

## Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson

Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson (1932–2004) was an American composer and conductor. His mother was a pianist, organist, and director of a theater in the Bronx in New York City, and she named her son after the important Afro-British composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. As a boy, Perkinson was interested in dance. He attended New York's High School of Music and Art as a dancer, and by the time he graduated he had started composing. He began studying music education at New York University, but transferred to the Manhattan School of Music after two years to complete a bachelor's (1953) and later a master's degree (1954) in composition and conducting. He also studied at the Berkshire Music Center, the Salzburg Mozarteum, and at Princeton University.

In 1965, Perkinson co-founded the Symphony of the New World. It was the first **racially-integrated** orchestra in the United States, and he was the associate conductor of the ensemble for its first five years. He was also guest conductor with many orchestras around the world and was the music director for a number of dance, theater, and performing arts

organizations. From 1998 until his death in 2004, Perkinson worked as the Coordinator of Performance Activities at Columbia College Chicago's Center for Black Music Research. In 1999, he also became conductor and music director of the New Black Music Repertory Ensemble, which performed in the Chicago area, as well as in Washington, DC and New York City.

Perkinson composed classical music as well as jazz and popular music. He wrote arrangements for jazz drummer Max Roach's quartet, as well as for popular music artists Marvin Gaye and Harry Belafonte. He also composed music for numerous theater, television, and film productions. His composition style blends Baroque counterpoint, American Romanticism, and elements of the blues, **spirituals**, and other African-American folk music.

**Integration** is the mixing of people of different races. A racially-integrated orchestra is one that includes musicians of more than one race.

**Spirituals** are a type of religious song associated with Black Christians of the southern United States. Spirituals are believed to be first created by enslaved African Americans before the end of the Civil War by combining European hymns (religious songs) with African musical elements.

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