



## Notes from “Meet the Composer – Valerie Coleman”

Shared by GPFS Board Members [Adam Eccleston](#) and BJ Nicoletti

Prior to the 2021 GPFS Flute Fair guest artist recital from Valerie Coleman, participants had the pleasure of a virtual “meet and greet” filled with deep interpersonal warmth and creative intellect. She also leaves people thinking and smiling; what a nice combination from a very gifted composer and flutist! Here are a few highlights from this informal yet lovely and unforgettable exchange between the artist-composer-flutist and audience.

*I’m proud to be a part of our flute community. I have great faith in our community.*

[Valerie Coleman](#)



### **Favorite piece tonight?**

“Every piece has its own life”. However, *Matisseries* is her favorite right now. She has written new materials to *Matisseries* and hopes to publish soon! Keep an eye on her website to learn more. She also noted her performance of Requiem Milonga for the GPFS Flute Fair and Seattle Flute Fair will be dedicated to [Paul Taub](#), the Seattle area great flutist and educator with global accomplishments

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and influence, who recently passed away. “It is up to us to honor Paul by taking up the change. He had such a big heart and was such an advocate for flutists and modern flute music.”

### **Process for composing new works?**

Each work has its own creative process. “There are times when writer’s block occurs, and I head to water... there is something about water that helps my compositional process.” As reflected through *Matisseries*, she loves “the idea of writing to visual art – the shape, the lines, the textures....”

### **Do you enjoy performing your own pieces?**

She describes it as cathartic to perform her own pieces. There are two hats, the emotional hat and the technical hat.” She says, “it’s a whole different world.” When she was writing for Imani winds, she was feeding off the energy from her colleagues. That is one of the main differences of being a soloist versus playing with a group.

### **Any new projects?**

**She has been commissioned to write an opera for the MET** and is leaning toward writing about the Harlem Renaissance or even channeling her love of sci-fi and the fantastical. “I could throw in a wizard and a dragon!” A fun exchange between Valerie and Flute Fair participants occurred when she invited ideas for this opera! One does not have this type of question posed to them often in a lifetime, if at all.

Some other new projects include:

- a new anthem to be performed at the end of each Tanglewood festival.
- a piece for the New World symphony.
- a flute quartet for Amy Porter’s Anatomy of Sound; and,
- more pieces for the flute!

Last, but not least, an important and very personal project is that her daughter wants to go to Disneyland after the pandemic is over!

## Composers inspiring you right now?

[Tania Leon](#) – tapping into her Cuban heritage. [Jesse Montgomery](#) and [Kevin Day](#).

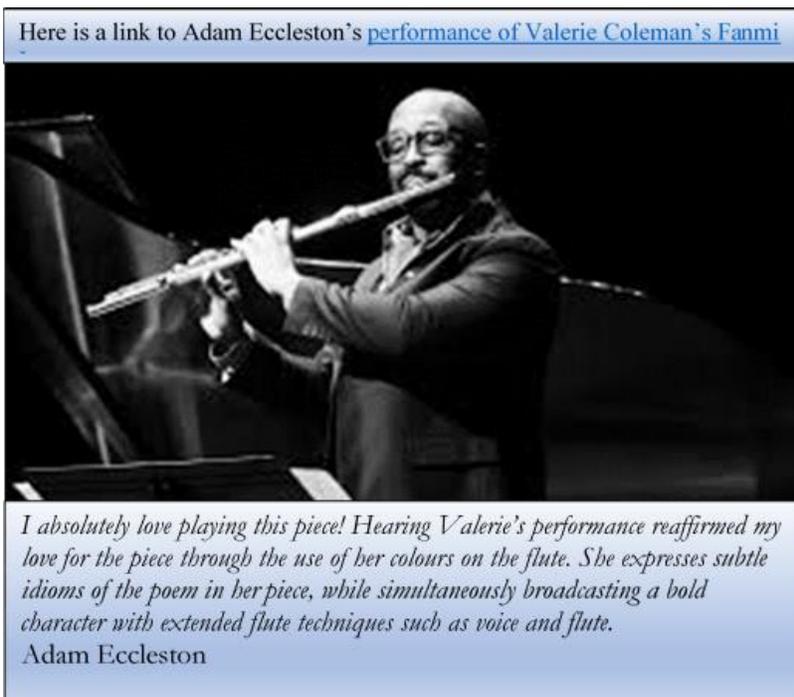
### A Note from [Adam Eccleston](#)

“In 2019, I premiered Valerie Coleman’s *Fanmi Imen* (Human Family) in Oregon, which is inspired by [Maya Angelou’s poem Human Family](#) (YouTube recording of Maya Angelou reading this poem). The piece was written in 2018 and it acknowledges differences within mankind, either due to ethnicity, background, or geography, but Angelou’s refrain: ‘we are more alike, my friends, than we are unlike,’ reaffirms our humanity as a reminder of unity.” See the full poem on the next page of this article.

Coleman’s work draws inspiration from French flute music blending with an underlying pentatonicism found in Asian traditions, a caravan through Middle Eastern parts of the world merging with Flamenco, and an upbeat journey southward into Africa with sounds of the Kalimba.

**Of Adam’s performance, Valerie says** “You stretched it and gave it life and breathe. My artistic sense is generated to the computer and through the score. It takes another artist to let it breath. You opened it up for me...fresh perspective.

To all of us, flutist-composer Valerie says “...for any of my music, open it up... improvise, play the pieces with someone who can improvise.”



# Human Family

I note the obvious differences  
In the human family.  
Some of us are serious,  
Some thrive on comedy.

Some declare their lives are lived  
As true profundity,  
And others claim they really live  
The real reality.

The variety of our skin tones  
Can confuse, bemuse, delight,  
Brown and pink and beige and purple,  
Tan and blue and white.

I've sailed upon the seven seas  
And stopped in every land,  
I've seen the wonders of the world  
Not yet one common man.

I know ten thousand women  
Called Jane and Mary Jane,  
But I've not seen any two  
Who really were the same.

Mirror twins are different  
Although their features jibe,  
And lovers think quite different  
thoughts  
While lying side by side.

We love and lose in China,  
We weep on England's moors,  
And laugh and moan in Guinea,  
And thrive on Spanish shores.

We seek success in Finland,  
Are born and die in Maine.  
In minor ways we differ,  
In major we're the same.

I note the obvious differences  
Between each sort and type,  
But we are more alike, my friends,  
Than we are unalike.

We are more alike, my friends,  
Than we are unalike.

We are more alike, my friends,  
Than we are unalike.

**By Maya Angelou**

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