

CARLOS

SIMON

WAKE UP! CONCERTO FOR ORCHESTRA



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Wake Up! Concerto for Orchestra

Carlos Simon: Wake Up! Concerto for Orchestra

Note by Carlos Simon

This concerto for orchestra is inspired by the poem, *Awake, Asleep*, written by the Nepali poet Rajendra Bhandari. In this profound poetic offering, Bhandari warns of the danger of being obliviously asleep in a social world, but yet how collective wakefulness provides “a bountiful harvest of thoughts.” My goal in writing this work was not only to wake a sleeping hall with the sound of the orchestra, but to leave those who hear the piece with the question: Am I asleep? For these reasons, I chose to compose a two-note rhythmic motif that acts as a “wake up call” throughout the composition—as if the orchestra is speaking to the hall and the audience, “WAKE UP!”

Awake, Asleep

To slumber amongst the awakened
is more difficult
than staying awake amongst the slumbering.

slumbering can be contagious,
one slumber leading to another,
another, and another
till an epidemic of slumber explodes.
During the pandemic of sleep
the despot sings of peace.

The slumbering public is innocent,
like a slumbering child,
smiling in its sleep.
Asleep, it does not know when it bedwets,
asleep, it is photogenic,
asleep, it does not cast stones at the mirror
does not ask for aeroplanes and guns,-

Things, a despot knows better
than a poet.

Like sleep, wakefulness too is contagious,
One rubs his eyes as he awakes,
sighs and coughs...
another coughs, another sits up, talks.
all talk to each other,
the talking growing into a din...
Like a sprouting shoot of thought
One thought sprouts, and another... and another.
becoming a bountiful harvest of thoughts.
Things, a poet knows better
than a despot.

© Rajendra Bhandari
Translated from Nepali by Pankaj Thapa

COMMISSIONED BY
San Diego Symphony Orchestra (lead commissioner)
and National Symphony Orchestra

Carlos Simon

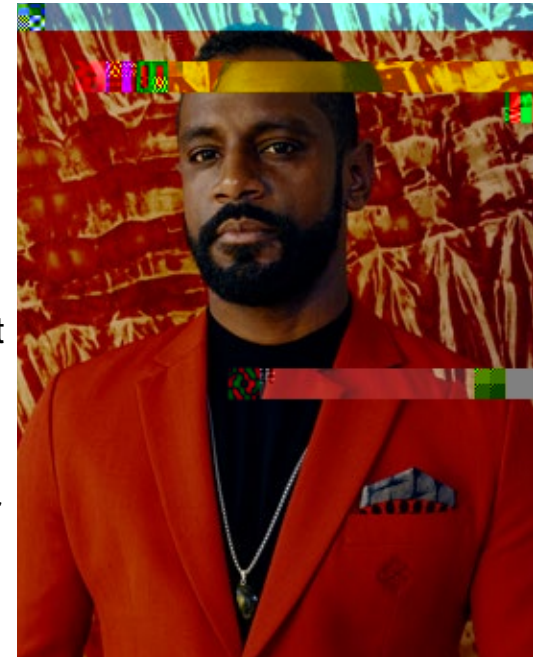
Kennedy Center Composer-In-Residence

“My dad, he always gets on me. He wants me to be a preacher, but I always tell him, ‘Music is my pulpit. That’s where I preach,’” Carlos Simon reflected for The Washington Post’s ‘Composers and Performers to Watch in 2022’ list.

Having grown up in Atlanta with a long lineage of preachers and connections to gospel music to inspire him, Grammy-nominated Simon proves that a well-composed song can indeed be a sermon. His music ranges from concert music for large and small ensembles to film scores with influences of jazz, gospel, and neo-romanticism.

