
For immediate release

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On June 27, Orchestra of St. Luke's Returns to Live, In-Person Performance with World Premiere of New Commission from Valerie Coleman at Caramoor, Crowning OSL's Longterm Collaboration with Composer



Valerie Coleman (photo: Matthew Murphy)

"One of the most versatile and galvanic ensembles in the U.S." – WQXR on OSL

On June 27, [Orchestra of St. Luke's \(OSL\)](#) celebrates the return to **live, in-person performance** with an orchestral program showcasing the **world premiere** of *Fanfare for Uncommon Times* (2021), a new **OSL commission** from **Valerie Coleman**, *Performance Today's* 2020 Classical Woman of the Year. Marking the first of OSL's two upcoming live concerts at **Caramoor**, its longtime summer home, this represents the culmination of the orchestra's in-depth collaboration with Grammy-nominated composer, flutist and educator Coleman. Early next month a quintet of

OSL wind players will give a livestreamed account of *Portraits of Josephine*, Coleman’s musical memoir of barrier-breaking artist and activist **Josephine Baker**, interwoven with original biographical content about Baker’s extraordinary life and legacy. **Streaming live** on June 9 from OSL’s **DiMenna Center for Classical Music** and subsequently available on-demand until the end of the month, this virtual **Free Community Concert** will be presented in partnership with venues in all five New York City boroughs, followed by a **live Q&A** with the composer herself. This follows last month’s launch of *The Musical Storytelling of Valerie Coleman*, a virtual OSL **Free School Concert** for which 11,700 grade-school students from more than 110 schools nationwide are already registered to date.

James Roe, OSL’s President and Executive Director, says:

“We are looking forward to reuniting with audiences at Caramoor for our first in-person orchestral performance since March 2020, with the world premiere of an OSL commission from one of the leading composers of our time, Valerie Coleman. A central part of Valerie’s mission is to promote unity through music, which makes her art so relevant for us now and in times to come. OSL is honored to break the silence of the pandemic with Valerie’s *Fanfare for Uncommon Times*.”

Kentucky native **Valerie Coleman** has been hailed as one of “**the top 35 female composers in classical music**” (*Washington Post*). Among today’s most frequently performed living composers, Coleman is best-known for *Umoja*, one of Chamber Music America’s “**Top 101 Great American Ensemble Works**.” She has received commissions from such leading organizations as **Carnegie Hall** and the **Library of Congress**, and recently became the first African-American woman to be commissioned by the **Philadelphia Orchestra**. Similarly acclaimed as a flutist, she was a founding member of the **Imani Winds** ensemble and is an alumna of **Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center’s CMS Two** fellowship program and a laureate of the **Concert Artists Guild** competition. Coleman comments:

“I am thrilled and honored to be featured within OSL’s season. It is always wonderful to work with my esteemed colleagues at OSL and I marvel at the progress the organization continues to make within the NYC community under Jim Roe’s brilliant leadership in conjunction with an excellent staff and musicians. I hope together we are able to enlighten the musical curiosities of many in the community.”

Live at Caramoor: world premiere of Coleman’s *Fanfare for Uncommon Times* (June 27)

It was at **Caramoor** that OSL first formed back in 1979, since when the orchestra has made the Westchester arts destination its regular summer home. After last season’s enforced break from live performance, OSL is thrilled to return this summer to perform the opening and closing orchestral concerts of Caramoor’s live, in-person festival. The centerpiece of the orchestra’s opening concert, “**Generational Fanfares**” (June 27), is the **world premiere** of Coleman’s *Fanfare for Uncommon Times* (2021), which OSL commissioned for the occasion. Led by internationally renowned conductor **Tito Muñoz**, this shares the program with **Joan Tower’s** *Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman*, **Copland’s** *Fanfare for the Common Man* and *Appalachian Spring*, and **Vaughan Williams’s** *The Lark Ascending*, featuring the “sublime” (*New York Times*) **Tai Murray** as violin soloist, as in the orchestra’s recent OSLive Wednesday Night Series.

