

## Ahmed Al Abaca

**Contact email:** [go@ahmedalabaca.com](mailto:go@ahmedalabaca.com)

**Biography:** Born in San Bernardino CA, Ahmed Al Abaca is a black, non-binary composer who began writing and playing the piano at the of age 6, and later performed in concert, military, and jazz bands in high school. Despite not having a traditional education in classical music, and thus being disadvantaged in terms of music theory and notation, they went on to study composition at Cal State San Bernardino and Hunter College, developing a tonal style which characterizes their music. In New York, where they lived for 8 years, Al Abaca collaborated with theater director Lily Raabe and producer Dale Novella. After moving to LA, with composer/producers Juan Cosme and Danilo Pichardo, Al Abaca formed The Humble Boys and produced the multimedia show and on-going project All You Seek, which is informed by their personal live experiences. Their piece *Across the Calm Waters of Heaven*, written for the 2015 San Bernardino mass shooting, was performed in 2016 at the Color of Music festival that celebrates black musicians and composers. Al Abaca's *Ascension* is recorded by the Janacek Philharmonic. They are a member of the Composer Diversity Collective, whose membership comprise black and brown composers in LA. Al Abaca is proud of his background but critical of elite institutions that fetishize experiences of marginalization in their selection process.

Pronouns: they/them

**List of works:** <https://www.ahmedalabaca.com/music>

**Recording:** *Across the Calm Waters of Heaven* (2016)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L84gfqqR-yQ>

Written in the aftermath of the 2015 San Bernardino mass shooting, *Across the Calm Waters of Heaven- A Piece for Peace* is an emotional journey that explores the nature of loss, grief, and love that transcends time and space. The piece begins by capturing the mixed feelings of loss and anticipation felt by the victims as they leave behind their bodies and their lives here on earth and begin their ascension into the love and care of their new eternal home. The work flows forward, capturing the awe and joy felt by the arrivals to their new home, a place of peace, love, and beauty. There, they are jubilantly greeted and reunited with their loved ones and a community of loving and caring souls. The victims terror, loss, grief, and fear dissolves as they bask in their new surroundings and community. A calm lake, represented by the piano solo, is a moment of reflection, as they look back on their lives and those they left behind. They are so filled with joy and love, they radiate down comfort and reassurance. The victims, will always guard over, and bask in warmth and love, their beloved on Earth, as they wait to welcome them to this place of love and light. This work captures the inextinguishable spark of human goodness, our unfathomable capacity to give and receive love, that burns brightly in the souls of all humanity. This spark of God, can never be extinguished even through violence, terror, or injustice. This work celebrates the power of love, and aims to bring peace, reassurance, and healing to others.

**Composer's website:** <https://www.ahmedalabaca.com/>

**Resources:**

<https://shoutoutla.com/meet-ahmed-al-abaca-composer-conductor-facilitator-music-lover/>

[https://churchesinusa.com/church/st\\_philips\\_episcopal\\_church/115346931821811/?lang=en](https://churchesinusa.com/church/st_philips_episcopal_church/115346931821811/?lang=en)