

## EMORJA ROBERSON | BIOGRAPHY '24

Emorja Roberson is the Assistant Professor of Music and African American Studies at Oxford College of Emory University.

He recently performed as the baritone soloist for Brahms' *Requiem* at with the Notre Dame Children's Choir where he also debuted his commissioned piece, "Joy, it's on the Way," under the direction of Mark Doerries. He has three published works, "Lord, I Am Grateful" with MorningStar Music Publishers, and two with GIA Music, "He'll be With You" and "Seek Ye First," which has been performed by the University of Arkansas Inspirational Chorale, Notre Dame Folk Choir, and South Bend Community Singers. He was selected as a 2023 Arts & Social Justice Fellow. This partnership between Emory Arts and the Ethics and the Arts program at Emory University of Ethics afforded the opportunity for Roberson to work with ASJ Fellow, Adán Bean, Spoken Word Poet, in the course, *Black Church, Black Music* at Oxford College. He recently served as the music director for the play, *March on Washington*, by Nikki Toombs, in partnership with the National Center for Civil and Human Rights. Roberson is a 2022 recipient of the Future of Music Faculty Fellowship with Cleveland Institute of Music which is a development initiative for Black and Latinx music professionals within academia.

As a student of Mark Doerries and Stephen Lancaster, Roberson became the first African American to receive a Doctor of Musical Arts in Choral Conducting ('22) and a Master of Sacred Music in Vocal Performance ('17) from the Sacred Music Department at the University of Notre Dame. His oratorio, *BE-SPOKEN*, highlights the experiences of the Black experience through jazz, hip-hop, and gospel. The 2022 debut cast consisted of Anthony Walker, King Chav, and Grammy-Award winner, Ledisi. He was awarded the 2021 Academic Freedom Award from the Department of Africana Studies and the 2022 Sr. Jean Lenz Award for his leadership that promotes a more diverse, inclusive campus community for all students. Roberson is also the founder of the talk show, Black@ND and the past director for the Voices of Faith Gospel Choir.

In 2019, he made his national debut on Season 9 of BET's *Sunday Best* competition as a top 20 contestant and served as the choir director for Kathleen Battle's *The Underground Railroad: A Spiritual Journey* tour with the DeBartolo Performing Arts Center at the University of Notre Dame.

As a doctoral student, Roberson hosted the University of Notre Dame's first Black History Month concert, UNSUNG, which featured artists in jazz, classical, and gospel, which included Callie Day, Isaac Cates, J.J. Wright, and Aalex Mansour. In March 2020, "Seek Ye First" from *The Evening Musicales* (2019), was featured on Sirius XM 64 (Kirk Franklin's Praise).

In 2016, he debuted his piece, "Let's Just Praise the Lord," with the South Bend Symphony Orchestra and was a featured soloist on Robert Kry's, *Paradiso: Transformation and Transfiguration* and *Mass for the Oppressed* by Emerson Eads. He has premiered Evelyn Simpson Curenton's "Sweet Lil Jesus" and was featured as the soloist for J.J. Wright's *O Emmanuel* with the Notre Dame Children's Choir. Under the direction of John Apeitos, Roberson was Duke Frederick in Roger Steptoe's world-premiere opera of the Shakespeare play, *As You Like It*. As a master's student in the Sacred Music Department at the University of Notre Dame, Roberson was a student of Dr. Stephen Lancaster and worked with world-renowned soprano, Deborah Voight, Carla Rae Cook, and J.J. Penna. Roberson recorded with Grammy Award Winner, Arturo Sandoval, for the Notre Dame Children's Choir CD, *Christmas at Notre Dame*, as a soloist on "Frosty, the Snowman" with Matthew Kelly.

Roberson graduated from the University of North Florida with a Bachelor of Music degree in Vocal Performance, where he studied with Krzysztof Biernacki. He has held lead roles in *Die Zauberflöte*, *The Consul*, *The Mikado* and *La Bohème* with the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra and performed as a soloist in Handel's *Messiah*.

He is a proud member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, and a charter member of Psi Beta Chapter of Alpha Kappa Psi Business Fraternity.