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Presented in collaboration with The Englert Theatre

Wednesday, October 11, 2023 7:30 p.m.

The Englert Theatre

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A NEW MULTIDISCIPLINARY FESTIVAL | OCT. 11-21

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SPHINX VIRTUOSI GENERATIONS

Wednesday, October 11, 2023, at 7:30 p.m.
The Englert Theatre
Part of Hancher Auditorium's 2023–2024 Season

PROGRAM

Quenton BLACHE Habari Gani*

Javier FARÍAS Abran Paso*

Adolphus HAILSTORK from Sonata da Chiesa

VI. Dona Nobis Pacem

VII. Exultate

Andrea CASARRUBIOS Herencia*

INTERMISSION

Xavier FOLEY Concertante for Two Double Basses and

String Orchestra, "Galaxy"*

Xavier Foley & Kebra-Seyoun Charles, basses

Coleridge-Taylor PERKINSON Sinfonietta No. 2 "Generations"

Misterioso: Allegro Alla sarabande Alla Burletta Allegro vivace

*new work for Sphinx Virtuosi



SPHINX VIRTUOSI

VIOLIN 1

Alex Gonzalez, Concertmaster Clayton D Penrose-Whitmore Meredith Riley Sandro Leal-Santiesteban

VIOLIN 2

Patricia Quintero-Garcia, Principal Maïthéna Girault Thierry de Lucas Sabrina Bradford

VIOI A

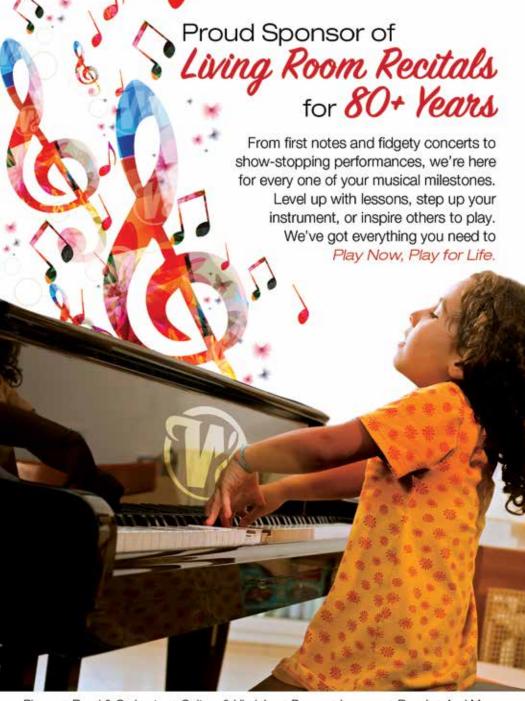
Celia Hatton, *Principal* Robert Alvarado Switala Bill Neri Kayla Cabrera

CELLO

Tommy Mesa, *Principal*Eri Snowden-Rodriguez
Diana Flores
Lindsey Sharpe

BASS

Kebra-Seyoun Charles, *Principal* (first half of program) Xavier Foley, *Principal* (second half of program) Christopher Johnson



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QUENTON BLACHE

Born 2001

Habari Gani

WORK COMPOSED: 2023

Commissioned by the Sphinx Virtuosi

WORLD PREMIERE: Fall 2023

INSTRUMENTATION: String orchestra

ESTIMATED DURATION: 4 minutes



African American composer and cellist Quenton Blache is based in Los Angeles and holds degrees in cello performance and composition from the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music; he also minored in Chinese. Blache's prolific compositional output reaches beyond the concert stage to include scores for a number of short films and documentaries. A prize-winning cellist, and participant in previous Sphinx Virtuosi tours, Blache returns to USC this season as a featured soloist with the Thornton Symphony. His current projects include pursuing a master's degree in screen scoring and competing in national level chess tournaments. Habari Gani fuses the composer's Cameroonian ancestral roots and character to form an electric string orchestra debut.

Habari Gani! This luminous opener comes from the Swahili greeting exchanged during the celebration of Kwanzaa. The ideals of unity and fellowship form the essence of this orchestral showpiece, where rhythm and dance lithely soar throughout. Featuring the number five in its meter and use of the pentatonic (five note) scale, *Habari Gani* springs forward like chatter of the latest news in a sub-Saharan community. In the score, the composer offers: "What's the news? The news is joyful, exuberant, and wondrous."

- Maïthéna Girault

JAVIER FARÍAS

Born 1973, Santiago, Chile

Abran Paso! (Make Way!)

WORK COMPOSED: 2023

Commissioned by the Sphinx Virtuosi

WORLD PREMIERE: Fall 2023

INSTRUMENTATION: String orchestra

ESTIMATED DURATION: 9 minutes



Composer/guitarist Javier Farías has written extensively for the guitar in varying genres, ranging from solo classical and electric to full guitar ensembles, as well as other instrumental combinations. Farías' music has been hailed by *Classical*



Guitar Magazine as "top class" and "outstanding ... bracing and evocative"; and by The Washington Post as "haunting, lyrical, and intense." Farías' catalogue, which includes over one hundred compositions, is representative of his devotion to the guitar, and also showcases his ability to write chamber music with diverse instrumentation; music for orchestra, jazz ensemble, choral music, and featured instruments such as the bandoneón, flamenco guitar, electric guitar, and charango.

