



UArk Music

2026-2027 Season

INSPIRATIONAL CHORALE

Datris Miguel Alexander Cobb, conductor

Desmond Henderson, keys and music director

Reginald James, organ

Jose Thomas, Jr., bass

Kelvin Williams, drums

Tuesday, September 29, 2026
Faulkner Performing Arts Center
7:30 p.m.

PROGRAM

Wade in the Water

African American Spiritual
arr. Topher Keen
(b. 1988)

Hear My Prayer

Moses Hogan
(1957-2003)

City Called Heaven

Josephine Poelinitz
(b. 1942)

Leah Hopkins, soloist

Precious Lord

Thomas Dorsey
(1899-1993)
arr. Arnold Sevier
(b. 1949)

Even Me

Elizabeth Codner
(1823-1919)
William Bradbury
(1816-1868)
adapted by Patrick Lundy
(b. 1967)

Come Thou Almighty King

adapted by Reverend Timothy Wright
(1947-2009)

INTERMISSION

He Heard My Cry

Donald Lawrence
(b. 1961)
adapted by Datriis Cobb

Christian Matthew, soloist
Hope People, soloist

Your Name

Javonta Patton
(b. 1990)

Andrew Taylor, soloist
Ariel Bronson, soloist

You Don't Have To Be Afraid

David Thomas
(b. 1966)
Les Pierce

Maggie Huddleston, soloist

Total Praise

Richard Smallwood
(1948-2025)

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PROGRAM NOTES

Wade in the Water

Traditional African American Spiritual, arr. Topher Keene

Topher Keene is an American choral conductor, educator, and arranger celebrated for creating dynamic, pedagogically engaging choral works and educational resources.

The familiar melody creates a sense of calming hope, while the ostinato mimics the sound and feeling of trudging through water deep water, representing the daily issues we all have. The descending chromatic line brings everything together, creating unique harmonies and resolutions that represent individual singers coming together to sing about hope despite their troubles. The text urges the listener to step into troubled waters—transforming an ancient petition for physical rescue and divine intervention into a sacred communal plea for renewal and deliverance.

Hear My Prayer

Moses Hogan

Moses Hogan earned international acclaim for his choral arrangements and compositions, elevating the African American spiritual tradition to global concert stages through his signature blend of rich vocal voicing and profound emotional depth. Hogan dedicated this poignant work to the memory of choral legend Jester Hairston.

Embodying the theme of pure supplication, Hogan sets this SATB a cappella work marked “Slowly, with freedom”. The opening phrases place a solitary, vulnerable plea in the upper voice over lush, close harmonic suspensions.. Hogan brings the petition to a peaceful close on an unhurried, sustained, pianissimo “Amen” .

City Called Heaven

Traditional Spiritual, arr. Josephine Poelinitz

Josephine Poelinitz is an esteemed choral arranger and educator whose vocal writing is rooted in gospel and spiritual traditions. Poelinitz was known for teaching City Called Heaven by rote, keeping up with the performance practice of Gospel music and original Spirituals. The text depicts a “poor pilgrim of sorrow” wandering alone in the world without hope for tomorrow. The descending tenor line during the bridge creates a brief sense of falling and being “tossed and driven” and uncertain where to turn, ultimately striving to reach a “city called heaven” to make it their home.

Precious Lord

Thomas A. Dorsey, arr. Arnold Sevier

Thomas A. Dorsey, widely revered as the “Father of Gospel Music,” composed this immortal anthem out of deep personal tragedy and grief, while arranger Arnold Sevier is known for his sensitive, classically grounded choral hymn settings.

Serving as the quintessential prayer of petition, this a cappella setting opens softly in 4-part homophony with the humble cry, “Precious Lord, take my hand”. Sevier reflects the vulnerability of Dorsey’s words through shifting chromatic suspensions and sudden unison declarations on “I am weak, I am worn”. The arrangement builds toward a powerful *fff* climax marked “at the river, Lord, I stand” before pulling back into a tender, *pianissimo* humming cadence that places complete trust in God’s guidance.

