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New Music USA Announces Six Composers and US Orchestras Selected for its Amplifying Voices Program

**24+ Orchestras will Perform New Works During the 2021-22 Season
Selected as a Sphinx Venture Fund Recipient for 2020**



Co-Commissioned Composers are Valerie Coleman, Juan Pablo Contreras, Tania León, Brian Raphael Nabors, Tyshawn Sorey, and Shelley Washington

More Information: www.newmusicusa.org

New Music USA's Statement on Anti-Racism: www.newmusicusa.org/channel/anti-racism

New York, NY – **New Music USA** announces six composers who have been co-commissioned to write new orchestral works through its **Amplifying Voices Program**, supported by the **Sphinx Venture Fund**. Composers **Valerie Coleman, Juan Pablo Contreras, Tania León, Brian Raphael Nabors, Tyshawn Sorey, and Shelley Washington** will each write new works to be premiered during the 2021-22 season and performed by a total of at least 24 orchestras. Each of the six composer's pieces will be performed by a minimum of four orchestras.

Amplifying Voices fosters collaboration and collective action toward equitable representation of composers in classical music. It was initiated by New Music USA last fall, with support from the Sphinx Venture Fund being confirmed in December 2019. Through a national call launched in January 2020, New Music USA asked orchestras to come forward with proposals for co-commissions and a commitment to promoting existing repertoire that deserves further performances.

The lead orchestras co-commissioning new works are **The Philadelphia Orchestra** commissioning **Valerie Coleman**, the **Las Vegas Philharmonic** commissioning **Juan Pablo Contreras**, the **Arkansas Symphony Orchestra** commissioning **Tania León**, the **Berkeley Symphony** commissioning **Brian Raphael Nabors**, the **Atlanta Symphony Orchestra** commissioning **Tyshawn Sorey**, and **Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra** commissioning **Shelley Washington**. Leadership at each orchestra will also work with their partner composer to increase the programming of works in their mainstream seasons by composers of all generations whose voices have not been represented in orchestral programming.

The six composers were selected by an independent panel including composer **Michael Abels**, conductor **Carolyn Kuan**, media personality and musician **Garrett McQueen**, and artistic administrator **Evans Mirageas**.

Amplifying Voices aims to make major strides in transforming the classical canon. According to the Institute for Composer Diversity's analysis of 120 American orchestras' 2019-2020 plans, 94% of music programmed for that season's mainstage orchestral concerts was written by white composers.

Through Amplifying Voices, New Music USA commits to be a steward and partner in a multitude of projects that foster strong working relationships between American orchestras and composers whose work should be more frequently heard in the concert hall. Amplifying Voices seeks to increase support and promotion of composers of color, bringing them to the table for artistic planning at major national orchestras, and ensuring orchestras' engagement with repertoire, past and present, that has previously been omitted from major concert programs.

Composer **Valerie Coleman** says, "At a time when bold solidarity is needed to address both the struggle within the pandemics of now, Amplified Voices is an affirmation that Black Lives do indeed matter and should be represented within this sacred field. The composers selected for this powerful initiative are leaders who have dedicated themselves to not only their craft, but advocate for others for the future of music's sake. I am humbled and proud to be selected by New Music USA to be among them."

"One of my missions as a composer is to invite musicians and listeners from all backgrounds to feel more included and represented in the beautiful genre that is classical music," says composer **Juan Pablo Contreras**. "I'm extremely honored to be a part of New Music USA's 'Amplifying Voices' program, and collaborate with a consortium of American orchestras led by the Las Vegas Philharmonic, to write a new work that will further this mission. My composition will tell a story describing the 'edge effect' that occurs in communities that are on the border shared between the United States and Mexico."

Composer **Shelley Washington** says, "I am so thrilled to be working with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra to write a new piece for them and other orchestras. Having the time and resources to create a large piece for the orchestra is rare in the modern classical world, especially for younger composers. In addition to writing the piece, I am looking forward to sitting down with the orchestra to open up a dialogue on what changes can be made to create a more inclusive space in the orchestral classical realm."

