

*Celebrating  
Black History  
Month*



THE URSULINE SCHOOL

The Tully Family  
Auditorium-Gymnasium

Thursday, February 3, 2022

*Commitment to  
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion*  
at  
THE URSULINE SCHOOL

*We*, the Ursuline community, are committed to thinking critically, realizing and challenging our assumptions, and collaborating to forge a greater understanding of the multicultural world. This means enhancing our diversity of thought, perspective and experience. This also means cultivating the empathy, understanding, and respect necessary to open one's mind to a multitude of perspectives and experiences that differ from one's own. Excellence in education today requires nothing less.

Our commitment to our community is to:

- Teach the skills, model the behaviors, provide the resources, and cultivate the environment of inclusion required to unlock the richness of that diversity.
- Learn, intentionally, the steps necessary to work towards positive changes in our communities, nation and global world.
- Ask for support when engaged in difficult and complex conversations.
- Embrace differing perspectives, remain open-minded to others' views, and listen while withholding judgment.

*Only* through inclusion can diversity act as a catalyst for creating space to achieve equity and excellence. When we skillfully engage our differences – we will find a path to greater understanding of the world and how we can be of service to it. Our mission of *Serviam* is the core of our identity as an Ursuline School and, therefore, is the central part of our core values.

# *Program*



## Welcome & Opening Prayer

Dr. Colleen Melnyk

## Introduction of *Lift Every Voice and Sing*

Solana Mahabeer '24 and Kendal Mangum '26

## *Lift Every Voice and Sing*

Composer, James Weldon Johnson

Mr. LaFredrick Coaxner, Guest Artist, Musical Director

Ms. Wendy Bryn Harmer, Instructor and Musical Preparation

Accompanist, Elder Damon Mack

Soloists, Ahmaya Knoelle Higginson  
and Carl Arnes Ellis, III

## Introduction of Guest Speaker

Safiya Grant '22

## “Young, Gifted and Black”

The Honorable Tanya R. Kennedy

## Introduction of *Freedom Medley*

Ms. Tamisha M. Chestnut,  
Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

## *Freedom Medley*

## Honors Choir

Classes of 2022 and 2023

Mr. LaFredrick Coaxner, Guest Artist, Musical Director

Ms. Wendy Bryn Harmer, Instructor and Musical Preparation

Soloists, Ahmaya Knoelle Higginson and Carl Arnes Ellis, III

Accompanist, Elder Damon Mack

## *Steal Away to Jesus*

Composer Wallace Willis

## *Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round*

Civil Rights Movement Fight Song

## *His Truth Still Marches On*

Arranger, Dwight Woods

Speaker, Carl Arnes Ellis, III

## *Down By the Riverside*

Composers Charlie Rich and Billy Sherrill

## Closing Remarks

Mrs. Rosemary M. Beirne, Principal

## *Lift Every Voice and Sing*

Composer, Weldon Johnson

Lift every voice and sing  
Till earth and heaven ring,  
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;  
Let our rejoicing rise  
High as the listening skies,  
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.  
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,  
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us.  
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,  
Let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,  
Bitter the chastening rod,  
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;  
Yet with a steady beat,  
Have not our weary feet  
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?  
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered,  
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,  
Out from the gloomy past,  
Till now we stand at last  
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years,  
God of our silent tears,  
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;  
Thou who hast by Thy might  
Led us into the light,  
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.  
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,  
Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee;  
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,  
May we forever stand.  
True to our God,  
True to our native land.

## Honors Choir

Classes of 2022 and 2023

Ms. Wendy Bryn Harmer, Instructor

Megan Anderson*	Olivia Goncalves*
Lauren Barton	Mackenzie Handler*
Ava Basciano*	Catherine Hickey*
Lily Beechinor-Collins	Rory Keane*
Victoria Belizze*	Keira Kostadinov*
Katherine Benjamin*	Sara LaVia*
Anna Brody*	Leila Martinez
Caroline Brody*	Isabella Mazzaro*
Maria Bulfamante*	Katherine Mehler
Jenna Cain	Johanna Michel*
Erica Cally*	Lola Milazzo*
Ciara Carolan*	Natalia Morales*
Jessica Caruso*	Emily Morillo
Mary Cinguina	Sarah Noka*
Wylie Coleman*	Jenna Nukho*
Kristen DeFlorio	Julia Ognibene*
Madeline Donovan	Hailey Raio
Aileen Dorrian	Alexandra Vasti*
Bianca Flores*	Elizabeth Vulcano*
Anna Gayer	Emma Wall*
Noelle Gayer	Mary Wrotniak*

\* denotes Seniors

## *Distinguished Guest*

### Honorable Tanya R. Kennedy

Hon. Tanya R. Kennedy is an Associate Justice of the Appellate Division, First Department. Prior to her appointment, Justice Kennedy served as a Justice of the Supreme Court, New York County. She was elected to Civil Court in November 2005, and thereafter served in Criminal Court and also Family Court. She has served as Acting Supreme Court Justice and as Supervising Judge of Civil Court, New York County. She is also a former Adjunct Professor at Fordham University School of Law, where she taught a Juvenile Justice seminar for ten years.

