

JUNETEENTH

Kedrick Armstrong, conductor
Melody A. Betts, vocals
Brian Raphael Nabors, Hammond organ

THU JUN 18 7PM

*We gratefully recognize the **McVay Foundation** for their generosity as lead sponsor for this program.*

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor	<i>The Bamboula</i> , Rhapsodic Dance No. 1	CA. 11'
Brittany J. Green	<i>Testify!</i>	CA. 5'
	Selections from vocalist Melody A. Betts	CA. 20'
	I N T E R M I S S I O N	CA. 20'
Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson	<i>Worship</i> , A Concert Overture for Orchestra	CA. 6'
Nkeiru Okoye	<i>Voices Shouting Out</i>	CA. 5'
Brian Raphael Nabors	Concerto for Hammond Organ Rhapsody Invocation: Threnody for the Victims of Senseless Violence, Racism, Hatred and Bigotry Finale <i>Brian Raphael Nabors, Hammond organ</i>	CA. 29'

Profiles of the conductor and soloists appear on pages 50, 51 and 53.
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THANK YOU

The 2025-26 Classical season is presented by Ameriprise Financial.

This concert will be broadcast live on [YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio](#).



**SAMUEL
COLERIDGE-TAYLOR**

B: August 15, 1875
London, England

D: September 1, 1912
Croydon, England

The Bamboula,
Rhapsodic Dance No. 1

PREMIERED: June 1910

The life of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was far too brief—just 37 years—but was marked by numerous triumphs on the international stage. At age 22 the London-born composer authored what became, by some accounts, the most successful cantata of his era, *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*. His music and reputation spread quickly across the Atlantic, boosted by three U.S. tours. He was invited to the White House by Theodore Roosevelt in 1904 and earned such a devoted following in America that multiple choruses and public schools were named in his honor. The great achievements of Coleridge-Taylor, whose father was from Sierra Leone, brought special pride to many in the Black American population at a time when the Reconstruction era's steps toward racial equality were being reversed.

THE PATRON'S COMMISSION

The last of Coleridge-Taylor's visits to the U.S. took place in 1910, and on it he traveled to the Norfolk Music Festival to conduct *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* at the invitation of the noted music patron Carl Stoeckel. Stoeckel wasn't content with only Coleridge-Taylor's musical calling card and commissioned a new orchestral work from the visiting composer. Coleridge-Taylor delivered *The Bamboula*, dedicated to Stoeckel and premiered in June 1910 by the New York Philharmonic. It quickly found further hearings; the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra played it as early as 1913.

The score for *The Bamboula* is prefaced by a brief, unattributed note: "The four bars beginning from letter B are identical with a well-known West Indian Negro Dance called 'the Bamboula,' the tempo of the original 'Bamboula' being quite fast throughout. No other subject matter is used throughout the composition, which is merely a series of evolutions of the phrase mentioned. This refers to the middle part also, which is introduced for the sake of contrast."

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

PROGRAM NOTE BY CARL SCHROEDER.

**BRITTANY J. GREEN****B:** February 3, 1991
Raleigh, North Carolina*Testify!***PREMIERED:**
September 27, 2024

— Brittany J. Green is a North Carolina-based composer, performer and educator who often creates new work by blending elements of sound, video, movement and text to elicit unconventional responses and redefine relationships between different types of media. Her work has been featured at Carnegie Hall, Tanglewood, the Chicago Symphony’s MusicNOW and many additional festivals worldwide. Her collaborators include Alarm Will Sound, the International Contemporary Ensemble and JACK Quartet.

For Green, the 2025-26 season has included a residency with the Lexington Philharmonic, a collaboration with the New York Philharmonic, and the premiere of her *Letters to America* at Carnegie Hall with soprano Karen Slack and the American Composers Orchestra. Green’s current research explores sounds of the Black church and music technology in K-12 education. She is also pursuing a project that explores the life and work of American composer Julius Eastman through the lens of queer theory and Black experimentalism. Green holds degrees from the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, East Carolina University and Duke University, and she currently teaches composition and music theory at East Carolina University.

