

LAND & ANCESTOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

Today we honour and acknowledge we are gathered on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak and Attawandaron. We acknowledge all the treaties that are specific to this area: the Two Row Wampum Belt Treaty of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy/Silver Covenant Chain; the Beaver Hunting Grounds of the Haudenosaunee NANFAN Treaty of 1701; the McKee Treaty of 1790, the London Township Treaty of 1796, the Huron Tract Treaty of 1827, with the Anishinaabeg, and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum of the Anishnaabek and Haudenosaunee. In the Spirit of these Treaties, we seek to place at the centre of our gatherings the values of respectful reciprocity, diversity, peace, responsibility, and mutual aid.

This land continues to be home to diverse Indigenous people (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) whom we recognise as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors to society. We hold all that is in the natural world in our highest esteem and give honour to the wonderment of all things within Creation. We bring our minds together as one to share good words, thoughts, feelings and sincerely send them out to each other and to all parts of creation. We are grateful for the natural gifts in our world, and we encourage everyone to be faithful to the natural laws of Creation.

The three Indigenous Nations that are neighbours to London are the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation; Oneida Nation of the Thames; and the Munsee-Delaware Nation who all continue to live as sovereign Nations with individual and unique languages, cultures and customs. We acknowledge all Indigenous nations and African diasporic communities unjustly harmed by generations of imperial domination, subjugation, colonialism, displacement, and cultural genocide - wounding tribes, families, elders, children, and natural resources, from the continent of Africa and around the globe.

We acknowledge the brilliance, courageous leadership and presence of Black communities for hundreds of years on this territory. We offer gratitude for all who labour, both past, present, and future, to make these lands a safer and more just environment for racialised peoples. We acknowledge centuries of Black and Indigenous solidarity, collaboration, love, mutual support and resilience. We commit ourselves to confronting, challenging, and uprooting racism and colonialism at all levels of our personal, social, and collective spaces.

We acknowledge all who came before us, all Black and Indigenous Ancestors of the territories we inhabit, and we extend our gratitude and respect.

WELCOME:

*"I have come to you tonite because no people
have been asked to be modern day people
with the history of slavery, and still
we walk, and still we talk, and
still we plan, and still we hope,
and still we sing;"*

*~Sonia Sanchez, from 'Reflections After
the June 12th March for Disarmament'*

Greetings Friends, and welcome to *And Still We Sing... Shout for Joy*. The excerpt by the celebrated poet and activist Sonia Sanchez, referenced above, gave birth to the title 'And Still We Sing' that has been the impetus for the Spring concert series of The Nathaniel Dett Chorale since its inception. To this overarching theme we have always chosen a subtitle to further expand the general idea, hence *Shout for Joy*.

The Nathaniel Dett Chorale is grateful to our patrons and funders for all the support we have received this past season, and tonight we acknowledge especially the support of the Canada Council for the Arts. We trust that you will be moved and inspired by this evening's performance as we continue the work of building bridges through the medium of Afrocentric choral music... *and still we walk, and still we talk, and still we plan, and still we hope, **and still we sing;**"*

D. Brainerd Blyden-Taylor
Artistic Director, The Nathaniel Dett Chorale

And Still We Sing... Shout for Joy

First-St. Andrew's United Church, 350 Queens Ave, London, ON N6B 1X6

Saturday November 8, 2025, 7:00pm

The Nathaniel Dett Chorale

D. Brainerd Blyden-Taylor, conductor; Gregory Oh, collaborative pianist

PROGRAMME

Welcome & Opening Remarks

Lift Every Voice and Sing | J. Rosamond Johnson (1873–1954) arr. Roland M. Carter (b. 1942)

Text by James Weldon Johnson (1871–1938)

Nguzo Saba Suite, Op.41 | Glen Edward Burleigh (1949-2007)

- 1. Umoja (Unity)**
- 2. Kujichagulia (Self-Determination)**
- 3. Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility)**
Andrew Gunpath, baritone
- 4. Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics)**
- 5. Nia (Purpose)**
- 6. Kuumba (Creativity)**
- 7. Imani (Faith)/Finale**