Simon is the current Composer-in-Residence for the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and frequently writes for the National Symphony Orchestra and Washington National Opera. Simon also holds the position of inaugural Composer Chair of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the first in the institution’s 143-year history. The 2023–2024 season sees premiere performances with San Diego Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, The Washington Chorus, and LA Master Chorale. These follow recent other commissions from the Minnesota Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Washington National Opera (in collaboration with Mo Willems), Brooklyn Art Song Society, New York Philharmonic and Bravo! Vail, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Glimmerglass Festival, Sphinx Organization, Music Academy of the West, BBC Proms, Metropolitan Opera, and San Francisco Chamber Orchestra.

Simon’s work spans genres, taking great inspiration from liturgical texts and writers such as Terrance Hayes, Colson Whitehead, Lynn Nottage, Emma Lazarus, Isabel Wilkerson, Ruby Aiyó Gerber, and Courtney Lett, as well as the art of Romare Bearden.



In September 2023, Simon released two albums on Decca. Together is a compilation of solo and chamber compositions and arrangements featuring Simon and guests such as J’Nai Bridges, Randall Goosby, Seth Parker Woods, and Will Liverman. The work draws on Simon’s personal experience as an artist to highlight the importance of heritage and identity, and the power of collaborative music-making. Simon also released the live premiere recording of brea(d)th, a landmark work commissioned by the Minnesota Orchestra and written in collaboration with Marc Bamuthi Joseph, conducted by Jonathan Taylor Rush. “Arguably the most important commission of Simon’s career so far” (New York Times), brea(d)th was written following George Floyd’s murder as a direct response to America’s unfulfilled promises and history of systemic oppression against Black Americans.

Simon was nominated for a 2023 Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Classical Composition for his previous album, Requiem for the Enslaved. The requiem is a multi-genre musical tribute to commemorate the stories of the 272 enslaved men, women, and children sold in 1838 by Georgetown University, released by Decca in June 2022. This work sees Simon infuse his original compositions with African American spirituals and familiar Catholic liturgical melodies, performed by Hub New Music Ensemble, Marco Pavé, and MK Zulu.

Acting as music director and keyboardist for Grammy Award winner Jennifer Holliday, Simon has performed with the Boston Pops, Jackson Symphony, and St. Louis Symphony. He has also toured internationally with soul Grammy-nominated artist Angie Stone and performed throughout Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Simon earned his doctorate degree at the University of Michigan, where he studied with Michael Daugherty and Evan Chambers. He has also received degrees from Georgia State University and Morehouse College. He is an honorary member of Phi Mu Alpha Music Sinfonia Fraternity and a member of the National Association of Negro Musicians, Society of Composers International, and Pi Kappa Lambda Music Honor Society. He has served as a member of the music faculty at Spelman College and Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia and now serves as associate professor at Georgetown University. Simon was also a recipient of the 2021 Sphinx Medal of Excellence, the highest honor bestowed by the Sphinx Organization to recognize extraordinary classical Black and Latinx musicians, and was named a Sundance/Time Warner Composer Fellow for his work for film and moving image.

Noseda became general music director of the Zurich Opera House in September 2021. In 2022, his initial four-year contract was extended through the 2027–2028 season. An important milestone was the completion of Noseda's two complete Ring Cycles in May 2024 in a new production by Andreas Homoki. Since April 2022, his performances of the Ring operas have been praised by critics and in February 2023 he was recognized as Best Conductor by the jury of the German OPER! AWARDS, specifically for his Wagner interpretations.

From 2007–2018, Noseda served as music director of the Teatro Regio Torino, where his leadership marked the opera house's golden era.

Noseda has conducted the most important international orchestras, opera houses, and festivals and had significant roles at the BBC Philharmonic (chief conductor), Israel Philharmonic Orchestra (principal guest conductor), Mariinsky Theatre (principal guest conductor), Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI (principal guest conductor), Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (Victor de Sabata chair), Rotterdam Philharmonic (principal guest conductor), and Stresa Festival (artistic director).

Noseda has a strong commitment to working with the next generation of musicians and in 2019 was appointed the founding music director of the Tsinandali Festival and Pan-Caucasian Youth Orchestra in the village of Tsinandali, Georgia.

