# MSO
## MOBILE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
SCOTT SPECK
MUSIC DIRECTOR




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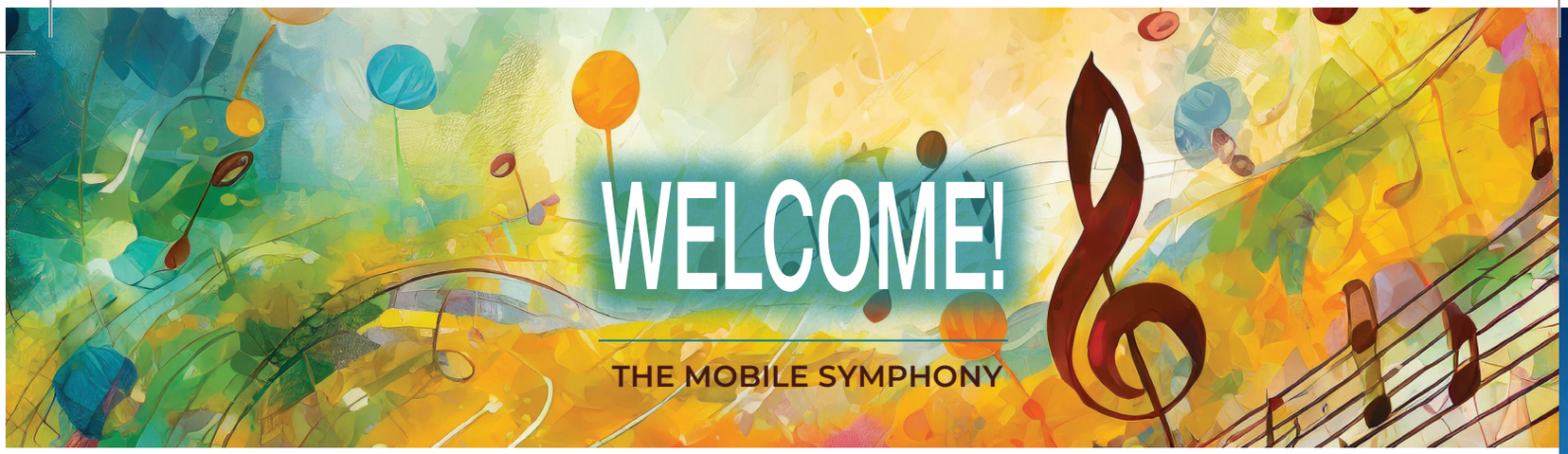



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# Welcome to the Mobile Symphony!

**We hope you'll enjoy the inspiring music that has made us Mobile's flagship arts organization.**

If you're a newcomer, check out the advantages of becoming a season ticket holder by subscribing to our concert series. You can save, enjoy exclusive benefits and never miss a beat from your very own season seat! Subscribers get more!

You'll notice a long list of donors who make all these wonderful programs possible. Please join them. You have an important part to play in our orchestra! Donors get even more – including parties and events with the orchestra.

Each year we present a casual Beethoven and Blue Jeans concert where we encourage everyone, including the orchestra, to wear jeans. Scott Speck, our music director, always reminds concertgoers we are about great music, not dress codes. Come as you are!

Turn your cell phones off and turn your good manners on. Respect those around you, so everyone has a great concert experience. New security measures are in place. Please be patient as you enter the Saenger.

As you read this program, you'll discover that the MSO is so much more than the music you hear today. Our education and outreach programs are unmatched along the Gulf Coast. Our amazing Mobile Symphony Youth Orchestra is a training ground for the Gulf Coast's very best student musicians. Attend one of their concerts, and you'll know we're not exaggerating!









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**mobilesymphony.org**
**257 Dauphin Street**
**P.O. Box 3127**
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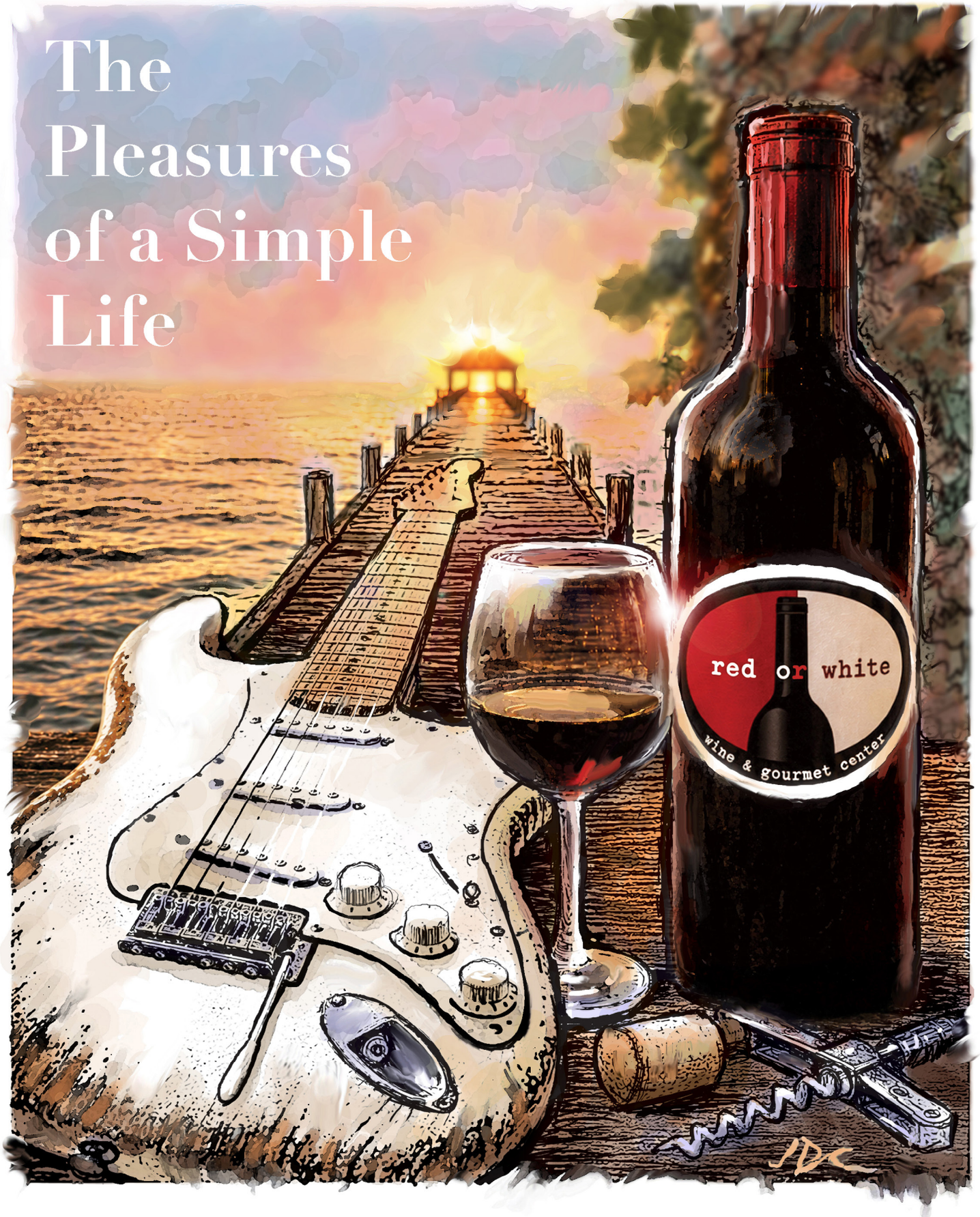
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# ABOUT THE MUSIC DIRECTOR

## SCOTT SPECK

*Dear Friends,*

As you read this, I'm upstairs putting on my jacket, reflecting on how grateful I am to be a conductor at this time in history. The typical American or European Music Director of old was an aloof, mystical figure, responsible for mysterious arm-waving and not much else. He or she never uttered a word to the audience or to the community. Where's the fun in that? It's my greatest pleasure to be able to express myself far beyond the podium — not only as a musician, but also as an enthusiastic proponent of our great orchestra to the community and beyond.

Energy and passion figure very heavily in our work at the Mobile Symphony. In fact, I have always taken the word "conductor" literally. Just as a conductor of electricity focuses energy in one place and projects it to another, I feel that my job is to focus the energy from the musical score and direct it to our musicians. These players then take that energy, amplify it a hundredfold with their own radiant musicality, and project it out to the audience. And you can help us to project the excitement still further, into all of the Gulf Coast.

At the Mobile Symphony, we feel an enormous responsibility to you — and we always try to create an atmosphere that enables several things to happen:

**Ownership.** MSO subscribers and audience members are part of our orchestra family. We hope you know we simply can't make our music without you.

**Adventure.** In a truly exciting performance, both the orchestra and the audience should feel the thrill of spontaneous creation. We always try to incorporate a sense of discovery into our concerts.

**Engagement.** We feel that it is our duty to enhance the understanding of the music we play. That's why you'll often hear me introducing some of the music from the stage. Of course, our vast educational offerings, in-school programs and brilliant Mobile Symphony Youth Orchestra have made many children into music lovers too.

**Trust.** I give my word of honor that we will always offer an enlightening, stimulating, enjoyable experience at the Mobile Symphony. If a piece of music is unfamiliar, it will become familiar by the end of the concert. I want you to know that whenever you come to the Mobile Symphony, you will have an absolutely sensational time.

Okay, the jacket is in place. See you in a few minutes!

Scott Speck

*Scott Speck, Music Director*



Scott Speck joined the Mobile Symphony in 2000 as its first full-time Music Director. Under his leadership the orchestra has grown into one of the Gulf Coast's premier performing arts organizations. Scott is a masterful conductor with a wide-ranging knowledge of repertoire, deep experience in programming, and a terrific sense of what will engage audiences – old and new. His performances with Yo-Yo Ma, Itzhak Perlman, Renée Fleming, Joshua Bell, Midori, Evelyn Glennie and Olga Kern have been highlights of his years as music director of the MSO.

Scott also holds positions as Music Director of the Joffrey Ballet, Chicago Philharmonic and West Michigan Symphony. He previously held positions as Conductor of the San Francisco Ballet; Music Advisor and Conductor of the Honolulu Symphony; and Associate Conductor of the Los Angeles Opera. During a tour of Asia he was named Principal Guest Conductor of the China Film Philharmonic in Beijing. He was also invited to the White House as Music Director of the Washington Ballet.

In past seasons Scott Speck has conducted at London's Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, the Paris Opera, Moscow's Tchaikovsky Hall, Festspielhaus Baden-Baden, New York's Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall, Chicago's Symphony Center, Washington's Kennedy Center, San Francisco's War Memorial Opera House, and the Los Angeles Music Center. He is the first conductor ever to perform at the Obama Presidential Center. He has led numerous performances with the orchestras of Chicago, Houston, Washington, Baltimore, Paris, London, Moscow and Beijing, among many others.

He is co-author of the world's best-selling books on classical music for a popular audience: *Classical Music for Dummies, Opera for Dummies* and *Ballet for Dummies*. He has been a regular commentator on National Public Radio, the BBC and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, broadcast throughout the world.

***Scott can be reached on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @scottspeckmusic***

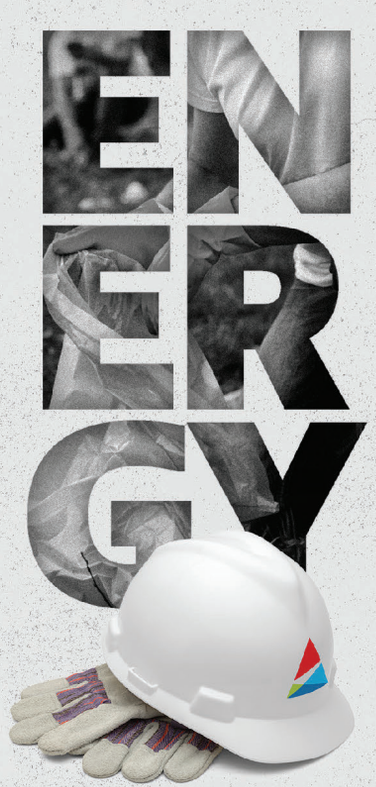
SSI



**In every great symphony, each part contributes to something larger than itself.**

For more than 38 years, The SSI Group has proudly called Mobile home and worked to make a positive impact in the communities we serve. That's why we're honored to support the Mobile Symphony Orchestra and the arts that inspire creativity, connection, and civic pride across our region.

The SSI Group
Rooted in Mobile since 1988.
Proud supporter of the Mobile Symphony Orchestra.




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Alabama Power

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# MOBILE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

## 2026-2027 ROSTER

*Strings and percussion personnel are listed alphabetically, following principal players*

### VIOLIN
Jenny Grégoire
*concertmaster*
Enen Yu
*co-concertmaster*
Will Jackson
*principal second*
Petra Bubanja
Edward Charity
Ken Davis
Ellen Grant
Sophia Han
Bret Heim
Molly Hollingsworth
Grace Kim
Gesa Kordes
Natasha Marsalli
Zully Morales
Maeanna Naffe Callahan
Julianne Odahowski Steele
Stan Roberts
Diane Schmitz
Silvia Suarez Rath
Jennifer Whittle
Lisa Wiggins

### VIOLA
Jacob Adams
*principal*
Courtney Grant
Katelyn Hoag
Jim Lichtenberger
Ashley Overby
Daniela Pardo
Miriam Tellechea

### CELLO
Moisés Molina
*principal, The Emily "Patsy" Stone Fail Chair*
Andrea Beltrán-Landers
Guo-Sheng Huang
Daniel Martinez
Zlatina Staykova
José Sunderland

### BASS
Taylor Hollyer
*principal*
Samuel Dahmer
Sophia Scarano

### FLUTE
Andra Bohnet
*principal*
Travis Jones
Rachel Nozny
*piccolo*

### OBOE
Rebecca Mindock
*principal, The Patty Malone Chair*
Matthew Fossa
Amy Selkirk

### CLARINET
Jonathan Holden
*principal*
Richard Jernigan

### BASSOON
Evelyn Watkins
*principal*
Kimberly Woolly
Richard Hopkins
*contrabassoon*

### HORN
Mollie Pate
*principal*
Jon Gannon
*associate principal*
James Baker
Joey Troia

### TRUMPET
Matthew Vangjel
*principal*
Michael Huff
Peter Wood

### TROMBONE
Jonathan Houghtling
*substitute principal*
Jonathan McNeer
Arie VandeWaa
*bass trombone*

### TUBA
Chester Schmitz
*principal*

### HARP
Katie Ott
*principal*
Merrie Beth Eubanks

### TIMPANI
Laura Noah
*principal*

### PERCUSSION
Bryan Dilks
*principal*
Grant Dalton
Matt Greenwood
Brian Nozny
John Purser
Zachary Webb

### PIANO/CELESTA
Robert Holm
*principal*





# MUSICIAN SPONSORSHIP



## A unique opportunity to support the Mobile Symphony and get to better know our orchestra musicians!

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*Musician sponsorship begins at the $5,500 contribution level.*

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**Andra Bohnet**
*Courtney Grant, viola*

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*Jonathan Holden, principal clarinet*

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*Will Jackson, principal 2nd violin*

**Joanna Mayson Cunningham**
*Evelyn Watkins, principal bassoon*

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*Arie VandeWaa, bass trombone*

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*Joey Troia, horn*

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*Jonathan Houghtling, substitute principal trombone*

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*José Sunderland, cello*

**Gaye Lindsey**
*Chester Schmitz, principal tuba*

**Mark Malone**
*Jon Gannon, associate principal horn*

**Meagan Malone**
*Peter Wood, trumpet*

**Dr. Elizabeth Manci**
*Ashley Overby, viola*

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*Andrea Beltrán-Landers, cello*

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*Bryan Dilks, principal percussion*

**Sherri & Randy Williams**
*Andra Bohnet, principal flute*

**Anonymous**
*Silvia Suarez Rath, violin*

**Anonymous**
*Miriam Tellechea, viola*

**Anonymous**
*Laura Noah, principal timpani*

**Anonymous**
*Travis Jones, flute*




**Being a Season Ticket Holder is the best way to experience the Mobile Symphony.**
Enjoy great value, great fun and, of course, great music!

