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BRITAIN'S CHINEKE! ORCHESTRA AND NIGERIAN-SCOTTISH TRUMPETER AARON AZUNDA AKUGBO MAKE THEIR ORANGE COUNTY DEBUT



(IRVINE, CA, February 24, 2025)—Philharmonic Society of Orange County presents Chineke! Orchestra, Europe's first majority-Black and ethnically diverse orchestra, in its Orange County debut on **Friday, April 4, 2025**, at 8 p.m. at the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall. Under the baton of Vimbayi Kaziboni—praised for his “great intensity, without distancing, maneuvering, without indifference” (*Neue Musikzeitung - Leipzig*)—the orchestra will be joined by rising-star trumpeter Aaron Azunda Akugbo. A pre-concert lecture with KUSC's Brian Lauritzen will begin at 7 p.m.

Kaziboni will lead the orchestra in a memorable program where classical tradition meets contemporary innovation with works by Avril Coleridge-Taylor, Valerie Coleman, Haydn, Samuel

Coleridge-Taylor and Brian Raphael Nabors. This concert is part of the Eclectic Orange Series sponsored by Jelinek Family Trust.

Opening with Valerie Coleman's *Seven O'Clock Shout*, this concert begins on a note of gratitude. Composed as an homage to the indefatigable spirit of Covid-19 frontline workers, this piece reflects the resilient rhythms of daily life during the pandemic, serving as a vibrant tribute to those who kept our world moving.

Avril Coleridge-Taylor's *A Sussex Landscape* follows, drawing from her personal connection to the region where she spent her later years. The piece unfolds with sweeping melodic lines, grand orchestral landscapes and cymbals crashing like the relentless waves along Sussex's shores, evoking the area's dynamic natural beauty. This composition not only portrays the tranquil and rugged aspects of Sussex but also serves as a musical homage to a place she cherished deeply.

The first half ends with Haydn's Trumpet Concerto in E-flat, with the orchestra's world-class trumpeter Aaron Akugbo, showcasing brilliance and highlighting the expressive elegance and technical prowess of the trumpet.

After the interval, Brian Nabors' *Pulse for Orchestra* takes us on a rhythmic journey, exploring the universal rhythms that underpin our shared experiences. This piece captivates with its dynamic energy, drawing listeners into a vibrant soundscape where each note pulses with life and connects us all.

The evening culminates with Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's Symphony in A minor. Premiered in 1896, this historic composition first captured the attention of audiences including King George V. Over a century later, it received its Proms premiere by the Chineke! Orchestra in 2021, testament to Coleridge-Taylor's lasting legacy and the symphony's blend of traditional forms with innovative ideas.

Founded in 2015 by double bassist Chi-chi Nwanoku CBE, the Chineke! Foundation strives to transform perceptions into classical music. Comprising four performing groups: **the Chineke! Orchestra**, Junior Orchestra, Chamber Ensemble, and Voices, it's predominantly made up of majority Black and ethnically diverse musicians and personifies inclusion, where rarely two people sitting next to each other are from the same background. Chineke! has opened doors for hundreds of talented musicians, receiving acclaim for the "sheer joyousness of its music-making" (*Daily Telegraph*, 2023).

Recent milestones include a North American debut tour in March 2023, a sold-out performance at New York's Lincoln Center, and groundbreaking releases of Florence B. Price, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, and Avril Coleridge-Taylor's compositions on the Decca label. Performing around 40 concerts in the UK annually, Chineke! holds a prestigious position as Resident Orchestra at London's Southbank Centre, playing regularly at the Queen Elizabeth Hall and Royal Festival Hall.

Every concert sees Chineke! proudly performing works by composers who have been neglected throughout history, from sixteenth century Lusitano, to the twenty-first century, including numerous new commissions from living Black composers.

Zimbabwean-born conductor **Vimbayi Kaziboni** is widely sought-after for his depth of approach, interpretive imagination and expressivity, as well as his innovative and thoughtful curation. Kaziboni has led many critically lauded performances with orchestras across the globe, performing at some of the most prestigious concert halls in the world, including Carnegie Hall, Walt Disney Hall, Royal Concertgebouw, Berlin Philharmonie, Elbphilharmonie, Philharmonie de Paris, Royal Festival Hall & Queen Elizabeth Hall at Southbank Centre, and at Lincoln Center.

