Emcee

Ms. Xernona Clayton  
*President & CEO Trumpet Awards Foundation*

Xernona Clayton, civil rights veteran, president and CEO of the Trumpet Awards Foundation, is this year’s mistress of ceremony. Clayton brings eye-witnessed accounts of the struggle for civil rights and social justice. In 1965 she joined the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and served as an advisor to the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Clayton and her husband, the late Ed Clayton, are authors of *The Peaceful Warrior*, a biography of Dr. King. This work has been published in several languages and is recommended by education boards nationwide.

A trailblazer in her own right, Clayton has emerged as a recognized voice in the media and corporate and community relations. She began her broadcast career in the 1967 and became the first African American in the South to host a television program. Clayton joined Turner Broadcasting System, Inc, in 1979 as a documentary specialist. In 1982 she was named Coordinator of Minority Affairs and in 1988 was appointed Corporate Vice President for Urban Affairs. As a corporate executive, Ms. Clayton was one of the highest ranking female employees at TBS.

Clayton is the recipient of numerous awards including the Humanitarian Award from the Hillside International Truth Center, the American Spirit Award from the United States Air Force Recruiting Service and the Mickey Leland Award presented by the National Association of Minorities in Cable. Additionally, Clayton was named one of the nation's "Top 100 Black Business and Professional Women" by Dollars and Sense magazine; one of the "Women at the Top of the Entertainment Industry" by *Ebony*; and one of "Georgia’s Most Influential Black Women" by *Georgia Informer* magazine. Her autobiography, *I've Been Marching All the Time*, was published in 1991.

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Today’s musical selection by the DeKalb Symphony Chamber Orchestra is performed under the direction of Interim Music Director and Conductor Mr. Fyodor Cherniavsky.

“Sonata da Chiesa” is Italian for Church Sonata, which evolved over 300 years ago as a Baroque instrumental work. As the name signifies, it was intended for performance in a church and originally was a set of instrumental interludes used for reflection or celebration usually alternating between slow and fast movements including Exultate, O Magnum Mysterium, Adoro and Jubilate featured in the main musical selection and Exultate featured in the postlude.

African American composer Adolphus Hailstork was born in 1941 and grew up in Albany, N.Y., where he took lessons in singing, violin, piano and organ. He conducted a boys’ choral ensemble in high school. A graduate of Howard University, Dr. Hailstork studied in Europe and earned a master’s degree in composition from the Manhattan School of Music and a doctorate from Michigan State University. He is currently a professor of music at Virginia’s Old Dominion University, where he holds the title of Eminent Scholar. Hailstork composed the “Sonata da Chiesa” in 1992 as a commission for the string orchestra of the Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Alexandria, Virginia. His piece reflects the composer’s fascination with cathedrals, particularly the Cathedral of All Saints in Albany, N.Y., where he was a chorister as a boy. In this work scored for strings, Hailstork updates an old form alternating the rhythmic propulsion of the dance with contemplative music displaying a distinctive harmonic edge.
Ms. Crystal M. Harriss (Soprano Soloist)

Crystal M. Harris enjoys a growing reputation as one of this country’s most exciting new artists. Ms. Harris is a graduate of Spelman College and Georgia State University, having earned a bachelor of arts (music) and master of music degrees, respectively. She is a candidate in the doctor of music arts (voice) program at the University of Alabama. Ms. Harris made her professional debut in 1991 with Onyx Opera in Atlanta, appearing as The Announcer in the production of Gallantry.

In 1994, Ms. Harris joined the Houston Grand Opera during its international tour of “Porgy and Bess,” and in 1998, she made her debut in the role of Bess at the Bremer Theater in Bremen, Germany, with New York/Harlem Productions.

As a concert artist, Ms. Harris has appeared with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, performed with a solo quartet in “A Child for Our Time” and as the featured soloist in “The Three Cornered Hat,” both conducted by Maestro Yoel Levi. Ms. Harris performed in “Scenes from the Life of a Martyr” with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Maestro Robert Spano. She received rave reviews for her performance, which was broadcast nation-wide by National Public Radio. In November 2005, Ms. Harris sang the role of Mimi in a concert version of “La Bohem” with the University of Alabama Opera Program.

Ms. Harris has spent much of her professional career performing in the most prestigious opera houses in Europe and North America, among them La Scala (Milan, Italy), Opera Bastille (Paris, France), Deutsche Oper (Dusseldorf, Germany), The War Memorial Opera House (San Francisco, Calif.) and the Los Angeles Opera, (Los Angeles, Calif.).

Today’s musical selection is “This River” was composed by Dr. Uzee Brown Jr., The original song was written as part of the religious musical drama “Yes, Lord,” based on the life of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner.

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Harmony: Atlanta’s International Youth Chorus

This year’s musical selections will be performed by Harmony: Atlanta’s International Youth Chorus under the direction of Joyce Ketchie Carr McDonald. Established in 1992, Harmony brings together 125 youth, ages 6 through 18, from diverse racial, cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds to promote peace, love, justice and hope through choral excellence and song. Truly an international chorus, Harmony’s members have sung in 35 languages since its inception. Harmony embraces the belief that training culturally diverse children to perform together benefits the quality of life in our communities and in our world in a tangible way. Harmony has performed at a number of venues including the Spoleto Festival and Carnegie Hall and has welcomed such dignitaries as Desmond Tutu, President Jimmy Carter and Andrew Young. In 2004 Harmony received a “Blessed are the Peacemakers Award” presented by the World Council of Churches. The Peacemaker Award honors those that exemplify creative and courageous peace and justice-making efforts. For more information on Harmony visit their website at www.harmonychorus.org.

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