**HUGE TICKET SAVINGS** – Save up to 25% off the price of regular concert tickets. As a subscriber, you will also be able to bring a friend and purchase their tickets at 20% off the regular price. (Special events not included)

**FLEXIBILITY** – Have Saturday tickets but can't make it? Simply give us a call by the Friday before the concert and we can exchange your tickets for Sunday and vice versa. No charge. Easy. Simple.

**SEAT SECURITY** – As an MSO Subscriber, your seat is YOURS for all of the concerts included in your subscription. Plus, you have first choice to keep or upgrade your seats during renewal season.

**RED CARPET ACCESS** – Whenever we have special concerts that are not part of the regular season, you will be the first to know through our Subscribers-Only Newsletter. In addition, you will have the opportunity to buy tickets before they become available to the general public.

**SUBSCRIBER LOUNGE** – During intermission, enjoy light snacks, coffee and a cash bar in our Subscriber-Only Lounge located in Room 1927 adjacent to the Saenger Theatre entrance on Joachim Street.

**LOCAL DISCOUNTS –** Various local merchants have partnered with the Mobile Symphony to provide our subscribers with exclusive discounts and offers. This means that with your Season Subscriber Card, you can take advantage of these great deals throughout the season. Make your concert experience even better when you dine before or after a concert!

**BECOME A DONOR –** Would you like to upgrade your concert experience? See (page 65) for information on the perks of becoming a donor!

*Become a Subscriber now!*
*Visit MobileSymphony.org*
*or call 251-432-2010*





# Mobile County Commission

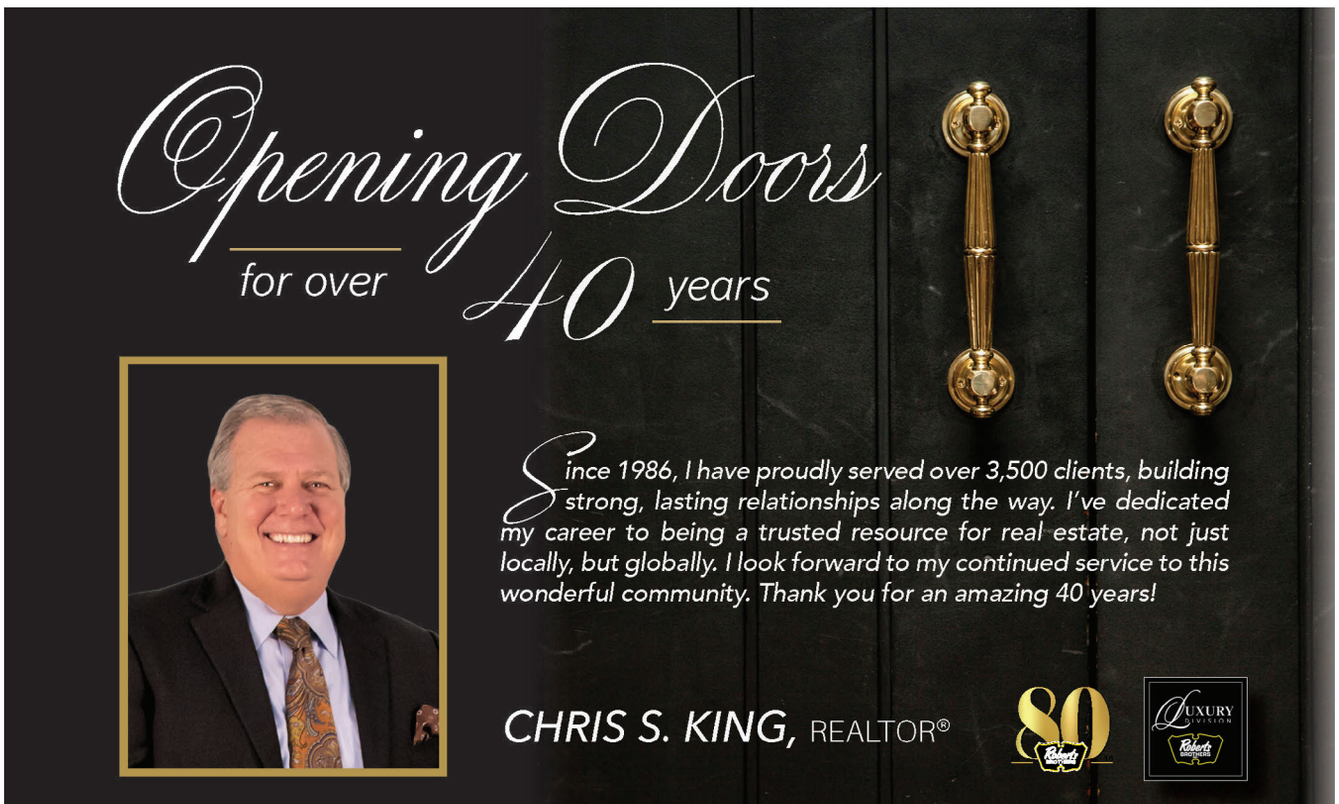

Merceria Ludgood
Commissioner, District 1


Connie Hudson
Commissioner, District 2


Randall Dueitt
Commissioner, District 3

The Mobile Symphony Orchestra is one of Mobile County's valued resources.
The Mobile County Commission is proud to partner with MSO
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It is an honor and privilege to support music through education and enrich our community.

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MOBILE APPLIANCE







## TAKE NOTE!

Pre-Concert Talk

**LEARN MORE. ENJOY MORE.
TAKE NOTE.**

Enhance your concert experience with **TAKE NOTE!** Join music experts and explore the world of classical music from an in-depth perspective. This informative pre-concert talk begins at 6:30 p.m. before Saturday classical performances and 1:30 p.m. before Sunday classical performances in Room 1927, adjacent to the Saenger entrance on Joachim Street

**TAKE NOTE! is available for the following 2026-2027 Season performances:**

**Beethoven & Blue Jeans**
*November 7 & 8, 2026*

**Cellobration**
*January 16 & 17, 2027*

**Four Seasons**
*February 20 & 21, 2027*

**Emanuel Ax**
*April 10 & 11, 2027*

**The Music of Star Wars**
*May 1 & 2, 2027*

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# MOBILE SYMPHONY BOARD

2026-2027



This is my final season as chairman of the Mobile Symphony board of directors. It's been an honor to be part of Mobile's flagship arts organization and work with the board, staff, musicians and Scott Speck, our talented music director. What a privilege to be a small part of making great music happen.

Along the way, I've realized how important our Mobile Symphony is beyond the concert hall. We're not just working toward a better orchestra; we're building a better Mobile. Having a world-class orchestra helps Mobile stand out as a great place to live and grow a business. The arts are vital to the quality of life we enjoy on the Gulf Coast – just like a vibrant economy, strong infrastructure, abundant outdoor activities and sugar-white beaches.

I'm always proud when I invite someone new to the symphony – or when I talk to a newcomer trying us out for the first time. I think they often arrive with low expectations but always leave pleasantly surprised or even astounded. "Wow," they say, "we had no idea!" Yes, we are Mobile's unexpected treasure!

Join me in sharing this jewel with your friends and neighbors. Invite someone to the symphony. Let them know, as our tagline says, "You've got to hear this!"

You have a part to play in the orchestra as well. Please consider becoming a season subscriber. You'll save money and enjoy some terrific perks. Better still, become a donor. Your ticket price covers less than half the cost of each concert and none of the costs of education programs.

Thank you for your generous support and enthusiasm. It's the foundation upon which the orchestra flourishes.

**Sincerely**,

**Dr. Richard L. Otts,** *Board Chair*

## OFFICERS

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**Maxey Roberts**
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MSO MOBILE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
SCOTT SPECK MUSIC DIRECTOR



# MOBILE SYMPHONY STAFF

Welcome to another amazing season of great music. Each year our reputation as a world-class orchestra grows. We are especially thrilled to learn that the legendary pianist Emanuel Ax, who performs with us this season, was encouraged to come to Mobile by Yo-Yo Ma. Mr. Ma shared that he had been to Mobile three times and that the orchestra is first-rate and the staff is as well. I cannot think of a better endorsement.

Growing a world class orchestra in Mobile, AL did not happen by accident. It took lots of hard work and planning by Scott Speck, our musicians, our board of directors and our amazing staff. And, most importantly it took the support of the community. You, our patrons have made this wonderful orchestra possible. Thank you!

What does the future hold? While we do not know the answer to that question, we do know there will always be challenges. We know that any successful organization must continue to be nurtured. Economies go up and down, generations change and technology continues to impact everything. We need to be flexible and innovative to meet the challenges and we need your support. Great things are ahead for your Mobile Symphony. Please join us on that journey!

**Warm regards,,**
**Celia Mann Baehr,** ***President / CEO***



**MOBILE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**
257 DAUPHIN ST. | MOBILE, AL
PO BOX 3127 | 251.432.2010

## MOBILE SYMPHONY STAFF

*President and Chief Executive Officer*
**Celia Mann Baehr**

*Director of Operations / Orchestra Personnel Manager*
**Ben Harper**

*Director of Finance and Human Resources Administrator*
**Amy Cummings**

*Patron Services Manager*
**Caroline Johnston**

*Development Associate*
**Adrianna Gramelspacher**

*Stage Manager / Marketing Associate*
**Haven Graham**

*Librarian / Operations Assistant*
**Leonard Ligon**

*Executive Assistant*
**Zachary Webb**

*Student Associate*
**Jaishon Robinson**
**Jeffrey Ward**

*Box Office Assistant*
**Reese Liggett**

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*Director of Education*
**Daniela Pardo**

*Program Coordinator*
**Ben Harper**

*Preludes Instructors*
**Andres Alean**
**Leslie Ann Middleton**
**Zully Morales**
**Dr. Silvia Suárez Rath**
**Annie Young-Bridges**

*Strings Instructors*
**Andrés Alean**
**Olivia Enkey**
**Dr. EunJin Kim**
**Leonard Ligon**
**Dr. Ashley Overby**
**Daniela Pardo**
**José Sunderland**
**Elizabeth Weaver**
**Annie Young-Bridges**

*Director, Chamber Strings*
**Leonard Ligon**

*Director, String Academy*
**Dr. Ashley Overby**

*Director, Eastern Shore Strings*
**Daniela Pardo**

### MOBILE SYMPHONY YOUTH ORCHESTRA

*Music Director / Conductor*
**Dr. Iván del Prado**

*Associate Conductor*
**Dr. Timothy Beattie**

*MSYO Administrator*
**Ben Harper**

*Assistant Conductor / MSYO Administrative Associate*
**Cooper Tate**

*String Coaches*
**Zully Morales,** violin
**Ashley Overby,** violin / viola
**Daniela Pardo**, viola
**José Sunderland,** cello
**Dr. Andrea Beltrán Landers,** cello
**Leonard Ligon,** bass

*Brass and Woodwind Coaches*
**Dr. Andra Bohnet,** flute
**Dr. Amy Selkirk,** oboe
**Richard Jernigan,** clarinet
**Dr. Kristina Nelson,** bassoon
**Mollie Pate,** french horn
**Joey Troia,** french horn
**Dr. Peter Wood,** trumpet
**Cooper Tate,** lower brass
**Arie VandeWaa,** lower brass
**Dr. Zachary Webb,** percussion

# SYMPHONIC INNOVATIONS FUND

Launched by an extraordinary gift from an anonymous donor, Mobile Symphony's Symphonic Innovations Fund is dedicated to performing and commissioning new works. Among the innovative works featured this season is Valerie Coleman's *Seven O'clock Shout*. Coleman is an American composer and flutist who was named *Performance Today's* 2020 Classical Woman of the Year and was listed among the "Top 35 Women Composers" in *The Washington Post*.



Valerie Coleman

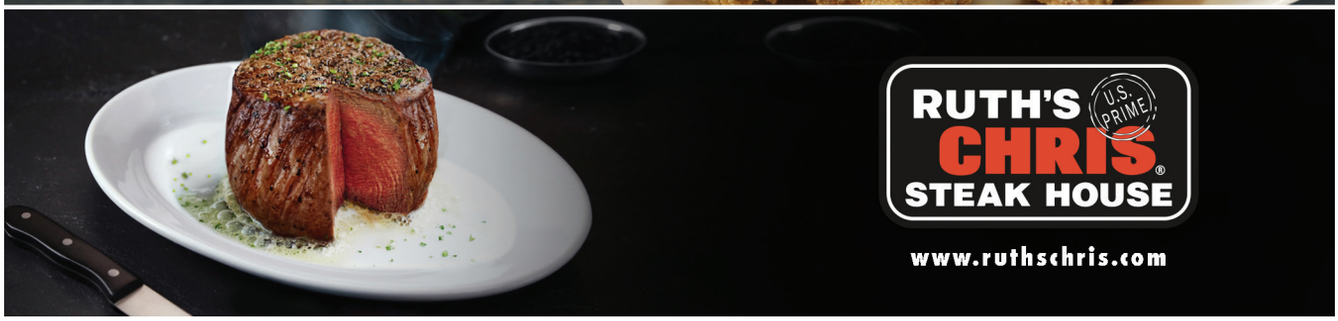
Contribute to the Symphonic Innovations Fund by phone at 251-432-2010 or by check to

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*All concerts have been made possible by grants from the Alabama State Council on the Art and National Endowment of the Arts.*



# CORPORATE SPOTLIGHT

For more than a decade, the **ALABAMA POWER FOUNDATION** has provided support and funding for hundreds of worthy projects throughout the state. The foundation focuses its resources on improving education, promoting arts and culture, restoring and enhancing the environment and boosting health and human services. Its mission: to improve the quality of life of Alabamians and to strengthen the communities where they live.

