



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE KING CELEBRATION RETURNS TO THE AIRWAVES IN JANUARY

**GREGORY PORTER TO PERFORM WITH THE ATLANTA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AND THE
COMBINED CHORUSES OF THE ASO AND EBENEZER BAPTIST CHURCH**

CONCERT TO STREAM ON DEMAND

ATLANTA – The **Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO)** in partnership with **Ebenezer Baptist Church** in Atlanta’s Historic Fourth Ward is pleased to announce the return of the much-loved **King Celebration** concert.

The Orchestra has been invited by the Honorable Reverend Raphael G. Warnock, Ph.D. and Patrice E. Turner, M.Div., Ed.D. of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta’s historic Old Fourth Ward, to reimagine the concert in the church’s sanctuary. The concert is planned to be broadcast the weekend of the King holiday (Monday, January 20, 2025) and during Black History Month. WABE FM 90.1 plans to air the concert at 8pm on the 20th.

The event will highlight both church musicians and the musicians of the ASO. Members of the ASO’s lauded chorus will join with the Ebenezer Baptist Church Choir. Jazz singer, Gregory Porter, will join to perform his composition, “1960 What?”

Selections from the classical tradition (contemporary Black composers from Atlanta like Carlos Simon and Joel Thompson), gospel music (by composers such as Thomas A. Dorsey and Kurt Carr), jazz and other repertoire reflective of the Ebenezer worship experience are planned. Jonathan Taylor Rush will conduct.

WABE FM 90.1 and Georgia Public Broadcasting are media partners. The concert will be available to American Public Media affiliate stations. It will stream on-demand on the 20th via GPB.org, EbenezerATL.org and ASO.org. Support for this program is provided in part by the Bank of America Charitable Foundation.

The history

For more than two decades, the ASO celebrated the national Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. January holiday with a concert at Morehouse College. Beginning in 1992, when the event hosted Coretta Scott King, soprano Jessye Norman, and many other luminaries, the concert was a national affair, drawing attention to the musical gifts of Atlanta and speaking to Dr. King's legacy.

Through a broadcast radio partnership with NPR and then APM, the concert was heard by millions of people. In 2012, Yo-Yo Ma helped celebrate the 20th anniversary of the King Celebration. Over the years, the program featured Black composers, conductors and artists of national renown.

Special guests

The King Celebration Concert features a number of special guests. Dr. Patrice E. Turner, Timothy Miller and Tamika Patton, of Ebenezer Baptist Church, will perform. Lauded singer and Atlanta favorite Gregory Porter will join with the ASO to perform his composition, "1960 What?" Waverly Alexander, a member of the ASO's Talent Development Program, will play Florence Price's *Adoration for Solo Violin and Orchestra*.

The King Celebration Returns

Presented in partnership by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia

Featuring Gregory Porter and members of the combined choruses of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Ebenezer Baptist Church

With special guests Dr. Patrice E. Turner, Timothy Miller, Tamika Patton and Waverly Alexander and composer, Carlos Simon

Jonathan Taylor Rush, conductor

CALENDAR LISTING

The King Celebration Returns!

Airing January 20, 2024 on WABE Public Media, 8pm

Available to American Public Media affiliate stations

Streaming On Demand - January 20, 2024 on GPB.org, ASO.org and EbenezerATL.org

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 hallmark education programs celebrated anniversaries this year: the Atlanta Youth Symphony Orchestra turned 50, and the Talent Development Program reached 30 years.

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.

About Ebenezer Baptist Church

Throughout its long history, Ebenezer Baptist Church, located in Atlanta, Georgia, has been a spiritual home to many citizens of the "Sweet Auburn" community. Ebenezer was founded in 1886, nine years after reconstruction ended. The church has had five pastors in its history: the Rev. John A. Parker; the Rev. Adam Daniel Williams; the Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr., known as "Daddy King"; the Rev. Dr. Joseph L. Roberts, Jr.; and the Rev. Dr. Raphael G. Warnock.

Known as "America's Freedom Church," Ebenezer Baptist Church is an urban-based, global ministry dedicated to individual growth and social transformation through living in the message and carrying out the mission of Jesus Christ.

