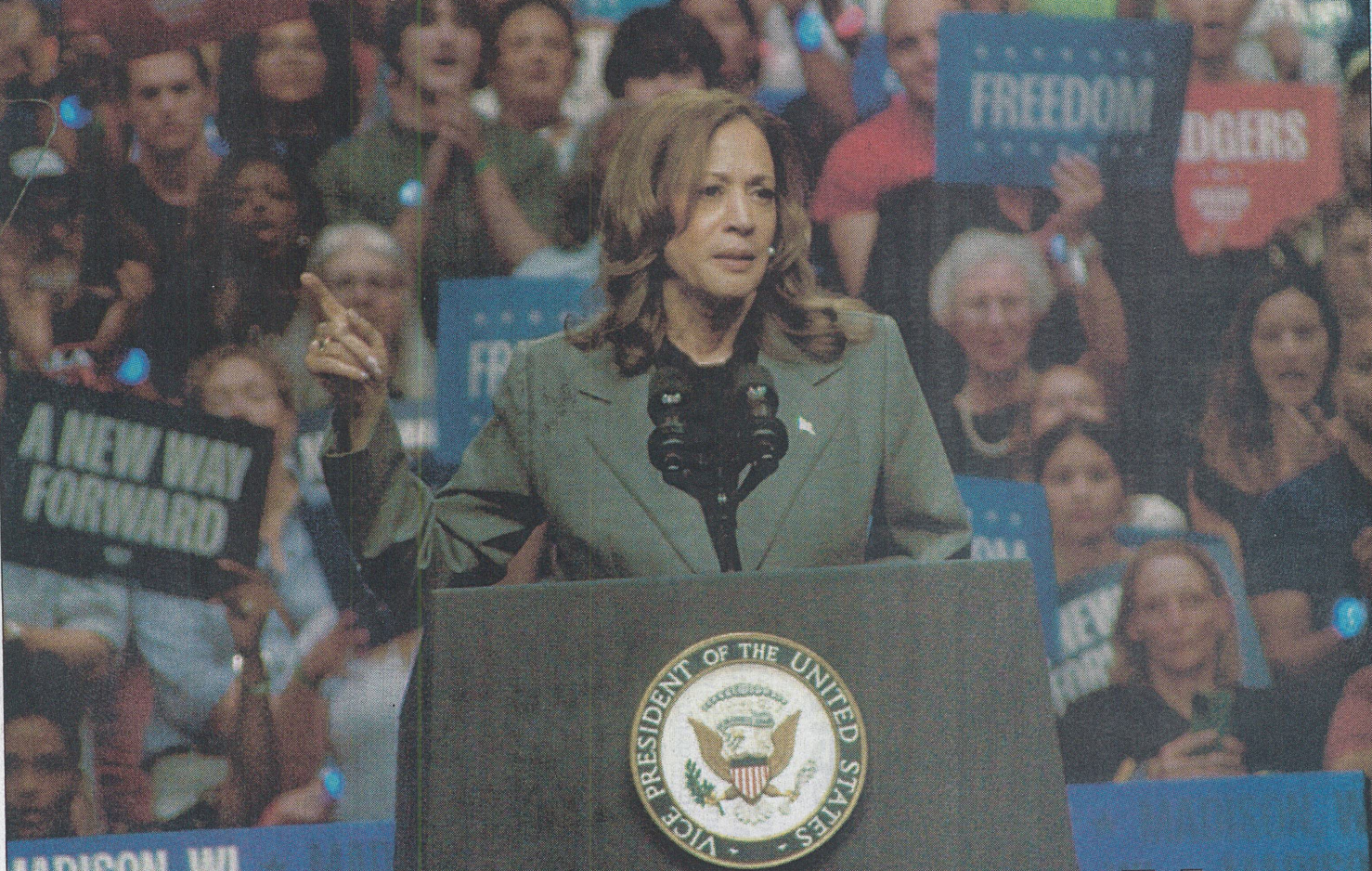


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Vol. 19 No. 20 • September 30, 2024 • Free • www.capitalcityhues.com



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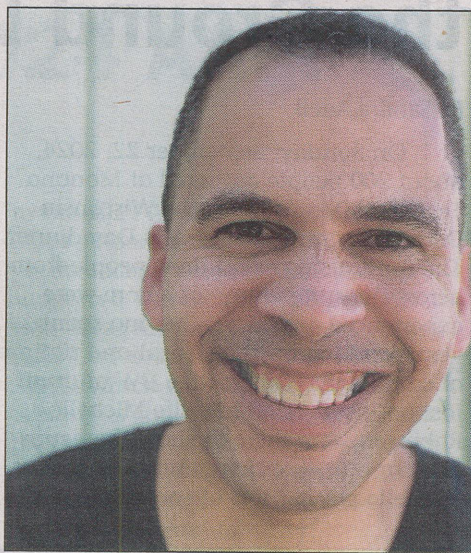
A Convergence of Classical Music Styles and Tastes

On October 10th, the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra will be recording *Convergence*, the second of five albums in the Musical Landscapes of Color project that is featuring the work of Black composers. The project is the brainchild of WCO Conductor Andrew Sewell and WCO's artist-in-residence Bill Banfield. The first album, *Harmony in Black* was released last March and included music composed by Banfield and Patrice Rushen, a Grammy nominated composer.