"The phrase 'Abran Paso!' refers to the way in which certain tangueros forcefully speak to their fellow dancers, demanding space on the dance floor to show off the brilliant, lithe choreographies they have prepared," Farías writes. "This laconic statement immediately connected to the idea I had in mind when I began to write this piece: musicalize the acrobatic provocations and unrepentant attitude of the dancers and move this through each member of the orchestra, allowing their own unique take on a storied tradition.

"It should be said that this piece has nothing to do with Tango; however it does have a repetitive, rhythmic motive that is clearly identifiable as Latin American. Although its exact provenance cannot be pinpointed, I've used it many times because I connect emotionally with its powerful, driving pulse. In this work, I'm not using the guitar, but rather transporting its characteristic 'rasgueo' (strum) to bowed instruments.

"Returning to the title ... just as the great Astor Piazzolla unapologetically reinvented the tango as a genre in his country, I too have strived to do the same by working with music and rhythms unique to mine. With that said, I endeavor to do the following: move the strings of the guitar, the most representative instrument of Chile, to the strings of the orchestra, so that the richness of our musical traditions can be shared with the world.

"Abran Paso!"

ADOLPHUS HAILSTORK

Born April 17, 1941, Rochester, NY

From Sonata da Chiesa VI. Dona Nobis Pacem VII. Exultate

WORK COMPOSED: 1991

Commissioned by the Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Alexandria, Virginia,

for its string orchestra.

WORLD PREMIERE: Hazel Cheilek led the Thomas Jefferson High School for Science

and Technology string orchestra in 1992.

INSTRUMENTATION: String orchestra

ESTIMATED DURATION: 7 minutes

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By his own reckoning, Adolphus Hailstork has spent much of his life bridging two distinct musical cultures. Hailstork first heard European classical music as a child at home on the radio. In an interview, Hailstork talked about being drawn to the music's exciting sound, and his childhood desire to write such music himself. Young Hailstork's other primary musical influence came from the years he spent in the choir of the Episcopal church he and his family attended in Albany. (Hailstork affectionately describes the ritual style of this church as "exceedingly high, with all the bells and smells.")

A prolific composer and passionate educator, Hailstork's 300+ compositions cannot be neatly categorized, and he has written in virtually every genre and style. Some of Hailstork's works reflect his classical training, while others employ African American idioms, and some compositions combine the two. Today, in addition to maintaining a busy composing schedule, Hailstork is an Eminent Scholar and Professor of Music (Emerita) at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA.

A sonata da chiesa ("music for church") refers to a 17th-century genre of music appropriate for performance in a church. These multi-movement instrumental works were not specifically liturgical; instead, they created a sacred space for contemplation within a religious service. Hailstork updates and repurposes this centuries-old genre by giving each of its movements a liturgical title, and imbuing the music with a unique blend of contemporary musical language and clear tonal references. The "Dona nobis pacem" (give us peace) begins quietly, without fanfare, presenting an eloquently simple melody played first by the concertmaster. Hailstork's scoring evokes the spacious expanse of a large church like the Cathedral of All Saints in Albany, NY. The music transitions from contemplation to celebration as Hailstork reprises the joy of the opening movement, appropriately titled "Exultate."

ANDREA CASARRUBIOS

Born 1988 in San Esteban de Valle, Castille, Spain

Herencia for String Orchestra

WORK COMPOSED: 2023

Commissioned by the Sphinx Virtuosi

WORLD PREMIERE: Fall 2023

INSTRUMENTATION: String orchestra

ESTIMATED DURATION: 9 minutes

Praised by *The New York Times* for having "traversed the palette of emotions" with "gorgeous tone and an edge-of-seat intensity," and described by Diario de Menorca as an "ideal performer" who offers "elegance, virtuosity, and great expressive power," Spanish-born cellist/composer Andrea Casarrubios has played as a soloist and chamber musician throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. She has placed first in a number of international competitions and has appeared

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2023-2024

at Carnegie Hall, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Lincoln Center, and the Piatigorsky, Ravinia, and Verbier Festivals. Her latest engagements include commissions and concerts in Canada, Mexico, Spain, Germany, and the United States.

Casarrubios writes, "In a work titled *Herencia*, the Spanish word for both 'inheritance' and 'heritage,' it is natural for you to wonder about the roots of the piece itself, and the myriad stylistic threads with which it is woven. However, for this work, my inspiration was not a particular musical heritage or genre; rather, it was the artists who would be playing it. I envisioned the remarkable musicians of Sphinx Virtuosi taking the stage to play this piece, and I thought of how each individual has trailing behind them a unique history of unfathomable complexity; an epic that they bring to bear in every moment of performance. I also imagined the way this collection of histories would one day coalesce with a shared intention to illuminate their world—your world—with music. This image was the seed from which *Herencia* came to be. As you listen, I encourage you to observe this phenomenon as it unfolds on stage, and at the same time to reflect on your own epic, in all its wondrous immensity, and how it has led to you sitting here in this moment."

