

Fellows Welcomed for the Third Year of the VSO Professional Development for Black Musicians Program

HAMPTON ROADS, VA [October 8, 2024] The Virginia Symphony Orchestra has welcomed its third class of Fellows for the VSO Fellowship Program: Professional Development for Black Musicians, partnered with Old Dominion University. The fellowship is an extension of the VSO's continued efforts to advance the goal of increased diversity of orchestral musicians nationwide. This year trumpet, clarinet, violin, viola, cello, and bass applications were accepted. The new Fellows; Adrian Jackson, Jafet Díaz Martin, and returning Fellows Camille Jones and Omari Imhotep Abdul-Alim, joined the VSO this fall. They will be performing all over the region, producing chamber shows, mentoring local school kids, and hosting their Capstone projects for the community. The Fellows will also partake in small ensemble educational concerts for elementary school students, outdoor community concerts, and an assortment of media appearances to help them succeed in their careers as performers and educators.

"The Fellows program at the VSO is one of the things of which I am most proud that we do; it is so rewarding and inspirational to see the impact it has on the Fellows, the rest of the musicians in the orchestra, staff, and audiences," stated Eric Jacobsen, music director of the VSO. "This year, we get to welcome Jafet and Adrian and enjoy another year with Camille and the return of Omari! I know each of them brings a high level of enthusiasm, talent, and motivation, and we are so looking forward to embracing them as members of the VSO family!"

A previous VSO Fellow, Zacherie Small, who won a position in the Double Bass section at New York's The Orchestra Now speaks fondly of his time in the program. "The VSO's Fellowship Program was pivotal in shaping my musical career, offering a unique blend of learning and professional experience. Being immersed in such an environment, I was always challenged to grow as a musician. Every challenge is an opportunity for growth. Reflecting on my experience, I have a profound appreciation for my personal growth and the growth of my artistic expression through this fellowship."

The program's third season is funded by the Hampton Roads Community Foundation, the Goode Family Foundation, and an Old Dominion University grant through the state of Virginia.

"The fellows have seamlessly integrated into our vibrant community, enriching our lives and enhancing our shared experiences," said Dr. Emily Ondracek-Peterson, Executive Director of ODU's Diehn School of Music. "Their presence has been a source of inspiration



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for our students, witnessing their journey from campus rehearsals to captivating performances with the VSO, and their impactful teaching and performances across the Hampton Roads community."

Adrian Jackson: A violist from Austin Texas, Jackson began studying viola at the McCallum Fine Arts Academy in Austin Texas at the age of 14. Jackson graduated from the Interlochen Arts Academy and got his bachelor's degree at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester NY. Adrian has served as Section violist of the Southern Tier Symphony, Principal violist of the New York State Ballet Orchestra, Substitute in the Orchestra of the Southern Finger Lakes, San Francisco Ballet, and the recipient of the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra Fellowship.

Jafet Díaz Martin: Born in Panama, this versatile trumpet player, teacher, and arranger is a former member of the Panama Municipal Symphonic Band. Jafet has also performed as a guest musician with many symphonies including the National Symphony Orchestra of Panama, and more Jafet attended the University of Panama for his Bachelor of Music in Trumpet Performance, and the Lynn University Conservatory of Music for his Master of Music in the studio of Marc Reese.

Camille Jones: A native of Maryland, Camille Jones is a passionate collaborator and advocate for diversity in the arts. Camille currently serves as a Sphinx Orchestral Futurist in Residence for the National Philharmonic. She received a Master of Music in Violin Performance from the University of Michigan. Most recently she received a graduate certificate from Old Dominion University as part of her tenure as a VSO Fellow during the 2022-23 season and has been invited back to participate for another year.

Omari Imhotep Abdul-Alim: An accomplished violinist and educator with a Master of Music in Violin Performance from the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music and a Bachelor of Music from the University of Missouri-Kansas City, Omari is a dedicated instructor with extensive experience teaching violin to a diverse range of students. Omari has also contributed significantly as a violin instructor and orchestral strings coach at the Academy for Discovery at Lakewood, as a member of VSO's first inaugural class of Black Musicians Fellowship. Omari is committed to enriching our musical education and performance landscape through his expertise and passion for music.

In addition to their performing and teaching, while in Virginia the Fellows will have several professional development opportunities, including private instrument instruction, mock auditions, and mentorship with VSO musicians. Applications for the 2025-26 program will



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open this November. More information can be found at www.virginiasymphony.org/fellowship.

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VIRGINIA COMMISSION FOR THE ARTS



As the region's most celebrated musical, educational, and entrepreneurial arts organization, the Virginia Symphony Orchestra continues to challenge expectations and push the boundaries of what an American orchestra can be. Innovation and excellence are at the heart of the VSO's narrative. The VSO has received national attention for its unique mission serving a home area of 1.7 million across the diverse communities of southeastern Virginia. Through appearances at the Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall and its commitment to adventurous programming, the VSO and its musicians have been highlighted in the media including The New York Times, The Washington Post, National Public Radio, and BBC Worldwide News.

As the largest performing arts organization in southeastern Virginia, the VSO and VSO Chorus present more than 150 concerts and events annually for more than 100,000 residents and visitors. Recent innovations include health and wellness programs, including interactive therapeutic experiences for people living with Alzheimer's and dementia, and adopting welcoming concert environments for those who are neurodiverse. Since 2019, the VSO has been recognized nationally for striving to reflect the region's ethnic and racial diversity in its members, its programming, and its leadership.

The selection of the young and dynamic conductor Eric Jacobsen as music director in 2021 was another bold step forward for the VSO, further expanding its vision to attract wider and larger audiences with engaging concert experiences and creative and relevant programming. Rounding out the artistic leadership team is Norfolk native Thomas Wilkins in the role of Principal Guest Conductor, reflecting the VSO's commitment to tell its community's stories and advance the important conversations that will promote understanding and belonging among all residents.