"This project is impactful in so many ways. I am beyond honored and elated to share and serve as a voice for so many who look like me and share my experience," says composer **Brian Raphael Nabors**. "Along with my wonderful colleagues, I believe this groundbreaking work will help to lay the foundation for barriers to be broken and the eradication of stigmas that have plagued our field for many years. To be a part of that change is an affirmation of everything I've worked for and continue to work for."

Vanessa Reed, President and CEO of New Music USA, says, "We created Amplifying Voices at the end of last year to support the programming of composers and repertoire that could and should be more regularly enhancing our experience of orchestral music. Congratulations to the orchestras and composers who've been selected for this unique initiative – I can't wait to hear their new pieces that result from these collaborations as we strive towards an open and equitable future for classical music."

"At a critical time in our nation's history, Sphinx looks forward to helping to amplify the most important voices in classical music, says **Afa. S. Dworkin**, President and Artistic Director of The Sphinx Organization. "There is a rich tradition of excellence in repertoire by Black and Latinx composers, ranging from Florence Price, William Grant Still, Margaret Bonds, Manuel Ponce, Silvestre Revueltas, and countless other voices who have shaped the fabric of classical music. This is a hopeful avenue to live by our commitment to diversity and profoundly shift our canon. By giving the spotlight to diverse voices, this New Music USA initiative can help to evolve our entire field."

About the Composers

Described as one of the "Top 35 Female Composers in Classical Music" by critic Anne Midgette of the *Washington Post*, **Valerie Coleman** is among the world's most played composers living today. Whether it be live or via radio, her compositions are easily recognizable for their inspired style and can be heard throughout venues, institutions and competitions globally. *The Boston Globe* describes Coleman as having a "talent for delineating form and emotion with shifts between ingeniously varied instrumental combinations" and *The New York Times* observes her compositions as "skillfully wrought, buoyant music." This is Coleman's second work for The Philadelphia Orchestra – her piece *Umoja* was premiered last September. With works that range from flute sonatas that recount the stories of trafficked humans during Middle Passage and orchestral and chamber works based on nomadic Roma tribes, to scherzos about moonshine in the Mississippi Delta region and motifs based from Morse Code, her body of works has been highly regarded as a deeply relevant contribution to modern music. Coleman has received awards and/or honors from the National Flute Association, The Herb Alpert Awards, MAPFUND, ASCAP Concert Music Awards, NARAS, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Edward and Sally Van Lier Fund, Artists International, Wombwell Kentucky Award, and Michelle E. Sahn Memorial Award, to name a few. www.vcolemanmusic.com

Juan Pablo Contreras, originally from Guadalajara, Mexico, is a Latin GRAMMY®-nominated composer and Universal Music recording artist who combines Western classical and Mexican folk music in a single soundscape. His works have been commissioned and performed by orchestras throughout the Americas including National Symphony Orchestra of Mexico, Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, and Victoria Bach Festival Orchestra. Winner of the BMI William Schuman Prize, Presser Music Award, and the Young Artist Fellowship of Mexico's National Fund for Culture and the Arts, Contreras holds composition degrees from California Institute of the Art, Manhattan School of Music, and is pursuing his DMA at University of Southern California. www.juanpablocontreras.com

Born in Havana, Cuba, composer and conductor **Tania León** settled in New York in 1967. She has played important roles at Dance Theater of Harlem, Brooklyn Philharmonic, American Composers Orchestra, and the New York Philharmonic (as New Music Advisor). León is the founder and artistic director of Composers Now. Notable commissions include works for the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the International Contemporary Ensemble. León's honors include induction into the American Academy of Arts and Letters; recognition from the Fromm, Koussevitzky, and Guggenheim Foundations; ASCAP's Victor Herbert Award; and a 2018 United States Artists Fellowship. Her works have received Grammy and Latin Grammy nominations for Best Contemporary Classical Composition. www.tanialeon.com

Brian Raphael Nabors, originally of Birmingham, AL, is a composer of emotionally enriching music that tells exciting narratives with its vibrant themes and colorful harmonic language. Nabors draws from combinations of Jazz Funk, R&B, and Gospel. His music has been performed by the Cincinnati, Atlanta, Nashville, and Detroit Symphony Orchestras, as well as ROCO. Nabors is also a 2020 Fulbright scholarship recipient to Sydney, Australia, studying with composer Carl Vine at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. He earned both a Doctor of Musical Arts and Master of Music degree in Composition from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. www.briannabors.com