AN UNUSUAL HOMAGE

One of Green’s most recent works is *Testify!*, premiered in September 2024 by the Jacksonville Symphony under its Music Director Courtney Lewis, who was on the Minnesota Orchestra’s artistic roster from 2009 to 2014, first as assistant conductor and then associate conductor.

The very first and last sounds of *Testify!* are heard only on a tambourine, an homage to Green’s mother and her unusual but regular Sunday morning church role. “I remember watching Mama—a self-proclaimed ‘non-musician’—work her way around a tambourine, making it dance and sing like magic,” says Green in her own notes on the piece. “When she plays the tambourine, even to this day, I feel like I’m in a whirlwind of sound and technicolor.”

Throughout *Testify!*, a persistent rhythmic pattern drives the music forward, never relenting, from the fifth measure until the final ring of the solo tambourine. This steady pulse works its way through every instrument and section of the orchestra, sometimes adding more and more voices until the entire ensemble is accentuating the rhythmic pattern as one. Green adds another layer by asking the musicians to interject spirited musical exclamations and literal shouts of joy. Woven throughout the piece are melodic ideas formed out of the beloved and jubilant gospel hymn, *I'm So Glad, Jesus Lifted Me*—a traditional call-and-response style anthem that often includes shouts of “Hallelujah!” The result is a high-powered, technicolored celebration inspired by Green’s own early church memories.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, suspended cymbal, 2 tambourines, xylophone, vibraphone, harp, piano and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY EMMA PLEHAL.



**COLERIDGE-TAYLOR
PERKINSON**

B: June 14, 1932
New York City

D: March 9, 2004
Chicago, Illinois

*Worship, A Concert
Overture for Orchestra*

PREMIERED:
September 8, 2001

Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson—named after the prominent British composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, whose music his mother greatly admired—was a composer, pianist and conductor who wrote music for the concert hall, television and film, and renowned dance and theatre ensembles like the Alvin Ailey Ensemble and American Theater Lab. In addition to his classical works, Perkinson was equally versed in jazz and popular music; he arranged several hits in the 1970s for stars like Marvin Gaye, Harry Belafonte and Max Roach.

Born in 1932, Perkinson was raised in New York City. He studied dance and piano as a young boy, and in 1949 won the LaGuardia Prize in music while still a high school student. He began college at New York University studying education, but later transferred to the Manhattan School of Music for compositional studies. Throughout the early 1960s, he studied conducting in the Netherlands, and in 1965, he co-founded Symphony of

the New World—the country’s first racially integrated orchestra. He later served as its music director.

A BLENDING OF STYLES

Perkinson’s music is a synthesis of styles: classical counterpoint, jazz, Romanticism, blues, spirituals and other Black folk music. Many critics have also noted the rhythmic influence of Igor Stravinsky, whom Perkinson met when he was in high school.

These influences all come to bear in *Worship*, A Concert Overture, written in 2001. Across roughly seven minutes, Perkinson unveils a sound world built on contrasts in tone but united by constant Stravinsky-esque changes in meter, lending a flowing yet angular feel to the work. It opens calmly with singing winds and strings, before percussion and brass propel the motion forward. The calm feeling returns briefly before the clarinet re-energizes the proceedings, driving the overture to a richly layered and percussive close.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, regular and small bass drums, cymbals, suspended cymbal, congas, hi-hat, tam-tam, tom-toms, xylophone and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY MICHAEL DIVINO.



NKEIRU OKOYE

B: July 18, 1972
New York City

Voices Shouting Out

PREMIERED:
February 23, 2002

Shortly after September 11, 2001, American composer Nkeiru Okoye set out to compose a work in direct response to the tragic attack in her own hometown of New York City. However, she found the moment too much in itself, and the music took several months of distance to find its footing and make its way to paper.