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## PROGRAM

**SCOTT SPECK,** *conductor*

Saenger Theatre

Saturday, October 10, 2026 at 7:30 P.M. | Sunday, October 11, 2026 at 2:30 P.M.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Hector Berlioz<br>(1803-1869) | *Roman Carnival Overture* | 8 minutes |
| Kenji Bunch<br>(b. 1973) | Symphony No. 1, "Lichtenstein Triptych"*<br>I. Varoom!<br>II. We Rose Up Slowly<br>III. In the Car | 26 minutes |

## INTERMISSION

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Modest Mussorgsky, arr. Ravel<br>(1839-1881) | *Pictures at an Exhibition*<br>Promenade<br>Gnomus<br>The Old Castle<br>Tuileries<br>Bydlo<br>Ballet of the Chicks in Their Shells<br>Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuÿle<br>Limoges<br>Catacombs<br>Hut on Fowl's Legs<br>The Great Gate of Kiev | 35 minutes |

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# PROGRAM NOTES

**ROMAN CARNIVAL OVERTURE, OP. 9**
**Hector Berlioz**
BORN: December 11, 1803 |
La Côte-Saint-André, France
DIED: March 8, 1869 |
Rue de Calais, Paris, France

Of all of the major composers of the 19th century, Hector Berlioz is perhaps the most personally interesting. What a vivacious, unique individual he was, both in his life and in his music. And, perhaps most refreshing – for one who lived such an intense and varied existence – on the whole he suffered from few pathologies in his behavior and personality. He was intense and impassioned in his pursuit of the composition of music that reflected his literary interests, his interaction with his physical surroundings, and his deeply-felt emotions. He was not a virtuoso performer (playing the flute and the guitar only passably), his early musical training having been derived largely from the study of harmony books. However – and it is a major informing aspect of his intellect – he was a man of literature. He read widely and with sophistication from an early age, and later became one of the most important music critics and general authors in music of all time. Over a half dozen or more of his major works derive from some important connection with Shakespeare; he married the most important Shakespearian actress of the time and composed his *Symphonie Fantastique* as a response to his hopeless infatuation with her (the marriage didn't work out). Characteristically, he never actually set any of Shakespeare's words to music – they were an inspiration only. And the same should be said of his music, which is filled with local color and the expertly crafted atmospherics that were inspired by nature and culture.

His early career was driven to some degree by his frustrating quest to win the prestigious Prix de Rome, which he finally won in 1830. Characteristically, having won, he dallied and resisted actually moving to Rome for the required residency there – he loathed Rome and Italian art and music. Of Rome he wrote: "Rome is the most stupid and prosaic city I know. …" He did, however, love the Italian countryside, the sunshine, and the evocative legends and characters.

While a successful composer in many genres, he always sought ultimate recognition as composer of opera, but notwithstanding his skill in that genre, his five operas never quite brought him the acclaim he deserved. And that is certainly true of his 1838 opera based upon the life of the great Renaissance artist, Benvenuto Cellini. For various reasons, it failed to please the directors and audience at the Opéra, and it was withdrawn. But it was a rip-roaring affair, full of brilliant music, masterful and exciting writing for the orchestra, and a general vivacious variety of almost everything. It was from this stimulating work whose elements, reworked, produced the *Roman Carnival Overture* six years later in 1844.

The traditional saturnine carnival of Catholic countries that ends with Lent (we've got Mardi Gras in Mobile and New Orleans) was quite renowned in the 19th century; *the New York Times* even had a special article on it in February 1874 that marveled at the mad rush of horses driven down the Via del Corso at the end of each day's revelry. Atmospherics driven by Berlioz's Roman memories infuse his overture, starting with the opening lick taken from the brilliant saltarello of the opera. But we only get a taste of it before mysterious sustained tones interrupt it set up the sonorous slow theme in the English horn. This memorable tune is the "love" duet from the first act of the opera. After various treatments of the tune some little "dust devils" of scales in the woodwinds announce the re-appearance of the fast saltarello, of which we heard just a taste at the very beginning. It doesn't go away, now, and carries us triumphantly along – although from time to time Berlioz teases us with brief allusions to the slow theme in the midst of the revelry. The sparkling Italian dance rushes headlong, as only Berlioz can drive an orchestra, ending with paint-peeling passages in the brass.

**SYMPHONY NO. 1, "LICHTENSTEIN TRIPTYCH"**
**Kenji Bunch**
BORN: July 27, 1973 | Portland, OR

Kenji Bunch's music often moves freely among contemporary classical language, vernacular styles, and the rhythmic vitality of American popular music. His Symphony No. 1, "Lichtenstein Triptych", completed in the early 2000s, takes its cue from the bold visual world of American Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein: hard-edged color, comic-book immediacy, sharply framed gesture, and dramatic contrasts of scale.

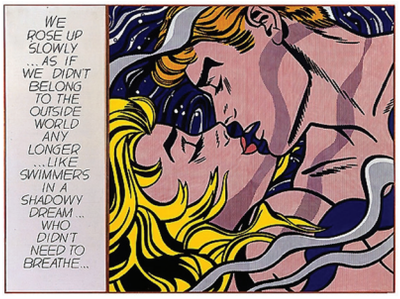
Rather than translating paintings into sound literally, Bunch responds to their graphic energy. The symphony unfolds in three movements – "Varoom!", "We Rose Up Slowly...", and "In the Car" – each reflecting the heightened atmosphere of a different Lichtenstein image. The result is a compact, vividly colored orchestral triptych, approximately twenty minutes in duration, whose musical language is highly stylized and infused with jazz and pop idioms.

***Varoom!*** – The opening movement bursts forward with the force of a comic-book sound effect. Brassy exclamations, bright percussion, and sharply etched rhythmic ideas suggest motion, impact, and spectacle. Its energy is extroverted and theatrical, inviting listeners to hear the orchestra as a canvas of saturated primary colors.

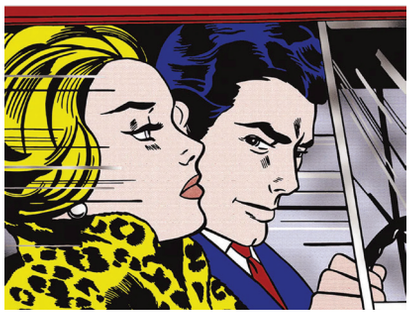



***We Rose Up Slowly...*** – The second movement turns inward. Its title suggests suspension and dreamlike ascent, and the music answers with a more lyrical, atmospheric character. Lines emerge

gradually, textures float, and the orchestra's colors soften, offering a moment of stillness after the kinetic charge of the first movement.




***In the Car*** – The finale returns to a world of momentum, framing and cinematic immediacy. Driving rhythms and quick shifts of color evoke the sensation of speed and close-up perspective. Like Lichtenstein's art, the music balances wit and intensity: familiar gestures are magnified, stylized, and made strange through bold orchestral design.



Across the three movements, "Lichtenstein Triptych" celebrates the meeting point of eye and ear. Bunch's symphony does not simply depict Pop Art; it reimagines its bold outlines, compressed drama, and electric surface as orchestral experience. The listener is placed inside a gallery of sound – one where gesture becomes image, image becomes rhythm, and color seems to leap from the page.

## PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

**Modest Mussorgsky (arr. Ravel)**
BORN: March 21, 1839 | Karevo, Russia
DIED: March 28, 1881 |
Saint Petersburg, Russia

A staple of piano recitals given by virtuosi, this work is probably more familiar to many in its orchestration by Ravel. Unquestionably, a tour de force for the solo pianist, it is equally a sound spectacular for the modern orchestra. It lends itself admirably to reinterpretation in the orchestral idiom for the simple reason that few works in the repertoire consist of such deliberate and vivid depictions of a variety of colorful images from the physical realm. It was composed by Mussorgsky in 1874 during three weeks in June as a tribute to the distinguished Russian architect and artist, Viktor Hartmann, who had unexpectedly died of an aneurysm at the age of only 39. Hartmann, a Volga German, was one of the champions of a new resurgence of indigenous Russian art, along with his close friend Mussorgsky. In recognition of Hartmann's work, an exhibition of some 400 of his drawings and paintings was given at the Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg in February and March of 1874. Mussorgsky's musical tribute to his friend takes the form of a suite of movements that vividly depict the subjects of ten of the paintings (few of the art works survive).

*Pictures at an Exhibition* is so replete with such a variety of colorful, eccentric and unique visual references that it almost begged for a setting for orchestra, with that group's magnificent palette of sound "colors." Yet, in all fairness it must be said that it is unquestionably equally successful as a solo piano work – imagine one person drawing all of the color, drama and power out of one instrument! To my mind, a comparison between the original piano version and its orchestration is rather like imagining a Western vista photographed in black and white by Ansel Adams on the one hand, and the same vista painted on a grand scale by Alfred Bierstadt. Both would be equally stunning interpretations. In any case, Mussorgsky's work was almost immediately seized upon by orchestrators and literally dozens of orchestral interpretations have been pumped out during the past 135 years – many by distinguished familiar conductors, composers, and orchestrators. Some of these occasionally are performed today, but only one has achieved almost universal acclaim and dominates today's concert performances, and that is the one done by Maurice Ravel in 1922. His gift for orchestration is well familiar to audiences, and his choices in the orchestration have now defined the work in the world's imagination.

In keeping with the composer's desire to mimic as much as possible the experience of a visitor to the exhibit, he starts the series of vignettes with a short movement ("Promenade") that literally depicts the viewer walking from painting to painting. The music of this short introduction appears several times throughout the suite in various guises as the visitor moves from picture to picture. The effect of walking is cleverly created by music that is without a steady metre – Mussorgsky self-deprecatingly said that it alluded to his own rather lumbering gait.

The suite begins with the "Promenade," played by solo, unaccompanied trumpet. It doesn't last long, and we arrive at the first picture, "Gnomus," the music for which stutters to and fro, depicting a grotesque little gnome. The promenade takes us to the next picture, "Il vecchio castello" (the old castle), a serene and antique scene in front of which a troubadour sings. In this case, Ravel has given the troubadour's song to a smoothly lyrical saxophone. The promenade next takes us to the "Tuileries," the famous garden near the Louvre, where children are noisy (and contentiously) at play. This short scene features light woodwinds and lyrical strings in a consciously naïve and playful style. Without the help of the promenade, we encounter the next movement, "Bydlo," dominated by a rustic, lurching Polish oxcart, depicted so famously by the melancholy tuba solo. The movement starts softly, growing louder as the huge cart goes by, and fades as it passes on. Again, the promenade theme presents us with the next picture, a truly bizarre painting of dancing "un-hatched chicks in their shells." Chirping flutes, pizzicato strings, and a scampering bassoon aptly conjure up frenetic baby birds in a mad avian ballet.

Immediately thereafter, there emerges a dark portrait of two Russian Jews, Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuÿle – one rich, one poor. This clichéd and dated caricature uses a Middle Eastern gapped scale to evoke the two men's culture, beginning with Goldenberg, followed by a rapidly tongued, muted piccolo trumpet passage for Schmuÿle. The two portraits are then combined, followed by a short, morose

tag. The famous market at Limoges comes next, populated by quarrelsome French peasant women. Barking horns and scintillating strings and woodwinds seem to evoke village gossip as it makes the rounds. A sudden pause and then a breakneck coda leads us to the dark and moribund world of the Roman catacombs, subtitled "With the dead, in a dead language."

Massive low brass and French horn passages ominously begin the first section, later joined by the trumpets in a powerful evocation of the finality of death. The second section is somewhat less foreboding, with strings and woodwinds creating a somewhat reflective search for the meaning of it all. The next movement takes the concept of "bizarre" to a truly higher level: it pictures the famous Slavic witch, Baba Yaga, who eats small children and lives in a hut standing on chicken legs. This particular hut is in the shape of a clock whose bells enter into the texture. It's a grotesque exercise in frenetic chasing around, far exceeding what we have heard so far. The end winds up in a whirlwind that spins right into the finale of the whole suite, the "Great Gate of Kiev."

The majestic theme is worked through in several versions – some with intimations of a carillon. Each version seems to be more intense than the one before, with teasing sections of calmness, only to be redoubled by even more massive and imposing renditions that seem to challenge human and musical limitations. The peroration is usually considered to be just about the loudest and most imposing playing of which an orchestra is capable. Enjoy!

–Wm. E. Runyan

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## **KENJI BUNCH,** COMPOSER



**Kenji Bunch** is familiar to many MSO audience members and subscribers. He was one of three composers-in-residence who produced commissioned works for the MSO in 2005-2006. Bunch, along with Kevin Puts and Mason Bates, has built an impressive career. The MSO is proud to be associated with such talent. In 2008 we premiered his Symphony No. 2 "Jubilee," commissioned to celebrate the unique beauty of the Mobile Bay area.

Kenji Bunch writes music that looks for commonalities between musical styles, for understandings that transcend cultural or generational barriers, and for empathic connections with his listeners. Drawing on vernacular musical traditions, an interest in highlighting historical injustices and inaccuracies, and techniques from his classical training, Bunch creates music with a unique personal vocabulary that appeals to performers, audiences, and critics alike. With his work frequently performed worldwide and recorded numerous times, Bunch considers his current mission the search for and celebration of shared emotional truths about the human experience from the profound to the absurd, to help facilitate connection and healing through entertainment, vulnerability, humor, and joy.

Mr. Bunch is widely recognized for performing his own groundbreaking works for viola. He currently serves as Artistic Director of the new music group Fear No Music and is deeply committed to music education in his hometown of Portland, Oregon.