XAVIER FOLEY Born 1994, Marietta, GA

Concertante for Two Double Basses and String Orchestra, "Galaxy"

WORK COMPOSED: 2023

Commissioned by the Sphinx Virtuosi

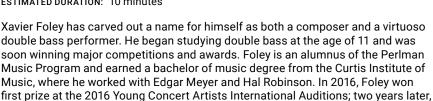
WORLD PREMIERE: Fall 2023

INSTRUMENTATION: 2 solo double basses and string

orchestra

he received a prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant.

ESTIMATED DURATION: 10 minutes



"When composing 'Galaxy,' I wanted to experiment with chord progressions one might imagine hearing when envisioning outer space as it is frequently portrayed in the media," Foley writes. "Simultaneously, I wanted to build a conversation between the double bass soloists and the self-conducted ensemble. The intrigue and ethos of the work are to showcase the solo instruments as virtuosic and star-like, which is atypical for most conventional repertoire. While the double bass is not often thought of as a solo instrument, that framing has been important to me as both a



frequent soloist and composer. Defying stereotypes and fully exploring the range of possibilities of the instrument is at the core of this concertante. In one way, the title suggests that the dominant solo voices are the brightest stars in the galaxy. In another, I imagine 100 billion stars, each offering a different amount and type of light. That perspective enriches our own understanding of the world and the great diversity of voices and lights that comprise such a rich galaxy. In imagining the different types of light, rather than prescribing the experience, I would love for our audiences to explore each of the sound palates and allow their imagination to take them on a unique sonic journey as they experience this work for the first time."

COLERIDGE-TAYLOR PERKINSON

Born June 14, 1932, Manhattan, NY Died March 9, 2004, Chicago, IL

Sinfonietta No. 2, "Generations"

WORK COMPOSED: 1996

On commission from Michael

Rudiakov and the Manchester Music Festival in Vermont

restivat in vermoni

WORLD PREMIERE: Undocumented INSTRUMENTATION: String orchestra

ESTIMATED DURATION: 19 minutes

The music of Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson, whose mother named him for the Black British composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, reflects the composer/conductor's versatility. He wrote and arranged music for theatre, film scores, classical works, jazz, and popular music, including his arrangements for Marvin Gaye's platinum-selling 1976 album, *I Want You*.

In the score for "Generations," Perkinson included the following comments:

"The inspiration for this composition, though non-programmatic, is somewhat autobiographical in that it represents my attempts at what were and are my relationships to members of my family—past and present. While each of the movements is without a strict 'formal' mode, an informal analysis of their structures is as follows:

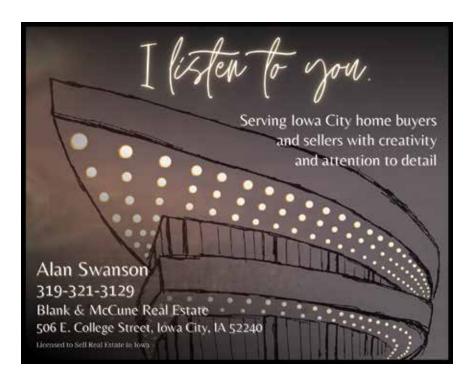
- "Misterioso and Allegro (to my daughter) is based on two motifs: the B-A-C-H idea (in German these letters represent the pitches B-flat, A-natural, C-natural, and B-natural), and the American folk tune 'Mockingbird,' also known as 'Hush Li'l Baby, Don't Say a Word.'
- "Alla sarabande (sarabande, a 17th- and 18th-century dance in slow triple meter) is dedicated to the matriarchs of my immediate family (of which there were for me, three), each of whom contributed a unique form of guidance for life's journey.



- "Alla Burletta (to my grandson). A burletta is an Italian term for a diminutive burlesca or burlesque-type work—a composition in a playful and jesting mood. Thematically, this movement is based on the pop tune 'Li'l Brown Jug.'
- 4. "Allegro vivace. This movement is a loosely constructed third rondo, which thematically begins with a fughetta (original melody), has a second theme (African in origin), and a third theme ('Mockingbird' paraphrased). Once again, the B-A-C-H idea from the first movement is the musical thread that ties these elements together. This movement is dedicated to the patriarchs of my family, known and unknown, past, present and future, for generations."

© Elizabeth Schwartz

Elizabeth Schwartz is a musician, writer, and music historian based in Portland, OR. She has been a program annotator for more than 25 years, and writes for ensembles and festivals across the United States, as well as internationally. Ms. Schwartz has also contributed to NPR's *Performance Today*, (now heard on American Public Media). www.classicalmusicprogramnotes.com



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