**BHM 2024 Theme: Culture/Diversity**

**SIR WILLARD WHITE: Bass-baritone opera singer**

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**Bass-baritone** **Sir Willard White** is the epitome of an opera superstar, with a career spanning more than 40 years. **Originally born in Jamaica**, Sir Willard first began to learn music by singing Nat King Cole tunes and later was a founding member of the Jamaican Folk Singers. Educated at the Julliard School,  he was selected by Maria Callas to participate in master classes she gave there from 1971 to 1972. He has sung a number of prominent roles including the title roles in Bluebeard’s Castle, Boris Godunov and Messiaen’s Saint François d’Assise, as well as Wotan in the Ring cycle and Golaud in Pelléas et Mélisande, the role of his LA Opera debut in 1995. He was knighted in the Queen’s Birthday Honours in 2004.

# THOMAS WILKINS: Black Classical music Conductor

# Classical music isn’t all about singers. Conductors play a major role too. Thomas Wilkins, the Principal Conductor of the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra (since 2008!), is the main man when it comes to Black conductors. His conducting career has spanned decades, and major symphony orchestras around America have performed under this baton, including the LA Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony and Philadelphia Orchestra. In 2018, the Longy School of Music awarded him the Leonard Bernstein Lifetime Achievement Award for the Elevation of Music in Society. In 2014, Wilkins received the prestigious “Outstanding Artist” award at the Nebraska Governor’s Arts Awards, for his significant contributions to music in the state. (read more):

# <https://www.laopera.org/discover/la-opera-content/seven-black-opera-singers-that-are-killing-the-game/>