

# SYMPHONIC SOUL: A CELEBRATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ARTISTRY

Saturday, Jan. 25, 2025 @ 8 p.m.

Carl St.Clair, conductor  
 Debora Wondercheck, producer / curator / conductor  
 Dr. Lesa Terry, artistic director  
 Duane Benjamin, music director and arranger  
 Christina Miles, storyline developer  
 Chris Smith, dancer  
 Bruce Cecil, production manager  
 Pacific Symphony

Dr. James Ford, Lead Trumpet  
 Francisco Torres, Lead Trombone  
 Scott Mayo, Lead Alto & Flute  
 Trevor Ware, Electric & Upright Bass  
 Rick Zahariades, Electric & Acoustic Guitar  
 Rayford Griffin, Drum Set  
 Adam Ledbetter, Piano & Organ  
 Eric Mckain, Congas & Midi Percussion

Dedrick Bonner  
 Founder / choir director of "The Singers of Soul"  
 The Singers of Soul Choir  
 Dedrick Bonner  
 Amber Liekhus  
 Eran Scoggins  
 Sha'Leah Nicole  
 Alfred Jackson  
 Joslyn James  
 Morgan Williams  
 Summer Greer  
 Donell Foreman  
 Terika Jefferson

Symphonic Soul is a dynamic tribute to African American artists who have profoundly influenced American music. Seamlessly blending classical, jazz, spirituals, and opera, this extraordinary concert, conducted in part by Carl St.Clair, celebrates the brilliance of legendary musicians, singers, and composers.

Performance at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts  
 Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall

- COLERIDGE-TAYLOR PERKINSON** Rondo from Sinfonietta No. 1 for Strings
- MARGARET BONDS** Selections from *Montgomery Variations*
- DUKE ELLINGTON** *Night Creature*
- DUANE BENJAMIN** *Marian Anderson Medley* for contralto and orchestra  
 "My Country Tis of Thee,"  
 "My Soul's Been Anchored,"  
 "Oh, What a Beautiful City,"  
 "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands"

—INTERMISSION—

- TRADITIONAL** "Hold On"  
*Arr. by Sounds of Blackness*
- REV. MILTON BIGGHAM** "The Lord is Blessing Me"  
*Orch. by Duane Benjamin*
- ABEL MEEROPOL** "Strange Fruit"  
*Orch. by Duane Benjamin & Dedrick Bonner*
- SAM COOKE** "A Change Is Gonna Come"  
*Orch. by Larry Ball & Duane Benjamin*
- REGINALD HEBER** "Holy Holy Holy"  
*Arr. by Dedrick Bonner*
- KANYE WEST** "Hallelujah"  
*Orch. by Duane Benjamin*
- CIVILLA DURFEE MARTIN / CHARLES H. GABRIEL** "His Eye Is On The Sparrow"  
*Orch. by Duane Benjamin*
- EUGENE ROGERS / MARK FOSTER** "Glory" from *Selma*  
*John Stephens (John Legend)*  
*Lonnie Lynn (Common)*  
*Che Smith (Rhymefest)*  
*Arr. Eugene Rogers*



# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Debora Wondercheck, producer / curator / conductor



Debora Wondercheck is a transformative nonprofit leader of the Arts & Learning Conservatory and producer/curator of *Symphonic Soul*. Wondercheck spearheads cultural inclusivity in arts education for over 3,800 children annually throughout Orange County. Recognized as one of Orange County's 125 Most Influential People and an

OC Visionary, she earned acclaim as a Woman of Distinction by the California State Assembly. In 2024, she was named Commissioner of the Arts by the city of Costa Mesa. Under her guidance, the Arts & Learning Conservatory earned Orange County's Outstanding Arts Organization of the Year, showcasing unwavering dedication to preserving high-quality music and theater programs for children, especially in marginalized communities. Wondercheck's commitment radiates through her impactful contributions, shaping futures through the transformative power of the arts.

Dr. Lesa Terry, artistic director



Dr. Lesa Terry, a violinist, composer, author, artistic director, educator, and scholar, is a leader in contemporary musical interpretation. She has played with the Atlanta and Nashville Symphony Orchestras and performed with the Uptown String Quartet and the Max Roach Double Quartet. Terry has also taught jazz history

at Santa Monica College. As the founder and musical director of the Women's Jazz Orchestra of Los Angeles, she has performed at the World Festival of Sacred Music, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the John Anson Ford Amphitheater, and the Hollywood Bowl. Recently, she appeared in the Oscar-nominated film *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood* and led the Lesa Terry Collective at the premiere screening of *Chevalier* at the 2023 Pan African Film Festival.

Duane Benjamin, music director / arranger



Affectionately known as "Ben-jamin," Duane Benjamin is a versatile musician specializing in trombone and electric bass. He has toured with legends like Diana Ross, Marvin Gaye, and The Temptations, and served as musical director for Gladys Knight. His prolific career includes performances with the Count Basie

Orchestra and recordings with artists like Justin Timberlake and Michael Jackson. Benjamin's arrangements have been featured on *American Idol* and *The Voice*, and he has co-produced hits for K-pop group BTS. He is the music director for the Mammoth Jazz Festival and teaches jazz trombone at UCLA, where he also directs the Commercial Music Studio Ensemble. Benjamin has released three albums, showcasing his talent in jazz and original compositions. For more information, visit [Duanebenjamin.com](http://Duanebenjamin.com) or YouTube/Duane Benjamin.

Dedrick Bonner, founder / choir director of "The Singers of Soul"



Hailing from Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Dedrick Bonner is now a Los Angeles artist who has made a career as the industry's "go-to" man for all things musical. Bonner started out as solo performer, playing at opera and theater houses around the globe. He soon realized that behind the scenes was where he thrived and thus made the transition. Since

that transition, Bonner has acted as a vocal coach and background vocalist for artists such as Beyoncé, Dolly Parton, BTS, the late Natalie Cole, Stevie Wonder, Jennifer Hudson, Fantasia, Ryan Gosling, and Kristin Chenoweth. He has also served as musical director for projects including this year's Squarespace Super Bowl ad featuring Dolly Parton, Procter & Gamble's 2019 Super Bowl ad, Old Navy's 2018 holiday ad, and *The Preachers* on Fox 11 alongside Bill Geddie.

Christina Miles, storyline developer



Christina Miles is a performance poet and storyteller from Orange County, California. She currently attends Brown University, where she studies anthropological archaeology and museum studies. Her poetry and research focus on themes of inheritance and African American spirituality across generations.

Bruce Cecil, production manager

Bruce Cecil is a driven entertainment producer and director with a 25-year history of making shows happen. He is internationally accomplished, specializing in content creation and live events, including concerts, sports, and comedy productions. Cecil has worked on numerous government, corporate, studio, and humanitarian projects, as well as with a "who's who" of musical artists, including Mary J. Blige, Chris Brown, 50 Cent, Shakira, The Black Eyed Peas, Earth, Wind & Fire, Stevie Wonder, Beyoncé, and many more.