## SPECK SPEAKS

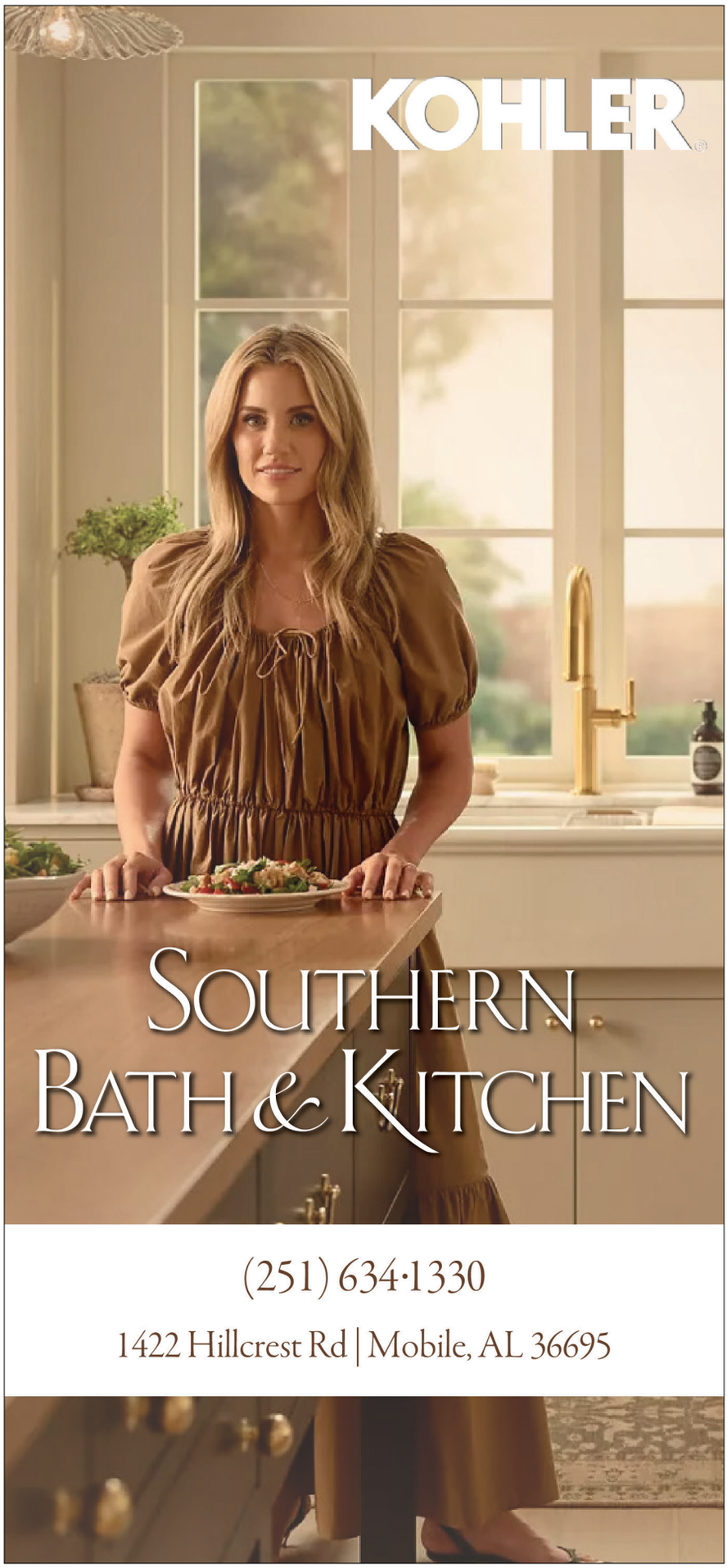
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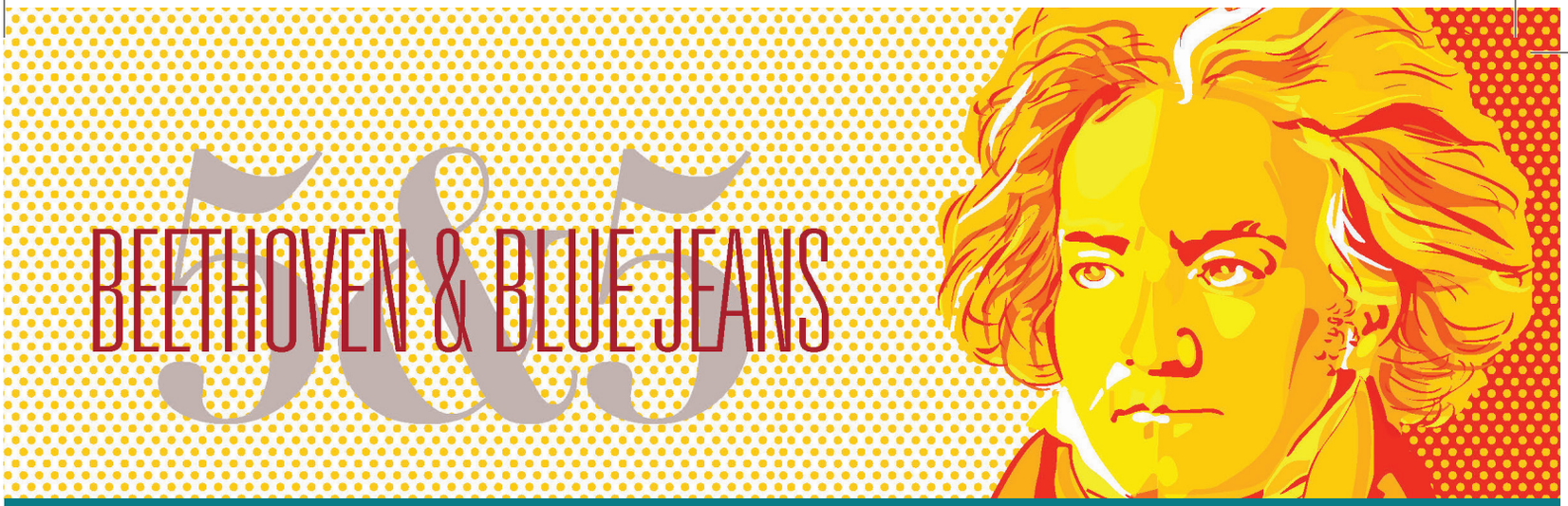
To open the season, we revisit one of the MSO's early heroes. You may remember that our former composer-in-residence Kenji Bunch composed a major work for the MSO, his Symphony No. 2 "Jubilee," which we premiered back in 2008. But we have never performed the First Symphony from this immensely talented composer – and I've always wanted to tackle it.

This symphony, which Kenji called the "Lichtenstein Triptych," pays musical tribute to Roy Lichtenstein, that leading Pop artist best known for his huge paintings inspired by comic books. Kenji decided to depict three of these paintings, creating a fast-slow-fast structure so common in classical music. "Varoom!" explodes like a cartoon bomb. "We Rose Up Slowly" shows a young couple coming up for air after a long romantic kiss. "In the Car" shows another couple on a ride; a well-dressed driver in a suit and tie looks intently sideways at his companion in a fur coat, who stares straight ahead. Kenji's music perfectly captures both the drama (or melodrama) of these scenes, and the cartoonish, jazzy, mid-20th century "mod" atmosphere that they evoke.

In looking for two companion works to play with Kenji's minor masterpiece, we decided to go all in on the relationship between music and visual art. Mussorgsky's incredibly evocative *Pictures at an Exhibition*, which we last played nearly a decade ago, portrays the whimsical, fantastical, sometimes monstrous creations of artist Viktor Hartmann. Maurice Ravel's over-the-top orchestration of Mussorgsky's music shows off our musicians to spectacular effect. And we pay tribute to the art of sculpture with *Roman Carnival*, a wild and vibrant Mardi Gras celebration during the lifetime of Renaissance sculptor Benvenuto Cellini.

For any orchestra, it's a challenge – and a whole lot of fun – to play three such different challenging works on the same program. And we hope that for you, each composition will have something to say not only on its own, but also in conversation with the other two. These are pieces that speak to each other, and the whole is more than the sum of its parts.






## PROGRAM

**SCOTT SPECK,** *conductor*
**STEWART GOODYEAR,** *piano*

Saenger Theatre
Saturday, November 7, 2026 at 7:30 P.M. | Sunday, November 8, 2026 at 2:30 P.M.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Valerie Coleman<br>(b. 1970) | *Seven O'Clock Shout** | 6 minutes |
| Ludwig van Beethoven<br>(1770-1827) | Symphony No. 5, C minor, op. 67<br>Allegro con brio<br>Andante con moto<br>Allegro<br>Allegro | 31 minutes |

**INTERMISSION**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Ludwig van Beethoven<br>(1770-1827) | Piano Concerto No. 5, E-flat major, op. 73, "Emperor"<br>Allegro<br>Adagio un poco mosso<br>Rondo: Allegro<br><br>Stewart Goodyear, *piano* | 34 minutes |

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## SEVEN O'CLOCK SHOUT

**Valerie Coleman**

Born: September 3, 1970 | Louisville, KY

Valerie Coleman composed *Seven O'Clock Shout* in 2020 for The Philadelphia Orchestra, which gave the work its virtual premiere on July 6 of that year under Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Lasting about six minutes, the piece is brief, but it carries the emotional weight of an extraordinary historical moment: the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, when isolation, uncertainty, grief, and gratitude became part of daily life around the world.

The title refers to the evening ritual that emerged in many cities during lockdown, when people leaned out of windows, stepped onto balconies, or gathered at doorways at 7:00 p.m. to cheer, shout, clap, and bang pots and pans in honor of frontline and essential workers. Coleman transforms that collective gesture into an orchestral anthem: a tribute to nurses, doctors, emergency responders, caregivers, grocery workers, delivery drivers, and all those whose labor sustained communities through fear and separation.

Coleman, an acclaimed flutist, composer, and founder of the Imani Winds, has long been admired for music that brings together classical craft with elements of jazz, Afro-Cuban rhythm, song, dance, and vivid orchestral color. In *Seven O'Clock Shout,* that broad musical language becomes a vehicle for human connection. The piece begins not with celebration, but with distance: a solitary trumpet call, soon answered by another trumpet, suggesting both isolation and the human need to reach across it. From that opening exchange, the music gradually expands into a warmer, more luminous texture, as if individual voices are finding one another across an empty cityscape.

The middle of the work blossoms with lyrical solo writing and shifting colors. Clarinet, flute, piccolo, English horn, strings, harp, and percussion each help shape a sound world that is both intimate and public. Coleman's writing often feels personal—almost like chamber music magnified for orchestra—because she writes with a performer's ear for breath, gesture, and timbre. Tender lines suggest compassion and care; quick rhythmic figures suggest motion, resilience, and the refusal to be stilled. Underneath, repeated rhythmic patterns, or ostinatos, create momentum and a sense of gathering energy.

As the piece moves toward its climactic "seven o'clock" moment, the orchestra becomes increasingly communal. Rhythms sharpen; the brass brighten; percussion adds the feeling of public celebration. Coleman layers propulsive patterns with the vitality of clave rhythm and call-and-response gestures, allowing the orchestra itself to behave like a crowd: one voice calls out, another answers, and soon everyone joins. What began as a lonely signal becomes a shared affirmation.

## SYMPHONY NO. 5 IN C MINOR, OP. 67

**Ludwig van Beethoven**

Born: December 17, 1770 | Bonn, Germany

Died: March 26, 1827 | Vienna, Austria

Beethoven's fifth symphony is the iconic work of classical music. It pervades the whole world of symbols and imagery of musical art as an evocation of a welter of ideas. In a sad way it is almost impossible to escape all these associations extrinsic to the work itself and to focus only on Beethoven's composition. But distancing one's self from it all and listening to the symphony as if for the first time can be a joy – as this writer has found, sitting in the best seat in the house (in the back of the orchestra).

By the time that Beethoven had composed this work he was a well-respected composer in Vienna, but certainly not hailed as a genius. The first three symphonies, three piano concertos, piano sonatas, string quartets – all had bolstered his growing reputation before he finished this symphony. It took him rather a long time, almost four years, as he interrupted his work frequently to produce some significant compositions: The Razumovsky string quartets, the fourth symphony and fourth piano concerto, and the first version of his only opera, *Fidelio*. Beethoven was a practical man, and when a commission materialized, he shifted his work to where the money was. He finally ground out the completion of the fifth symphony and presented it on an ill-starred concert at the Theater an der Wien on December 22, 1808. It was an all-Beethoven affair, presenting the premières of not only the Fifth Symphony, but also the Sixth Symphony, the Fourth Piano Concerto, and the Choral Fantasy (a precursor to his Ninth Symphony), as well as various other compositions. The concert was four hours long and the hall was literally freezing. Moreover, Beethoven, who was conducting, had to start over in one work after a mistake derailed things. The proceedings were not helped by his awkward, grand-eloquent conducting which led to knocking over some lamps and accidentally smacking an unfortunate stagehand in the face. All of this was soon forgotten and the written record shows that Beethoven's fifth symphony was quickly accorded general acclaim and was on its way to immortality.

The defining characteristics of the work are well known, and focus upon rhythmic vitality, a thitherto unknown sense of drama, and imaginative structural details– but most of all, upon a stunning coherence and economy of elements. The latter is the foundation of the first movement, famous for its four-note motto beginning and the "wringing" almost to death of every musical possibility of the short idea. Forget "fate knocking at the door," this is simply a dramatic tour-de-force of musical coherence. And even if one ignores the adroit manipulation of the melodic content of the opening idea, it is astonishing how well the movement stands upon its own feet from a purely rhythmic perspective.

The second movement is an elegant set of variations on two themes. The key of the movement is A-flat, and even if most of us don't have perfect pitch, it just "sounds" fresh and unexpected when the

violoncellos and violas enter with one of Beethoven's most ingratiating melodies in that particular key. The second theme is a more triumphant one, in C major, another remote and refreshing key. The variations gracefully work themselves out with these contrasting themes in a movement quite different from the first.

The third movement is the traditional dance movement, here cast in Beethoven's innovative "scherzo" rhythm – the stately dance of his predecessors being sped up considerably. But it's not a rollicking good time to be had by all, here. Rather, it opens with a mysterious arpeggio in the low strings that ends shortly on some chords with enigmatic meaning. Soon this is shatteringly interrupted by the unison horns in a virile melody that seems related to the opening of the symphony. The middle of the movement, called the "trio," is usually an opportunity for contrast, and we do get it. It starts out contrapuntally with a vigorous and challenging passage for the violoncellos and double basses—it's a famous one! They snarl and shake it like a dog. Ultimately, a truncated version of the opening returns, but even softer, and here is where the real magic occurs.

Beethoven "bridges" the transition into the last movement with a delicate solo passage in the first violins played over pianissimo sustained notes in the seconds and violas – the basses and timpani softly "throb." In one of the most eerie and tension-building passages in all the literature the melody snakes up and down in a crescendo that jubilantly leads to the C major theme that resolves all previous "troubled thought." For this glorious moment Beethoven brings in three trombones, contra-bassoon, and piccolo—thitherto found only in the opera orchestra. The last movement is long, as three themes are worked over, interrupted only by the striking innovation of a brief reference to the third movement. It's as if Beethoven is saying, "OK, we win, but it may be only a brief victory." The recapitulation ensues, followed by an enormous coda – longer than any other section so far. We hear the main three themes again, only in a kind of reverse order. The long coda is needed to erase all doubt as to what prevails over the diversions and dark moods of the other three movements. Victory is ours, and the fifty or so measures of emphatic C major chords seal the finale.

## PIANO CONCERTO NO. 5 IN E-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 73 "EMPEROR"

**Ludwig van Beethoven**
Born: December 17, 1770 | Bonn, Germany
Died: March 26, 1827 | Vienna, Austria

It is Mozart, of course, to whom we owe the creation of the mature, symphonic piano concerto. Following in his stead, Beethoven wrote five works in this genre; the first two were composed in the 1790s and owe much to the example of Mozart. The third, in C minor, was completed in 1803, around the time of his second symphony, and it is a far darker and impassioned work than the previous ones. By the time of the fourth concerto, finished in 1806, Beethoven had undergone remarkable growth as a composer. He had resolutely fought his way out of the deep suicidal depression occasioned by his increasing deafness. The monumental *Eroica* (third symphony), his opera, *Fidelio*, and the Rasumovsky string quartets had been created, and revealed the musical power, psychological depth, and progressive imagination of the mature composer. As such, the fourth piano concerto occupies a significant place in his oeuvre, with the role of the piano assuming greater strength and independence than in the earlier concertos. The fifth concerto (the moniker, "Emperor," has no real meaning, having been attached later in circumstances not related to the composer, although it must be admitted, it's not inappropriate, at all, if you must have a nickname) thus stands at the end of his efforts in the genre. It is a major work, not only in its intrinsic artistry, but also marks the culmination of an extraordinary period of inspiration and production on the part of the composer. That time began more or less in 1803 with the great third symphony, the *Eroica*, went on to include other major works in the "heroic style," and ended in 1809 with the fifth piano concerto. Many of them are in the key of E-flat major, which seems to have been Beethoven's key of choice when essaying a bold, dynamic, confident work.