A CHANNELING OF HOPE

On New Year’s Day in 2002, Okoye finally sat down and found a different approach that felt more hopeful and courageous. She recalls the experience:

“As a native New Yorker, born within a mile of Ground Zero, I was shaken, and angry. A sudden burst of inspiration and defiance struck some months later. I decided not to write the terrorism into my music: the piece would be a celebrative tribute to those of us who keep living.”

Voices Shouting Out was composed using an 11-tone row—a set series of 11 different pitches out of the 12 available in the chromatic scale, used in sequence throughout the composition. In a matter of just a few minutes, though, Okoye reaches out to use several different sources for inspiration, creating a one-of-a-kind blend of musical styles.

Using the tone row as a starting point, Okoye harmonized it to give a feeling of jazz influence; she even included a muted trumpet section in honor of the great American jazz trumpeter Miles Davis. At the work’s center, a lyrical section featuring strings, harp and flute takes stylistic elements from contemporary gospel music. Finally, the aggressive, accented style of playing she requests from the orchestra was inspired by and somewhat in honor of a university marching band that rehearsed directly next to where Okoye worked on the piece. She could hear the powerful, impactful chords and rhythms, and incorporated that into this composition. This rhythmic momentum opens the piece and then ultimately returns, carrying the music to its conclusion.

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Okoye is a Guggenheim Fellow and American Prize-winning composer, librettist, conductor and cultural thought leader whose music fuses narrative, improvisation and cultural resonance. Her music has been performed at Carnegie Hall and the Royal Opera House, and by ensembles including the BBC Concert Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Houston Grand Opera and Opera North UK. She is currently the William Levi Dawson composer in residence with the Montgomery Symphony Orchestra. Among her many projects, her most recognized works include her opera *Harriet Tubman: When I Crossed That Line to Freedom*; an extensive oratorio, *When the Caged Bird Sings*; and the piece heard today, *Voices Shouting Out*. Her piano miniature *Dusk* appears on the 2025 Latin Grammy-winning album, *Kaleidoscope*, and her upcoming album, *When the Caged Bird Sings*, will be the first one dedicated entirely to her own work.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 2 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbal, triangle, wood block, xylophone, marimba, glockenspiel, harp, piano and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY EMMA PLEHAL.

**BRIAN RAPHAEL
NABORS****B:** April 10, 1991
Birmingham, Alabama**Concerto for Hammond
Organ****PREMIERED:**
September 24, 2023

The Minnesota Orchestra's 2025-26 season has featured concertos for several instruments less often given the solo spotlight—such as viola and timpani—but tonight we hear something entirely unprecedented: the ensemble's first-ever performance of a concerto for Hammond organ. Alabama-born Brian Raphael Nabors, whose background is described on page 53, pulls double duty as both composer and soloist on the electro-mechanical organ created in the 1930s by American engineer and inventor Laurens Hammond. The Hammond organ is noted for its warm tones, percussive attack and expressive vibrato. It has become widely used in jazz, gospel, rock and blues, but rarely in classical orchestra settings—though it did appear on the Orchestra Hall stage this past February, in a suite from Bernard Herrmann's film score *Vertigo*.

THE COMPOSER'S WORDS

Nabors' Hammond Organ Concerto was commissioned by the Alabama Symphony Orchestra and members of Sound Investment, and premiered on September 24, 2023, by the composer-soloist and the commissioning ensemble under the direction of Carlos Izcaray. Nabors has provided these illuminating comments on his concerto:

"In the history of American music, the Hammond organ has seamlessly crossed genres and broken barriers. From the spiritual silos of the Black church, to the smooth and vivacious world of Jazz, to the hardy soulfulness of Rock; the Hammond has been there. This concerto is my love letter to all that has made me the artist I am. It is a love letter to the beauty, pain, and struggle that American music was born from. [It] is divided into three movements: a rhapsody, threnody and gospel praise break.

