

Mind the Gap: Marsalis, Dawson and the Black American Voice

Thursday, June 18, 2026 · 20:15 · Concertgebouw
Antony Hermus, conductor · Miro Petkov, trumpet · Davóne Tines, bass-baritone

	TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME	MIN
1	NABORS b. 1991 <i>Pulse</i>	12'
2	MARSALIS b. 1961 <i>Trumpet Concerto</i>	35'
3	TRADITIONAL <i>I'm Troubled in Mind (orch. Thomas Beijer)</i>	5'
4	KERN 1885–1945 <i>Ol' Man River (orch. Thomas Beijer)</i>	5'
5	DAWSON 1899–1990 <i>Negro Folk Symphony</i>	35'
	TOTAL MUSIC	92'

Brian Raphael Nabors

12 minutes

b. 1991

Pulse

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen for the pulse itself, the steady, driving rhythmic engine that underpins the entire piece and never lets up. Around it, Nabors spins a sequence of contrasting ‘episodes,’ so listen for the changes of scene: bustling, syncopated passages full of urban energy; broader, more atmospheric stretches; and the colourful, jazz- and gospel-tinged harmonies that flavour his orchestral writing. It is bright, kinetic and immediately engaging, music designed to grab the ear and set the body moving.

Wynton Marsalis

35 minutes

b. 1961

Trumpet Concerto

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

This is a big, multi-movement journey, so settle in and follow its changing moods. Listen for the way Marsalis blends idioms: passages of bluesy, vocal lyricism (the trumpet ‘singing’ or ‘crying’ in the manner of a great jazz soloist) set against more formal, classically-developed orchestral writing; bright, swinging, syncopated music alongside reflective, soulful slow movements.

Keep your ear on the solo trumpet’s astonishing range of expression, from brilliant, high-flying virtuosity to muted, intimate, almost speech-like phrases, and the bent notes and growls of the jazz tradition. Marsalis asks the soloist to be both a classical virtuoso and a jazz storyteller. Listen, too, for echoes of New Orleans, of the blues and of Louis Armstrong woven into the symphonic fabric. It is a concerto that celebrates the trumpet in all its guises, and the deep common roots of America’s classical and vernacular music.

Traditional

5 minutes

I’m Troubled in Mind (orch. Thomas Beijer)

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

This is a short, deeply felt song, so simply let the melody and the voice carry you. Listen for the plain, aching beauty of the spiritual’s tune, and for the weight of feeling the bass-baritone brings to its words of trouble and faith. Beijer’s orchestration will frame the voice in warm instrumental colour; the art here is in restraint and sincerity rather than display: a moment of intimate, sorrowing song amid the larger orchestral canvases of the evening.

Jerome Kern

5 minutes

1885–1945

Ol’ Man River (orch. Thomas Beijer)

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen for the broad, rolling melody, which seems to flow like the great river it describes, in long, sweeping phrases that build to the famous climactic line. The power of ‘Ol’ Man River’ lies in

its combination of nobility and sorrow: a tune of hymn-like grandeur carrying words of hardship and endurance. In the hands of a great bass-baritone like Davóne Tines, heir to the Robeson tradition, listen for the dignity, depth and quiet defiance he brings to it: a show tune that, sung this way, becomes something close to a sacred song.

William L. Dawson

35 minutes

1899–1990

Negro Folk Symphony

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Listen, throughout, for the spirituals at the symphony's heart, folk melodies that surface in the orchestra, sometimes plainly, sometimes grandly developed. Dawson described a motif representing the link 'taken out of a human chain when the first African was taken from the shores of his native land'; listen for it in the horn at the very start of the first movement.

The first movement, 'The Bond of Africa,' moves from darkness and longing to surging energy. The slow movement, 'Hope in the Night,' is the emotional core, brooding and sorrowful, evoking the suffering of the enslaved, with a long, aching central song. The finale bursts out in jubilation, driving the symphony to an exuberant, life-affirming close; listen for the African-inspired rhythmic vitality Dawson added after his travels. It is music of great sweep and heart, and a moving end to an evening celebrating the Black American voice.



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