INTERMISSION

Music Down in My Soul | Moses Hogan (1957-2003)

Fanfare and Processional | Undine Smith Moore (1904-1989)

Kaisha Lee, soprano

The Ordering of Moses (excerpt) | R. Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943)

Benjamin MacDonald, tenor; Martin Gomes, bass

24 Negro Melodies Op. 59: No. 16. Let Us Cheer the Weary Traveler | Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

Gregory Oh, pianist

Shout for Joy | Adolphus Hailstork (b.1941)

I Can Tell the World | Moses Hogan

Walk Together Children | Moses Hogan

~ Encore ~

PROGRAM NOTES:

The program 'Shout for Joy' combines several elements of black music idioms, including classical, jazz, gospel, blues, and spirituals. The title is drawn from the third last piece on the program and pays homage to the historical Jesus as a freedom figure. In his book *The Spiritual and the Blues*, James H. Cone states that Jesus was not the subject of theological questioning, but rather an experience, a historical presence in motion, liberating and moving people in and to freedom. This program focuses on the jubilation and celebration inherent in both the idea and experience of this freedom.

The first selection, **Lift Every Voice and Sing**, opens the program giving voice to the striving for freedom which is still ongoing, and commemorates the 125th Anniversary of the text written by the African American poet, author, and one of the leading lights of the Harlem Renaissance – **James Weldon Johnson**. It has become known as The Black National Anthem, and the stirring setting we offer tonight was arranged by distinguished composer, conductor, educator, and pianist, **Dr. Roland M. Carter**.

The remaining selections on the first half of the program comprise the Nguzo Saba (Seven Principles) associated with the festival of Kwanzaa. Kwanzaa is a Pan-African holiday that celebrates family, community, and culture. Commemorated from December 26 through January 1, its origins are in the first harvest celebrations of Africa, from which it takes its name. The name Kwanzaa is derived from the phrase "matunda ya kwanza" which means "first fruits" in Swahili, a Pan-African language which is the most widely spoken African language. The Kwanzaa festival builds on the five fundamental activities of Continental African "first fruit" festivities: ingathering, reverence, commemoration, recommitment, and celebration. Kwanzaa, then, is:

~ A time of ingathering of the people to reaffirm the bonds between them.

~ A time of special reverence for the creator and creation in thanks and respect for the blessings, bountifulness, and beauty of creation.

~ A time for commemoration of the past in pursuit of its lessons, and in honour of its models of human excellence, our ancestors.

~ A time of recommitment to our highest cultural ideals in our ongoing effort to always bring forth the best of African cultural thought and practice; and

~ A time for celebration of the Good, the good of life and of existence itself, the good of family, community, and culture, the good of the awesome and the ordinary, in a word the good of the divine, natural and social.

Dr. Maulana Karenga founded the organisation **Us** in response to the Watts riots in Los Angeles, California, USA in 1965. It is from this organisation and the philosophy of Kawaia that the celebration of Kwanzaa sprang. Dr. Karenga also states:

From the beginning, the essential task of our organisation Us has been and remains to provide a philosophy, a set of principles and a program which inspires a personal and social practice that not only satisfies human need but transforms people in the process, making them self-conscious agents of their own life and liberation. Such a transformative practice will, of necessity, also lead to the building of moral community and to the constant becoming of the best of what it means to be both African and human in the fullest sense.

The set of principles which we put forth are the Nguzo Saba (The Seven Principles): Umoja (Unity), Kujichagulia (Self-Determination), Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility), Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics), Nia (Purpose), Kuumba (Creativity) and Imani (Faith). These Seven Principles are essential standards of personal and social excellence directed toward building and sustaining moral community, and strengthening and maintaining the community's capacity to define, defend and develop its interests in the most positive and productive sense.