Today, with a congregation of over 6,000, Ebenezer continues to serve the Atlanta community in the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site under the dynamic leadership of Reverend Dr. Raphael G. Warnock—assuming the role of senior pastor in 2005. One of his foremost accomplishments to date has been the completion of the Martin Luther King, Sr. Community Resources Complex. This facility houses the Martin Luther King, Sr. Community Resources Collaborative, which provides support to the Atlanta community at large. Over the last several years, Pastor Warnock has also developed Ebenezer Everywhere: members and friends of Ebenezer who live across the United States and internationally.

About Gregory Porter

Acclaimed singer and songwriter Gregory Porter was raised in Bakersfield, California, and he cites the Bakersfield Southern Gospel sound, as well as his mother's Nat King Cole record collection, as fundamental influences on his own sound.

Porter began singing in small jazz clubs in San Diego while attending San Diego State University on a football scholarship. Eventually Porter moved to New York City to pursue music full-time and his career began to ascend with the release of his first two albums—*Water* (2010) and *Be Good* (2012)—both of which received GRAMMY nominations.

In 2013, he released his breakout Blue Note debut *Liquid Spirit* which quickly grew into a global phenomenon, selling more than a million albums and earning Porter his first GRAMMY Award with NPR declaring him “America's Next Great Jazz Singer.”

His 2016 follow-up *Take Me To The Alley* won Porter his second GRAMMY for Best Vocal Jazz Album and firmly established him as his generation's most soulful jazz singer-songwriter. In 2017, Porter released the heartfelt tribute album *Nat King Cole & Me*, and in 2020 returned to his original songwriting on the uplifting *ALL RISE*, both of which received GRAMMY nominations.

His 2021 release *Still Rising* collected new songs, covers, duets, and a selection of his much-loved favorite songs.

Porter has hosted the podcast *The Hang*, a conversation series featuring his famous friends, as well as his own cooking show *The PorterHouse*, in which the singer shared recipes inspired by his local community, experiences from touring the globe, and family cooking traditions from growing up with his mother and seven siblings.

About Jonathan Taylor Rush

Jonathan Taylor Rush, hailed as “a continually rising talent in the conducting world” by *The Baltimore Sun*, brings passion, unique interpretation, and a refreshing energy to the orchestral experience. Rooted in his musical upbringing within the church, Rush's approach to conducting is imbued with elements of gospel and soul music.

Previous conducting highlights include debut performances with the likes of 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.

The 2024/25 season includes performances with Nashville Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Louisiana Philharmonic, North Carolina Symphony, Savannah Philharmonic, and Hartford Symphony. He is committed to the performances of living composers and has premiered works by James Lee III, Fernando Arroyo Lascurian and Carlos Simon. Rush is also a champion of the music of William Grant Sill, Florence Price and Samuel Coleridge Taylor.

About Georgia Public Broadcasting

As one of the largest PBS stations in the nation, Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB Media) has been creating content worth sharing for over 50 years. With nine television stations, 18 radio stations and a multi-faceted digital and education division, GPB strives to educate, entertain and enrich the lives of our viewers and listeners with programming that includes statewide radio news, current affairs, high school sports, educational resources for teachers and students and enlightening programs about our state like *Georgia Outdoors*, *A Seat at the Table*, *On Second Thought*, *Political Rewind* and more. For more information, visit www.gpb.org.

About WABE

WABE is Atlanta's original, independent, non-profit source for news and local stories and the choice for NPR and PBS. Our stations deliver fact-based journalism and inclusive, engaging, cultural content that informs, inspires, reflects, and empowers the millions who call the Greater Atlanta area home. WABE's programs, podcasts, and events make Atlanta's stories and storytellers accessible and relevant across various platforms for our diverse audience. WABE original programming, along with national NPR and PBS content, is available on WABE 90.1FM, WABE.org, WABE TV (PBS-30), and WABE-HD1/ WABE-HD2, as well as streaming on the WABE Mobile App, Hulu + Live, YouTube TV, Chromecast, PBS.org, Local Now, Roku, Android TV & mobile, Amazon Fire TV & tablets, iOS, tvOS, and Android TV live streams. Visit wabe.org for more information.

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