As he matured, Beethoven, like many great artists pushed the limits of the artistic conventions of his milieu; one has only to think of the challenging nature for performer and listener alike of the late string quartets and piano sonatas. That was certainly true of many aspects of his fourth piano concerto, and even more so for the fifth. The latter is a significant work in all regards, not the least for its great length – one of the longest of his symphonies and concertos – but not a measure too long for his formidable execution of the musical architecture. It unfortunately marks another milestone: it was the first of his concertos that he did not perform, owing to the significant deterioration of his hearing, which made collaboration with the orchestra impossible.

Like the fourth concerto it begins unconventionally, the piano playing the opening bars with the orchestra. The beginning consists simply of three great hammer strokes in the orchestra, after each of which the piano plays a short roulade of arpeggios, trills, and other cadenza-like gestures, in a style not unworthy of Chopin. The orchestra immediately follows with a vigorous statement of the main theme, a simple, but stately one, in the Beethovenian tradition, and not inappropriate for the grand nature of the work. Soon, the quieter second theme comes, first in minor through the woodwinds, and immediately in the major in the horns. The orchestra works its way through to the end of the section and the piano finally enters with a scale, a trill, and the main theme from the opening measures. There then ensues one of Beethoven's longest movements, in which the soloist and orchestra engage in a dialogue that stunningly exemplifies the creativity and genius of the composer, as they work out the themes on their way to the recapitulation – heralded by a repetition of the hallmark opening chords and piano flourishes.

The profound serenity, beauty, and reflective eloquence of the slow movement stand at the apex of the composer's gift in this voice. The gentle main theme is primarily

stepwise, rather like a simple chorale, played first by the orchestra. The rich, freshness of the opening is accomplished in no small part by Beethoven's choice of key – B major, a remote key, but really an enharmonic version of one of his signature harmonic relationships. The piano enters and engages in a series of explorations of the material, in a free and almost improvisatory fashion, interspersed with meditative, straightforward statements of the eloquent theme. This sublime, discursive mood continues–certainly no one is in a hurry for it to end – but it surely must, and the composer again pulls out a bit of trickery to bring on the finale. A soft, sustained B natural in the bassoons and horns descends to Bb, the strong note in music that psychologically takes us to E-flat, the main key of the concerto, and where we must go for the last movement. But the intent is mysterious: we hear a brand new theme in the piano, softly and deliberately stated, and then, without notice, we vigorously plunge straightway into the happy last movement with that new theme of its subject. It's a romping, stomping affair which some have compared to a rough German dance – it's certainly in the vein of his seventh symphony, which he would compose two years later.

The shape is simple – only a diversion in the middle interrupts this dancing, active material. There, the pianist explores briefly a few fresh keys and contrasting ideas, but soon enough, the driving, dancing fun resumes, as the smashing conclusion seems so near. One more trick, though: gradually the intensity appears to be waning, not growing, and a quiet duet between the soloist and the timpani portends a tranquil ending. Not so – for a triumphal outburst in Beethoven's best manner from the whole orchestra clinches the matter.

–Wm. E. Runyan
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## **STEWART GOODYEAR,** PIANIST

Proclaimed "a phenomenon" by the *Los Angeles Times* and "one of the best pianists of his generation" by *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, **Stewart Goodyear** is an accomplished concert pianist and composer. He has performed with, and has been commissioned by, many of the major orchestras and chamber music organizations around the world.

Highlights of Mr. Goodyear's 2026-27 season include appearances with the Calgary Philharmonic, the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, the Annapolis, Arkansas, Colorado, Mobile, Northwest Florida, and South Bend Symphony Orchestras, and a full weekend of all five Beethoven concerti with Orchestra Iowa and the Louisville Orchestra. Mr. Goodyear also gives solo recitals at Houston's DACAMERA, Telluride Chamber Music, and Toronto's Koerner Hall, and launches his new collaboration with the Imani Winds, which includes the quintet and sextet he commissioned for the ensemble. In summer 2026, he performed at the Grant Park Music Festival, Peninsula Music Festival, and Rockport Chamber Music Festival following a full season of international orchestral performances and recitals from the Eastman School of Music to The Gilmore.

Mr. Goodyear is also active as a composer. His recent commissions include an orchestral work for the Chineke! Orchestra, his Piano Quintet for the Penderecki String Quartet, and a piano work for the Honens Piano Competition.

Mr. Goodyear's discography includes works by Beethoven, Grieg, Prokofiev, Rachmaninov, Ravel, and Tchaikovsky. His Rachmaninov recording received a Juno nomination and the recording of his transcription of Tchaikovsky's complete "The Nutcracker" was chosen by The New York Times as one of the best classical music recordings of 2015.

Mr. Goodyear is a Steinway Artist.









## SPECK SPEAKS
## BEETHOVEN & BLUE JEANS

What a blast to perform BOTH of Beethoven's Fifths on the same concert! These are pieces well known to the Mobile Symphony audiences, but we've never played them together.

I just love the Emperor Concerto. It has everything great about Beethoven: grandeur, inevitability, awesome power, lilting melody, individual expression, and an emotional range that stretches from melancholy to elation. It also happens to be the piece I conducted in my second concert ever, way back in college – and every time I conduct it, I'm swept back to those early days. Of course, any successful performance requires a great pianist. I've admired Stewart Goodyear from afar for many years, and it's a gift to perform this concerto with him.

As for the Fifth Symphony, it's the very epitome of struggle and triumph. There's nothing more momentous in all of classical music than those first four notes – fate knocking on the door, as Beethoven himself reportedly described it. It may be an oversimplification to say that this symphony takes us on one singular trajectory from darkness to light – after all, the second movement is a lovely oasis, before the agitated third movement once again takes up the struggle. But the triumph of the finale is so complete, so extreme in its victory, so successful in sweeping *all trouble* away (and in C major, no less!), that feels like we've won an enormous battle. In this way, Beethoven's Fifth became a template for the most dramatic symphonies by Mahler, Bruckner, Shostakovich, Sibelius, and so many other composers who described a monumental struggle in music. After the Fifth, nothing was the same again.

As you might imagine, performing the Fifth Symphony is an effort. It's a physical and emotional workout. It's not like tossing off a virtuosic overture or concerto. It's more like giving birth. And you can't play something like this every day. So we're going to make these two performances count!









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## PROGRAM

**BYRON STRIPLING,** *guest conductor/trumpet*
**SYDNEY MCSWEENEY,** *guest vocalist*
**BOBBY FLOYD,** *guest keyboardist*

Saenger Theatre

Saturday, December 12, 2026 at 7:30 P.M. | Sunday, December 13, 2026 at 2:30 P.M.

| | |
|---|---|
| Christmas Eve Sarajevo | arr. Paul Neill |
| What Child is This | arr. Marty Robinson |
| Santa Claus is Coming to Town | |
| Hark the Herald | arr. Jeff Tyzik |
| I Have a Little Dreidel | arr. Ian Finkel |
| A Christmas Overture | arr. Jeff Tyzik |

## INTERMISSION

| | |
|---|---|
| Sleigh Ride | Leroy Anderson |
| O Come All Ye Faithful | |
| God Rest Ye Merry Gentleman | |
| O Holy Night | arr. Bill Grimes |
| White Christmas | arr. Cy Payne |
| Holiday Medley | arr. Bill Grimes |
| Joy to the World | |

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## **BYRON STRIPLING,** ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



With a contagious smile and captivating charm, trumpet virtuoso **Byron Stripling** has ignited audiences internationally. As soloist with the Boston Pops Orchestra, Stripling has performed frequently under the baton of Keith Lockhart, as well as being featured soloist on the PBS television special, *Evening at Pops*, with conductors John Williams and Mr. Lockhart. Currently, Stripling serves as artistic director and conductor of the highly acclaimed Columbus Jazz Orchestra.

Since his Carnegie Hall debut with Skitch Henderson and the New York Pops, Stripling has become a pops orchestra favorite throughout the country, soloing with Boston Pops, National Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Cincinnati Pops, Seattle Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Dallas Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Detroit Symphony, Vancouver Symphony, and Toronto Symphony, to name a few. He has been a featured soloist at the Hollywood Bowl and performs at jazz festivals throughout the world.

An accomplished actor and singer, Stripling was chosen — following a worldwide search — to star in the lead role of the Broadway-bound musical, *Satchmo*. Many will remember his featured cameo performance in the television movie, *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles,* and his critically-acclaimed virtuoso trumpet and riotous comedic performance in the 42nd Street production of *From Second Avenue to Broadway.*

Television viewers have enjoyed his work as soloist on the worldwide telecast of *The Grammy Awards.* Millions have heard his trumpet and voice on television commercials, TV theme songs including "20/20," CNN, and soundtracks of favorite movies.

Stripling earned his stripes as lead trumpeter and soloist with the Count Basie Orchestra under the direction of Thad Jones and Frank Foster. He has also played and recorded extensively with the bands of Dizzy Gillespie, Woody Herman, Dave Brubeck, Lionel Hampton, Clark Terry, Louis Bellson and Buck Clayton in addition to The Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, The Carnegie Hall Jazz Band, and The GRP All Star Big Band.

Stripling enjoys conducting seminars and master classes at colleges, universities, conservatories and high schools. His informative talks, combined with his incomparable wit and charm, make him a favorite guest speaker to groups of all ages.

Stripling was educated at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York and the Interlochen Arts Academy in Interlochen, Michigan. One of his greatest joys is to return periodically to Eastman and Interlochen as a special guest lecturer.

A resident of Ohio, Stripling lives in the country with his wife, former dancer, writer and poet, Alexis, and their beautiful daughters.



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## PROGRAM

**SCOTT SPECK,** *conductor*
**BENETT TSAI,** *cello*

Saenger Theatre
Saturday, January 16, 2027 at 7:30 P.M. | Sunday, January 17, 2027 at 2:30 P.M.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Johann Strauss Jr.<br>(1825-1899) | Overture to *Gypsy Baron* | 8 minutes |
| Camille Saint-Saëns<br>(1835-1921) | Cello Concerto No. 1, A minor, op. 33<br>Allegro non troppo<br>Allegretto con moto<br>Allegro non troppo<br><br>Benett Tsai, *cello* | 19 minutes |

## INTERMISSION

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Peter Illyich Tchaikovsky<br>(1840-1893) | Symphony No. 2, C minor, op. 17<br>Andante sostenuto – Allegro vivo<br>Andantino marziale, quasi moderato<br>Scherzo: Allegro molto vivace<br>Finale: Moderato assai – Allegro vivo | 35 minutes |

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Benett Tsai appears by arrangement with Young Concert Artists, *Inc.www.yca.org*

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# PROGRAM NOTES

## OVERTURE TO GYPSY BARON

**Johann Strauss II**
BORN: October 25, 1825 | Neubau, Vienna, Austria
DIED: June 3, 1899 | Vienna, Austria

*Der Zigeunerbaron* (The Gypsy Baron) is one of Johann Strauss II's most successful stage works, second in enduring popularity only to *Die Fledermaus*. The three-act operetta premiered at Vienna's Theater an der Wien on October 24, 1885, with a German libretto by Ignaz Schnitzer based on a story by Hungarian writer Mór Jókai.

Set in late-eighteenth-century Hungary, the story mixes romance, mistaken identity, hidden treasure, military swagger, and Romany color. Strauss was already famous as Vienna's "Waltz King," but here he drew deeply on Hungarian and Romany-inspired idioms, combining operetta sparkle with a more dramatic, atmospheric tone than many of his lighter comic works.

The overture opens with a dark, rhapsodic introduction, its woodwind lines and restless rhythms suggesting the exoticized Hungarian atmosphere of the operetta. A tender oboe melody offers a lyrical contrast before the music gathers momentum. As the overture unfolds, Strauss alternates spirited dance rhythms, bright orchestral colors, and sweeping Viennese waltz gestures, finally driving toward a brilliant coda full of syncopation and theatrical energy.

In miniature, the overture captures the appeal of Strauss's operetta style: elegant melody, buoyant rhythm, vivid characterization, and a seamless blend of Viennese charm with Hungarian flair.

## CELLO CONCERTO NO. 1 IN A MINOR, OP. 33

**Camille Saint-Saëns**
BORN: October 9, 1835 | Paris, France
DIED: December 16, 1921 | (age 86 years), Algiers, Algeria

Saint-Saëns composed his First Cello Concerto in 1872, during a period when French composers were working to renew their country's musical life after the Franco-Prussian War. Already famous in Paris as a brilliant pianist, organist, and composer, Saint-Saëns brought to this concerto the qualities that made his music so admired: clarity, elegance, craftsmanship, and a gift for vivid drama.

The work was written for the French cellist Auguste Tolbecque, who gave the premiere at the Paris Conservatoire on January 19, 1873. It quickly became one of Saint-Saëns's most popular concertos, and it remains a favorite because it gives the cello so many different roles to play: bold protagonist, lyrical singer, agile virtuoso, and graceful partner to the orchestra.

One of the concerto's surprises is that it unfolds without pauses. Instead of three separate movements, Saint-Saëns shapes the piece as one continuous journey. Even so, listeners can hear three main sections: a fiery opening, a lighter and more graceful middle section, and a final return of the opening's energy. This gives the concerto both variety and momentum, carrying the audience forward from the very first bar.

The beginning is unusually immediate. Rather than waiting through a long orchestral introduction, the solo cello enters almost at once, launching into a restless, dramatic theme. From there, the music moves quickly between forceful gestures and singing lines, showing off the cello's range of color and character. Saint-Saëns keeps the orchestra transparent enough for the soloist to shine, while still giving the music a strong sense of conversation and forward motion.

The central Allegretto con moto changes the mood. Its minuet-like grace brings lightness and charm after the intensity of the opening, and the cello sings with poise rather than display. But the calmer atmosphere does not last forever: Saint-Saëns gradually steers the music back toward the urgency of the beginning.

In the final stretch, earlier ideas return with renewed brilliance. The solo part becomes more virtuosic, but the display always serves the music's dramatic shape. By the end, the concerto has packed a remarkable amount of contrast into a compact span: passion, elegance, lyricism, and excitement, all held together by Saint-Saëns's unmistakable sense of balance.

## SYMPHONY NO. 2 IN C MINOR, OP. 17

**Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky**
BORN: May 7, 1840 | Votkinsk, Russia
DIED: November 6, 1893 | Saint Petersburg, Russia

The symphonies of Tchaikovsky clearly stand in the center of nineteenth-century orchestral repertoire. Beloved by audiences and musicians alike for more than a century, they were embraced enthusiastically from the onset. To be sure, there was a time when some commonly scoffed at what they perceived as the composer's emotional theatrics and shallow playing to the cheap seats. Thankfully, that reaction has largely passed, and Tchaikovsky's genius stands in higher regard. To be sure, the deep affection for his symphonies largely stems from the evergreen popularity of the last three of his six works in that genre. Of his other symphonic works, *Romeo and Juliet* (a rather early piece) enjoys equal esteem with the three last symphonies.