RHAPSODY. "The first movement is an exploration of American sound. It is a celebration of the many cultural influences that make the U.S. such a unique place. In a nutshell, it is everything we continue to strive for; fluid cultural integration. I send the soloist and orchestra through a whirlwind of genres. There's Latin flavor, modern jazz, hard rock, all thrown into a contemporary sound block.

INVOCATION: THRENODY FOR THE VICTIMS OF SENSELESS VIOLENCE, RACISM, HATRED AND BIGOTRY. “The second movement presents many truths that concern the well-being of our nation’s people. Unfortunately, even in this current day and age, America is no stranger to tragedy. Within recent years, we’ve had numerous isolated events of terror: mass school shootings, church shootings, shootings in public places, unlawful killings of unarmed citizens, and unjust groups who threaten our ability to have peace by pushing an agenda of hate and division. To top it off, a global pandemic. I wanted this movement to be a moment where we pay homage to all of those innocent people lost, reflect on who we are, and re-examine our core values if we are to live in a nation where everyone, regardless of where you come from, can prosper.

“This movement features the traditional American hymn *Amazing Grace* and the spiritual *Oh Freedom*. In partnership with the orchestra, the organ introduces these inspirational themes with sound interruptions symbolic of a very cut-throat, visceral pain to create an all-encompassing duality of hope and tragedy. After a roaring improvised cadenza, the strings split into 14-part divisi and voices throughout the orchestra gradually gather and ascend to a soaring climax, with each individual voice creating a counterpoint representing the souls of the innocent victims ascending to claim their peace.

FINALE. “Finally, we have the third movement that is essentially one large gospel praise break between the organ and orchestra. It is a glimpse of what freedom sounds like and the peace that we’ll have when we all understand, as Dr. Maya Angelou said, that ‘we are more alike, than we are unlike.’ This movement is lightning fast, bringing about the sound world of the Afro-American church, where echoes of praise ring out amongst the musicians.”

Instrumentation: solo Hammond organ with orchestra comprising 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets (1 doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons (1 doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbal, bongos, congas, crotales, drum set, maracas, tambourine, tam-tam, thunder sheet, Tibetan singing bowl, whip, wood blocks, glockenspiel, vibraphone, chimes, harp, piano, electric guitar, bass guitar and strings

PROGRAM NOTE INTRODUCTION BY CARL SCHROEDER, WITH MUSICAL DESCRIPTION BY BRIAN RAPHAEL NABORS.



KEDRICK ARMSTRONG,
CONDUCTOR

Kedrick Armstrong has been music director of the Oakland Symphony since 2024; his highlights there this season include premieres by Dave Ragland and Jasmine Barnes as part of an ongoing spotlight of Black American composers. His recent guest conducting engagements include the world premiere of a new production of Scott Joplin's opera *Treemonisha* with Washington National Opera and concerts with the Springfield Symphony and Chicago Sinfonietta, as well as his Chicago Symphony debut. He has served on the music staff at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Washington National Opera and Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and recently concluded his tenure as creative partner and principal conductor of the Knox-Galesburg Symphony. He advocates for the performance, publication and preservation of minority voices in classical music, and has spent several seasons as the music mentor/supervisor for EmpowerYouth!—a collaboration of the Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Chicago Urban League. More: kedrickarmstrong.com.



JAMIE BARTON,
MEZZO

Critically acclaimed by virtually every major outlet covering classical music, American mezzo Jamie Barton is increasingly recognized for how she uses her powerful instrument offstage—lifting up women, queer people and other marginalized communities. In recognition of her iconic performance at Last Night of the Proms, Barton was named 2020 Personality of the Year at the BBC Music Magazine Awards. She also won the Beverly Sills Artist Award, Richard Tucker Award and BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition. Her 2007 win at the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions launched a major international career that includes leading roles at the world's most-loved opera houses, including the Metropolitan Opera, Royal Opera House, Teatro Real, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Opéra National de Paris and Festival d'Aix-en-Provence. *Unexpected Shadows*, her album with composer-pianist Jake Heggie, earned a 2022 Grammy nomination for Best Classical Solo Vocal Album. More: harrisonparrott.com, jami bartonmezzo.com.



