CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA’S AFRICAN AMERICAN NETWORK PRESENTS TRIBUTE TO THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN FILM STAR, JOSEPHINE BAKER

Chicago Composer Renée Baker’s New Score for Siren of the Tropics Performed Alongside a Screening of the Silent Film Starring Josephine Baker

Saturday, February 29, at 5:00 p.m., in Buntrock Hall

CHICAGO—The Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s African American Network (AAN) presents its fourth annual celebration of National Black History Month, titled “A Sovereign Pout: Le Tumulte Noir of Josephine Baker,” on Saturday, February 29, at 5:00 p.m., in Buntrock Hall at Symphony Center. The Chicago Modern Orchestra Project, the percussion ensemble Tsukasa Taiko and members of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) perform Chicago-based composer Renée Baker’s new film score for Siren of the Tropics alongside a screening of the 1927 silent film starring the first African American film star, Josephine Baker.

Before she became a style and entertainment icon, Josephine Baker lived in poverty and faced segregation as a black artist in America. To further her career, Baker moved to Paris, where she built a following and went on to star in Siren of the Tropics, directed by Mario Nalpas and Henri Étiévant. A rags-to-riches tale mirroring Baker’s own life, Siren depicts the story of Papitou, a West Indies woman who follows a visiting prospector, André Berval, to France. While her love goes unrequited, Papitou finds her true calling as a dance hall performer and flourishes in Paris. Siren was the first of Baker’s four films and cemented her place in history as a trailblazer for black entertainers.

Chicago-based composer Renée Baker leads the Chicago Modern Orchestra Project, the percussion ensemble Tsukasa Taiko and members of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) in this performance of her new score to the film. The program’s title, “A Sovereign Pout: Le Tumulte Noir of Josephine Baker,” takes its name from a series of paintings depicting Josephine Baker as well as other figures of jazz culture in 1920’s Paris.
Before she began composing the new score for *Siren of the Tropics*, Renée Baker traveled to Paris to research the entertainer’s life. This new score reflects the freedom Josephine Baker enjoyed as Paris embraced African American and jazz music nearly a century ago.

A prolific, Chicago-based visual artist, filmmaker, composer and violinist, Renée Baker has collaborated with the CSO African American Network for the past four years. She has composed more than 2,000 works that include symphonies, chamber ensembles, ballets, operas and film scores. Baker treats her compositions as carefully constructed environments that simultaneously showcase a refined grasp of indeterminacy, experimentalism, classicism, subjectivity and objectivity. Her performers and audiences are encouraged to consider music and art’s limitless communicative capabilities. Baker also is the founding music director of the Chicago Modern Orchestra Project (CMOP), an orchestra dedicated to commissioning, performing and recording creative and classical music of many contemporary composers.

Established in 2016, the African American Network has grown to include more than 3,000 members and presents an annual series of programs to create connections and conversation through music. CSO Director of Community Stewardship Sheila Jones curates and hosts the annual series. Ticket prices for AAN events are $25. More information is available at cso.org/aan.

Tickets for all CSOA-presented concerts can be purchased by phone at 800-223-7114 or 312-294-3000, online at cso.org or at the Symphony Center box office: 220 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60604.

Artists, programs and prices are subject to change.

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**African American Network**

**February 29, 2020, at 5:00 p.m.**

**A Sovereign Pout: Le Tumulte Noir of Josephine Baker**

Renée Baker, composer and conductor

Chicago Modern Orchestra Project

Tsukasa Taiko

Members of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians

Tickets: $25

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**Featured Artists for this Performance:**

Renée Baker, composer and conductor

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra: [www.cso.org](http://www.cso.org) and [www.csosoundsandstories.org](http://www.csosoundsandstories.org)

Founded by Theodore Thomas in 1891, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra is consistently hailed as one of the greatest orchestras in the world. Since 2010, the pre-eminent conductor Riccardo Muti has served as its 10th music director. Missy Mazzoli is Mead Composer-in-Residence.

From baroque through contemporary music, the CSO commands a vast repertoire. Its renowned musicians annually perform more than 150 concerts, most at Symphony Center in Chicago and, each
summer, at the suburban Ravinia Festival. They regularly tour nationally and internationally. Since 1892, the CSO has made 62 international tours, performing in 29 countries on five continents.

People around the globe listen to weekly radio broadcasts of CSO concerts and recordings on the WFMT radio network and online at cso.org/radio. Recordings by the CSO have earned 62 Grammy Awards, including two in 2011 for Muti’s recording with the CSO and Chorus of Verdi’s *Messa da Requiem* (Muti’s first of eight releases with the CSO to date). Find details on these and many other CSO recordings at www.cso.org/resound.

The CSO is part of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association, which also includes the Chicago Symphony Chorus (Duain Wolfe, Director and Conductor) and the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, a training ensemble for emerging professionals. Through its prestigious Symphony Center Presents series, the CSOA presents guest artists and ensembles from a variety of genres—classical, jazz, world, and contemporary.

The Negaunee Music Institute at the CSO offers community and education programs that annually engage more than 200,000 people of diverse ages and backgrounds. Through the Institute and other activities, including a free annual concert led by Muti, the CSO is committed to using the power of music to create connections and build community.

The CSO is supported by thousands of patrons, volunteers and institutional and individual donors. The CSO’s music director position is endowed in perpetuity by a generous gift from the Zell Family Foundation. The Negaunee Foundation provides generous support in perpetuity for the work of the Negaunee Music Institute.