

YourClassical

Impact Report—June 2025

VIEW PAST IMPACT REPORTS

[!\[\]\(003082e50e3009141f59bd5df831749f_img.jpg\) YourClassical Shines the Spotlight on Young Artists](#)

[!\[\]\(17413706fd4997a1a4bdf85c6864eee1_img.jpg\) YourClassical's Class Notes provides music education across the state](#)

Donor support powers Minnesota Public Radio's (MPR) and American Public Media's (APM) public service mission and diverse musical programming, making programs like **YourClassical** possible. YourClassical, from American Public Media, is a collection of curated streams, unique programs and relevant features to connect classical listeners with the music they love. YourClassical provides classical music for all of life's moments and all audiences.



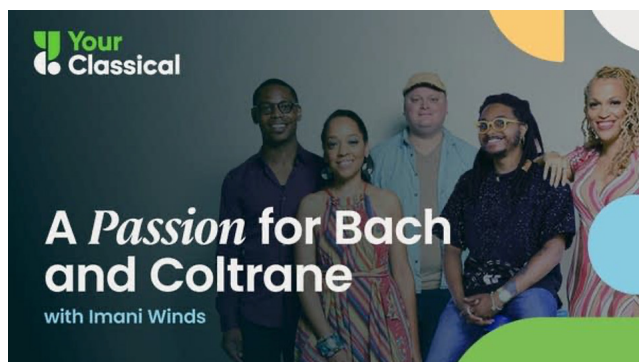
YourClassical recognizes the need to expand the classical music canon by adding the work of more composers, performers and conductors to our airwaves and music streams. YourClassical is committed to exploring the music of composers and performers who are living and working today, and to include more works that feature women or people of color in the role of performer, composer, or conductor. As part of a project to **commission and record new work**, YourClassical discovers, empowers and celebrates new, important and previously unheard voices in the classical arena, encouraging the development of new talent.

Generous donors inspire and enable programming that supports this commissioning project and highlights the work of these composers and performers for all our listeners.

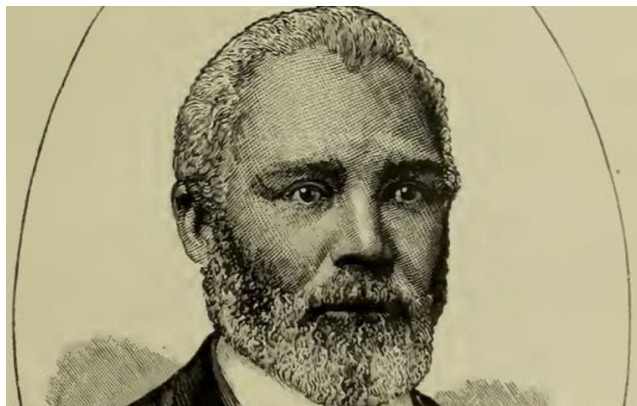
HIGHLIGHTS:

YourClassical is committed to increasing diversity in its programming to ensure that artists who are living and performing today, along with more women and people of color, are represented in its playlists. YourClassical's commissioning efforts support new works or works that had previously been written but not recorded. Some recent examples of this project include:

- A partnership with **Imani Winds**, a five-piece wind ensemble, to create a poetry special called “**A Passion for Bach and Coltrane**,” an innovative and surprising confluence of classical and jazz. This project was awarded the Grammy Award for Best Classical Compendium in 2024. Together with the Harlem Jazz Quartet, jazz soloists and spoken word by A.B. Spellman, Imani Winds’ *Passion for Bach and Coltrane* offers an intimate perspective on the group’s most personal recording in its 25-year history.



- Programming featuring **Justin Holland**, one of the best guitar virtuosos of the 19th century. Holland was a teacher, Freemason and civil-rights activist. He was born free and used his freedom to help enslaved Black people escape through the Underground Railroad. He moved in the same national circles as statesman Frederick Douglass. He also was a composer, arranger and guitar virtuoso, and YourClassical recently commissioned the recording of more than two dozen pieces composed or arranged by Holland. Most pieces had never been recorded before, and 14 were included in a **Performance Today special** hosted by YourClassical Host Scott Blankenship with Holland expert Prof. Ernie Jackson.



