



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CONTACT:** Ashley Mirakian, 404-733-4349

[ashley.mirakian@atlantasymphony.org](mailto:ashley.mirakian@atlantasymphony.org)

**CARLOS SIMON CURATES CONCERT FOR ATLANTA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

**ATLANTA** – Grammy®-nominated composer Carlos Simon has curated a program for the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra that shines a spotlight on local artists, including the Spelman and Morehouse College Glee Clubs, on Thursday and Friday, February 15 and 16 at 8 pm at Atlanta Symphony Hall. Conductor Jonathan Taylor Rush leads the orchestra in a program that features works by Simon, known for imbuing a powerful social conscience into his works and exploring contemporary life in Black America.

“I have curated this program with thinking about Black identity, social justice, anti-racism, perseverance, healing and a call to action for a better tomorrow,” said Simon.

The concert’s finale is *brea(d)th*, a work written by Simon with libretto from Bamuthi, a spoken word artist, about the work about the killing of George Floyd. “We talk about the [killing] in *brea(d)th*, but it’s more about the future and what we need to do collectively to make sure this doesn’t happen again, and being aware of how much work needs to be done for equity.”

*Brea(d)th* was commissioned by the Minnesota Symphony Orchestra and premiered there in April 2023. Bamuthi will be in town to perform the work that he co-created with Simon. Bamuthi currently serves as the Vice President and Artistic Director of Social Impact at the Kennedy Center and was a 2017 TED Global Fellow, an inaugural recipient of the Guggenheim Social Practice initiative, and an honoree of the United States Artists Rockefeller Fellowship.

The concert prominently features the glee clubs from Morehouse and Spelman Colleges, along with two singers who are HBCU alums, Kearstin Piper Brown, soprano, and Brian K. Major, baritone.

Simon went on to say, “It is impossible to truly quantify the impact of the Historically Black College and University (specifically Morehouse and Spelman) on the nation and the world. Particularly in music, many students (like me) come to the music department with little or no experience in

technical training in music, but somehow leave the institution proficient enough to make lasting and iconic imprints on the music industry.”

“My goal was to showcase just a sample of the talent that has been fostered from these two institutions through the performance of Spelman and Morehouse Glee Clubs, graduates Brian Major and Kearstin Piper Brown and through compositions written by alumni.”

The concert also features an adaptation of “We Shall Overcome” by Dr. Uzee Brown Jr., a professor in the Music Department at Morehouse College.

These concerts are sponsored by BlackRock.

### CALENDAR LISTING

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#### Carlos Simon Curates

Thursday, February 15, 8pm

Friday, February 16, 8pm

Jonathan Taylor Rush

Kearstin Piper Brown, soprano

Brian K. Major, baritone

Bamuthi, spoken word

Morehouse College Glee Club

Spelman College Glee Club

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

SIMON	“Ring Shout” from <i>Four Black American Dances</i>
H. SMITH	<i>Four Negro Spirituals</i>
CHARPENTIER	“Depuis le jour” from <i>Louise</i>
Arr. B.E. BOYKIN	<i>Go Down Moses</i>
LEONCAVALLO	“Si Puo? Si Puo?” from <i>Pagliacci</i>
Arr. HOGAN	<i>There’s a Man Goin Round Taking Names</i>
HOWARD GOODALL	“Lacrymosa” from <i>Eternal Light</i>
OLATUNJI	<i>Bethelehemu</i>
Arr. UZEE BROWN	<i>We Shall Overcome</i>
CARLOS SIMON	<i>brea(d)th</i>

Explore the city’s exceptional talent in a program curated by Grammy®-nominated composer Carlos Simon, who packs a powerful social conscience into many of his works that explore contemporary life in Black America. The famed choirs from Morehouse and Spelman Colleges perform in a concert featuring Atlanta-based composers. The Orchestra performs alongside the visionary poet and performance artist Bamuthi, and vocal soloists who graduated from HBCUs. The program includes *We Shall Overcome* by Uzee Brown, a distinguished artist from Morehouse College.

### ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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#### JONATHAN TAYLOR RUSH, conductor

Jonathan Taylor Rush is an accomplished and visionary conductor hailing from Windsor, CT. Rush draws inspiration from the profound emotions evoked by the enthusiastic audiences who gather to experience his performances. Fueled by a deep passion for music, his mission is two-fold: to cure someone's bad day through the power of music and to ignite a passion among younger generations of musicians and creators, who may doubt the possibility of realizing their dreams.

Rooted in his musical upbringing within the church, Rush's approach to conducting is imbued with elements of gospel and soul music. He fearlessly infuses his performances with soul and passion, breathing new life into the classical masterworks. An ardent advocate for living and underrepresented composers, Rush is committed to programming their music in the concerts he conducts.

Among his many achievements, Rush was named Assistant Conductor, and was later promoted to Associate Conductor with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra from 2020 to 2023. At the Baltimore Symphony, he curated the orchestra's inaugural Gospel Fest, a groundbreaking event featuring the legendary gospel artist Karen Clark Sheard. He also served as Artistic Director of the Baltimore Symphony Youth Orchestras. As Artistic Director, Rush led the ensemble on its first-ever international tour through Europe, showcasing their talents at renowned venues such as Dvořák Hall in Prague.

Rush has made captivating debuts with renowned ensembles, including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Sinfonietta, Nairobi Philharmonic, and many more including his opera debut with the Washington National Opera at the Kennedy Center.

