

Allison Loggins-Hull is named next Cleveland Orchestra Composer Fellow

by Mike Telin



When Allison Loggins-Hull’s manager reached out to say that The Cleveland Orchestra was curious to see some of her scores, the composer/flutist thought they might be interested in programming some of her music in the future. Then, several weeks later, when he called back and asked Loggins-Hull if she was interested in being the Orchestra’s Daniel R. Lewis Composer Fellow, at first she didn’t take him seriously.

“I thought ‘Okay, Greg, what do you really want?’ But when he said no, this is real, I was like wow, because this was not something that I saw coming.”

On Thursday, May 4 at 7:30 pm at Severance Music Center, Franz Welser-Möst will lead The Cleveland Orchestra in the world premiere of Loggins-Hull’s *Can You*

See? The concert will also include Barber’s *Cello Concerto* with Alisa Weilerstein as soloist and the revised 1947 version of Prokofiev’s *Symphony No. 4*. The program will be repeated on Saturday at 8 pm. Tickets are available [online](#).

One hour before each performance, a Prelude program in Reinberger Chamber Hall curated by Loggins-Hull will feature excerpts from her full-length program *Honoring Black Composers*, which will be presented at Karamu House on May 21.

During a Zoom call from her home in New Jersey, Loggins-Hull said the first order of business was to set up some brainstorming sessions with the Orchestra to discuss what

the three-year Fellowship could entail. “I explained that I was not sure if this is what they had in mind, but could we use this Fellowship as an opportunity to get outside of Severance and work more closely with community organizations in and around Cleveland?”

Loggins-Hull’s hope is for the Fellowship to culminate in a large work informed by the city the Orchestra calls home. And she thinks the best way to do that is to hit the ground running and get to know people and community organizations.

“It takes time to do this kind of work in a meaningful way,” she said. “So during my initial visit last fall, which was my first time I was ever in Cleveland, I spent time at museums, the Fatima Family Center, Global Cleveland, Karamu House, Cleveland School for the Arts, and The Baseball Heritage Museum. All of these offered very different tastes of Cleveland in an effort to introduce myself and let people know what I was envisioning.”

Audiences will have an opportunity to get to know Loggins-Hull’s music later this week. She explained that *Can You See?* is an arrangement of an existing piece for nine players that was written in 2021 on a commission from the New Jersey Symphony.

“It was during COVID and just after George Floyd, so you can remember all the conversations and discourse that were going on during that time. They asked me to write a response to *The Star Spangled Banner*, and I found myself thinking about the lyrics, their meaning, and whether or not we were living up to them — particularly about this being the land of the free.”

Although the work borrows melodic material from the National Anthem, Loggins-Hull said that she has stretched it out in such a way that it takes on a somber aesthetic. “I used the strings to create a blurriness, bouncing off the idea of things being out of focus and playing on the words ‘can you see.’”

When re-writing the piece for larger musical forces, she said that she took the existing melodic material, sketched out different delay effects, and orchestrated it. “What ended up happening is that it’s the same piece but it’s really not. I found that suddenly it had a more hopeful feel to it and I went with that vibe once I started to hear what was happening.”

She also added a section that gives a nod to the flute section. “I’m a flutist, so there’s a little bit of nepotism there, but I did it in a way that is inspired by Native American flute playing. That was the one American musical language that I had not really acknowledged

or tried to honor in the first version, and I wanted to represent all of America and American music.”

Loggins-Hull looks forward to hearing the work played this week. “They are such an incredible Orchestra — I mean, I’m still in a little bit of disbelief.”



The repertoire for the Prelude Concerts will include Loggins-Hull’s *The Pattern*, a sextet for [Pierrot ensemble](#), a movement from Carlos Simon’s *Warmth from Other Suns*, and two movements from Bongani Ndodana-Breen’s *Three Tales from African Migration*. Performers include Joshua Smith (flute), Amy Zoloto (clarinet), Wei-Fang Gu, Jeffrey Zehngut, Jessica Lee, Isabel Trautwein, and Yun-Ting Lee (violin), Eliesha Nelson and William Bender (viola), David Alan Harrell, Charles Bernard, and Brian Thornton (cello), Thomas Sherwood (percussion), and Daniel Overly (piano).

“I wanted to use these opportunities to continue the conversation on migration, which is happening a lot during the *American Dream Festival*. I also wanted to try to represent more of the diaspora, which is why I included Bongani Ndodana-Breen who is South African.”

Winding down our conversation, I mentioned to Loggins-Hull that her [website](#) refers to her as “Flutist. Composer. Producer.” What does she call herself when people ask what she does? “I usually just say that I’m a flutist and composer. And if I’m meeting someone for the first time who doesn’t know me at all I’ll just say that I’m a musician, and let the conversation develop organically.”

Other American Dream Festival events:

On Saturday, May 20 from 12:00 Noon until 2:00 pm Elena Dubinets will moderate a panel discussion titled “Puccini’s *La fanciulla del West* and its influences: placing the opera into a perspective.” Panelists include Allison Loggins-Hull, Kira Thurman, and Douglas Shadle. CWRU Tinkham Veale University Center, Ballroom A, 11038 Bellflower Road. Free.

Sunday, May 21 at 2:00 pm: “The American Dream: Honoring Black Composers.” Music by Allison Loggins-Hull, Carlos Simon, Florence Price, Jesse Montgomery, Howard Swanson, and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. Allison Loggins-Hull and Joshua Smith (flute), Daniel McKelway and Amy Zoloto (clarinet), Wei-Fang Gu, Jeffrey Zehngut, Sonja Braaten Molloy, Beth Woodside, and Jessica Lee, (violin), Eliesha Nelson and Gareth Zehngut (viola), David Alan Harrell (cello), and Daniel Overly (piano). Karamu House, 2355 East 89th Street, Cleveland. Tickets available [online](#).

Visit The American Dream Festival [page](#) here.

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