- The commissioning of Nashville composer **Cristina Spinei** to write “Spiral,” a trio for violin, cello and piano. Spinei has been a fixture in the Nashville music community since 2014 and, in recent years, she was commissioned by the Pacific Northwest Ballet for their 2022 “Worlds to Come” production. The East Nashvillian magazine praises her “adventuresome imagination,” but Spinei describes her style as “minimalish.” She describes the **creation of Spiral** for us.



- A project that commissioned **Navajo pianist Connor Chee** to write “**Unbroken: Music for the Navajo Code Talkers**.” **Chee** has made a career based on his passion for telling the stories of his Native American heritage through classical piano. His music speaks to every aspect of Navajo life, from simple songs that are sung every day, to sacred pieces that are sung privately and music for celebration and powwows. Chee had thought about writing a piece about the Navajo Code Talkers for some time, and this commission offered the perfect opportunity. *Unbroken* pays tribute to the Navajo soldiers who created a secret code within the Navajo language that played a big role in America’s victory in World War II.



- YourClassical’s “**Storytime**” celebrates diversity by inviting diverse narrators to create and read stories from a host of cultures. Stories like “**The Turtle and the Flute**,” “**The Elephant’s Child**” and “**Little Man From Uxmal**” promote cultural identity and belonging while they open everyone to the value of embracing cultural diversity. The recordings are available on **YourClassical’s website**.

REACH:

30

pieces commissioned
by YourClassical

24

Justin Holland pieces for
guitar commissioned

177

stations across the country carried Justin
Holland: The Guitar's Black Pioneer

61%

of the stations that carried A Passion for Bach and
Winds were in the top 50 markets nationally

180,800

listeners to Reclaiming the SoundWaves
with Connor Chee

COMMUNITY RESPONSE:

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Working with the YourClassical team on 'Unbroken: Music for the Navajo Code Talkers' was an incredibly meaningful experience. I was given complete creative freedom, which allowed me to engage directly with my followers on social media to ask what imagery or themes they found most impactful. One person commented that 'radio waves' instantly made them think of the Navajo Code Talkers. This really resonated with me and helped shape the direction of the piece. I appreciated having a platform to share a piece of our history that not everyone is immediately aware of, and it was powerful to hear how much it was appreciated by those who do know the story. This commission aligned deeply with my personal goal of connecting people with my culture and history through music."

– Connor Chee, composer

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Minnesota Public Radio | American Public Media allowed a 30-year dream to come true: to promote the music of African American classical guitarist Justin Holland. For years, I had wanted to do a dedicated recording of his music but could never get the kind of support funding required to hire the best classical players for the task. MPR | APM came as a blessing to me at the right time. This project has allowed me to continue my life's work on Justin Holland and continue to promote his genius. Working with the staff and administrators was as professional as it gets and, in addition, their support was superb. I will be forever grateful they found my research when they did."

– Prof. Ernie Jackson, Co-Director Music Production at
Queensborough Community College and Justin Holland expert

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This Friday, I will be in my studio weaving at my tapestry loom for an upcoming exhibit. Connor captures in his music the physical movements of a tapestry weaver and her tools as she weaves at the loom. Navajo weaving tradition holds that when a weaver sits at the loom, she must be in the 'harmony place' - that place of peace with the Creator of All and all others. One does not approach the loom if one is holding negative emotions for the energies of our emotions are woven into the fabric. One only weaves when one is at peace. Though I am not Navajo, I have always felt closest to God/Creator/Spirit when I sit at my loom. It is where we co-create together truth, beauty and goodness."

– YourClassical listener

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YourClassical's commissioning initiative is more than just adding music to the canon. It's a multi-channel program that also includes interviews, in-depth web features, online streaming and national specials. These commissions are just one way to connect with listeners we've traditionally missed."

– Scott Blankenship, YourClassical host