His academic accomplishments include a Bachelor of Music Education degree from The Ohio State University and a Master of Music degree in Orchestral Conducting from the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University. Jonathan's Mentors and teachers of conducting are Joseph Young, Mei-Ann Chen, and Marin Alsop.

#### BAMUTHI, spoken word

BAMUTHI (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. Bamuthi's opera libretto, *We Shall Not Be Moved*, was named one of 2017's "Best Classical Music Performances" by *The New York Times*. His opera, *Watch Night*, was inspired by the forgiveness exhibited by the congregation of Emanuel AME church in Charleston, and premiered at The Perelman Center in New York.

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.

While engaging in a deeply fulfilling and successful artistic career, Bamuthi also proudly serves as Vice President and Artistic Director of Social Impact at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC. 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 1 million times, and is a testament to his capacity to distill complex systems into accessible and poetic presentations. Bamuthi's community development philosophy, called "The Creative Ecosystem", has been implemented in dozens of cities across the United States 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.

Bamuthi 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 that activate under-resourced parks and affirm peaceful urban life.

His essays have been published in Harvard Education Press; 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, Bamuthi received an Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts from the California College of Arts in the Spring of 2022.

#### KEARSTIN PIPER BROWN, soprano

Kearstin Piper Brown has become one of the most sought-after lyric sopranos and will debut with the Metropolitan Opera this coming season. Last year she made her debut at the Lyric Opera of Chicago in the world premiere of *The Walkers*, and sang in Moravec's *The Shining*, first with Opera Parallèle in San Francisco and subsequently with Atlanta Opera.

In 2022, she resumed performances in the lead role in *Intimate Apparel* with Lincoln Center Theater (as part of the joint Metropolitan Opera's New Works Program), for which she won several awards, including the World Theater Award for "Outstanding Debut Performance in an Off-Broadway Production." *Intimate Apparel* is featured on PBS' Great Performances series.

Other career highlights include performances with New Orleans Opera, Santa Fe Opera, San Francisco Opera, Edinburgh Festival, Utah Festival Opera, Dayton Opera, Virginia Opera, the Belarusian Philharmonic Orchestra Minsk, Cape Town Opera, the Royal Festival Hall London, and the Israeli Opera.

On the concert stage, Brown has had resounding successes with repertoire often dedicated to the music of Black composers. Most recently, she performed with the Rochester Philharmonic, the Dallas Symphony, the National Philharmonic as well as with Steven Blier's New York Festival of Song, the Berkshire Opera Festival, the Skaneateles Music Festival, and the Cecilia Chorus of New York at Carnegie Hall.

Ms. Brown holds a Master of Music in Vocal Performance and Literature from Northwestern University School of Music.

BRIAN MAJOR, baritone

Charismatic baritone Brian Major continues to be praised by critics for his “velvety voice’ and “commanding stage presence.”

Last season, Major performed in Verdi’s *Falstaff* with Maryland Lyric Opera and joined the roster of The Metropolitan Opera where he made his house debut as Baron Douphol in *La traviata*.

He also returned to the Columbus Symphony to sing Schaunard in *La bohème*, joined Opera Carolina for a performance of *Aida*, sang the title role of Don Giovanni with the Schenectady Symphony Orchestra, and performed at Carnegie Hall as a soloist in Mozart’s Mass in C, K. 220 and Vaughan Williams’ Serenade to Music.

Past season credits include performances with Opera Columbus, Columbus Symphony Orchestra, Boston Lyric Opera, Opera Columbus, Sarasota Opera, Madison Opera, Toledo Opera, Opera Grand Rapids, Opera Carolina, Opera Saratoga, Opera in the Heights, Opera Company of Middlebury, and in Montpellier, France where he performed an all-French Opera concert with Maestro Michel Plasson.

An accomplished recitalist and concert artist, Mr. Major has been the baritone soloist in performances with the Siena Chamber Orchestra in Italy, Sun Valley Opera in Idaho, Des Moines Symphony Orchestra, and the Michigan State University Symphony Orchestra.

Major has won numerous awards and honors including awards from the Opera Ebony Vocal Competition, Annapolis Opera Vocal Competition, Opera at San Nicola Vocal Competition, Harlem Opera Theater’s Vocal Competition, and at the Atlanta Music Club Vocal Competition.

Major holds degrees from Morehouse College, Boston University, and Michigan State University.

### **About the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra**

Under the leadership of Music Director Nathalie Stutzmann, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO) offers live performances, media initiatives, and learning programs that unite, educate and enrich our community through the engaging and transformative power of orchestral music experiences. The ASO engages the diverse international community of our city, bringing people together in harmony—including our youngest citizens, with extensive opportunities for youth and families to fall in love with music. Two of the hallmark education programs celebrate anniversaries this season: the Atlanta Youth Symphony Orchestra celebrates 50 years and the Talent Development Program turns 30.

The Orchestra’s range and depth are featured in more than 150 concerts each year, including the flagship Delta Classical Series, Movies in Concert, Family Concerts, Coca-Cola Holiday series, and many community and education concerts. In addition, the ASO presents many vibrant, wide-ranging events and artists through its Delta Atlanta Symphony Hall Live presentations. The ASO also performs with the ASO Chorus, originally founded by Robert Shaw, and currently under the direction of Norman Mackenzie. The Chorus is featured on nine of the ASO’s 27 Grammy® Award-winning recordings.

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