

# MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Kensho Watanabe, conductor  
Dr. Louise Toppin, host  
Catherine Daniel, mezzo

Friday, November 3, 2023, 8PM | Orchestra Hall

*With these concerts we recognize Al and Kathy Lenzmeier for their generosity as the lead sponsor of the Listening Project.*

Julia Perry	<i>A Short Piece for Small Orchestra</i> (1952 chamber orchestra version)	CA. 8'
Carmen Brouard	<i>Trois monologues d'Émilie</i> Je ne connais rien à l'absence Une robe blanche Elle est vivante <i>Catherine Daniel, mezzo</i>	CA. 10'
Brian Raphael Nabors	<i>Pulse</i>	CA. 12'
I N T E R M I S S I O N		CA. 20'
Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson	<i>Mop/Mop: A Symphonic Sketch</i>	CA. 7'
Alvin Singleton	<i>56 Blows (Quis Custodiet Custodes?)</i>	CA. 12'
Errollyn Wallen	<i>The World's Weather</i>	CA. 14'

## PRE-CONCERT

Art Song Recital with soprano Merrin Guice Gill and pianist Emily Urban  
Friday, November 3, 6:15pm, Target Atrium

## THANK YOU

The 2023-24 Classical season is presented by Ameriprise Financial.

This concert will be recorded by [YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio](#) for later broadcast. Following the concert, ticketholders will receive a complimentary digital download of each piece from tonight's performance. The recordings will also be shared broadly in partnership with the African Diaspora Music Project; visit [africandiasporamusicproject.org](http://africandiasporamusicproject.org) for more information.



## KENSHO WATANABE, CONDUCTOR

Kensho Watanabe has quickly established himself internationally as an artist known for his collaborative leadership and intelligently crafted performances. Recently recognized as a recipient of a Career Assistance Award by the Solti Foundation U.S., he held the position of assistant conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra from 2016 to 2019. Last season, in addition to conducting the Minnesota Orchestra's first Listening Project concert, he made a successful debut at the Metropolitan Opera with Kevin Puts' *The Hours* and Terrence Blanchard's *Champion*. He returns to the Met this season to conduct the full revival run of *The Hours*, and recently made his Detroit Opera debut leading Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*. Among other operas he has led is *La Bohème* at the 2022 Spoleto Festival. An accomplished violinist, he received his master of music degree from the Yale School of Music and served as a substitute violinist in the Philadelphia Orchestra from 2012 to 2016. He is also a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied with Otto-Werner Mueller. In addition, he holds a bachelor of science degree from Yale College, where he studied molecular, cellular and developmental biology. More: [askonasholt.com](http://askonasholt.com), [kenshowatanabe.com](http://kenshowatanabe.com).



## DR. LOUISE TOPPIN, HOST

Louise Toppin has received critical acclaim for her operatic, orchestral, oratorio and recital performances worldwide. Her 19 CDs include *Ah love, but a day*; *La Saison des fleurs*; and *Songs of Love and Justice, Vol. I*, a collection of songs by Adolphus Hailstork. She has edited nine anthologies and a choral work published by Classical Vocal Reprints and Hildegard Press, including *Rediscovering Margaret Bonds* and *An Anthology of African and African Diaspora Songs*. Her recent performances include co-curating and singing at a festival on Black Music in Hamburg, Germany, with Thomas Hampson, Leah Hawkins and Larry Brownlee; a solo appearance with the Experiential Orchestra in New York City; a recital for the Oxford Lieder Festival in England; a residency with Duke University as a scholar/artist; the 150th anniversary celebration of the ratification of the 13th amendment for Congress and President Obama at the U.S. Capitol; and Masters of the Spirituals at Lincoln Center. She serves on the education committee for the Denyce Graves Foundation and on the boards of Opera Ebony and The Hampsong Foundation. She is co-founder and director of the George Shirley Vocal Competition and Videmus, and founder/editor of the African Diaspora Music Project. She is also a professor of music (voice) at the University of Michigan. More: [louisetoppin.com](http://louisetoppin.com).