New York magazine describes OSL as “**being able to play virtually any score as if the musicians had all grown up with it under their pillows,**” and the orchestra returns for the **Summer Season Finale** (Aug 8) with a very different lineup, drawing the official Caramoor season to a close with an **all-Bach program** comprising three of the Baroque master’s violin concertos, all directed from the instrument by former Gramophone Artist of the Year **Leonidas Kavakos**.

“**Music in Color**” livestream: **Coleman’s Portraits of Josephine** (June 9)

Co-host of PBS’s *First Person* and a winner of Robert Redford’s Sundance Foundation Award for Activism in the Arts, **Kirya Traber** is OSL’s longtime “Music in Color” collaborator. She explains:

“This collaboration with OSL felt like a real-life manifestation of that icebreaker question: ‘If you could invite anyone – living or from history – to a dinner party, who would you invite?’ I was tasked with writing and performing an original script in the voice of Josephine Baker, as inspired by the music of Valerie Coleman. We are all three Black women in the performing arts, each with our own artistic talents, and our own experiences in the world, but there were so many familiar points of connection between us. Writing and rehearsing this piece felt like having a wonderful conversation with new friends across space, time and medium.”

Traber will discuss her creative process further in an online interview hosted by Manhattan’s **New York Public Library for the Performing Arts** on June 7.

“**Music in Color**” tells the life stories of important composers of color through music and the spoken word. Launched in 2017 with major support from **National Endowment for the Arts**, over the past four years the program has celebrated the life and works of **Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-George** (1745–99), **Florence Price** (1887–1953) and living composers **Eleanor Alberga** and **Gabriela Lena Frank**, with dedicated Free School Concerts and Free Community Concerts serving all five New York City boroughs. Presented live in regular seasons, since the start of the pandemic these free biographical concerts have instead been reconceived expressly for the online experience.

Representing a new expansion of “Music in Color,” this season’s livestreamed **Free Community Concert** couples Valerie Coleman’s music with an exploration of the life of her subject and inspiration, the peerless American-born entertainer, French Resistance agent and civil rights activist **Josephine Baker** (1906–75). **Portraits of Josephine** (2007), Coleman’s suite for wind quintet, chronicles significant events in Baker’s colorful, complicated life, providing the catalyst for a **new theatrical work** by **Kirya Traber**, who plays the role of Baker in pre-recorded dramatic interludes. These will be interwoven with OSL’s live interpretations of Coleman’s music in the upcoming livestream, after which Coleman herself will join OSL’s **James Roe** for a **live conversation**.

Streaming live from OSL’s **DiMenna Center for Classical Music**, now New York’s leading venue for livestreaming digital performance, *Portraits of Josephine* replaces the orchestra’s usual annual **Five Borough Tour**. As such, it will be presented in partnership with Manhattan’s **New York**

Public Library for the Performing Arts, the **Brooklyn Public Library**, Queens’s **Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning**, the Bronx’s **Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture** and Staten Island’s **Snug Harbor Cultural Center**. The latter is also joining forces with the **Staten Island Urban Center**, the students of whose **Young Women’s Leadership Training Group** will draw inspiration from Coleman and Baker to create **original art projects** for a dedicated **virtual gallery** at Snug Harbor’s Youth Matters Page. This is not the first time “Music in Color” has directly inspired new artistic creativity in New York communities; similarly, December’s “Music in Color” concert – *The Imagination of Eleanor Alberga* – prompted visual artists at the Brooklyn Public Library, Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture and Snug Harbor’s Youth Matter Program to curate galleries of original art in response to Alberga’s music.

Meanwhile, schools around the country are continuing to register students for *The Musical Storytelling of Valerie Coleman*, a free five-part webcast available for streaming on demand until July 1. Hosted by Imani Winds’ **Monica Ellis**, and featuring musical performances of Coleman’s music and more by OSL musicians and the composer herself, this narrative biographical concert offers young audiences insights into her artistic journey and creative inspiration.