In addition to being standards of excellence, the Nguzo Saba are also categories of priorities and categories of human possibilities. As categories of priorities, they tell us some of the most important things in our lives, identifying a key set of views, values and practices which we should, even must, put first in our personal and social life. And as categories of possibilities, the Nguzo Saba, offer us a set of principles that encourage thought and practice which help define, develop, and enhance our humanity in the context of community and the world.
~Dr. Maulana Karenga~

As Founder and Artistic Director of The Nathaniel Dett Chorale, I have been profoundly influenced by the Nguzo Saba. They are very much a part of the vision, mission, and guiding principles of The Nathaniel Dett Chorale organisation, and I have personally sought to inculcate them into year-round practice.

The second half of the programme is a celebration of the Spiritual and showcases this significant musical genre in several unique iterations, beginning with the work of Moses Hogan.

Moses G. Hogan (1957-2003) died on February 11, 2003, at the age of 45, but not before establishing himself as a musician, composer, and arranger of international renown. A son of New Orleans, he was a member of the very first class at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, and though he went away to study piano at Oberlin College in Ohio and Julliard in New York, though he established himself as one of the world's finest pianists by winning the Kosciusko Foundation's Chopin Competition in New York, like most New Orleanians, he couldn't stay away. An artist-in-residence at both Loyola and Dillard Universities, he made sure that New Orleans was a beneficiary of his prodigious talent. Mr. Hogan didn't create the American Spiritual. He couldn't have, as they were first sung centuries ago by enslaved but hopeful people. He was, however, an ardent champion of the idiom, and dedicated himself to its preservation. Dr. Roland Carter, stated, "Hogan's arrangements are fresh. His rich harmonies, rhythmic vitality, and creative voicings capture the essence of intent and style for the genre. These are major additions to the literature and without a doubt will become staples of choral repertoire, thereby contributing significantly to the preservation of the Spiritual. No, Mr. Hogan didn't create the Spiritual, but the world would be a much less joyful place had he not spread his arrangements of them around the world". **Music Down in My Soul** was commissioned by the 6th World Symposium on Choral Music for The Michigan State University Children's Choir. It is styled a Gospel Praise Song inspired by the Spiritual *Over My Head*. Hogan's arrangements of **I Can Tell the World** and **Walk Together, Children** round out the program.

Fanfare and Processional, sometimes called Heritage Fanfare and Processional, was dedicated to Dr. Carl G. Harris and the concert choir of Virginia State University in celebration of their centenary anniversary in 1982. While it is quite appropriate for use as an academic or ecclesiastical procession, it is also reminiscent of Jesus' historic procession into Jerusalem which was a precursor to both suffering and triumph. The words "no man can hinder him" remind us that if Jesus can triumph even over death, then perhaps we may have the will and fortitude to sing our respective freedoms into existence. **Undine Smith Moore** was Professor of Music at Virginia State University and considered by some to be the 'Dean of Black Women Composers'. She was an alumna of Fisk University, and its first graduate to receive a scholarship to the Julliard School of Music.

R. Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943) Born and raised in the historic underground railroad community of Drummondville (now Niagara Falls), Ontario, Dett and his family moved subsequently across the Rainbow Bridge into Niagara Falls, NY. Ultimately, it was Rochester's Clarissa Street neighbourhood which Dett called home from the 1930s until his death. As the first Black recipient of a Bachelor of Music in Piano & Composition (Oberlin, 1908), Dett was also the first Black graduate of the Eastman School (1932). R. Nathaniel Dett completed **The Ordering of Moses** in 1937, having begun it as his MM thesis at the Eastman School of Music (1932), Rochester, NY. The oratorio's rich, emotional orchestration offers a symbolist portrait of Moses from the burning bush up to his deliverance of the Israelites through the Red Sea. Tonight, we are pleased to offer you what we call the 'Burning Bush' excerpt from this towering work which encompasses Dett's rich fugal setting of the Spiritual '*Go Down, Moses*'. Though Dett spent most of his adult life living and working in the US, he kept his relationship with Canada and his Canadian colleagues very much alive. When he died in 1943 his body was returned to the land of his birth to be buried alongside his mother and his siblings in the Fairfield Cemetery, Niagara Falls, ON.