Newark-born multi-instrumentalist and composer **Tyshawn Sorey** is celebrated for his incomparable virtuosity, effortless mastery and memorization of highly complex scores, and an extraordinary ability to blend composition and improvisation in his work. *The Wall Street Journal* notes Sorey is, "a composer of radical and seemingly boundless ideas." *The New Yorker* recently noted that he is "among the most formidable denizens of the in-between zone...An extraordinary talent who can see across the entire musical landscape." Sorey has received support from The Jerome Foundation, The Shifting Foundation, Van Lier Fellowship, and was named a 2017 MacArthur fellow and a 2018 United States Artists Fellow. He received a B.Mus. in Jazz Studies and Performance from William Paterson University, an M.A. in Music Composition from Wesleyan University, and a D.M.A. in Music Composition from Columbia University. He is currently Assistant Professor of Music and African American Studies at Wesleyan University. www.tyshawnsorey.com

Shelley Washington is a composer, performer, collaborator, and educator who writes music that draws elements from jazz, rock, American folk and other musical spaces. She also performs as a saxophonist and vocalist, and doubles on flute, piccolo, and clarinet. She is a founding member of the composer collective Kinds of Kings. Her music explores emotions and intentions, and it uses intricate rhythms with grooves, melody, and harmony. It sometimes confronts social injustices. Washington has a B.A. in music and an M.A. in education from Truman State University, a Master of Music in composition from NYU, and is currently working on a PhD in composition at Princeton. www.shelleywashington.com

About the Orchestras

The **Arkansas Symphony Orchestra** celebrates its 55th season in 2020-2021. ASO is the resident orchestra of Robinson Center Music Hall. Arkansas Symphony Orchestra performs more than sixty concerts each year for more than 165,000 people through its Stella Boyle Smith Masterworks Series, Acxiom Pops Live! Series, River Rhapsodies Chamber Music Series, and numerous concerts performed around the state of Arkansas, in addition to serving central Arkansas through community outreach programs and bringing live symphonic music education to over 26,000 school children. ASO employs 12 full-time musicians, more than 70 part-time musicians and 15 administrative staff members with an annual operating budget of \$3.5 million. www.arkansassymphony.org

The **Atlanta Symphony Orchestra** (ASO), currently in its 75th season, continues to affirm its position as one of America's leading orchestras with excellent live performances, renowned guest artist features and engaging education initiatives. The ASO performs more than 150 concerts each year from the Delta Classical Series, Movies in Concert, Family Concert Series, Atlanta Symphony Hall LIVE and the Coca-Cola Holiday Series, as well as community and education concerts. Now in his 19th season as Music Director, Robert Spano's continued commitment to nurturing and championing contemporary American music, through the Atlanta School of Composers and other partnerships, has defined a new generation of American composers. In 2016, he received the American Composers Forum's Champion of New Music Award. During his tenure, the Orchestra has performed more than 28 ASO commissions, as well as several co-commissions. The Orchestra continues to record regularly on its in-house label, ASO Media, further demonstrating the Orchestra's commitment to celebrating classical masterworks, while continuing to perform commission, premiere and record with some of today's leading composers. During the ASO's history with Telarc, the

Orchestra and Chorus have recorded more than 100 albums and its recordings have won 27 Grammy® Awards in categories including Best Classical Album, Best Orchestral Performance, Best Choral Performance and Best Opera Performance.

www.atlantasymphony.org

Berkeley Symphony is unique among Bay Area and American orchestras for its commitment to innovation, community, and excellence. Founded in 1971 in the intellectual and artistic nexus of Berkeley, California, the Orchestra is committed to premiering and commissioning new music and champions women composers, sustained by the supportive musical environment of Berkeley, the East Bay, and the San Francisco Bay Area. From the outset, the people behind Berkeley Symphony's culture and programming were attuned to the culturally diverse people and the heady creative climate of their home city. In the 2019-2020 season, Berkeley Symphony entered a new era under the leadership of Joseph Young, the Orchestra's fourth Music Director in its nearly 50-year history, following a highly successful February 2019 debut that was acclaimed by critics and audiences alike. In addition to building on the Orchestra's artistic innovation, creativity and adventurous programming, Maestro Young is committed to amplifying the voices of underrepresented composers and artists as well as continuing to tell diverse stories that reflect the local Berkeley community. Previous music directors include founder Thomas Rarick (1971-1978), Kent Nagano (1978-2008), and Joana Carneiro (2009-2018). www.berkeleysymphony.org

