



# LOUISVILLE ORCHESTRA

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# PRESS RELEASE

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## Louisville Orchestra Presents Fourth Annual FESTIVAL OF AMERICAN MUSIC

**KENTUCKY SPRING::** Rachel Grimes's new folk opera *The Way Forth* and the Louisville Ballet's fresh take on Copland's *Appalachian Spring* on February 23.

**THE JAZZ INFLUENCE::** Two world premieres of LO commissions and Teddy performs Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* on March 8+9

Louisville, KY (January 29, 2019) ... **Teddy Abrams** and the Louisville Orchestra continue to carve out a unique niche among American orchestras, both by celebrating the Orcehstra's history and engaging with the Louisville community to create something profoundly new. This spring's **fourth annual Festival of American Music** perfectly showcases this combination of qualities. The first program, "**Kentucky Spring,**" on **Saturday, February 23** features the **world premiere** of the folk opera and film *The Way Forth* by Louisville native **Rachel Grimes**, an exploration of Kentucky's history that uses the perspectives of generations of Kentucky women to reflect on the challenges and opportunities of the present day. On the same bill, in collaboration with the **Louisville Ballet**, is a performance of **Aaron Copland's** timeless *Appalachian Spring*, featuring new choreography for the first time in the history of the work, created by Louisville Ballet choreographer-in-residence **Andrea Schermoly**. Two weeks later on March 8 + 9, "**The Jazz Influence**" features **two world premieres of Louisville Orchestra commissions** from **Gabriel Evens** and **Tyshawn Sorey** and a Louisville premiere by Abrams's mentor **Michael Tilson Thomas**. **Gershwin's** jazz-orchestral classic *Rhapsody in Blue*, featuring Abrams as both pianist and conductor, rounds out the program.

**KENTUCKY SPRING (SAT 23 FEB 8PM) and THE JAZZ INFLUENCE (FRI 8 MAR 11AM + SAT 9 MAR 8PM) will take place at The Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts.**

**Tickets start at \$20 and are available by calling 502.584.7777 or by visiting [LouisvilleOrchestra.org](http://LouisvilleOrchestra.org)**

## KENTUCKY SPRING (SAT 23 FEB 8PM)

About the launch of this year's Festival of American Music Abrams explains:

"The first week of our signature Festival of American Music features two massive creative projects. The gravity of these undertakings gives this week great significance: *Appalachian Spring* is rarely seen in its ballet form, and never with a new, authorized choreography. For an orchestra that famously worked with Martha Graham herself, this is a very meaningful project in our community. Rachel Grimes's opera, focusing on Kentucky's history told through the lenses of strong, historic women, is particularly special as a work of contemporary thematic relevance and for its reimaging of standard musical forms and formats—exactly what we try to explore each season at the Louisville Orchestra."

**Rachel Grimes** took part in the inaugural Festival of American Music when the LO performed three new arrangements from her piano suite *Book of Leaves*. This season they collaborate on the folk opera ***The Way Forth***, commissioned in part by The Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts where it will be presented in Whitney Hall. The work uses music, narration and film to weave together the voices of generations of Kentucky women from 1775 to the present, inspired by a treasure trove of family photos, documents, and letters. As Grimes says of her initial confrontation with these materials:

"What to do with all of these random mysterious photos, letters, deeds, a gorgeous 1908 scrapbook, this ancient Scottish family Bible... Why is this woman wearing men's clothing and sporting a cigar? Is this the old house that burned? So, he really was a miner '49er...how are we related to him? Why didn't she finish her college degree until she was 61?? These were some of the questions that led to a few answers and many more questions that my brother and I asked our parents and relatives over the last several years as we made our way through sorting the memorabilia of many generations of Kentuckians."

Using these documents to piece together and explore lesser-told tales of the historically oppressed, Grimes's folk opera honors the feminine, the holistic, the emotional legacies of the silenced, the beauty of daily life, and the eternal grace and redemption of time, as symbolized by the great Dix and Kentucky Rivers. An experimental film co-created with filmmaker **Catharine Axley**, along with the support of Owsley Brown Presents, the production company behind the Louisville Orchestra documentary *Music Makes a City*, will accompany the musical work for use in live performance. Following the Louisville premiere, *The Way Forth* will be presented as part of Knoxville's Big Ears Festival.

Sharing the program with *The Way Forth* is a fully staged performance of Aaron Copland's Pulitzer Prize-winning ballet ***Appalachian Spring***. Legendary choreographer Martha Graham created the original ballet after commissioning the music from Copland, and this performance marks the first time new choreography has been approved by the Copland Foundation since the premiere of that version in 1944. The world premiere choreography is by South African-born **Andrea Schermoly**, who initially made her name as a dancer with Holland's Netherlands Dance Theater and is currently choreographer in residence with **Louisville Ballet**. This event marks the third full co-production between the orchestra and ballet; when they collaborated in 2016 on a program including Stravinsky's *Petrouchka* and Teddy Abrams's *Unified Field*.