This year marks the 150th Anniversary of the Afro-British composer, conductor and political activist **Samuel Coleridge-Taylor** hailed by 20th-century critics as a "musical genius". He was born in Holborn, a suburb of London in England, on August 15, 1875. His father, a doctor from Sierra Leone, was forced to return to his home country around the time of Samuel's birth because he was not permitted to practice medicine in England. Coleridge-Taylor's talent was quickly recognised by the British musical elite. In 1899 Coleridge-Taylor first heard African American spirituals sung by the Fisk Jubilee singers on one of their tours. He became keenly interested in this unique American idiomatic music and began incorporating it into his compositions. Black Americans returned the compliment forming the Coleridge-Taylor Society in 1902 to perform and promote his music in America and eventually brought Coleridge-Taylor over for three successful tours--in 1904, 1906, and 1910. In England, Coleridge-Taylor continued an active life in music. He composed, taught at Trinity College of Music, conducted numerous choral societies, and even conducted in the famed Handel Society from 1904 until his death on September 1, 1912. Coleridge Taylor's **24 Negro Melodies, Op. 59** date back to 1905 and are piano settings of African folk melodies and Spirituals reminiscent of similar settings by Brahms (Hungarian), Dvorak (Bohemian), and Grieg (Norwegian). **Let Us Cheer the Weary Traveler, No.16** in the collection, was sung as a 'signal song' when a person or persons were making a bid for freedom.

Adolphus Cunningham Hailstork III (b. 1941) is Eminent Scholar and Professor of Music at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. He is likely the most prolific living African American composer, having more than 300 compositions in his opus currently, spanning every classical style

imaginable. And he's still active! A new requiem cantata, *A Knee on the Neck*, written in response to the killing of George Floyd was premiered in 2022; and the Los Angeles Philharmonic premiered a new orchestral piece in 2021, after which conductor Thomas Wilkins deemed him the "dean of African American composers." Hailstork calls himself a "cultural hybrid" who embodies a "historical curiosity" of classical music. **Shout for Joy** is a jubilant festival anthem for choir and organ, [brass & percussion not used in today's performance] that draws its inspiration from Hailstork's early training as a choirboy in an Episcopal cathedral. He recalled this in a recent interview: "Thirty years ago, or so, it dawned on me that I was strongly influenced by my experience in the cathedral - I started piano there, I learned organ there, and I learned to read music there. And the cadences, the melodic inflections, etc. were very strongly influenced by that." We used to have choral festivals at the cathedral [like the ones that have been traditional in England since the 1700s] where the boys and men's choirs from Toronto, and another one in Albany, [would] all get together and have these fantastic choral programs that would start off with fanfares with brass and timpani and all of that, and then we'd do these big choral anthems. And that's exactly why I subtitled that piece [Shout for Joy] 'The Bank Street Festival Anthem', because it was directly influenced by my experience as a kid in the cathedral." *Shout for Joy* was commissioned by Bank Street Memorial Baptist Church of Norfolk Virginia in celebration of its 150th Anniversary (1840-1990) and premiered in May 1990 with Dr. Carl G. Harris, conductor of the choir, at the organ.

BIOGRAPHIES:



D. Brainerd Blyden-Taylor

D. Brainerd Blyden-Taylor is the Founder, Artistic Director and conductor of The Nathaniel Dett Chorale, Canada's first professional chamber choir dedicated to the creation, performance, and preservation of Afrocentric music of all styles. Born in Trinidad & Tobago, Mr. Blyden-Taylor immigrated to Canada in 1973. He founded The Chorale in 1998, in response to a musical void in Canada; there had never been a professional ensemble dedicated to the diffusion of Afrocentric choral music. The response that The Chorale has received in Canada and the United States since its inception has certainly given credence to Mr. Blyden-Taylor's vision.

Mr. Blyden-Taylor has conducted several university, youth, and concert choirs, most notably a 25-year tenure with The Orpheus Choir of Toronto. He also works frequently as a guest conductor, having appeared with organisations such as the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Symphony Nova Scotia, Hannaford Street Silver Band, The Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, Toronto Chamber Choir, Pro Coro Canada, Ontario Youth Choir, Nova Scotia Youth Choir, and the Schulich Singers – McGill University. He has also worked as artistic director and advisor for the Algoma Festival Choir, the Nova Scotia Mass Choir, and the Chatham-Kent Roots Festival. He launched The North Star Festival in August 2017, in partnership with the Yale Alumni Chorus and the Harriet Tubman Institute at York University.