## CATHERINE DANIEL, MEZZO

Canada-based mezzo Catherine Daniel has earned acclaim for her performances in opera, symphonic concerts and recitals. Her career highlights include singing Emelda Griffiths in Grammy Award-winner Terrence Blanchard's opera *Champion* with l'Opéra de Montréal; debuting Klytemnestra in Edmonton Opera's production of Strauss' *Elektra*; singing Elisabetta in Knoxville Opera's production of Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda*; and debuting at Carnegie Hall as a soloist in Haydn's *Mass in Time of War*. Daniel debuted the role Katie Ellen in the Pulitzer Prize-winning opera *Omar* at the Spoleto Festival in 2022. She reprised the role twice: first at the Carolina Performing Arts Center in Chapel Hill, and most recently with Boston Lyric Opera. This year she sang in two world premieres: *La Flambeau* by David Bontemps and *Pomegranate* by Kye Marshall. She looks forward to major projects overseas in the upcoming season. She was a member of the Atelier Lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal, and later became a member of the Opera Studio Nederlands in Amsterdam. She recently completed her master's in vocal performance with Canadian tenor John Tessier. Earlier she earned a degree in integrated music/education from the University of Manitoba, where she studied voice with coloratura soprano Tracy Dahl. More: [catherinedaniel.com](http://catherinedaniel.com), [randsman.com](http://randsman.com).



**JULIA PERRY**

**B:** March 25, 1924  
Lexington, Kentucky  
**D:** April 24, 1979  
Akron, Ohio

*A Short Piece for Orchestra*

COMPOSED: 1952

The title of Julia Perry’s *A Short Piece for Orchestra* gives only a minimal notion of what to expect from the music, but its brilliant sounds are sure to leave listeners wanting to know more about the composer. Perry was born in 1924 in Lexington, Kentucky. Her father was a doctor who had considerable skill as a pianist and once toured with the tenor and composer Roland Hayes. Perry studied in both the United States—at Akron University, Westminster Choir College and Julliard—and abroad, in Italy with Luigi Dallapiccola and in Paris with Nadia Boulanger. She served on the faculty of Florida A&M University in Tallahassee for many years and was awarded two Guggenheim Fellowships, the Prix Fontainebleu, and a National Institute of Arts and Letters Award. She died in 1979 at the age of 55.

Perry’s early works incorporated African American spirituals and Blues styles. Her studies with Dallapiccola inspired the use of serialist techniques, increased rhythmic complexity, and the use of short motives that are adapted and expanded upon within each piece. *A Short Piece for Orchestra* exemplifies her motivic ingenuity as the opening material is stretched and reshaped in a tightly constructed and engaging theme and variation structure. Written in 1952, early in her time in Italy, it was re-orchestrated in 1955 and again in 1965. The version played by the Minnesota Orchestra for this program is the original 1952 chamber orchestra version.

Perry returned to the U.S. for good in 1960. Her later works reflect the ongoing struggle for racial equity in this country and incorporates popular music genres. The combination of counterpoint and serialism alongside popular music genres has led some to refer to Perry as an American “neo-classical” composer. In all, Perry wrote 12 symphonies, four operas, and works for wind band, chamber ensemble, solo piano, voice and chorus. Her best-known pieces, in addition to *A Short Piece for Orchestra*, include *Stabat Mater* (1951) and *Homonculus C.F.* (1960).



**CARMEN BROUARD**

**B:** February 10, 1909  
Port-au-Prince, Haiti  
**D:** December 11, 2005  
Montreal, Canada

*Trois monologues d’Émilie*

COMPOSED: 1985

Pianist and composer Carmen Brouard was born in Haiti and studied piano both there and in Paris, ultimately becoming a concert pianist. She later adopted Canada as home, settling in Montreal in 1977, where she taught ear-training and composition in addition to her composing. Brouard co-founded the still-active Society for the Research and Dissemination of Haitian Music. Despite being Haiti’s leading 20th-century classical composer, very little of her music was published or recorded during her lifetime.

Brouard is best known as a member of the Haitian mizik savant, a group of 20th-century Haitian musicians who consciously incorporated Vodou rhythms and melodies into their classical music. This can be heard in the use of pentatonic scales and syncopated rhythms within classical tonal and harmonic structures. Brouard was mindful of representing and reflecting the cultural identity of Haiti—a country which continues to grapple with the devastating impacts of prolonged colonization—on a global stage.