## THE JAZZ INFLUENCE (FRI 8 MAR 11AM + SAT 9 MAR at 8PM)

On March 9, the second program of the Festival of American Music, "**The Jazz Influence**," explores the intersection of classical music and jazz with **two world premieres of Louisville Orchestra commissions: *Run for It* by Gabriel Evens and *For Bill Dixon and A. Spenser Barefield* by Tyshawn Sorey**. Evens is another of Louisville's own: an Assistant Professor of Jazz Piano, Composition and Arranging at the University Louisville who recently released *The Wrong Waltz* with the Gabe Evens Trio, which *All About Jazz* described as "a fine balance of harmonically rich originals with beautiful singing melodies," praising Evens himself as "a pianist with a vibrant and robust approach to his composing and playing." Sorey, a rising star virtuoso percussionist and recipient of a 2017 MacArthur "genius grant" Fellowship, is making his first venture into orchestral composition. The *Wall Street Journal* calls him "**a composer of radical and seemingly boundless ideas**," while the *New Yorker* recently noted that Sorey is "**among the most formidable denizens of the in-between zone ... an extraordinary talent who can see across the entire musical landscape.**"

In addition to the two world premieres, "The Jazz Influence" will feature the **Louisville premiere of *Four Preludes on Playthings of the Wind***, by **Michael Tilson Thomas** who wrote the work especially for Grammy-nominated soprano **Measha Brueggergosman**, who will be our special guest for the concert. The work was written especially for her. Finally, these works representing the newest in jazz-influenced orchestral music are juxtaposed with one of the earliest masterpieces in that specialized genre, as Abrams acts as both conductor and pianist for a performance of Gershwin's pioneering classic, ***Rhapsody in Blue***. This Saturday evening program is preceded on March 8 by a Friday matinee concert in the

Coffee Concert Series, which will include the entire evening program with the exception of the Sorey premiere.

## **Louisville Orchestra: Fourth Annual Festival of American Music**

***Concerts take place at The Kentucky Center for the Arts***

### **SAT 23 FEB 8PM**

#### **KENTUCKY SPRING: Festival of American Music 1**

Teddy Abrams, Music Director • Andrea Schermoly, choreographer • Dancers from the Louisville Ballet

AARON COPLAND: *Appalachian Spring*

RACHEL GRIMES: *The Way Forth*

Support for this concert provided by Brown-Forman + Michael and Chandra Rudd and our commission sponsors, The Maxine and Stewart Frankel Foundation for Art

### **FRI 8 MAR 11AM**

#### **THE JAZZ INFLUENCE: Festival of American Music 2**

Teddy Abrams, conductor + piano • Measha Brueggergosman, soprano

GABRIEL EVENS: *Run for It* (world premiere of an LO Commission)

GEORGE GERSHWIN: *Rhapsody in Blue* (with Teddy Abrams, piano + conducting)

MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS: *Four Preludes on Playthings of the Wind* (Louisville premiere)

Support for this concert provided by Hilliard Lyons

### **SAT 9 MAR 8PM**

#### **The Jazz Influence: Festival of American Music 2**

Teddy Abrams, conductor + piano • Measha Brueggergosman, soprano

GABRIEL EVENS: *Run for It* (world premiere of an LO Commission)

TYSHAWN SOREY: *For Bill Dixon and A. Spencer Barefield* (world premiere of an LO Commission)

GEORGE GERSHWIN: *Rhapsody in Blue* (with Teddy Abrams, piano + conducting)

MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS: *Four Preludes on Playthings of the Wind* (Louisville premiere)

Support for this concert provided by Brown-Forman, + Kaplan Johnson Abate and Bird LLP, + Jana and John Dowds

*All dates, programs, and artists are subject to change.*

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## **UPCOMING AT THE LO**

Star Wars: A New Hope™ in Concert | 2.2+3.2019 | Keitaro Harada, conductor

The Midtown Men | 2.16.2019 | 8PM | Bob Bernhardt, conductor

Kentucky Spring: Festival of American Music 1 | 2.23. 2019 | 8PM | Teddy Abrams, conductor

The Jazz Influence: Festival of American Music 2 | 3.8+9.2019 | 8PM | Teddy Abrams, conductor

An Evening in Italy | 2.28-3.2. 2019 | 7:30PM | Gabriel Lefkowitz, conductor + violin | various locations

Carnival of the Animals | 3.16.2019 | 11AM | Kelly Corcoran, conductor | Brown Theatre

The Music of Queen | 3.23.2019 | 8PM | Martin Herman, conductor

The mission of the Louisville Orchestra is to change lives throughout our entire community as only the Louisville Orchestra can – by promoting a culture of music through outstanding performances + education. Our sponsors believe in this mission: The Louisville Orchestra receives funding from the Fund for the Arts, The Kentucky Arts Council, and the Association of the Louisville Orchestra.

**The LO Coffee Series is sponsored by Hilliard Lyons.**

**The LO Classics Series is sponsored by Brown-Forman.**

**The Donor Lounge is sponsored by Bluegrass Motorsport.**

To learn more about becoming a donor, contact Edward Schadt at 502.585.9413.

\*6% sales tax will be added to each ticket purchase.