Even Me

Elizabeth Codner & William Bradbury, arr. Patrick Lundy

William Bradbury was an influential 19th-century American composer whose hymn melodies defined an era of sacred song, setting texts such as Elizabeth Codner’s plea for spiritual renewal.

Marked “Worshipful with feeling”, this anthem moves the choir from a quiet request to an exuberant petition. The opening verses build gently from the Soprano section into a warm two-part duet with the Alto section, later adding the Tenor and Bass sections and emphasizing the individual believer’s growing request. The music reaches a dramatic breakthrough at the chorus, leaping to an emphatic outcry on “Even me, Lord!” The driving rhythms and lush gospel harmonies turn a personal request into an uninhibited, unified petition for grace.

Come Thou, Almighty King

Rev. Timothy Wright

Rev. Timothy Wright, affectionately known as the “Godfather of Gospel,” was an influential pastor, choir director, and Grammy-nominated recording artist celebrated for his energetic, high-praise gospel choir anthems.

This spirited arrangement brings the classic 18th-century hymn text directly into the traditional Black gospel choral idiom. A modulating ostinato on the phrase “Thy Name” builds dynamic and vocal momentum, fulfilling the scriptural charge to approach God’s presence

with joyful, uninhibited thanksgiving.

He Heard My Cry

Donald Lawrence, William James Stokes, Ryon Lawford, Green & Bloom, and Marshon Lewis

Donald Lawrence is a prominent figure in contemporary gospel music, known as a songwriter, producer, and director who fuses orchestral vocal arrangements, hip-hop rhythm, and scriptural narratives.

This modern anthem connects petition directly to God's faithful response. Beginning with a spoken prologue drawing parallels between Israel's bondage and modern emotional struggles, the music unfolds over a steady groove. The driving choral line repeats "I sought the Lord, He heard me, He delivered me," contrasted against spoken word and solo lines. The score peaks in an energetic, syncopated vamp ("Heard my cry!") that celebrates liberation from anxiety, doubt, and inner oppression.

Your Name

Jovonta Patton

Jovonta Patton is a Billboard chart-topping contemporary gospel artist and songwriter from Minneapolis, recognized for his urban praise style and modern worship anthems.

Centering on the Philippians theme of thanksgiving, Your Name builds upon a bright, syncopated groove. The choral parts shift through evocative lyrical depictions of God's character—from "great and mighty" to "joy in sorrow," "healer," and "faithful". Patton uses escalating gospel vamps in which the choir repeats short, declarative praises, culminating in a continuous wall of sound that magnifies God's attributes.

You Don't Have to Be Afraid

David Thomas & Les Pierce, as recorded by Take 6

David Thomas is an acclaimed vocalist and long-time member of the ten-time Grammy Award-winning vocal group Take 6, collaborating here with veteran songwriter and producer Les Pierce to create sophisticated vocal jazz and soul.

Marked by a smooth "Soul groove", this piece addresses the first half of Philippians 4:6: "Be careful [anxious] for nothing". The choral accompaniment provides lush, close-harmony jazz backings (incorporating altered extended chords) beneath a reassuring vocal lead. The bridge weaves in the comforting scriptural imagery of God's eye on the sparrow, reassuring the listener that prayer dispels fear and welcomes divine peace into life's storms.

Total Praise

Richard Smallwood (1948 - 2025)

Richard Smallwood is a legend of sacred choral and gospel music, celebrated for seamlessly weaving classical counterpoint, romantic piano textures, and traditional Black gospel harmonies into enduring masterworks.

Total Praise unites prayer, petition, and praise into a single anthem. Based on Psalm 121, the piece opens with a quiet affirmation of trust: "Lord, I will lift mine eyes to the hills". The texture builds continuously through rich, chromatic modulations toward an overwhelming fortissimo declaration: "You are the source of my strength... I lift my hands in total praise to You". The piece concludes with a towering, multi-layered, repeating "Amen" cadence that envelops the space in an offering of thanksgiving and reverence.