MELODY A. BETTS,
VOCALS

Melody A. Betts is a Chicago-based actress, singer-songwriter, writer and director who appeared on Broadway most recently as Aunt Em/Evillene in *The Wiz*. She made her Broadway debut in *Waitress* and has also been seen in *Invisible Thread* at Second Stage in New York. Her national tours include *The Sound of Music*, *The Wiz* and *Waitress*. In Chicago she has appeared in *Fiddler on the Roof* and *The Factotum* (Lyric Opera of Chicago); *The Nativity* (Goodman Theatre), *Ragtime*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *The Boys from Syracuse*, *Seussical the Musical* and *Elf* (Drury Lane Theatre); *Once on This Island*, *Nunsense*, *All Shook Up*, *The Drowsy Chaperone* and *Kiss Me, Kate* (Marriott Theatre); *Comedy of Errors* and *Pinocchio* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater); and *Motherhood the Musical* (Royal George Theatre). On TV she has been seen in *Jesus Christ Superstar Live*, *Chicago P.D.*, *Chicago Fire*, *Chicago Code*, *Power*, *I Can See Your Voice* and *Southside*. She is a member of AEA, SAG-AFTRA and AGMA. More: stewarttalent.com.



MARIA CAMACHO-DIVELY,
AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE
INTERPRETER

Maria Camacho-Dively is a trilingual interpreter from Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico, who believes the magic of theater should be for everyone. A graduate of North Central University and an NIC-certified interpreter since 2011, she brings energy, artistry and connection to every performance, helping stories resonate with both Deaf and hearing audiences. Outside of interpreting, she delights in humming her favorite musical tunes and engaging in lively discussions with friends about their latest theater adventures. She loves attending performances and immersing herself in the vibrant local art scene while also embracing her Puerto Rican heritage through continuous learning and exploration. From a young age, she has been involved with music as a woodwind player, percussionist and steel drum player, among other roles.



SARAH HICKS,
CONDUCTOR

Sarah Hicks, the Minnesota Orchestra's principal conductor of Live at Orchestra Hall, has led a broad range of programs since joining the Orchestra as assistant conductor in 2006, and has earned wide acclaim as a guest conductor in the U.S. and abroad. Her notable projects here have included co-creating the Inside the Classics series and Sam & Sarah series with former Orchestra violist Sam Bergman and leading original productions with collaborators such as PaviElle French, Kevin Kling, Peter Rothstein, Robert Elhai, The Moving Company, Nur-D, The New Standards, Cloud Cult and Dessa—with whom Hicks and the Orchestra made a live-in-concert recording on Doomtree Records. This July she will lead the Orchestra in John Williams film music concerts and a Night in the Tropics concert with trumpeter Charles Lazarus; next season she will lead film music concerts of *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi* and *Amadeus* as well as performances with Guster and Leslie Odom, Jr. More: minnesotaorchestra.org.



BRIAN RAPHAEL NABORS,
HAMMOND ORGAN

The son of a church musician and pastor in Birmingham, Alabama, Brian Raphael Nabors was surrounded by a wealth of musical activity while growing up. His upbringing immersed him in R&B, NeoSoul, jazz, funk and Black marching band culture. This adventurous, innovative spirit has led to the creation of cutting-edge works, including a Concerto for Hammond Organ and a Concerto for Orchestra that embraces nearly every sector of the American soundscape. Nabors' music has been performed by the Boston Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Detroit Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Atlanta Symphony and Britain's Chineke!, among other ensembles, at venues including Carnegie Hall and Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, and at festivals such as Lucerne, Tanglewood, Aspen, Ravinia and Grant Park. He holds a doctorate and master's degree in composition from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. He currently serves as assistant professor of composition at Louisiana State University. More: viscontiarts.com, briannabors.com.