Nevertheless, his first three symphonies are a delight, and decidedly feature the overall style, attractive melodies, and dramatic flair with which audiences are familiar in the "big three" final ones. And don't for a minute presume that the first three are mere "juvenilia" or youthful experiments. Tchaikovsky matured quickly in the St. Petersburg Conservatory, under the tutelage of Anton Rubinstein, and he dove into symphonic composition with alacrity and facility. While a student he made several youthful efforts at symphonic music, but the major steps came when he moved to Moscow in 1866 as a young teacher of harmony. His first symphony appeared that year (but typically, underwent revisions in 1874). The remarkably mature overture,

*Romeo and Juliet*, came soon, in 1869 – it too, underwent revisions right up to 1880. The second symphony was completed in 1872 and revised in 1880. It was composed during the summer and fall while the composer was a guest with his sister's family in Kamianka, a city about two hundred miles southeast of Kyiv. The estate and the area were favorites of Tchaikovsky, and there he learned the Ukrainian folksongs that so inform the second symphony.

A word about the popular nickname for the symphony: Almost since its composition it has been known as the "Little Russian," not given by Tchaikovsky, but by the music critic, Nikolay Kashkin. For centuries that term has been fraught with controversy, owing to its origin as a Russian reference to the Ukraine. To be sure, the composer wrote his second symphony while visiting in Ukraine and it significantly employs Ukrainian folksongs. Nevertheless, "Little Russia" as a reference to the Ukraine is a term that now is in totally disrepute – even considered a major insult by Ukrainians. Rather like *The Moldau* by Smetana. The river in the Czech Republic is the Vltava, and "Moldau" is a forgotten vestige of German hegemony. Likewise, by general agreement, the symphony is now "Ukrainian." Time moves on.

While Tchaikovsky was instilled with a deep appreciation of Russian culture and native musical traditions, in keeping with the general tendencies of nineteenth-century musical nationalism, he was not one who generally used folk materials in his oeuvre. The "Ukrainian" symphony is the chief exception, for he utilized traditional Ukrainian folksongs in three of its four movements. No mean feat, for it is often a technical challenge for composers to utilize the characteristic shapes of folk tunes into the material suitable for development in Western art music. Unlike much of his music, the symphony is largely devoid of dark emotional angst. Rather, it is a bustling, cheerful work that churns happily along.

The first movement begins with a substantial andante introduction, featuring the folksong, "Down by Mother Volga" – it will be heard again in the middle of the movement. A solo, unaccompanied French horn leads off with the tune, soon answered by the bassoon. The composer goes on to build on elements of the tune, with the tension increasing by the addition of his characteristic, rather frenetic, string scales. But shortly, the introduction concludes with unaccompanied horns playing the tune as at the beginning.

The tempo quickens considerably, and a new, snappy tune appears. Some will identify it as used in Rimsky-Korsakov's *Russian Easter Overture*. In the best tradition of a Beethovenian "economy of means," Tchaikovsky takes elements of both melodies as motifs – including a little three-note ascending one – and constructs almost the entire weft of the movement. Not until the development section in the middle, though, do we finally hear the opening horn melody again – this time in the two clarinets. Every idea seems familiar and integrated into the whole, as it all charges through the recapitulation to the end in the best careening, pounding Tchaikovsky fashion. But ending softly, as it began, with "Down by Mother Voga" in the horn and bassoon.

The "slow" movement is in fact a rather stately little march introduced and led along quietly by the timpani. It's not a folksong, but a recycled and rather sedate bridal procession from his unpublished – and largely lost– opera, *Undine* (1869). The quiet little tune seems a bit odd for a wedding march, but after ambling along in several settings, it gives over to a contrasting middle section. This is, indeed, another Ukrainian folksong. Its simple rhythm soon is accompanied by Tchaikovsky's characteristic rhythmic undulations, carrying it along to the return of the "wedding march." And it, through the composer's mastery of drama through orchestration and imaginative rhythms, returns in new imaginative guises. Many will be reminded of sounds, colors, and textures from his *Nutcracker* from decades later in his life – demonstrating his remarkable early musical maturity. Finally, the modest little march gradually fragments softly away, ending, as it began, with the timpani.

The scherzo that follows doesn't last long, and is an effervescent, sparkling affair, almost a moto perpetuo. The strings bounce fervently along, driven by sizzling woodwind interjections – a Tchaikovsky trademark, for sure. Another familiar mark of the composer is here, as well: the implication of a 3/4 measure for two in 6/8 time –perceived as a syncopation. The middle section starts with a miniature "village band" in the woodwinds, and is in duple time, providing an agreeable contrast with the usual triple time of most scherzos. After a few times though the tune the opening rapidity of the beginning returns. A short coda concludes the romp.

A massive, magisterial passage introduces the finale. It has long been compared with Mussorgsky's grand, imposing "Great Gate of Kiev" (composed two years later and orchestrated even later, actually), but this brief introduction is quintessentially Tchaikovsky's. The movement proper is soon quietly, but vigorously, off to the races, starting with the Ukrainian folksong, "The Crane." The composer is reputed to have said that he was taught the tune by an old servant on the estate where he was staying when he wrote the symphony, and that the old butler was the "real composer." The tune serves admirably in its role as the main material of the movement. It's really only four bars long, and simple as can be. It pervades the movement almost as thoroughly as the immortal four notes of the first movement of Beethoven's fifth symphony. One can do almost anything with a simple, well-chiseled tune as this, and Tchaikovsky manifestly does. You're going to hear it a lot! After running the tune through several guises, a descending, more lyrical theme comes softly in the strings – and those two themes make up the whole from here on. In this, and much more, the young Tchaikovsky shows himself to have been an astute student of the disciplined approach to composition that stems from Haydn and Mozart through Beethoven – Russian nationalism and folk materials, notwithstanding.

After a vigorous development of both ideas, the approaching recap is signaled by the traditional a long-held note in the bass. A riot of chromatic harmony rises over the bass and the ominously thundering timpani but suddenly ceases. Unaccompanied

horns announce the recapitulation, which begins softly with the lyrical second theme, joined soon by "The Crane" theme in the string section. But Tchaikovsky's famous knack for stupendous finishes soon dominates all. Then abruptly, in a surprise, everything halts dramatically, with a smash in the tam-tam. The frenetic coda then takes off in a breathtaking dash to the slam-bang ending – driven by the pervading, demonic timpani.

It's all great fun, and highly entertaining. Experienced listeners will spot much that resembles the composer's evergreen fourth symphony, and it's clear that the young Tchaikovsky already had developed his personal mastery of the symphonic idiom. To be sure, there are moments that seem overwrought, or prolix, and a bit repetitious, but it's a fine work, and a welcome revelation for Tchaikovsky fans for whom it is new.

–Wm. E. Runyan
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## **BENETT TSAI,** CELLO



The music-making of Australian cellist **Benett Tsai** has been described as "electrifying…flawless freshness" (Süddeutsche Zeitung) and "charismatic, heartfelt playing full of fluid intensity" (Sydney Arts Guide). A compelling soloist and chamber musician on major stages worldwide, he first gained international recognition at the 2022 Grand Prix Emanuel Feuermann in Berlin, where he received both the Third Prize and Special Prize for the Best Haydn Concerto as the youngest entrant. Soon after, he joined the roster of Young Concert Artists for management upon winning First Prize and The Stern Young Artist Award at the 2023 YCA Susan Wadsworth International Auditions in New York. His subsequent recital was listed by New York Classical Review as one of the best debuts in 2024, and he was named a VC Artist by The Violin Channel.

In the 2026/27 season, Benett will perform across North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. Highlights include his Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra debut conducted by Michał Nesterowicz, and premieres of Matthew Hindson's "Rock Star" cello concerto with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra under Samy Rachid and the Göttinger Symphonieorchester under Ryusuke Numajiri. He also returns to the Queensland Symphony Orchestra and appears with the symphony orchestras of Virginia Beach, and Plano. In recital, he collaborates with pianist Aristo Sham at Hong Kong City Hall (Premiere Performances HK) and accordionist Radu Ratoi at The Phillips Collection (Washington D.C.), with further appearances at Carnegie Hall and Chamber Music San Francisco as part of YCA on Tour.

Since his mainstage debut at the age of thirteen, Benett has performed widely as a soloist with orchestras such as the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Sinfonia Lahti, Queensland Symphony Orchestra, Kammerphilharmonie Metamorphosen Berlin, Maryland Symphony Orchestra, Anchorage Symphony Orchestra, Australian Chamber Orchestra Academy, and the Canberra Symphony Orchestra. Conductors with whom he has collaborated include Esa-Pekka Salonen, Umberto Clerici, Joseph Bastian, Nicholas Milton, and Elizabeth Schulze.

Among other venues internationally, Benett has been presented in recitals at The Kennedy Center (Washington D.C.), Berliner Philharmonie, Shanghai Oriental Arts Center, La Jolla Music Society, Kaufman Music Center (New York), City Recital Hall (Sydney), and Melbourne Recital Centre. He has also made appearances at the Verbier Festival, Rose Theater at Lincoln Center with Emanuel Ax, Kravis Center for the Performing Arts, Calgary ProMusica, and Musica Viva Australia. Notably, he was featured in the 2020 film, The Way Forward, where he performed with pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet.

Born in 2003, Benett began playing the cello at the age of five under the guidance of his uncle and teacher, Thomas Tsai. He currently studies with Clive Greensmith at The Colburn School in Los Angeles, where he holds a Bachelor of Music degree. In previous years, he also learned with Li-Wei Qin and Susan Blake. His other significant mentors include Ralph Kirshbaum, Steven Isserlis, and his pianist father, Joshua Tsai.

Benett plays on a 1719 Giuseppe Guarneri 'filius Andreae' cello, on loan from a generous benefactor.

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*Pictured:*
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## PROGRAM

**SCOTT SPECK,** *conductor*
**CHEE-YUN,** *violin*

Saenger Theatre
Saturday, February 20, 2027 at 7:30 P.M. | Sunday, February 21, 2027 at 2:30 P.M.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) | *The Four Seasons* | |
| Ástor Piazzola (1921-1992) | *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* | |
| Vivaldi: | La primavera (Spring) Allegro – Largo – Allegro | 11 minutes |
| Piazzolla: | Verano Porteño (Summer) | 6 minutes |
| Vivaldi: | L'estate (Summer) Allegro non molto – Adagio e piano – Presto e forte | 10 minutes |
| Piazzolla: | Otoño Porteño (Autumn) | 6 minutes |

## INTERMISSION

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Vivaldi: | L'autunno (Autumn) Allegro – Adagio molto – Allegro | 9 minutes |
| Piazzolla: | Invierno Porteño (Winter) | 7 minutes |
| Vivaldi: | L'inverno (Winter) Allegro non molto – Largo – Allegro | 7 minutes |
| Piazzolla: | Primavera Porteña (Spring) | 5 minutes |

Chee-Yun, *violin*

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## THE FOUR SEASONS, OP. 8

**Antonio Vivaldi**
BORN: March 4, 1678 | Venice, Italy
DIED: July 28, 1741 | Vienna, Austria

Antonio Vivaldi was the most important composer of the Italian Baroque period, although appreciation of that fact was slow in coming in later times. But, during his lifetime he was celebrated all over Europe, and his compositions were highly influential – most notably on J. S. Bach. He wrote almost fifty operas but is remembered now for his amazing fecundity in composing instrumental works. He wrote about five hundred concertos (not as one unappreciative wag once said, "the same concerto five hundred times.") While many of them feature wind instruments, the majority of them are for strings, and are practically an early eighteenth-century compendium of almost every imaginative passage or technique that one could ask of them.

Vivaldi early on was ordained into the priesthood, and his probable red hair gave him the moniker, "the red priest." He was a teacher on and off for most of his life at the Ospedale della Pietà in Venice (you can still see the building, today, just down the quay from St. Mark's Cathedral.) The institution was basically a girls' school for children born to the Venetian nobility under awkward circumstances, shall we say? The school had very high musical standards, and the quality of its student orchestras was legendary. Vivaldi, however, was a great traveler, moving around Italy working for various patrons, and taking up residencies here and there in opera houses. His publications swept Europe, and he was influential in establishing many conventions of eighteenth-century musical composition. His 1725 publication, *Il Cimento dell' Armenia e dell'invenzione*, contained twelve concertos, seven of which had descriptive titles, including *The Four Seasons*. The others were *The Hunt, Pleasure*, and *Storm at Sea.*

*The Four Seasons* consists of four concertos for solo violin and string orchestra. Each concerto – in typical Vivaldi fashion – consists of three movements, the tempos of which are always respectively fast, slow, and fast. Not only did he give each of them the title of a specific season, he is also the presumed author of the four sonnets, each of which corresponds to a respective concerto. From listening to so many orchestral compositions of the nineteenth century that have a "program," or story, that the music putatively illustrates or tells, audiences today have come to regard program music as practically the norm. But, for early audiences it was quite the novelty – yes, the tradition went back to the Greeks, but it was a rather thin one.

As one listens to each of the twelve movements of the four concertos, the "roadmap" is fairly clear. Each opens with a section for the complete orchestra (the ritornello), followed by a section for solo violin, accompanied by the orchestra – or a few members of them. The ritornello and solo sections alternate – about three times – ending with a final ritornello. The solo sections vary in themes and textures, but the ritornelli generally cover the same material, so you can usually spot them when they return – although Vivaldi usually altered them a little each time.

It is marvelous how the composer is able to evoke the sounds, situations – even the temperatures! – of the various seasons, using only imaginative string figurations, melodies, and tempos. He doesn't need all the resources of the modern orchestra, at all. Taken from the accompanying sonnets, Vivaldi literally tells us to expect birds and thunderstorms in first movement of "Spring," the sleeping, faithful dog of the goatherd in the second, and nymphs and shepherds dancing to bagpipes in the third movement. "Summer" brings us blazing sun and scorched pine trees in the first movement, and a summer storm with hailstones in the other movements. "Autumn" brings us rustic peasants celebrating the harvest in the allegro, sleeping off the effects of wine in the second movement, and a vigorous hunt with dogs and horns (ending tragically for the quarry) in the last movement. Finally, "Winter" comes with shivering, frosty snow, and chattering teeth. The second movement depicts contentment by the fire – not worrying about the poor folks drenched outside by the rain. And the last movement brings slipping on icy paths and skittering across frozen waters. One can literally feel the "cold wind blowing through the house, despite locked and bolted doors."

