

For immediate release

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## Gateways Music Festival Orchestra Makes Carnegie Hall Debut with World Premiere of New Jon Batiste Commission, Plus Full Schedule of NYC Performances & Events in April 2022



*Gateways Music Festival Orchestra (photo: Matt Wittmeyer); Anthony Parnter (photo: Konstantin Golovchinsky)*

This April, the [Gateways Music Festival Orchestra](#), comprised entirely of **classical musicians of African descent**, presents events around NYC, culminating with its eagerly anticipated **Carnegie Hall debut** on **April 24**. To many Black musicians, the **Gateways Music Festival** represents a welcome haven from the isolation many face in their working lives. To give these musicians a supportive artistic home, the festival was founded in 1993 by eminent concert pianist and educator **Armenta Adams (Humming) Dumisani**. Originally based in North Carolina, the festival relocated to Rochester, New York in 1995, when Dumisani was appointed to the faculty of the **Eastman School of Music**. The festival retains its relationship with the school, dividing its season between Rochester and NYC. This year's NYC events take place at some of the

city's most esteemed cultural institutions, including **Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church** and the **Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture**, as well as the 92nd Street Y, Cooper Union, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Morgan Library & Museum, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts and Steinway Hall.

The Carnegie debut will showcase the **world premiere** of a new Gateways commission from 2021-22 "Perspectives" artist **Jon Batiste**, the Oscar-winning, Grammy-nominated music director of *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*. Batiste's new work shares the program with **Brahms's Variations on a Theme by Haydn**, the Third Symphony of **Florence Price**, the first African-American woman to be recognized as a symphonic composer, and *Sinfonia No. 3* by **George Walker**, the first African-American laureate of the Pulitzer Prize for Music, whose centennial falls next year. The concert concludes with Atlanta-based composer **James V. Cockerham's Fantasia on "Lift Every Voice and Sing,"** a signature piece for the ensemble, whose distinguished members hail from the foremost orchestras and conservatory teaching faculties nationwide. Watch Gateways' overview video: "[Inspiring through the Power of Performance.](#)"

**Lee Koonce** has served as Gateways' **President & Artistic Director** since 2009. Koonce's long association with the nonprofit festival dates back much further, however, for it was he who instigated its celebrated three-week quartet residency with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1997, when he served as that orchestra's Director of Community Relations. Now, almost a quarter-century later, he explains what Gateways' historic Carnegie Hall debut means for the festival and the communities it serves:

"Gateways Music Festival's journey to Carnegie Hall has been nearly 30 years in the making. Carnegie Hall's presentation of an all-Black classical symphony orchestra as part of its regular season is momentous, especially at this time of racial reckoning in the United States. Hearing and seeing the Gateways orchestra on Carnegie's revered main stage will show Black children that they can perform classical music at the highest level, while reminding people of all backgrounds that this music belongs to everyone. We are grateful to Carnegie Hall for its belief in our mission and its commitment to showcasing the artistry of Black classical musicians. It's a sign of hope and heralds a brighter future."

**Anthony Parnter** will lead the orchestra in this historic performance. Known for his "charismatic, captivating conducting" (*Los Angeles Times*), Parnter serves as Music Director and Conductor of California's San Bernardino Symphony Orchestra and the Southeast Symphony and Chorus, founded as an all-Black ensemble in 1948. Highly sought after as a guest conductor, he has also led such eminent American orchestras as the Philadelphia Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic and Atlanta Symphony, which he conducted at its celebrated live screening of *Black Panther*, and such leading international ensembles as the Chineke! Orchestra, with which he re-opened London's newly-renovated Queen Elizabeth Hall in a historic concert that was broadcast live worldwide by the BBC. Based in Los Angeles, he has led the Hollywood Studio Symphony in recording sessions for many international feature film and television projects, including *Star Wars: The Mandalorian*, *Tenet*, *Little, American Dad*, *The Hunt*, *Fargo*, *The Way Back*, *The Night Of*, *Ghostbusters: Afterlife*, *Encanto*, *Star Wars: Book of Boba Fett* and *Ice Age: Adventures of Buck Wild*.