The **Las Vegas Philharmonic**, led by Music Director Donato Cabrera, established its presence in Southern Nevada in 1998. The mission of the LVP is to inspire a lifelong appreciation of music through performances and educational experiences for our community that enhance the lives of our residents and the culture of our city. Each season showcases local talent alongside stellar internationally known guest artists in the magnificent Reynolds Hall. At the orchestra's core are 76 professional musicians, many of whom are esteemed educators who also perform in other professional productions in Las Vegas, bringing depth and variety to the organization. www.lvphil.org

Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra (LACO), under the visionary leadership of Music Director Jaime Martín, is a renowned interpreter of timeless masterworks, a champion of contemporary composers, and an advocate for diversity in all aspects of classical music. Proclaimed "America's finest chamber orchestra" (*Public Radio International*), "LA's most unintimidating chamber music experience" (*Los Angeles Magazine*), "resplendent" (*Los Angeles Times*), and "one of the world's great chamber orchestras" (*Classical KUSC*), LACO has, since its inception in 1968, produced 32 recordings, toured four continents, and garnered eight ASCAP awards. LACO enriches and connects the community through intimate and transformative musical experiences that foster artistic excellence, education, and innovation. www.laco.org

The Philadelphia Orchestra is one of the world's preeminent orchestras. Under the leadership of Music Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin, it strives to share the transformative power of music with the widest possible audience, and to create joy, connection, and excitement through music in the Philadelphia region, across the country, and around the world. Through innovative programming, robust educational initiatives, and an ongoing commitment to the communities that it serves, the ensemble is on a path to create an expansive future for classical music, and to further the place of the arts in an open and democratic society. www.philorch.org.

About New Music USA

New Music USA supports the sounds of tomorrow by nurturing the creation, performance, and appreciation of new music for adventurous listeners around the world. We empower and connect US-based music makers, organizations, and audiences by providing funding through our Project Grants; fostering new connections through our programs; and deepening knowledge through our online magazine, NewMusicBox, and our work as an advocate for the field. New Music USA works in collaboration with its community in response to pressing needs and to amplify the diverse voices of music creators. New Music USA envisions a thriving and equitable ecosystem for new music throughout the United States. Amplifying Voices is the next step in New Music USA's 20 years of support for the orchestra sector in the US. It builds on New Music USA's Music Alive Composer residency program which was supported by Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and run in partnership with the League of Orchestras. [@newmusicusa](http://www.newmusicusa.org)

About The Sphinx Organization and Sphinx Venture Fund

The Sphinx Organization is the social justice organization dedicated to transforming lives through the power of diversity in the arts. Sphinx's four program areas – Education & Access, Artist Development, Performing Artists, and Arts Leadership – form a pipeline that develops and supports diversity and inclusion in classical music at every level: music education, artists performing on stage, the repertoire and programming being performed, the communities represented in audiences, and the artistic and administrative leadership within the field. Sphinx was founded in 1997 by Aaron P. Dworkin with the goal of addressing the underrepresentation of people of color in classical music. The name Sphinx, inspired by the mythical creature and legendary statue, reflects the power, wisdom and persistence that characterize Sphinx's participants, as well as the enigmatic and

interpretive nature of music and art. Now lead by President and Artistic Director Afa S. Dworkin, Sphinx programs reach more than 100,000 students and artists as well as live and broadcast audiences of more than two million annually.

Over five years, Sphinx will invest \$1.5 million to transform the future of cultural diversity, equity, and inclusion in the arts with the Sphinx Venture Fund (SVF). Through competitive grants, SVF will catalyze initiatives designed to solve a challenge or an issue related to DE&I in the sphere of the performing arts, with an emphasis on classical music. www.SphinxMusic.org

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