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## **JENS IBSEN SELECTED AS WINNER OF SECOND ANNUAL EMERGING BLACK COMPOSERS PROJECT PRIZE**

*Ibsen will receive a \$15,000 commission and mentorship, and his piece will premiere with the San Francisco Symphony during the 2023–24 season*

SAN FRANCISCO, CA—The San Francisco Symphony, in partnership with the San Francisco Conservatory of Music (SFCM) and the SFCM President’s Advisory Council on Equity and Inclusion, announced today that Jens Ibsen is the winner of the second annual [Emerging Black Composers Project](#) (EBCP) prize. The San Francisco Symphony, led by Music Director [Esa-Pekka Salonen](#), will give the world premiere of his work during the 2023–24 season.

As winner of the Emerging Black Composers Project prize, Ibsen will receive a \$15,000 commissioning fee, mentorship from committee members, and resources to workshop his piece with SFCM, along with a premiere of the work at Davies Symphony Hall. Ibsen joins [Trevor Weston](#), Sumi Tonooka, Jonathan Bingham, and Shawn Okpebholo as winners of the ten-year project.

Ibsen was selected through an anonymous review process overseen by a selection committee led by EBCP Chair [Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser](#) and including SFCM Music Director [Edwin Outwater](#) and Salonen.

“Jens’ music made me feel things with immediacy,” Bartholomew-Poyser said. “He grasped me and had me in tears at moments; at others, I laughed out loud at the ingenuity. And then, when I looked at the score, I saw the craft beneath. The craft and the potential. I really wanted to hear this person's music, and wanted them, in particular, to have no barriers moving forward!”

A self-described opera lover and metalhead, Jens Ibsen is a multidisciplinary artist whose vocal talents have led him to performances from Dubai to Shanghai. As a composer, his works range from solo repertoire to orchestral works, as well as electroacoustic music.

Born in Accra, Ghana to a Ghanaian mother and an American father, his works are influenced by early exposure to Ghanaian drumming and classical Arabic and Indian music, with later inspiration coming from progressive metal and other distortion-heavy genres. He made history as the first African-born member of the world-renowned Vienna Boys Choir, where he was a principal soloist.

“Eclecticism is quite literally in my veins,” Ibsen said. “I strive to make work reflective of this as I explore diverse musical languages and weave them into a tapestry entirely unique, yet familiar. I am constantly dissecting the harmonies and rhythms of whatever I listen to and looking for opportunities to add them to my vocabulary. I especially enjoy replicating the timbres of this music through extended techniques—whether it’s scratchy string overpressure or having a singer wail like a metal frontman.”

“Jens' compositions have an enthralling balance of rhythmic drive, elegant tonality, and beautiful settings of words,” Outwater said. “His music connected with me deeply on an emotional level and is linked to contemporary life in a vital and compelling way. He writes in a variety of settings and styles, but his overall voice as a composer is never in doubt. I'm excited to meet Jens and learn more about his music!”

Ibsen completed his B.A. in music composition at Pepperdine University. He received his M.M. in music composition at the Mannes School of Music. He is based in San Francisco and New York.

The Emerging Black Composers Project intends to spotlight early-career Black American composers and their music. It was launched in 2020 with the inaugural first-place commission given in June 2021 to Trevor Weston.

### **About the San Francisco Symphony**

The San Francisco Symphony is widely considered to be among the most artistically adventurous and innovative arts institutions in the United States, celebrated for its artistic

excellence, creative performance concepts, active touring, award-winning recordings, and standard-setting education programs. In the 2020–21 season, the San Francisco Symphony welcomed conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen as its twelfth Music Director, embarking on a new vision for the present and future of the orchestral landscape. In their inaugural season together, Esa-Pekka Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony introduced a groundbreaking artistic leadership model anchored by eight Collaborative Partners from a variety of cultural disciplines: Nicholas Britell, Julia Bullock, Claire Chase, Bryce Dessner, Pekka Kuusisto, Nico Muhly, Carol Reiley, and esperanza spalding. This group of visionary artists, thinkers, and doers, along with Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony, have set out to explore and develop new ideas inspired by the Partners’ unique areas of expertise, including innovative digital projects, expansive and imaginative performance concepts in a variety of concert formats, commissions of new music, and projects that foster collaboration across artistic and administrative areas. Shaped by the dynamic partnership and shared vision of Esa-Pekka Salonen, San Francisco Symphony’s eight Collaborative Partners, and the Orchestra and Chorus, the 2021–22 season reflects a spirit of collaboration, experimentation, and renewed dialogue through live music. This exciting artistic future builds on the remarkable 25-year tenure of Michael Tilson Thomas as the San Francisco Symphony’s Music Director, who continues his rich relationship with the Symphony as its first Music Director Laureate. For more information, visit [sfsymphony.org](http://sfsymphony.org).

### **About the San Francisco Conservatory of Music**

SFCM draws on the bold creativity of San Francisco to offer unparalleled training for the 21st century musician. We support students in developing the skills and vision to chart successful careers and advance the human experience through music. We believe a musical education must extend far beyond technical and performance skills. Our commitment to music of enduring quality and importance is the foundation of our innovative curriculum, cultivating critical thinking and business acumen alongside artistic practice, and creating a transformative environment of inquiry, collaboration, and entrepreneurship. Our DNA combines a global perspective with the unstoppable energy and imagination of our hometown. Our pioneering programs and partnerships with leading institutions and businesses prepare students to seize opportunities in music and a wide array of the fastest developing sectors today. SFCM is a magnet for exceptional faculty whose ongoing professional experience benefits our students. As the only conservatory partnered with a leading artist management company and recording label, we are able to provide our students unique insight and access to the music industry.

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