



CATHEDRAL  
CHORAL  
SOCIETY



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## TWO D.C. CHORUSES JOIN FORCES TO BRING FOCUS TO AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSIC

- *The Heritage Signature Chorale and the Cathedral Choral Society embark on multi-year plan to highlight the music – contemporary and traditional – of African Americans.*
- *The first video episode is now available at: <http://www.cathedralchoralsociety.org/i-too-sing-america>*

### **I, Too, Sing America**

Taking its name from Langston Hughes' 1925 poem, the **I, Too, Sing America** project is a musical conversation and performance partnership between the Heritage Signature

Chorale and the Cathedral Choral Society to increase **awareness** and **understanding** of the music of African Americans, with the aim of elevating the art form in the public consciousness and better establishing it as a foundation of American music. The partnership will explore the repertoire of Spirituals, as well as large-scale choral-orchestral works of African American composers.

## **BACKGROUND**

Rarely has African American music been given the same attention on concert programs, in research journals, in funding opportunities, and in the overall national consciousness as music of other traditions. Yet, African American music represents a truly significant foundation of American musical culture. The music first evolved as the expression of enslaved peoples, and then served as the foundation for quintessential American genres, such as jazz, blues, and rock n' roll. The original music itself is deeply complex, rich in history, and beautiful in aesthetic. We are excited to explore this repertoire more deeply together with an ensemble that has a particularly powerful connection with and expertise in it. What's more, the music provides an invaluable [or profound] perspective on slavery and the emotions and challenges of those people who endured slavery.

**I, Too, Sing America** is a reference to the first line of Langston Hughes' 1925 poem "I, Too." In it, Hughes uses the image of African American people not having a seat at the table "when company comes," and refers to a time when others might realize the beauty of the African American culture. The I, Too, Sing America Project will document a journey

in learning to understand, perform, and celebrate the deep history and meaning in the music of African Americans.

## **WHY HERITAGE SIGNATURE CHORALE**

For more than 20 years, The Heritage Signature Chorale has been, and continues to be, committed to preserving, at the highest possible level, the performance tradition of African American choral music, especially the Negro Spiritual; to elevating the African American singer and composer in all musical genres; and to bringing a unique interpretation of classical music from America, Europe and other regions of the world. The Chorale provides a venue for showcasing artists, composers, and arrangers who share this commitment, thereby fostering community awareness and appreciation of this important legacy.

## **WHY CATHEDRAL CHORAL SOCIETY**

Through music, we can build a more equitable and connected worldwide community.

As one of the original symphonic choruses in the nation, and the oldest choral society in Washington, DC, we wish to delve deeper and highlight the extraordinary musical contributions of African Americans to our nation's story. And, as a choir with significant resources, a visible home at Washington National Cathedral, and a prominent place in the American musical landscape, we feel a responsibility in this regard and acknowledge that we can play an important role in elevating the music of African American composers.

We commit ourselves to acting with integrity by compensating and crediting our participants, acknowledging that there is a difference between cultural representation and cultural appropriation, and, most of all, recognizing when we haven't met these goals.

## **SCOPE**

The first stage of the project is a three-year, part live and part digital program documenting the journey of the two choirs getting to know one another and performing this beautiful and inspiring music together. A library of video interviews with musical leaders and other resources related to the performance of African American music will be hosted (free access) on the CCS website and YouTube channel. Live music presentations under the direction of Stanley Thurston, Steven Fox, and others, will include Spirituals, oratorios, and other works by African American composers.

## **RESOURCES**

Digital resources will be hosted at [www.cathedralchoralsociety.org/i-too-sing-america](http://www.cathedralchoralsociety.org/i-too-sing-america), and concerts and other live events will be listed as they become available.

## **PRODUCTION TEAM**

Dana M. Anderson

Director of Strategic Initiatives, Heritage Signature Chorale

Christopher Eanes

Executive Director, Cathedral Choral Society

Steven Fox

Music Director, Cathedral Choral Society

Susan Stanford

Board Member, Cathedral Choral Society

Stanley J. Thurston

Artistic Director and Founder, Heritage Signature Chorale

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## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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