Coleman wrote the first iteration of Umoja when she was in graduate school and it has undergone transformation as Coleman's career has transformed as well.

"I think Umoja really encapsulates what Maya Angelou says in her poem 'Human Family,'" Coleman said. "We are more alike than we are unlike." And so there is a sing-songy quality and

get emails, phone calls, even some text messages. Usually those come in with questions about things that are happening on that person's street or a problem with a process. When I answer, I handle that immediately. If I don't know the answer, I tell them I don't know the answer, but I will get it for them. I contact staff and then staff provides me with the answer. I learn a lot from the answers that they provide so that when the question comes up again, I can answer it myself. That's part of the job. And to be honest, if someone calls me, I just like to answer the phone and deal with the situation right then and there. I'd rather not have to listen to a voice mail and get back to people. I'd rather just get it over with at the moment. That means people call me anytime of the week. It doesn't matter if it is Sunday or Saturday. I get calls as late as 10 p.m. I know I shouldn't answer the calls, but I haven't set boundaries and that is fine. That's part of the work. And in addition to that, the committees in the city exist to provide feedback and recommendations to the council. Sometimes there are issues that I am following that perhaps don't impact my district, but they are related to housing. Housing is important to me. I want to know what the Plan Commission recommended. I want to know what Public Works and Transportation recommended. Plan, Liquor Licensing and Transportation are not my committees, but I try not to miss the meetings or if I miss the meeting, I



the feel of healing that I feel Umoja is imbued with. For the listener, I think the melody and the nature of the meaning of the work, just everything about it, really uplifts spirits. In this crazy political climate that we are in right now, I think we need that now more than ever to remind each other that we are more alike than we are unlike. And decency and humanity are really important now more than ever."

"In this composition, I try to give some voices the opportunity to really sing the melody," Coleman said. "And it wasn't really a deliberate selection of, 'Okay, I really want this to be the violin's show.' It was really more of an intuitive aspect of which instruments I would like to hear within this particular incarnation. The work starts off actually, within this really ethereal state. And then the violin comes in with the melody. This is the first time that we hear the melody. In the original version, it's very much like a drum circle. It dances and it has a flow to it. But in this case, the violin part is more of singing. It's more of a nurturing and warm type of slower ballad feel to introduce the melody. And then the rest of the string ensemble, the violin sections one and two along with viola, come in with the second part of the melody as if everyone is joining in. A community is joining in to really sing this moment of unity together. And then later on, we hear the truest incarnation of the piece right at the end. It takes a while for this journey

"You have day-to-day business that you have to deal with in the council office," Figueroa Cole said. "Every other week, you have to work on the agenda. You have to review it and move things around or add things. That takes time. It's a bigger responsibility. We've had a few times when tough decisions have had to be made. It's more weight that you have to carry."

"I came all the way from Puerto Rico," Figueroa reflected. "I had to leave my family behind to build my own family here, to create my own roots here. And yet, I never thought about doing what I am doing today. And what I am doing, I really feel privileged and I really love the job. And here I am as the leader of this institution. I think it is important for people to see that if I can do that, anyone can do it. From that perspective, I am still learning to embrace it."

Yannette Figueroa Cole truly is an "immigration" success story.



"In some ways, it's working with the same instruments of the classical tradition," Myers said. "But it is doing so hopefully in a way that meets contemporary needs. The focus of my musical interests is on the present even though I am using instruments of the traditions of the classical past, my work is very much interested in the musical present."

Like Coleman's *Umoja*, Myers' *Changes* has been with him since his collegiate days at the University of Michigan. And it is written in the mini-

"I was really interested in music that is sometimes referred to as minimalist music like Philip Glass," Myers said. "I think the term process music is more appropriate because oftentimes folks will think the music of Phillip Glass is very repetitive when in actuality, this music celebrates change. In terms of making music and how I work with instruments, I think it's a matter, at least with this particular piece, trying to take what I really like in the music of others, but also finding a way to make it my own."

"This piece started out as a chamber music piece. It's for string quartet and clarinet. I wrote this as a student at Michigan back in 2002. At the time, I was writing for a student group who was preparing a concert for an exhibition of art. This was at the University of Michigan. This was art that was also part a part of the minimalist movement. There were very few colors. It was celebrating very specific types of textures. They were putting on a concert of music that had this process style. It wasn't so much the changes of the world that I was focused on as much as the changes of a particular season. This was taking place in the dead of winter. I was really wanting to write something that sounded like snow, that sounded like a field of snow. That was the initial motivation. Once I had that assignment, the piece came pretty quickly."

"I try to write for musicians," Myers emphasized. "My job is to make musicians happy. And the musicians' job is to perform for the audience. But my job is to make music for musicians. One of the great joys of my professional life is being able to work with other musicians and orchestras. I'm a pivot introvert. It's always nice to have opportunities to work with musicians of all sorts."

The October 10th performance will be a convergence of musical styles and tastes that will come together in harmony to the delight of the audience.



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