A native of Milan, Noseda is Commendatore al Merito della Repubblica Italiana, marking his contribution to the artistic life of Italy. He has been honored as Musical America's Conductor of the Year (2015) and International Opera Awards Conductor of the Year (2016). In 2023, he received the Puccini Award whose past recipients include legendary opera stars Maria Callas, Birgit Nilsson, and Luciano Pavarotti.

The NSO Music Director Chair is generously endowed by The Sant Family.
Funding for NSO recordings is provided by generous Noseda Era Fund supporters.

National Symphony Orchestra

The 2023–2024 season is the National Symphony Orchestra's 93rd season. Gianandrea Noseda serves as the Orchestra's seventh music director, joining the NSO's legacy of distinguished leaders: Christoph Eschenbach, Leonard Slatkin, Mstislav Rostropovich, Antal Doráti, Howard Mitchell, and Hans Kindler. Its artistic leadership also includes Principal Pops Conductor Steven Reineke and Artistic Advisor Ben Folds.

Since its founding in 1931, the NSO has been committed to performances that enrich the lives of its audience and community members. In 1986, the National Symphony became an artistic affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, where it has performed since the Center opened in 1971. The 96-member NSO participates in events of national and international importance, including the annual nationally televised concerts on the lawn of the U.S. Capitol, live-streamed performances from the Kennedy Center Concert Hall on medici.tv, and local radio broadcasts on Classical WETA 90.9 FM.

The NSO builds on its recording legacy with its eponymous label that launched in 2020. Since launching, the National Symphony Orchestra has garnered praise for its ambitious recording projects including the orchestra's first complete Beethoven Symphony cycle and the release of the first-ever cycle of George Walker's Sinfonias, both led by Music Director Gianandrea Noseda.

Additionally, the NSO's community engagement and education projects are nationally recognized, including NSO In Your Neighborhood, an annual week of performances in schools, churches, community centers, and other unexpected venues; Notes of Honor, which offers free performances for active, veteran, prior service, and retired members of the military and their families; and Sound Health, a collaboration with the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and other medical partners, that works to raise awareness of the impact music, and particularly live music, can have on health outcomes. Career development opportunities for young musicians include the NSO Youth Fellowship Program and its acclaimed, tuition-free Summer Music Institute.

For more information, visit nationalsymphony.org



Violins
Nurit Bar-Josef, Concertmaster
Ying Fu, Associate Concertmaster
Ricardo Cyncynates,
Assistant Concertmaster
Jane Bowyer Stewart
Teri Hopkins Lee
Pavel Pekarsky
Heather LeDoux Green
Joel Fuller
Lisa-Beth Lambert
Jing Qiao
Angelia Cho
Mae Lin**
Regino Madrid**

Benjamin Scott
Malorie Blake Shin
Marina Aikawa
Peiming Lin
Derek Powell

Violas
Daniel Foster, Principal
Abigail Evans Kreuzer,
Assistant Principal
Lynne Edelson Levine
Denise Wilkinson
James Francis Deighan
Nancy Thomas
Jennifer M|TJ 0 2012 -1.2 o5Eannst

Marissa Regni, Principal
Dayna Hepler, Assistant Principal
Desimont Alston
Cynthia R. Finks
Deanna Lee Bien
Glenn Donnellan
Natasha Bogachek
Carole Tafoya Evans
Jae-Yeon Kim
Wanzhen Li
Hanna Lee

Oboes

Nicholas Stovall, Principal

Jamie Roberts, Assistant Principal

Harrison Linsey

Kathryn Meany Wilson,

English Horn

Clarinets

Lin Ma, Principal

Eugene Mondie, Assistant Principal

Paul Cigan

Peter Cain, Bass Clarinet

Bassoons

Sue Heineman, Principal

David Young, Assistant Principal

Steven Wilson

Samuel Blair**, Contrabassoon

Horns

Abel Pereira, Principal

James Nickel,

Acting Associate Principal





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