Mr. Blyden-Taylor has served as a member of the teaching staff of the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto and the Faculty of Music, Queen's University. He has served as a Master Teacher with the Toronto Board of Education, coaching teachers, and students in conducting and choral technique, and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from York University in Toronto for his contribution to education. Mr. Blyden-Taylor is also in frequent demand as a Clinician, Adjudicator and Lecturer both nationally and internationally, and is an active and dedicated church musician.



Gregory Oh

Gregory Oh gained his notoriety as a “new music revolutionary” but his wandering of the genres has seen him appear in places from the legendary techno club Berghain to the Beijing Modern Music Festival, and the Ubumuntu Festival in Kigali to Lincoln Centre in New York City.

As a pianist, he was praised in the National Post for his “mesmerizing performance... intelligence and soul; imagination and insight. He revealed a visceral sense of tempo, excellent voicing, a wonderful pianistic palette, and a warm honest sound,” and lauded in the Toronto Star for “a superhuman interpretation of André Ristic’s keyboard-smashing avalanche of notes.” Gregory “is clearly on his way, through performances, commissioning and programming, to making a lasting contribution to new music in this country.” (National Post/CAN). He holds graduate degrees from the University of Toronto, where he completed his studies with Marietta Orlov as the top graduating pianist, and the University of Michigan, where he worked with Martin Katz.

A rising music director and conductor, he recently received the 2022 Dora Mavor Award for Outstanding Music Direction for his work on the premiere of *RUR: A Torrent of Light* by Nicole Lizée and Nicolas Billon. Other credits include *The Cave* by John Millard and Tomson Highway, *Bearing* with director Michael Greyeyes (Signal Theatre/Luminato), *Ride the Wind* with AACM founding member Roscoe Mitchell and the Montreal-Toronto Art Orchestra, *The Raven* (University of Toronto), *Melancholiac: The Music of Scott Walker* (Bad New Days/Summerworks), *Cold Spring* (2011) at New York’s EMPAC and Native Earth’s *Giiwedini* (2010). Known for his imaginative programming ideas, he has programmed at The Music Gallery, the Open Ears Festival of Music and Sound and most recently at the Harbourfront Centre. He has taught at Memorial University of Newfoundland and currently teaches at the University of Toronto and the National Youth Orchestra of Canada.



The Nathaniel Dett Chorale

The Nathaniel Dett Chorale is Canada's first professional choral group dedicated to the creation, performance, and preservation of Afrocentric choral music. The multi-faceted vocalists of The Nathaniel Dett Chorale perform all styles and genres of music appropriate to the traditions of Africa and its Diasporas. The Chorale's mission is to build bridges of understanding, appreciation, and acceptance between communities of people through the medium of Afrocentric choral music.

Founder D. Brainerd Blyden-Taylor named The Nathaniel Dett Chorale after internationally renowned African Canadian composer R. Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943) to draw attention to Dett's legacy, to the breadth of Afrocentric choral music, and to be a professional choral ensemble where persons of African heritage can be well represented. Currently in its 27th Season, The Nathaniel Dett Chorale is also Artist in Residence at The Harriet Tubman Institute for Research on Africa and its Diasporas at York University.

Sopranos

Kaisha Lee
Jennifer McCallum
Makenzie Morgan
Alison Ryan
Karen Weigold

Altos

Margaret Bárdos
Gabrielle Byrnes
Jenna Cowans
Ianjai Mounsey-Ndemo
Théa Nappert

Tenors

Matthew Boutda
Nicholas Gough
Benjamin MacDonald
Alain Paquette
William Salinas-Crosby

Basses

Dallas Bergen
Wade Bray
Matheus Coelho
Martin Gomes
Andrew Gunpath
David Yung