## THE FOUR SEASONS OF BUENOS AIRES

**Ástor Piazzolla**
BORN: March 11, 1921 | Mar del Plata, Argentina
DIED: July 4, 1992 | Buenos Aires, Argentina

Ástor Piazzolla has created a musical genre and style that began with the traditional elements of the Argentine tango but has infused it with much of advanced twentieth century "classical" techniques. The result almost obscures its popular roots. Jazz, Stravinsky, Bartók, dissonance, counterpoint, ubiquitous chromaticism, and varied orchestration – they all are incorporated into Piazolla's musical take on the tango. Piazzolla was born in Argentina but moved with his parents in 1924 to New York City, living in Greenwich Village, immersing himself in the musical culture and atmosphere of the great city. Jazz, classical music, the blues – all were his métier – all the while his family exposed him to traditional Argentine music at home, including the sound of the bandoneón (the indigenous Argentine accordion, rather like a concertina). He moved back to Argentina in 1936, and there ensued a long and remarkable career as composer of tangos. But, by the early fifties he was immersed in the study of Stravinsky and Bartók, studying composition with Ginastera, listening to lots of jazz, and composing "classical" music. In 1953 he won a major prize with a symphony that he

had composed and was off to Paris to study with the famed Nadia Boulanger. There, she disabused Piazzolla of dreams of becoming another Bartók, and insisted that he must acknowledge his brilliance in the tango, and to follow it for his success. And so he did, but not without taking with him his deep engagement with the techniques of jazz, blues, and complicated contemporary art music. All of these elements fuse into his signature style: "Nuevo Tango." You might flippantly call it Stravinsky and Bartók meet Carlos Gardel.

Typically, his works are performed by a small tango group, generally, but not always, consisting of bandoneón, violin, electric guitar, double bass, and piano. "Spring," or "Primavera Porteña," was composed in 1970 (two of the other "seasons" were written separately and earlier) for solo piano, and then for the small tango group, and like so many of his works, has been rescored for larger ensemble. It is quite representative of his "new tango" style of jagged melodic motifs – often repeated motorically, walking bass lines with a tango thump just before beat four, harmonic chromaticism, and some traditional counterpoint. There are three distinct sections – after Vivaldi's, but there is none of the latter's pictorialism. Rather than anything specifically seasonal in this "primavera," it, like the other three, is generally representative of the city of Buenos Aires. Tango traditionalists were originally horrified by his style of tango, but he now is universally popular – at least with progressives.

"Otoño Porteño" (Autumn) often opens the cycle in Piazzolla's own ordering, setting a smoky, reflective tone with tango rhythms that shift between elegance and unease.

"Invierno Porteño" (Winter) turns inward, balancing melancholy lyricism with moments of sharp intensity.

"Primavera Porteña" (Spring) brings contrapuntal energy and renewal, its lines darting and overlapping with the urgency of city life.

"Verano Porteño" (Summer), the earliest of the four pieces, is heated and volatile, full of rhythmic drive, sudden pauses, and sultry theatricality.

–Wm. E. Runyan

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## **CHEE-YUN,** VIOLINIST



Violinist **Chee-Yun's** flawless technique, dazzling tone, and compelling artistry have enraptured audiences on five continents. Charming, charismatic, and deeply passionate about her art, Chee-Yun continues to carve a unique place for herself in the ever-evolving world of classical music.

A winner of the Young Concert Artists International Auditions and a recipient of the Avery Fisher Career Grant, Chee-Yun has performed with many of the world's foremost orchestras and conductors. She has appeared with the San Francisco, Toronto, Pittsburgh, Dallas, Atlanta, and National symphony orchestras, as well as with the Saint Paul and Los Angeles Chamber Orchestras. As a recitalist, Chee-Yun has performed in many major U.S. cities, including New York, Chicago, Washington, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Atlanta. In 2016, Chee-Yun performed as a guest artist for the Secretary General at the United Nations in celebration of Korea's National Foundation Day and the 25th anniversary of South Korea joining the UN. In 1993, Chee-Yun performed at the White House for President Bill Clinton and guests at an event honoring recipients of the National Medal of the Arts. Recent highlights include her appearance with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, as well as her collaboration with acclaimed guitarist Mak Grgić.

Her most recent recording, *Serenata Notturno*, released by Decca/Korea, is an album of light classics that went platinum within six months of its release. In addition to her active performance and recording schedule, Chee-Yun is a dedicated and enthusiastic educator. Her past faculty positions have included serving as the resident Starling Soloist and Adjunct Professor of Violin at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and as Visiting Professor of Music (Violin) at the Indiana University School of Music. From 2007 to 2017, she served as Artist-in-Residence and Professor of Violin at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

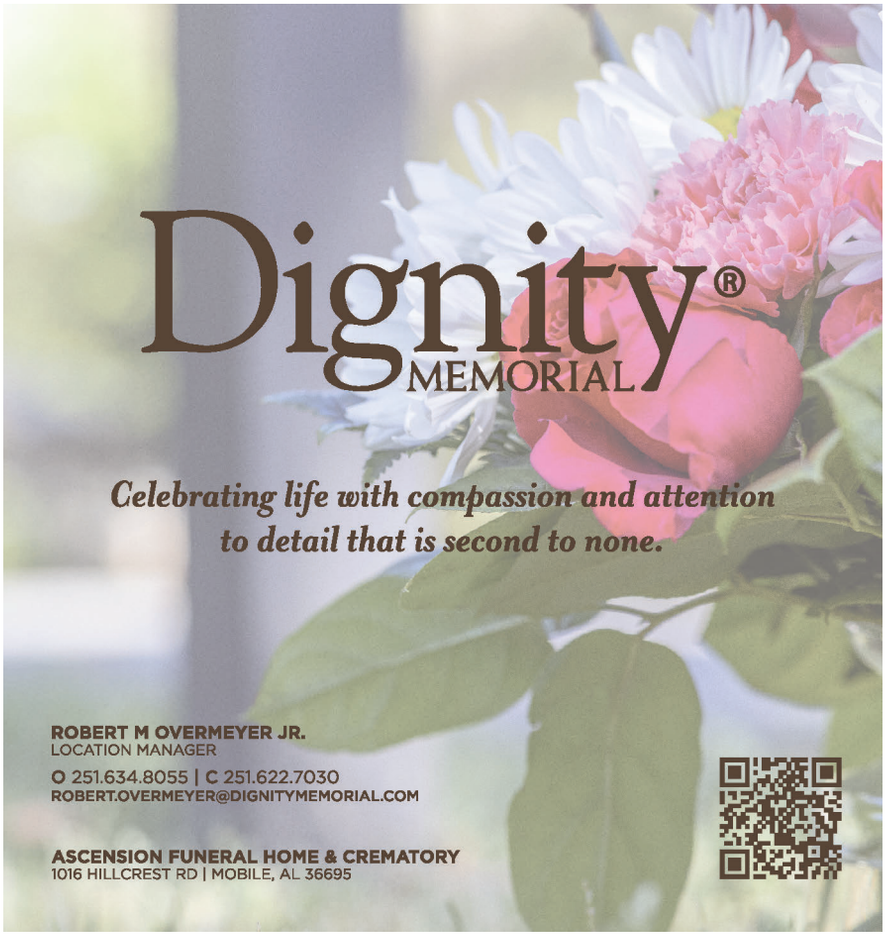
Chee-Yun plays a violin made by Francesco Ruggieri in 1669. It is rumored to have been buried with a previous owner for 200 years and has been profiled by the *Washington Post.*

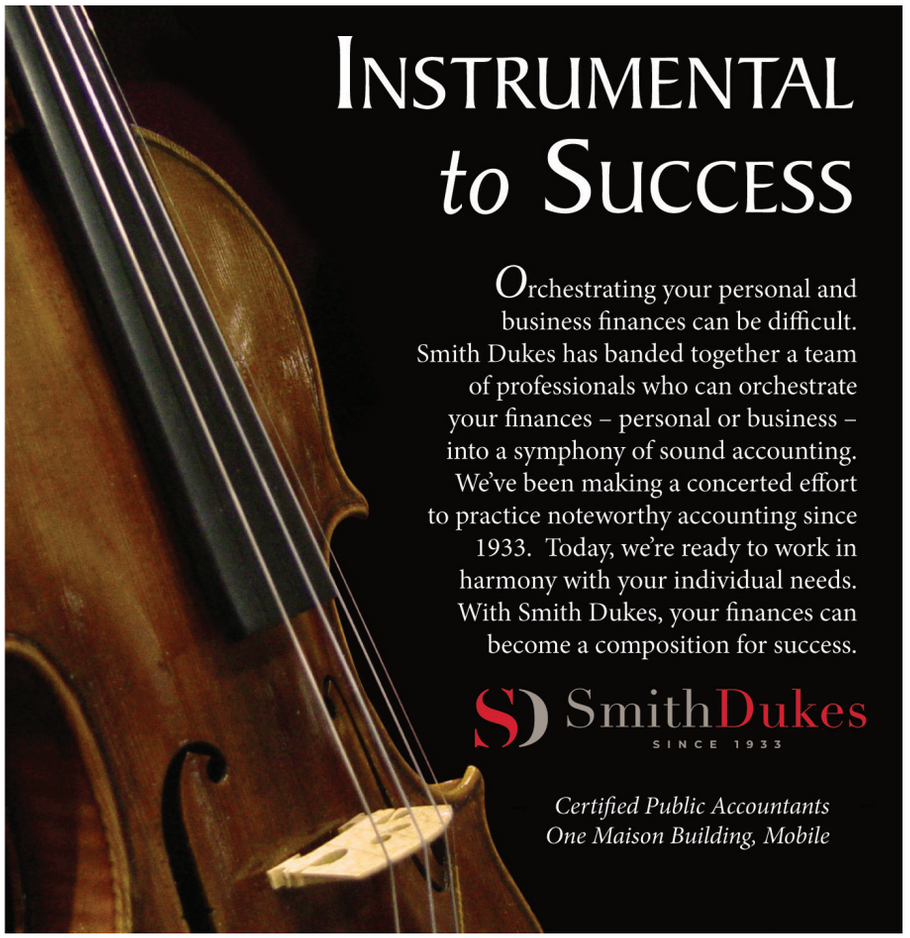
## SPECK SPEAKS
### A SPARKLING PERFORMANCE

Chee-Yun is a force of nature. I first met her back in 1993, just as we both were beginning our musical careers. I was working in my first professional job, as Associate Conductor of the Honolulu Symphony, and she had just won the Avery Fisher Career Grant. She came to Honolulu and knocked the audience's socks off with her sparkling personality and ebullient playing. We became fast friends. I invited her to solo with the MSO in 2011, playing the Mendelssohn violin concerto – and she won the hearts of Mobile. We brought her back the following year to play the Sibelius violin concerto, and again in 2015 to perform Lalo's *Symphonie Espagnole* with the Mobile Symphony Youth Orchestra.

Then, in 2018, we invited Chee-Yun to play Vivaldi's masterpiece *The Four Seasons*, coupled with Astor Piazzolla's *Four Seasons of Buenos Aires.* She was prepared to perform all the Vivaldi seasons first, followed by all the Piazzolla seasons. But I threw her for a loop: I told her that I wanted to alternate composers, playing one season by Vivaldi, one by Piazzolla, another by Vivaldi, and so on. I thought that this constant switching of gears from Baroque to tango and back would help these two disparate musical styles to illuminate each other. She took on the challenge – and the evening was a sensation. This has been her preferred mode of playing these two works ever since. Now, eight years later, it's time to do it again!



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# Emanuel Ax

## PROGRAM

**SCOTT SPECK,** *conductor*
**EMANUEL AX,** *piano*

Saenger Theatre
Saturday, April 10, 2027 at 7:30 P.M. | Sunday, April 11, 2027 at 2:30 P.M.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Louise Farrenc<br>(1804-1875) | Overture No. 2, op. 24 | 7 minutes |
| Felix Mendelssohn<br>(1809-1847) | Symphony No. 4, A major, op. 90, "Italian"<br>Allegro vivace<br>Andante con moto<br>Con moto moderato<br>Saltarello: Presto | 27 minutes |

## INTERMISSION

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Frederic Chopin<br>(1810-1849) | Piano Concerto No. 2, F minor, op. 21<br>Maestoso<br>Larghetto<br>Allegro vivace | 35 minutes |

Emanuel Ax, *piano*

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**Ann Marie Kilpatrick Terry**

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*opus3artists.com*

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## OVERTURE NO. 2 IN E-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 24

**Louise Farrenc**
BORN: May 31, 1804 | Paris, France
DIED: September 15, 1875 | Paris, France

Until recently Farrenc has been practically unknown to symphonic audiences – especially in this country – but in her time she was held in high regard in the first half of the nineteenth century in France. Unlike so many women composers of the past, she suffered little obscurity during her lifetime. She showed immense talent early on as a pianist, and after study with some of the most august teachers, began a career as performer and composer while in her teens. By the age of thirty-eight she was appointed a professor of piano at the prestigious Paris Conservatory and had a long and distinguished career. All the while she was a busy composer, working in all major genres except opera. Her best works are considered her chamber music, and they enjoyed substantial recognition.

While she was primarily a pianist and professor of piano, the Overture in E-flat sounds like the work of a master of the orchestra – it rocks! A concert overture, meaning not associated with an opera, but a standalone work, it is nevertheless a reflection of the operatic scene in Paris during her lifetime. We must remember that opera was the far-preferred genre in that century in France, and the decades before and around the middle of the century were totally dominated by "French Grand Opera." The most celebrated composers were Meyerbeer (from whom Wagner stole many of his ideas), Auber, Halévy, and Rossini (for his *William Tell)*. Every night the Paris Opera presented these large, long, spectacular operas, operas that the more violent, sordid, and colorfully and elaborately staged, the better. And the vivid action on the stage was supported in the orchestra pit by virtuoso performers (usually professors from the Paris Conservatory) performing exciting scores. Scores that featured new instruments such as valved trumpets and horns, the bass clarinet, the English horn, and others – as well as an immoderate use of the piccolo.

This is the milieu that Farrenc knew so well and was undoubted her model when she stepped into the symphonic arena, populated by these successful and forceful male composers. Her Overture in E-flat, composed in 1834 appeared only a few years after Berlioz' *Symphonie fantastique*, Meyerbeers's *Robert le Diable*, and Rossini's *William Tell*. All of them gangbuster, dynamic works. Perhaps the best way to understand the musical atmosphere of the times is to remember that the 1828 première of Auber's *La Muette de Portici* was so well received that the roused audience stormed out of the theatre, rioted in the streets, and modern Belgium was created as a result. Talk about the power of music in those days! It must be admitted that the dénouement, wherein the mute heroine leaped from her balcony into the mouth of Mt. Vesuvius (apparently a distance of several miles!) may have contributed to the excitement.

So, with this musical atmosphere in mind, it is clear whence the vivacity and power of this powerful, well-crafted overture stems. Louise Ferranc was obviously not only a gifted pianist, pedagogue, and composer, but with this powerful work as evidence, she most certainly must have been a formidable personality.