Justice Kennedy is a member of the Board of Directors of the New York City Bar Association, Women in Law Section of the New York State Bar Association, Pattern Jury Instructions of the Association of Supreme Court Justices of the State of New York, Board of Overseers of the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, where she received her law degree; and an Advisory Board Member of Penn State Law.

Justice Kennedy is a Past President of the National Association of Women Judges and holds active membership in the New York Coalition of 100 Black Women, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, NAACP and is also a member of The Abyssinian Baptist Church.

Justice Kennedy's honors include Distinguished Alumna Award from Penn State University; the Diversity Trailblazer Award from the New York State Bar Association; Brooklyn Technical High School Hall of Fame Designation; Diversity Leadership Award from Penn State Law; and the Alumni of the Year Award from Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law.

## *Distinguished Guest*

### LaFredrick Coaxner

La Fredrick Coaxner is a native of Greenville, South Carolina, where he began his musical training at the Phillis Wheatley Repertory for Youth under the direction of Dwight Woods. Mr. Coaxner received his Bachelor of Music in voice performance at The Juilliard School. He immediately found his place in music being cast as Basilio in *Le nozze di Figaro*, *The Fox in Fables*, Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore*, Kasper Amahl in *the Night Visitors*, and Sam in *Susannah*. Some of Mr. Coaxner oratorio works include *Dubois Seven Last Words of Christ* and *Handel's Messiah*. He also studied at the Centro Studi Lirica in Novafeltria, Italy.

Mr. Coaxner is currently a soloist with The Harlem Jubilee Singers under the direction of Professor Gregory Hopkins. He is also a soloist and choir director for Queen Ester Marrow and the Harlem Gospel Singers under the direction of Anthony Evans. He has traveled nationally and internationally performing in Europe, South America, Central America and the United States. In more recent years, Mr. Coaxner was featured in *Porgy and Bess* with The New Jersey State Opera, toured with The Harlem Jubilee Singers in South America and Europe, and *The Cotton Club Review* in Italy.

Mr. Coaxner frequently leads workshops at schools, places of worship, community events across the nation, actively promotes the value of education, as well as encouraging young people to pursue musical opportunities. He is a member of Harlem's historic Abyssinian Baptist Church where he serves as choir director for the *Inspirational Voices of Abyssinian*.

## *Distinguished Guest*

### Ahmaya Knoelle Higginson

New York Harlem-born Ahmaya Knoelle Higginson has graced stages across the United States, in Europe and Japan, thrilling audiences worldwide with her powerhouse, multi-octave voice.

Ahmaya was exposed to music even before she was born. Her parents, Vy Higginsen and Ken Wydro, created the classic gospel musical, *Mama, I Want to Sing*, loosely based on the life and work of Vy's sister, Doris Troy ("Just One Look"), whose recordings for Atlantic Records and the Beatles' Apple label catapulted her to international recognition. At a young age of 7, Ahmaya toured the world performing and singing in her family's theater company. She graduated from the acclaimed Professional Performing Arts High School in NYC, attended the Manhattan School of Music and the American Musical and Dramatic Academy for her college studies. Ahmaya is currently starring in and co-directing the acclaimed Off-Broadway revival of *Mama, I Want to Sing*, continuing the history of her family's musical legacy.

Ahmaya serves as an Artistic Director and Music Educator of the Mama Foundation for the Arts. She co-founded the acclaimed Gospel for Teens music arts education program. She also helped form the "Sing Harlem Choir" a traveling commercial choir where advanced members of gospel for teens can elevate to performing on major platforms. She has booked, administered, musically arranged, produced and choreographed dates for numerous appearances, including The Grammy Awards, Saturday Night Live, Nickelodeon and many more.

As an enthusiastic arts activist and New York Harlem resident, Knoelle continues to serve her community through teaching music, is passionate about passing her legacy, and the history of music to the next generations.

## *Special Acknowledgments*

### ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Colleen Melnyk, President  
Mrs. Rosemary M. Beirne, Principal  
Mrs. Liz Lynch, Assistant Principal of Student Life  
Ms. Robyn Summa '93, Assistant Principal for Curriculum and Instruction

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Ms. Wendy Bryn Harmer, Choral Music

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