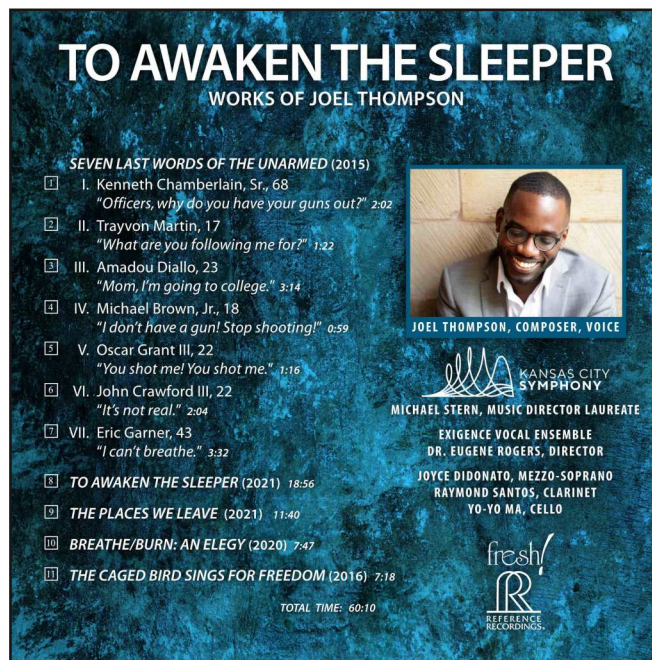
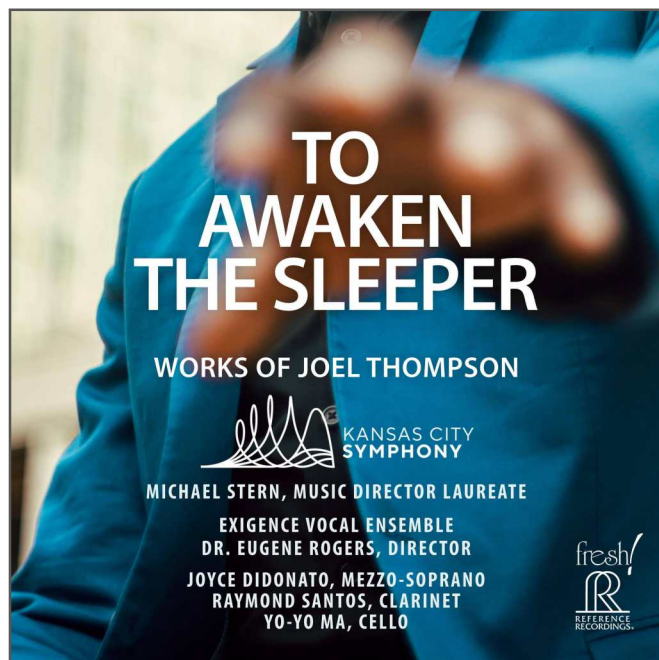


U.S. Street Date: July 24, 2026

Compact Disc (Total Time 60:10) with Detailed Booklet

U.S. Suggested List Price \$16.98

Also Available in Standard and High Resolution Digital Downloads and Streaming



**NEW ALBUM FROM GRAMMY® AWARD-WINNING KANSAS CITY SYMPHONY
AND DEBUT COMPENDIUM BY IMPORTANT COMPOSER JOEL THOMPSON!**

REFERENCE RECORDINGS proudly presents a landmark recording, the first commercial project to feature **JOEL THOMPSON**'s music exclusively, brings together this ascendant composer and the **KANSAS CITY SYMPHONY** led by **MICHAEL STERN**. Joining them are some of the most important performers of today focused on the same crucial topics: cellist **YO-YO MA**, mezzo-soprano **JOYCE DIDONATO** and the Sphinx Organization's vocal ensemble **EXIGENCE** led by **DR. EUGENE ROGERS**. This is powerful music of profound insight and uncompromising conviction, brought to life by the passion and artistry of eminently skilled collaborators.

The career of composer **Joel Thompson** has seen a meteoric rise since the premiere of his breakout choral work *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed* in 2015. Each of its seven movements sets to music the last words of an unarmed Black man before he was killed. Since 2015, Thompson has received multiple prestigious awards, been commissioned by America's top orchestras and ensembles and taken the post of Houston Grand Opera's first-ever composer-in-residence. Today, Thompson's compositional voice is one of the most powerful and incisive in the country, centering the concerns and desires of the voiceless and historically marginalized.

The **Kansas City Symphony**, founded in 1982, has seen a similar rise since the appointment of **Michael Stern** as music director in 2005. Stern took the orchestra from a regional group to being one of the top 25 American orchestras over the course of his remarkable 19-year tenure, raising both its national and international profile. Throughout his time at the orchestra's helm he demonstrated an unwavering commitment to new music, to American composers and to works dedicated to the pressing issues of our time.

2026 marks the 50th Anniversary of **REFERENCE RECORDINGS**, one of the most innovative and respected independent labels in the music business. Reference Recordings releases have been highly praised for their dedication to high quality sound in the service of great music. After more than 200 projects and many GRAMMY® awards and nominations, RR's first and second-generation team continues recording and releasing what many consider to be the finest sounding classical, jazz and blues albums in the world. **FRESH!** is part of Reference Recordings' mission to encourage unique and fine artists and give them a strong platform for promotion and sales nationally and internationally. Reference Recordings are distributed in North America by Naxos USA, and internationally through a network of independent distributors.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Janice Mancuso – Media Relations | press@ReferenceRecordings.com | US: 1-800-336-8866 | Int'l: +1-650-355-1845
"Press Room" at www.ReferenceRecordings.com | kcsymphony.org | primoartists.com/joel-thompson