

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

Sphinx Virtuosi with Britton-René Collins

Friday, October 18 – 7:30 PM

Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center

PROGRAM (selection of notes)

American Form/s

Treemonisha Overture (Arr. Jannina Norphoth, Jessie Montgomery)

Scott Joplin

Born: November 24, 1868, Texarkana, Texas

Died: April 1, 1917, New York City, New York

Composed: 1910-11

Duration: 8 minutes

Joplin's *Treemonisha* Overture, the instrumental prelude to his only surviving operatic work, blends classical elements with the syncopated rhythms characteristic of his ragtime style. The opera tells the story of a young, educated Black woman who leads her community out of superstition and ignorance, mirroring Joplin's own advocacy for education and progress in African-American communities. The Sphinx Virtuosi commissioned this special arrangement from Jannina Norphoth and Jessie Montgomery, both of whom lead multifaceted careers as violinists, composers/arrangers, and educators.

Four Novelletten, Op. 52

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

Born: August 15, 1875

Died: September 1, 1912

Composed: 1902

Duration: approx. 20 minutes

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's *Four Novelletten, Op. 52* is a charming suite for string orchestra, with each movement showcasing his talent for melodic invention and his ability to blend European classical forms with elements of African musical traditions. The *Novelletten* were composed during a period when Coleridge-Taylor, a British composer of African descent, was gaining international recognition, particularly in the United States, where he was often

referred to as the "Black Mahler." The suite's lively and lyrical character reflects the influence of Romantic composers like Dvořák and Brahms, while also incorporating Coleridge-Taylor's distinctive voice. His works were so admired in the early 20th century that when he toured the U.S., he was welcomed by President Theodore Roosevelt at the White House—an honor rarely afforded to Black artists of the time.

American Mirror, Part One

Derrick Skye

Born: 1982

Composed: 2018

Duration: 13 minutes

Derrick Skye is an acclaimed Los Angeles-based composer and musician known for his transcultural approach to music, integrating various musical practices from different cultures around the world into his works. *American Mirror* reflects on the coming together of cultures in our society, which consists of many generations and descendants of refugees, immigrants, and slaves, and how intercultural collaborations are essential to the well-being of American society. Melodically, the piece draws from West African, North African, and Eastern European vocal techniques and ornamentations, in addition to modal scales. Underneath these melodies, *American Mirror* uses open harmonies commonly found in Appalachian folk music, and also includes drones, an accompaniment practice found in many musical cultures.

Serenade for Strings (IV. Tempo di Marcia)

Teresa Carreño

Born: December 22, 1853

Died: June 12, 1917

Composed: 1901

Duration: 4 minutes

The *Serenade for Strings* by Teresa Carreño, a renowned Venezuelan pianist and composer, includes a lively and engaging finale marked *Tempo di Marcia*. The piece reflects Carreño's ability to infuse classical forms with vibrant rhythmic energy and melodic charm. Carreño was a child prodigy on the piano, performing across Europe and America, and her compositions often drew from the rich musical traditions of her Venezuelan roots while embracing European classical influences. The *Finale* of the *Serenade* showcases her skill in crafting spirited and rhythmic music, combining elegance with an infectious energy.

Daydreaming (A Fantasy on Scott Joplin)

Levi Taylor

Composed: 2018

Duration: 5 minutes

The program concludes with a work by celebrated film composer, educator, and advocate Levi Taylor. His imaginative homage to Scott Joplin masterfully captures the bold, joyful, and sophisticated essence of Joplin's music. This Sphinx Virtuosi commission will set the stage for ***American Form's*** – a carefully and collaboratively curated program that celebrates the richness of the American musical landscape.