

ARTISTIC BIO

Innocent Okechukwu is a Nigerian composer whose music has gained increasing international recognition for its expressive depth, versatility, and prolific output. He earned a Master of Music degree in Composition from the Longy School of Music of Bard College and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Composition at the University of Iowa School of Music, where he studies with David Gompper.

With more than two hundred compositions to his credit, Okechukwu's works have been programmed and performed across Africa, Asia, Europe, and North and South America. His growing international profile has led to performances by several distinguished ensembles and organizations, including the JACK Quartet, Chamber Orchestra of Boston, Castle of our Skin, the Brazilian Symphonic Orchestra, the Baton Rouge Civic Orchestra, the Iowa City Community String Orchestra, and the Akojopo Foundation, among others. His music has been praised for its emotional sincerity and imaginative use of texture and color. In Nigeria, *People's Daily* once described him as "one who has appointment with greatness," recognizing his rapidly developing artistic voice and contribution to contemporary classical music.

In 2022, Okechukwu published his first book, *Musical Echoes*, a collection of his original compositions that is available through Amazon. He has also self-published two piano anthologies, *The Voyage, Book 1* and *The Voyage, Book 2*, both of which reflect his interest in lyrical writing, narrative structure, and accessibility for performers.

A major milestone in his career came in August 2025, when three works from his piano anthology were recorded by Navona Records as part of the *Arise & Shine* project in collaboration with the Sphinx Organization. Following the success of the recording project, three of the featured works were subsequently published by Hal Leonard, further expanding the reach of his music to performers and educators.

Okechukwu continues to receive recognition for his artistic achievements. He was recently named a finalist in the 2026 Ruth Wales du Pont Collegiate Composition Competition,

affiliated with the American Pops Orchestra. He also recently made his debut with the Iowa City Community String Orchestra, where his composition *Ise Oluwa* received its world premiere.

His honors and awards include the Bronwyn and Jeffrey Lamont Artistic and Social Change Fellowship (2021–2022), the Certified Music Practitioner Scholar and Access for Equity Scholar awards (2022–2023), the distinction of becoming the first winner of the United Christian Church and Ministerial Association 30th Anniversary Anthem Commission in 2023, and the Dixon-Hibbard Scholarship for musical productivity and artistic achievement for the 2026–2027 academic year. Also in 2026, Innocent's work for SATB titled – *Make a Wish* was published by TUX Peoples' Music. Innocent is also not left out in academic publications, as one of his papers titled – Representing African Pianism: An Analysis of Akin Euba's *Scenes from Traditional Life* was published by The Society of Composers Inc. (SCI)

In May 2026, Innocent won the first place at the Luna Nova 2026 Pipe Organ Composition Contest. Following that, on the 7th of July, 2026, his String Quartet (De Tenebris, ad Lucem) was yet selected and performed in Vienna, Austria, by the Red Cedar Quartet from Michigan, USA.