Brouard’s *Trois monologues d’Émilie* for mezzo and orchestra contains texts drawn from a play by Canadian poet Michel Garneau (1939-2021) that reimagines the life of American poet Emily Dickinson—whom Garneau has re-named Émilie—in 19th-century Quebec. Many of the biographical details remain the same; however, the play examines what can be perceived of Émilie’s inner life through her poetry and interactions with her sister. The *Trois monologues* Brouard set explore matters of life and death: What remains of an artist after they die? How does one want to be remembered? What does it mean to be fully alive? These intimate songs are text-driven, emphasizing the ponderous nature of the monologues.

The titles of the three movements come from each movement’s first words sung by the soloist, and reference ideas drawn from Dickinson’s writing. One translation of the French titles to English is “I know nothing of absence,” “A white dress” and “She is alive.”


**BRIAN RAPHAEL  
NABORS**

**B:** April 10, 1991  
Birmingham, Alabama

*Pulse*

**PREMIERED:** September 9, 2019

— Brian Raphael Nabors is the youngest living composer featured at tonight's concert. Born in 1991 in Birmingham, Alabama, he composes music that integrates contemporary classical techniques with those of jazz, funk, gospel, and rhythm and blues. In addition to composing, Nabors plays piano in a variety of genres and settings. "I gain inspiration from everywhere," he said in a recent interview with radio host Bill Doggett of *I Care If You Listen*. "I love creating a vat of harmonic primordial soup and pulling different sounds out as they correspond to different emotions I'm feeling."

Nabors' works have been performed in the United States and abroad by ensembles such as the Boston, Atlanta, Detroit and Munich symphonies, as well as the Chineke! Orchestra. He has written for orchestras and chamber ensembles, and he composes increasingly for electronic instruments. He studied at Samford University and the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, and was a composition fellow at Tanglewood. He now serves on the composition faculty of the Louisiana State University School of Music.

Of his recent orchestral work *Pulse*, Nabors writes: "My conception of *Pulse* began as a long contemplation of daily life as we know it, combined with thoughts of life in nature. The universe seems to have this natural rhythm to it. It is as if every living and moving thing we are aware and unaware of is being held together by a mysterious, resolute force. *Pulse* is an episodic rhapsody that explores several phases and colorful variants of rhythm all held together by an unwavering pulse. Each episode is meant to symbolize a different scenario of life for the listener, be it a buzzing modern metropolis, a deep wilderness abundant with animalia or the scenic endless abyss of the ocean. All of these worlds and their philosophical meanings are then brought together in a contemplative theme of 'unification' in the strings that symbolizes our deep connection as living beings to everything within, over, under and around us."

*Pulse* was first performed by the Nashville Symphony Orchestra, conducted by former Minnesota Orchestra Associate Conductor Giancarlo Guerrero, on September 9, 2019.


**COLERIDGE-TAYLOR  
PERKINSON**

**B:** June 14, 1932  
New York City  
**D:** March 9, 2004  
Chicago, Illinois

*Mop/Mop: A Symphonic  
Sketch*

**COMPOSED:** 1998

— Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson's musical expertise spanned genres and styles, leading to an innovative and varied career. Perkinson was born in 1932 in New York City and spent a good part of his childhood there with his mother, who was a pianist and organist. He was named after the famed composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, whose parents came from Britain and Sierra Leone, and would follow in his footsteps early on when he showed exceptional talent at playing piano.

Perkinson studied composition and conducting at the Manhattan School of Music, Princeton University, Berkshire Music Center and Salzburg Mozarteum. In 1965 he co-founded the Symphony of the New World, the first racially integrated orchestra in the United States. Perkinson also arranged music for artists such as Harry Belafonte and Marvin Gaye; served as music director of the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater; wrote music for the Dance Theater of Harlem; and was the director of the Center for Black Music Research at Columbia College in Chicago.

Some of Perkinson's remarkable versatility as a musician was necessitated because of racism in the United States. "The fact was that I did not or could not make headway in the United States," Perkinson once told his colleague Johann Buis, "and when opportunities did come my way and they discovered that I was Black, these opportunities were withdrawn or modified." It is fortunate for today's listeners that Perkinson and so many other musicians persevered despite racism, leaning into their connections with artists in other genres and even other countries to keep them active in the music industry.

