

# Nkeiru Okoye, *Composer*

## Short Bio

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A native New Yorker, **Nkeiru Okoye** is the most performed African American woman in symphonic music. She has had compositions performed on four continents, including performances by major and regional symphonies such as the Philadelphia Orchestra, Detroit Symphony, and St. Louis Symphony. She is the recipient of awards and/or commendations from the International Society for Contemporary Music, Meet the Composer, Yvar Mikhashoff Trust for New Music, and ASCAP. Her best known pieces include *Voices Shouting Out* an orchestral short, *The Journey of Phillis Wheatley*, a narrated orchestral showcase, *African Sketches* a piano suite that can be found in the Oxford University Press *Anthology of Piano Music of Africa and the African Diaspora*, and *Songs of Harriet Tubman*, a song cycle from her upcoming folk opera on Tubman. Okoye's work is notable for its accessible style and its combining of contemporary classical, African American, popular music, and West African influences. In addition to writing music, Okoye is a soft-sculpture artist specializing in life-sized dolls called Canbies. Her creations can be found in museums and galleries nationwide, most notably the Smithsonian.

## Full Bio

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According to a recent Temple University Study, **Nkeiru Okoye** is the most performed African American woman in symphonic music. Okoye has had her compositions performed in the United States, Europe, Africa, and Asia. An exciting voice in the symphonic field of contemporary classical and education/family repertoire, her music is notable for its appeal to diverse audiences and infusion of popular music genres.

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Okoye has won awards and/or commendations from the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM), Meet the Composer, Composer's Collaborative, Inc., Yvar Mikhashoff Trust for New Music, the Detroit Symphony, the Ford-Mellon Foundation, ASCAP, the Beneva Foundation, and the Johns Hopkins University Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies British American Project.

Okoye's compositions have been programmed by major and local orchestras in the US including the Philadelphia, Detroit Symphony, St. Louis, Virginia, Grand Rapids, Indianapolis, Gateways Festival, Richmond, New Jersey Chamber, and New Horizons symphony orchestras, amongst others. Her music has been recorded by the Moscow Symphony and Prague Radio Orchestras, and has been published by Oxford University Press. Conductors who have performed her music include Thomas Wilkins, Charles Ansbacher, John Varineau, Akiko Fujimoto, Leon Burke, Wes Kenney, Marlon Daniel, and Julius Kerr-Bartolli.

Nkeiru Okoye [in KIR ro oh KOY yeh] was born in New York, NY, the second daughter of a Nigerian father and an African American mother. Traveling between the US and West Africa during her early years, she was a regular cast member on the Nigerian television show, *Junior Opinion*. After settling into residence on Long Island, she began piano lessons at 10, advancing to professional studies at the Manhattan School of Music Preparatory Division, by the age of 13, and started winning competitions for her original compositions a year later. At 16, though never having studied composition formally, she received a scholarship to attend Oberlin Conservatory, where she received her Bachelor's Degree in composition. Dr. Okoye earned a PhD and an MA in composition and theory from Rutgers University. Her composition teachers, coaches and mentors have included Noel DaCosta, Adolphus Hailstork, Wendell Logan, John Duffy, Alvin Singleton, and Robert Sirota. In addition to writing music, Okoye is a soft-sculpture artist specializing in life-sized dolls called Canbies. Her creations can be found in museums and galleries nationwide, most notably the Smithsonian.

## Contact Information

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### Nkeiru Okoye

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