feast on the bread that  
bought us one more day to try to  
get it right...

#### CHORUS

May we feast on the bread  
That bought us one more day  
To try to get it right...

May we feast on the bread  
That bought us one more day  
To try to get it right...

May we feast on the bread  
That bought us one more day  
To try to get it right...

#### V. BREADTH

#### CHORUS

So much work has been done  
Who does the work that's still left?

#### NARRATOR

The breadth of the task...

In 1619, Jamestown, enshrined a  
color-based American caste  
It took 244 years before Black  
people were enshrined a voting  
place in the franchise  
1868 the 14th amendment was  
ratified

Jamestown-citizenship  
244 years in between  
244 years from 1868 will be the  
second decade of the NEXT  
century  
By the time there is a parity of  
Black enslavement and Black  
political agency,  
NO one in this room will be alive.  
And THAT is the breadth of the  
task  
To create the EQUAL positive effect  
Of THAT historical debt  
The debt of 12 generations of  
humans who were not permitted  
to be who they could have been  
THAT is the breadth of the sin

Caste is the infrastructure of our  
divisions  
It is our country's pre-existing  
condition  
If a person has high blood  
pressure, it's not a surprise if they  
suffer a heart attack  
Why are WE surprised by the way  
law enforcement disregards the  
dignity of Blacks

The breadth of the task  
Is to make a future that remembers  
the breath of the stolen  
To think of joy as an economy  
To consider its theft with interest

Consider the breadth of a man at  
the very end of a life  
He breaks no law that requires the  
death penalty  
But that is what he receives  
Consider at the time of his death  
There is a viral disease  
That literally sees no color  
Sees us for what we actually are  
As the same  
As an interconnected species  
It took a blind organism to make  
the planet stop  
And notice  
The breadth  
And depth  
And late spring carelessness by  
which American law  
Presides over black death

The breadth of a life

The breadth of the lives of folks on  
the block who didn't have activist  
intentions  
And the breadth of the local  
activists who supported them  
with intention

The breadth of our intention to  
learn the cost of the debt  
our intention to earn back what  
was lost with his breath  
the breadth of the people who ain't  
out here for bread  
who are healing the city  
who the city often forgets

The breadth of our intention to  
learn the cost of the debt  
our intention to earn back what  
was lost with his breath  
the breadth of the people who ain't  
out here for bread  
who are healing the city  
who the city often neglects

#### CHORUS

So much work has been done  
Who does the work that's still left?

#### NARRATOR

Do you remember 2020?  
Do you remember its breadth  
Standing on the steps of the  
Supreme Court after Justice  
Ginsburg passed,  
or standing in Black Lives Matter  
Plaza, near the white house, days  
after protesters were tear-gassed

Do you remember 2020?  
Do you remember its breadth  
I found myself transported to the  
root of the American experiment.  
Beyond anger, or grief, what led  
so many of us to gather in those  
moments?  
What are the ties that bind us  
together?  
The breadth of common hope that  
we could be \*better\* than this...  
that with clear eyed understanding  
of our social pathologies,  
there existed a pervasive doe eyed  
idealism underneath.

There was a 'reason' why we  
demanded better of our country...  
because we collectively knew we  
were 'capable' of better...that like  
a teacher's most gifted student  
after failing several critical tests,  
we collectively knew that we  
could be more accurately defined  
by our promise than by our  
failures.

The promise of what's possible  
That's the breadth of the task

To make possible  
The breadth of the promise...

#### CHORUS

So much work has been done  
Who does the work that's still left?

*Libretto by Marc Bamuthi Joseph.*