New York City's WQXR and Rochester's WXXI Public Media will serve as media sponsors for the seven-day festival. A full schedule of New York City festival events is provided below, and further details are available [here](#).

### **About Gateways Music Festival**

The mission of Gateways Music Festival is to connect and support professional classical musicians of African descent and enlighten and inspire communities through the power of performance. Founded in 1993 by concert pianist and retired Eastman School of Music associate professor Armenta Hummings Dumisani, Gateways comprises 125 musicians – players in major symphony orchestras, faculty from renowned music schools and conservatories, and active freelancers – who perform at concert halls and community venues throughout their host city. In May 2016, Gateways Music Festival formally affiliated with the Eastman School of Music, a festival partner since 1995, but remains an independent non-profit organization.

### **About Eastman School of Music**

The Eastman School of Music was founded in 1921 by industrialist and philanthropist George Eastman (1854-1932), founder of Eastman Kodak Company. It was the first professional school of the University of Rochester. Eastman's dream was that his school would provide a broad education in the liberal arts as well as superb musical training. More than 900 students are enrolled in the Collegiate Division of the Eastman School of Music – about 500 undergraduates and 400 graduate students. They come from almost every state, and approximately 23 percent are from other countries. They are taught by a faculty comprised of more than 130 highly regarded performers, composers, conductors, scholars and educators, who include Pulitzer Prize winners, Grammy winners, Emmy winners, Guggenheim fellows, ASCAP Award recipients, published authors, recording artists and acclaimed musicians who have performed in the world's greatest concert halls. Each year, Eastman's students, faculty members, and guest artists present more than 900 concerts to the Rochester community. Additionally, more than 1,700 members of the Rochester community, from young children through senior citizens, are enrolled in the Eastman Community Music School.

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[gatewaysmusicfestival.org](http://gatewaysmusicfestival.org)

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[www.youtube.com/c/GatewaysMusicFestival](https://www.youtube.com/c/GatewaysMusicFestival)

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### **Gateways Music Festival 2022: New York City events**

**Thurs, April 21 at 7:30pm**  
**Abyssinian Baptist Church**

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200 West 57th Street, Suite 404

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Guest artist concert: Imani Winds

**Fri, April 22 at 3:30pm**

**New York Public Library for the Performing Arts (Bruno Walter Auditorium)**

Panel discussion: Gateways musicians with host Terrance McKnight of WQXR

**Fri, April 22 at 7:30pm (except where noted)**

**Gateways' "Around the Town" Chamber Music Series**

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 5:30pm: Gateways Brass Collective

92nd Street Y: Guest Artist Recital: Marian Anderson String Quartet

Morgan Library and Museum: Gateways Piano Quartet

Steinway Hall: Gateways Pianists

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture: Guest Artist Recital: Harlem Chamber Players

**Fri, April 22 at 10:30pm**

**Location TBA**

Gateways "After Hours" Jam Session

**Sat, April 23 at 9am**

**Carnegie Hall (Resnick Education Wing)**

Workshop and masterclasses with music educators and students

In partnership with Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute

(By invitation only)

**Sat, April 23 at 5pm**

**The Cooper Union (Rose Auditorium)**

Film screening: *The Caged Bird – The Life and Music of Florence B. Price*

**Sat, April 23 at 6pm**

**The Cooper Union (Rose Auditorium)**

Paul J. Burgett Lecture:

Cory Hunter, PhD: "Black Idioms in the Music of Florence B. Price"

**Sat, April 23 at 7:30pm**

**The Cooper Union (Rose Auditorium)**

Chamber Music Concert

**Sun, April 24 at 3pm**

**Carnegie Hall, Stern Auditorium / Perelman Stage (debut)**

Gateways Music Festival Orchestra

Anthony Parnter, conductor

Johannes BRAHMS: *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*

George WALKER: Sinfonia No. 3

Jon BATISTE: new work (with Jon Batiste, piano; world premiere of new Gateways commission)

Florence PRICE: Symphony No. 3 in C minor

James COCKERHAM: *Fantasia on "Lift Every Voice and Sing"*

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