Recent collaborators have included the Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, London Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Junge Deutsche Philharmonie, Warsaw National Philharmonic Orchestra, Geneva Chamber Orchestra, Ensemble Modern, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Klangforum Wien, Ensemble Contrechamps, London Sinfonietta, City of Birmingham New Music

Group, American Composers Orchestra, International Contemporary Ensemble, and the Martha Graham Dance Company. Collaborations with acclaimed soloists have included Pierre Laurent Aimard, Tabea Zimmermann, Claire Chase, Juliet Fraser and Steven Schick among others. Upcoming debuts include performances with the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, SWR Symphonieorchester, SWR Vokalensemble, Munich Chamber Orchestra, Musikkollegium Winterthur, RAI National Symphony Orchestra, and the New World Symphony. Return engagements this season include the BBC Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Warsaw National Philharmonic Orchestra, Klangforum Wien, International Contemporary Ensemble, Ensemble Modern & Ensemble Modern Orchestra.

A former Fulbright Fellow and a graduate of the International Ensemble Modern Academy, Kaziboni holds degrees from the University of Southern California (USC) in Los Angeles and the University of Music and Performing Arts Frankfurt (HfMDK) in Germany.

Born in 1998 and of Nigerian-Scottish descent, **Aaron Azunda Akugbo** hails from Edinburgh and is poised as a future leading exponent of his instrument. He brings a wide-ranging musical taste to his artistry and despite being classically trained, cites Louis Armstrong as his biggest musical inspiration. He is a charismatic performer with an abundance of natural humour which translates into an effortless engagement with people and audiences.

A graduate of the Royal Academy of Music and an ex-principal of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, Aaron can often be seen freelancing in the principal chairs of some of the most prestigious orchestras in the UK including the Philharmonia, BBC Philharmonic, BBC Symphony and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras.

Besides his solo and orchestral performances, Aaron is also a founding member of Connaught Brass. In 2022 the group were finalists at the Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT) awards in London and were also selected to be Artists of the Tillett Trust, City Music Foundation and Kirkman Concert Society. They were the inaugural winners of the Philip Jones Brass Ensemble Award in 2019 and attended the prestigious Britten Pears Chamber Music Residency in March 2022.

Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall is located at 615 Town Center Drive, Costa Mesa, CA 92626. Ticket prices start at \$26 and are available at the Philharmonic Society box office at (949) 553-2422 and online at www.philharmonicociety.org. Tickets are also available at the Center box office at (714) 556-2787 and online at www.scfta.org.

ABOUT PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY:

Founded in 1954 as Orange County's first music organization, the Philharmonic Society of Orange County presents national and international performances of the highest quality and provides dynamic and innovative music education programs for individuals of all ages to enhance the lives of Orange County audiences through music.

Since its inception, the Philharmonic Society has evolved and grown with the county's changing landscape, presenting artists and orchestras who set the standard for artistic achievement from Itzhak Perlman, Gustavo Dudamel, Yo-Yo Ma, and Renée Fleming to the Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and many others. In addition, the Philharmonic Society celebrates multi-disciplinary performances under its Eclectic Orange brand and embraces music from a wide range of countries with its World Music performances. Its celebrated concerts introduce children to classical music with creative and inspiring performances, instilling music appreciation for future generations.

The Philharmonic Society's nationally recognized Youth Music Education Programs, offered free of charge, engage more than 100,000 students annually through curriculum-based music education programs that aim to inspire, expand imaginations, and encourage learning at all levels. These programs are made possible by the Committees of the Philharmonic Society comprised of 500 volunteer members who provide more than 90,000 hours of in-kind service each year. As a key youth program, the exceptional Orange County Youth Symphony and String Ensemble provide top-tier training to the area's most talented young musicians through multi-level ensemble instruction, leadership training, touring opportunities, challenging professional repertoire, and performances in world-class venues. The Philharmonic Society also promotes

life-long learning by connecting with colleges and universities to conduct masterclasses and workshops and providing pre-concert lectures to introduce audiences to program selections.

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- WHAT:** Chineke! Orchestra
Vimbayi Kaziboni, conductor
Aaron Azunda Akugbo, trumpet
- WHEN:** Friday, April 4, 2025, 8pm
Pre-concert lecture by KUSC's Brian Lauritzen, 7pm
- PROGRAM:** **Valerie COLEMAN:** *7 O'Clock Shout*
A. COLERIDGE-TAYLOR: *Sussex Landscape*
HAYDN: Trumpet Concerto in E-flat major
Brian Raphael NABORS: *Pulse*
S. COLERIDGE-TAYLOR: Symphony in A minor, Op. 8
- WHERE:** Renée & Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall, Segerstrom Center for the Arts
615 Town Center Drive, Costa Mesa, CA 92626
- TICKETS** Ticket prices start at \$26.
Call for pricing and availability.
- AND**
- INFORMATION:** Available at the Philharmonic Society box office (949) 553-2422 and
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