INNOCENT OKECHUKWU

Composer · Pianist

Artistic Biography · November 2026

Innocent Okechukwu is a Nigerian composer whose catalogue of more than three hundred works spans choral and vocal music, solo and chamber music, orchestral and band repertoire, concertos, organ music and music for the stage. His music is emotionally direct and vividly imagined, and it carries the rhythms, instruments and communal music-making of his Igbo childhood in Urualla, Imo State, into the concert hall, the church and the classroom. Nigeria's *People's Daily* has described him as "one who has appointment with greatness."

His works have been performed across Africa, Asia, Europe, and North and South America by artists and ensembles including the JACK Quartet, the Chamber Orchestra of Boston, Castle of our Skin, the Brazilian Symphonic Orchestra, the Civic Orchestra of Baton Rouge, the Iowa City Community String Orchestra and the Akojopo Foundation. In July 2026 the Red Cedar Quartet performed his string quartet *De Tenebris, ad Lucem* in Vienna, Austria, and the Iowa City Community String Orchestra gave the world premiere of *Ise Oluwa*; in November 2026 the Westchester Symphonic Band (New York) premieres his *Fanfare for a New Dawn*. His trio *Dusk to Dawn* was commissioned by the Silver-Ebony-Ivory Trio in Boston.

His honours include first place in the 2026 Luna Nova Pipe Organ Composition Contest, selection as a finalist in the 2026 Ruth Wales du Pont Collegiate Composition Competition with the American Pops Orchestra, and first prize in the UCCMA 30th Anniversary Anthem Composition Competition. He was selected for the Golden Hornet String Quartet Smackdown in Austin, Texas (2025) and for the Texas New Music Festival in Mexico City (2027), and holds the University of Iowa's Dixon-Hibbard Scholarship for 2026–2027. Recent works include the Christmas collection *Born For Us This Day*, ten carols for SATB choir, piano and chamber orchestra; the choral medley *Keep the Lantern Burning*; the four-movement orchestral work *Where Horizons Bend*; the concertos *Kinetic*, *Altitude* and *Rain Maker*; and a cycle of twelve new works for solo organ.

Three pieces from his piano collection *The Voyage* were recorded by Navona Records with the Sphinx Organization on the album *Arise & Shine* and later published by Hal Leonard; his SATB anthem *Make a Wish* is published by TUX Peoples' Music, and his study "Representing African Pianism: An Analysis of Akin Euba's *Scenes from Traditional Life*" is published by the Society of Composers, Inc. His books include *Musical Echoes*, *The Voyage*, *The Voyage: Music Explorer's Handbook* and *Rising Voices: A K-12 Choral Anthology*. He has presented his work at the XII Piracicaba International Piano Festival (Brazil), the Aspen Composers' Conference and the UCCMA Biannual Conference.

Okechukwu is a Ph.D. candidate in Music Composition, with a minor in Piano Performance, at the University of Iowa, where he studies with David Gompper and teaches musicianship and theory. He holds a Master of Music in Composition from the Longy School of Music of Bard College, where he studied with John Howell Morrison, and a B.A. in Music Theory and Composition from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, where he graduated with First Class Honours as the department's best graduating student. A devoted teacher, he has taught piano, violin and voice to students from the age of four to adulthood in Nigeria, the United Arab Emirates and the United States. He is affiliated with BMI and lives in Iowa City, Iowa.