One of Perkinson's collaborators was pioneering Bebop musician Max Roach, who was sometimes called the "Duke Ellington of jazz drumming." Perkinson toured domestically and abroad with Max Roach, and his orchestral work *Mop/Mop* was written in honor of him. Rhythmic bursts are contrasted with rich jazz harmonies, expanding triplet-motif riffs, a Baroque-inspired fugato section and an unexpectedly "cool" final chord. *Mop/Mop* exemplifies Perkinson's skillful synthesis of modernist harmonic and rhythmic construction, Bebop jazz style and imaginative orchestration.





**ALVIN SINGLETON**

**B:** December 28, 1940  
Brooklyn, New York

*56 Blows (Quis Custodiet Custodes?)*

**PREMIERED:** January 13, 1994

Alvin Singleton was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1940 and got his start singing at church and improvising on the piano. Soul and jazz music were in the air around him, and he would later call Miles Davis, John Coltrane and George Lewis his favorite musicians. After graduating with a bachelor’s degree in music, Singleton began his professional career as an accountant and played in jazz ensembles on the side. Five years later, he returned to full-time music study as a composer and took courses from luminaries like Roger Sessions and Charles Wuorinen. He then traveled to Italy and Germany, where he studied with Goffredo Petrassi and attended lectures by Karlheinz Stockhausen. He lived in Austria and worked around Europe until 1985, when he returned to the United States as resident composer for the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra.

Singleton’s accolades include commissions from the Atlanta, Houston, Cleveland and Philadelphia orchestras, and a number of festivals in Europe and the United States. His mastery of Western European classical techniques is evident in his use of serialism and chromaticism. At the same time, Singleton’s deep knowledge and skill in jazz are apparent as his music, although written down, maintains a sense of spontaneity and improvisation.

Many of Singleton’s works have a connection to current events. *56 Blows (Quis Custodiet Custodes?)* was begun in 1992, the year after Rodney King was violently beaten by four Los Angeles police officers. The officers were acquitted despite video evidence capturing the officers delivering each of the 56 blows inflicted on King. The Latin subtitle, *Quis Custodiet Custodes?*, asks “Who guards the guardians?” Singleton remarked that listeners may be expecting to hear each of the 56 blows in this piece, warning “but what you expect to hear, I don’t give you—at least not when you are expecting it.” Although the violence itself was terrible, “the number one reason for me to write [this piece] was what it said about the abuse of power. Rodney King could have been anybody.”

The piece was premiered in 1994 by the Philadelphia Orchestra. It takes on renewed resonance in this community as we continue to grapple with the impacts of George Floyd’s murder in 2020 by a Minneapolis police officer.



**ERROLLYN WALLEN**

**B:** April 10, 1958  
Belize City, Belize

*The World’s Weather*

**PREMIERED:** June 11, 2022

Errollyn Wallen is in high demand as a composer of our time. Born in Belize in 1958, she moved with her parents to London at the age of two. She played piano and wrote music from a young age, but didn’t initially consider pursuing music as a career. She trained as a modern dancer and studied in London and with the Dance Theater of Harlem in New York. Upon her return to London in her early 20s, Wallen shifted her focus to music. She attended Goldsmiths College and King’s College to study piano, voice and composition. She also played in a cabaret band, opened a recording studio and production company, wrote music for film and television, and founded the chamber group Ensemble X.

Wallen’s catalogue thus far includes 22 operas, numerous orchestral works, and music for chamber ensembles and voices. Her musical influences range from popular genres to Baroque forms and serialist techniques. The year 2023 has brought premieres of a new violin concerto, a piano concerto, a song cycle and a large work for unaccompanied voices. Wallen made her Wigmore Hall debut late last month, performing *The Errollyn Wallen Songbook*. Her book *Becoming a Composer* will be released later this year.

Wallen currently lives in a lighthouse in the Scottish Highlands. Although *The World’s Weather* was written before she moved there, the piece reflects the weather she witnesses while living in such close proximity to the sea. Commenting on the work and its inspiration, she states: “For all the weather I now have, *The World’s Weather* was never intended to be literal or programmatic....[The title] came from the spine of a book I happened to see in a library. My friend, anthropologist Catherine Bolten, also encouraged me with the information that from a single drop of water the world’s weather can be ascertained....*The World’s Weather* moves between dark and light sensations with its jagged interruptions and sensuous harmonies, but is ultimately a celebration of what it means to be alive and composing music in the midst of majesty and plight.

*The World’s Weather* premiered at the 2022 BBC Proms; this performance is its first in the United States.

PROGRAM NOTES BY SHEKELA WANYAMA.