

Meet the Orchestra

May 2 & May 6-9, 2025

COMPOSER SPOTLIGHT: Carlos Simon

Who is Carlos Simon?

Carlos Simon is an American composer. He writes music for orchestras and choirs. He also writes music for solo instruments and small groups. Sometimes he even writes music for films!

Where is Carlos from?

Carlos grew up in Atlanta, Georgia. His father was a preacher, just like Carlos's grandfather and great-grandfather.

Carlos's dad started a church when Carlos was young. Carlos and his siblings each had jobs to help. Carlos was responsible for the music (and helping to mow the lawn!). He played piano and organ at the church. His mom played trombone. Having people depend on him to do something important gave Carlos a sense of purpose.





Carlos Simon (standing, right) with students at Georgetown University

Where did he go to school?

Carlos has gone to many schools.

First, he studied piano and composition at Morehouse College and Georgia State University.

Next, he earned his doctorate degree in music composition at the University of Michigan.

Carlos still goes to school, now as a teacher! Today he is a professor at Georgetown University in Washington, DC.

What is important to Carlos?

Carlos believes it is our job to help others. His childhood taught him to ask, “How can I serve?” Just like his dad’s church brings people together, Carlos knows that music is another way to reach people. He explains:

“You have no idea how your music – or whatever you do – will impact the next generation. You just have to do what is best in the time you have with the gifts that you have.”

What music by Carlos is part of Schooltime: Meet the Orchestra?

You will hear “Holy Dance” from Four Black American Dances. It is a special piece for Carlos. It honors his upbringing with music that is full of energy and joy. The trombones are a tribute to his mom. At one point, Carlos even has the trombones stand up to play! The percussion often sound like hands clapping, just like the gospel choir at his dad’s church.