

**MEDIA RELEASE
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LONDON SYMPHONIA CELEBRATES BLACK HISTORY MONTH WITH REDISCOVERY OF UNJUSTLY NEGLECTED COMPOSER



THE LIFE AND TROUBLED TIMES OF SAMUEL COLERIDGE-TAYLOR Saturday, February 22, 2025 at 7:30 p.m

LONDON, February 11, 2025 – **London Symphonia** is celebrating **Black History Month** with an extraordinary concert that tells the remarkable story of **Samuel Coleridge-Taylor**, a composer of mixed race regarded as a musical genius at the turn of the 20th century. Born in 1875 in London England, this prolific composer of more than 100 works, who died at the young age of 37, became a transatlantic sensation lauded by the British Royal Family and welcomed to the White House by President Theodore Roosevelt. Yet he is only now emerging as one of Britain's best-kept musical secrets.

London Symphonia, together with actor, playwright and poet **Roy Lewis**, is proud to present **The Life and Troubled Times of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor**, a showcase of his brilliant music and ingenuity performed against the backdrop of the story of his triumphs, tragedies and astounding life. **(Saturday, February 22, 2025 at 7:30 p.m., Metropolitan United in London, ON.)**

“2025 is the **150th anniversary** of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor’s birth. We’re excited to present **The Life and Troubled Times of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor**, a concert experience that is part theatrical, part musical rediscovery. We hope that people from across the community will join us as we rediscover this most unjustly neglected composer,” said Andrew Chung, Artistic Producer, London Symphonia.

Roy Lewis tells the story of Coleridge-Taylor’s life through the historical fiction of vignettes he created in the form of letters and diary entries from such famous personalities as **Sir Edward Elgar, Antonin Dvořák, Edith Roosevelt** (wife of President Theodore Roosevelt), **Coleridge-Taylor** himself and his wife **Jessie Walmisley**.

Works by **Florence Price, Franz Schubert, Antonín Dvořák,** and **Kris Bowers** (of *Bridgerton* fame) round out the program performed by the London Symphonia Chamber players.

“Coleridge-Taylor’s music is truly groundbreaking. Sitting at the crossroads of a tumultuous Europe in the prelude to World War I, Coleridge-Taylor creates his own path, looking to the musical giants of the past and connecting with his father’s African heritage and the sounds and rhythms of African-American music,” said Chung.

A graduate of the Royal College of Music, Coleridge-Taylor was championed by the eminent composer, Sir Edward Elgar. His most famous piece, *Song of Hiawatha* was performed frequently for 50 years, often outshining Handel’s *Messiah* in popularity. Financial struggles and personal tragedy throughout his short life are often linked to his early death.

Concertgoers can choose to attend **The Life and Troubled Times of Samuel Coleridge** in person at Metropolitan United, home of London Symphonia, or virtually through high quality 4K HDR Video On Demand productions that include 21 days of unlimited access.

London Symphonia is deeply grateful to Concert Sponsor Canada Life and for the support of our government partners, London Arts Council, Canada Council for the Arts, and the Ontario Arts Council.

LISTING INFORMATION: LONDON SYMPHONIA CONCERT

The Life and Troubled Times of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

Roy Lewis, narrator

London Symphonia Chamber Players

Sat. February 22, 2025 at 7:30 pm

Doors open at 6:30 pm

Metropolitan United, 468 Wellington St, London, ON N6A 3P8

In-person tickets are \$55 General Admission, \$75 Reserved Seating, and \$55 for unlimited Video On Demand 21-day access, plus fees and HST.

Ticket packages start at \$155 for 3-concert General Admission subscription and \$212 for Reserved Seating, plus fees and HST. 5-concert packages are also available. In person and Video On Demand tickets are available online at londonsymphonia.ca.

Free tickets are available for post secondary, high school and children aged 6 to 12. Family-Flex Packs and tickets to individual concerts can be purchased online at londonsymphonia.ca.

ABOUT ROY LEWIS

Roy Lewis, is a poet, playwright, director and actor. He is a Founding Member of the Obsidian Theatre Company and a 16-season veteran of the Stratford Festival Company acting company. On stage he has played Morocco in *The Merchant of Venice*, Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet*, Cyclops in *The Odyssey*, Claudius in *Hamlet*, The Stage Manager in *Our Town*, Abel Magwitch in *Great Expectations*, Prospero in the *Tempest*, Mr. Potter in *It's A Wonderful Life*, Charley in *Death of a Salesman* and Camilo in *The Winter's Tale*. Roy has directed 10 plays. His plays *Moments With You* and *I See the Crimson Wave: The Nat Love Story* had their premieres at the Here For Now Theatre and Talk Is Free Theatre.

ABOUT SAMUEL COLERIDGE-TAYLOR (1875-1912)

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was an English composer, conductor and political activist who fought against race prejudice with his incredible compositions. Born in Holborn in 1875 to an English mother and a father originally from Sierra Leone, he liked to be identified as Anglo-African – and was later referred to by white New York musicians as 'Black Mahler', owing to his musical success. Raised in a family of keen musicians, Coleridge-Taylor's father taught him to play the violin at a young age. Coleridge-Taylor's classical compositions were heavily influenced by traditional African music, making him one of the most progressive writers of his time. He also became well known for his use of poetry – particularly in his cantata trilogy, *The Song of Hiawatha*, which included the epic *Hiawatha Overture* and was based on a poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. His work across music and politics was so well received that in 1904, he was invited by President Theodore Roosevelt to visit the White House – a bold statement and a positive step forward for African Americans. Samuel Coleridge-Taylor died of pneumonia on September 1, 1912 in Croydon, at the age of 37. Throughout his short life, he faced financial struggles and personal tragedy, which are both often linked to his early demise.

ABOUT LONDON SYMPHONIA

London Symphonia is a professional symphony orchestra committed to performing vibrant and bold musical experiences for London and the region. With a core of 30 players, our versatile group meets the community's needs for quality programming by presenting well-known symphonies, Canadian premieres, and collaborations with some of Canada's finest singer-songwriters. We deliver a rich, artistic experience by seeking out the most accomplished performers and conductors representing a blend of locally, nationally and internationally recognized talent. A registered charitable organization, we perform a number of outreach and music education engagements each season for students and seniors in our community.

Website: londonsymphonia.ca

Social media: Join the conversation on Facebook | Instagram | Twitter | YouTube

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