OSL’s recent streaming successes

When it comes to making new, original art and entertainment during the pandemic, OSL “**has responded robustly and creatively to the constraints of streamed performance**” (*New York Times*), leading the New York City field in terms of quantity, frequency and production values. At the heart of the orchestra’s generous winter and spring lineup were the **OSLive Wednesday Night Series**, broadcast live from the **DiMenna Center**, where they were filmed under the superlative direction of **Tristan Cook**. Highlights included “**Sounds and Stories**,” a mini-series of three interdisciplinary concerts hosted by **David Hyde Pierce** and created with guest collaborators **Teju Cole**, **Anna Clyne**, **Jyll Bradley** and **Rita Dove**. Click [here](#) to see OSL’s President and Executive Director **James Roe** and series host **David Hyde Pierce** discuss the series in a **WABC Television** feature story, which credited the orchestra with helping to **diversify audiences for classical music**.

About St. Luke’s Chamber Ensemble, OSL & the DiMenna Center for Classical Music

St. Luke’s Chamber Ensemble was founded in 1974, when a group of virtuoso musicians began performing chamber concerts at Greenwich Village’s Church of St. Luke in the Fields. Today, the 24 ensemble musicians make up the artistic core of **Orchestra of St. Luke’s**, pairing beloved chamber works with lesser-known gems in OSL’s Chamber Music Series and anchoring almost every program presented by the orchestra. Regular seasons also see OSL perform in diverse musical genres at New York’s major concert venues, drawing on an expanded roster for large-scale works, and collaborating with artists ranging from Joshua Bell and Renée Fleming to Bono and Metallica. The orchestra has commissioned more than 50 new works and has given more than 175 world, U.S., and New York City premieres, as well as participating in 118 recordings, four of which have been recognized with Grammy Awards. Internationally celebrated for his expertise in 18th-century music, **Bernard Labadie** was appointed as OSL’s Principal Conductor

in 2018, continuing the orchestra's long tradition of working with proponents of historical performance practice. Built and operated by OSL, the **DiMenna Center for Classical Music** opened in 2011. New York City's only rehearsal, recording, education and performance space expressly dedicated to classical music, it serves more than 500 ensembles and 30,000 musicians each year.

To download high-resolution photos, click [here](#).

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[OSLmusic.org/](https://www.OSLmusic.org/)

Orchestra of St. Luke's celebrates Valerie Coleman

Music in Color

June 9 at 6:30pm

Five Borough Tour livestream: *Portraits of Josephine*

VALERIE COLEMAN: *Portraits of Josephine* (suite for woodwind quintet)

With dramatic interludes written and performed by Kirya Traber

Includes post-concert Q&A with Valerie Coleman

Click [here](#) for free tickets and more information.

Ancillary events:

May 20–June 30: Snug Harbor, Staten Island Urban Center: Virtual Gallery inspired by program

June 7 at 5:30pm: NYPL presents "Citizen Artist: Kirya Traber X Josephine Baker"

June 13: Brooklyn Public Library: encore stream

June TBD: Hostos Center for Arts and Culture: encore stream

Available till July 1

Free School Concerts webcast: *The Musical Storytelling of Valerie Coleman*

VALERIE COLEMAN: *Red Clay & Mississippi Delta*

VALERIE COLEMAN: *Umoja*

VALERIE COLEMAN: Selections from *Portraits of Josephine*

J.W. & J.R. JOHNSON, arr. COLEMAN: *Lift Every Voice and Sing*

CLAUDE DEBUSSY: *Syrinx*

VALERIE COLEMAN: "CUTOUT: Creole Dancer" from *Matisseries*

With Monica Ellis, host; Valerie Coleman, flute

Click [here](#) for free registration and more information.

Live at Caramoor

Sun, June 27 at 4pm

Katonah, NY

“Generational Fanfares”

Tito Muñoz, conductor

With Tai Murray, violin

VALERIE COLEMAN: *Fanfare for Uncommon Times* (world premiere)

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *The Lark Ascending*

JOAN TOWER: *Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman*

COPLAND: *Appalachian Spring Suite*

COPLAND: *Fanfare for the Common Man*

Sun, Aug 8 at 4pm

Katonah, NY

Summer Season Finale: “Concertos with Kavakos”

With Leonidas Kavakos, directing from the violin

BACH: Violin Concerto in A minor

BACH: Violin Concerto in E

BACH: Violin Concerto in D minor

For more information, click [here](#).

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