## SYMPHONY NO. 4 IN A MAJOR, OP. 90 ("ITALIAN")

**Felix Mendelssohn**
BORN: February 3, 1809 | Hamburg, Germany
DIED: November 4, 1847 | Leipzig, Germany

Mendelssohn was a prodigy, born into a distinguished family of Jewish bankers and philosophers. He and his sister Fanny – also a talented composer, conductor, and pianist – were raised in a warm, intellectual, highly supportive artistic family. They matured early, and a stream of musical compositions flowed from them both. Mendelssohn was clearly one of the most important German composers of his time and infused the expressiveness of early romantic music with the clarity and intellectuality of Mozart and Haydn's classicism. This exquisite balance found expression in a wide variety of musical genres; Mendelssohn was at home writing Protestant oratorios such as *Elijah* and *St. Paul* as he was composing chamber music and symphonies. He created a significant body of work in his relatively short life, including major works for orchestra that constitute an important part of today's repertoire. These works (from his maturity) include six concert overtures, six concertos, and five major symphonies.

His musical style reflects, to a large degree, his upbringing and his personality – it speaks of discipline, balance, and an overall cheerful, largely untroubled mien. While his compositions reflect solicitude for clear, balanced musical structures, and an obvious avoidance of excess of romantic emotion and empty virtuosity, there is nevertheless a sentimental and emotive quality to them. And this is certainly true of his symphonies. Symphony No. 4, like No. 3, "Scottish," was composed in direct response of the sights and sounds of his well-known travels. As a superbly talented, and highly intellectual scion of a distinguished and wealthy family, Mendelssohn was encouraged by Goethe (and funded by his doting father) to take an extended tour of various European countries in the years 1829-31. Early in the tour he visited Scotland, the experience of which resulted in the afore-mentioned "Scottish" symphony, and the overture, The Hebrides (Fingal's Cave).

Moving on to Italy in May of 1830, he toured the major cities, including Rome, Naples, Venice, and Florence, and by the time of his return to Germany in late 1831, was effusive about his experience and stimulation in Italy. In a letter to his sister, Fanny, he spoke enthusiastically of his "Italian" symphony, and characterized it as the "happiest piece

I have ever written." Few would argue with that description, but it took a little while for its full realization. Upon his return to his native Germany, other affairs took precedence, but a commission from the Philharmonic Society in London for several works – the princely sum of 100 guineas surely played a part, as well – ensured the symphony's rapid completion by early 1833. The première was a great success, and a major contributor to the composer's popularity in Great Britain thenceforth. Apparently, Mendelssohn felt that what almost everyone subsequently deemed as a practically perfect piece, nevertheless needed some substantial revision and tweaking. He apparently wrestled with the project for some years and complained about the trouble and "bitter moments" that it had caused him. It came to nothing. Notwithstanding the creator's artistic opinions, the original version has stood as the only one and ironically is seen as perfect in every way. It was not until 1851, four years after his death, that it was published.

The first movement instantaneously sets the mood: if any music may be said to be joyous, this is it! The vigorous repeated notes of the woodwinds propel the leaping theme in the strings – and Mendelssohn's reaction to the excitement and warmth of the Italian experience is palpable. Rhythmic drive pervades the whole movement, not lessened in the development section, where the composer's familiarity with J.S. Bach's contrapuntal wizardry comes to the fore. A few long-held notes in the oboe heralds the recapitulation of a marvelously spirited and happy movement – no wonder it has almost become a cliché for those in the media who have appropriated it.

The second movement – traditionally a slow one – here takes the guise of an Italian procession of some kind, walking along leisurely. A Neapolitan religious procession comes to mind – a common sight there, then. It may be helpful to the imagination to think of the one in New York's Little Italy in the film *The Godfather*. It trudges along, borne above the pizzicato strings, with a middle section in a contrasting, somewhat lighter, mood, before returning to the tranquil, melancholy main tune, ending quietly. The third movement in the "old days" of late musical classicism would have been a minuet and trio, and Mendelssohn, ever the traditionalist, cheerfully supplies one. Beethoven's vigorous, energetic models for this movement still ringing in everyone's ears are nowhere to be heard – Mendelssohn is himself, here. This tender movement comes from an untroubled land of gentility; the important part for the horns in the middle section stem from the newly developing sound of German romanticism, so clearly heard in the works of the composer's countryman, Carl Maria von Weber.

The last movement takes us back to the vivacity and élan of Italy in its driving evocation of the scintillating native dance, the saltarello. Others have posited the presence of the tarantella, as well. Driving breathlessly along, never relenting, Mendelssohn's interpretation of these old, medieval frenetic dances is an exhilarating ride. Catapulting along to the climactic end, we sense dancers gradually reaching exhaustion, despite the constant rhythmic drive, only to reach down and pull out just enough energy to sizzle at the dynamic ending.

**Piano Concerto No. 2 in F minor, Op. 21**
**Frederic Chopin**
Born: March 1, 1810 |
Żelazowa Wola, Poland
Died: October 17, 1849 | Paris, France

Frederic Chopin wrote his Piano Concerto No. 2 in F minor when he was still a young man in Warsaw, just beginning to find the voice that would make him one of the most beloved composers for the piano. Although we know it today as "No. 2," it was actually the first of his two piano concertos to be composed; the numbering simply reflects the order in which the concertos were published. Chopin himself played the solo part at the premiere in Warsaw in 1830, shortly before leaving Poland and stepping onto the wider European stage.

This concerto is very much a young pianist-composer's showcase, but it is not just about speed or brilliance. The orchestra sets the scene, and then the piano seems to take us by the hand and lead us into Chopin's private world. You will hear elegant melodies, sparkling runs, moments of tenderness, and sudden bursts of excitement. Even at this early stage, Chopin already sounds unmistakably like himself: poetic, intimate, graceful, and deeply expressive.

The first movement, Maestoso, opens with a grand orchestral introduction, but the mood changes when the piano enters. Instead of simply showing off, the soloist gives the music a more personal voice. At times the piano sounds proud and dramatic; at other times it turns inward, as if sharing a private thought. Chopin blends brilliance with lyricism, making even the most dazzling passages feel expressive rather than merely decorative.

The second movement, Larghetto, is the heart of the concerto and one of its most beautiful moments. It has the feeling of a love song or a quiet dream. Chopin admired the singing style of Italian opera, and here the piano seems almost to breathe and sing like a human voice. Many listeners have heard in this movement a sense of youthful affection and longing, and it is easy to understand why: The music feels tender, glowing, and wonderfully sincere.

Allegro vivace, the finale, brings a brighter, more energetic mood. The music dances forward with lightness and charm, and there are touches that suggest Chopin's Polish roots. The piano writing is quick and demanding, but it never feels heavy. Instead, the movement sparkles, combining youthful energy with the elegance that makes Chopin's music so appealing.

–Wm. E. Runyan
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## **EMANUEL AX,** PIANO



Born to Polish parents in what is today Lviv, Ukraine, **Emanuel Ax** moved to Winnipeg, Canada, with his family when he was a young boy. Mr. Ax made his New York debut in the Young Concert Artists Series, and in 1974 won the first Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Competition in Tel Aviv. In 1975 he won the Michaels Award of Young Concert Artists, followed four years later by the Avery Fisher Prize. Emanuel Ax was recently named the 2026 Musical America Artist of the Year.

As Artist in Residence for the 2026/2027 season with Radio France, the season begins with a European tour with performances in Munich, Paris, and Amsterdam. Upon returning to North America, Ax will embark on a series of concerts with The Knights with the final performance at Carnegie Hall in New York. An avid collaborator, Mr. Ax's season will also include chamber music with long-term musical colleagues and friends, Yo-Yo Ma (in Hartford, Philadelphia, East Lansing, Ann Arbor, Chappel Hill and Winona) and Itzhak Perlman (in Philadelphia, Akron, and Detroit). He will return to North American orchestras in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, Kansas City, Lincoln, Irvine, Portland, Seattle, Sarasota, Mobile, and New Albany. In recital he can be heard in Omaha, Palm Beach, New Orleans, Ridgefield, La Jolla, San Francisco, Schenectady, Rochester, and at Carnegie Hall. An extensive European tour will include concerts in London, Oslo, Madrid, Dresden, Prague, Monte Carlo, and Milan.

Three years in the making, Joseph Levy's "All the Music in the World", a documentary film following Mr. Ax on tour including interviews with his many artistic partners will be premiered at DOC NYC this fall.

"Classical Music Happy Hour", the podcast launched by WQXR NY in 2026 hosted by "Manny" Ax received such acclaim that a new season is in preparation for 2027.

Mr. Ax has been a Sony Classical exclusive recording artist since 1987 and following the success of the Brahms Trios with Leonidas Kavakos and Yo-Yo Ma, the trio launched an ambitious, multi-year project to record all the Beethoven Trios and Symphonies arranged for trio of which the first four discs have been released with the fifth arriving this fall. He has received GRAMMY® Awards for the second and third volumes of his cycle of Haydn's piano sonatas. He has also made a series of GRAMMY-winning recordings with Yo-Yo Ma of the Beethoven and Brahms sonatas for cello and piano. In the 2004/05 season Mr. Ax contributed to an International EMMY® Award-Winning BBC documentary commemorating the Holocaust that aired on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. In 2013, Mr. Ax's recording Variations received the Echo Klassik Award for Solo Recording of the Year (19th Century Music/Piano).

Mr. Ax is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and holds honorary doctorates of music from Skidmore College, New England Conservatory of Music, Yale University, and Columbia University.

## **SPECK SPEAKS** EMANUEL AX

When Yo-Yo Ma was fourteen years old, he met his fellow student, the brilliant pianist Emanuel Ax, in the Juilliard School cafeteria. Over the next 53 years, Yo-Yo and Manny became lifelong collaborators. Since 1973 they've toured the globe together, recorded countless duet albums, won five Grammy awards together, and championed solidarity and peace through music. Musically speaking, no two artists are more joined at the hip.

After Yo-Yo had graced the Saenger stage with the Mobile Symphony for the third time – he played the cello concerto by Dvorak in 2005, Schumann in 2012, and Elgar in 2024 – we received a call from his management. Apparently Yo-Yo had been talking up Mobile Symphony to his friend. "And Manny wants to play with you too," they said. Who are we to refuse?

At this stage in his life, Manny Ax is concentrating on the exquisite, soulful and poetic music of Frederic Chopin. Together we chose the glorious Piano Concerto No. 2 for his performances here. We haven't played that piece for over 20 years, and it's way past time to revisit it. What a thrill to play it under such beautiful circumstances – with the world-renowned pianist who wanted to experience what his best friend Yo-Yo experienced, here with us in Mobile.




## PROGRAM

**SCOTT SPECK,** *conductor*
**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA CHORUS**
**MOBILE OPERA CHORUS**
**EASTERN SHORE CHORAL SOCIETY**

Saenger Theatre

Saturday, May 1, 2027 at 7:30 P.M. | Sunday, May 2, 2027 at 2:30 P.M.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| John Williams (b. 1932) | Star Wars: Main Title | 5 minutes |
| | Star Wars Episode IV: Princess Leia's Theme | 5 minutes |
| | Star Wars Episode V: Imperial March | 3 minutes |
| | Star Wars Episode V: Yoda's Theme | 4 minutes |
| | Star Wars Episode V: The Asteroid Field | 4 minutes |
| | Star Wars Episode VI: Parade of the Ewoks | 4 minutes |
| | Star Wars Episode IV: Cantina Band | 3 minutes |
| | Star Wars Episode IV: Here They Come! | 3 minutes |
| | Star Wars Episode VI: Luke and Leia | 5 minutes |

## INTERMISSION

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| John Williams (1809-1847) | Star Wars Episode I: Anakin's Theme | 3 minutes |
| | Star Wars Episode I: Duel of the Fates | 4 minutes |
| | Star Wars Episode III: Battle of the Heroes | 4 minutes |
| | Star Wars Episode II: Across the Stars | 6 minutes |
| | Star Wars Episode VII: Rey's Theme | 3 minutes |
| | Star Wars Episode VIII: The Rebellion is Born | 4 minutes |

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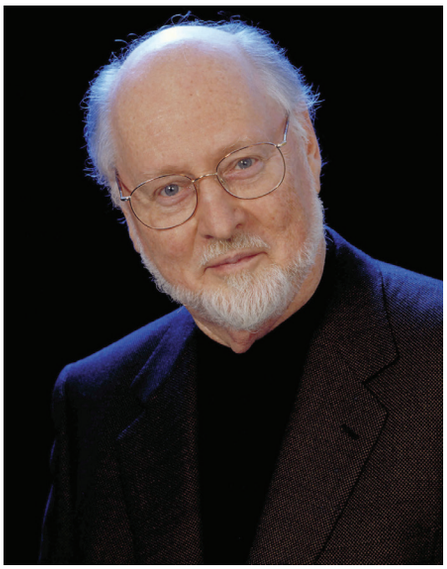
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## **JOHN WILLIAMS** BIOGRAPHY



In a career that spans five decades, **John Williams** has become one of America's most accomplished and successful composers for film and for the concert stage. He has served as music director and laureate conductor of one of the country's treasured musical institutions, the Boston Pops Orchestra, and he maintains thriving artistic relationships with many of the world's great orchestras, including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Mr. Williams has received a variety of prestigious awards, including the National Medal of Arts, the Kennedy Center Honor, the Olympic Order, and numerous Academy Awards, Grammy Awards, Emmy Awards and Golden Globe Awards. He remains one of our nation's most distinguished and contributive musical voices.

Mr. Williams has composed the music and served as music director for more than one hundred films. His 40-year artistic partnership with director Steven Spielberg has resulted in many of Hollywood's most acclaimed and successful films, including *Schindler's List, E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial, Jaws, Jurassic Park, Close Encounters of the Third Kind, four Indiana Jones films, Saving Private Ryan, Amistad, Munich, Hook, Catch Me If You Can, Minority Report, A.I.: Artificial Intelligence, Empire of the Sun, The Adventures of TinTin and War Horse.* Their latest collaboration, *The BFG*, was released on July 1, 2016. Mr. Williams has composed the scores for all seven Star Wars films, the first three Harry Potter films, *Superman: The Movie, JFK, Born on the Fourth of July, Memoirs of a Geisha, Far and Away, The Accidental Tourist, Home Alone, Nixon, The Patriot, Angela's Ashes, Seven Years in Tibet, The Witches of Eastwick, Rosewood, Sleepers, Sabrina, Presumed Innocent, The Cowboys* and *The Reivers,* among many others. He has worked with many legendary directors, including Alfred Hitchcock, William Wyler and Robert Altman. In 1971, he adapted the score for the film version of *Fiddler on the Roof*, for which he composed original violin cadenzas for renowned virtuoso Isaac Stern. He has appeared on recordings as pianist and conductor with Itzhak Perlman, Joshua Bell, Jessye Norman and others. Mr. Williams has received five Academy Awards and 50 Oscar nominations, making him the Academy's most-nominated living person and the second-most nominated person in the history of the Oscars. His most recent nomination was for the film *Star Wars: The Force Awakens.* He also has received seven British Academy Awards (BAFTA), 22 Grammys, four Golden Globes, five Emmys, and numerous gold and platinum records.

Born and raised in New York, Mr. Williams moved to Los Angeles with his family in 1948, where he studied composition with Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco. After service in the Air Force, he returned to New York to attend the Juilliard School, where he studied piano with Madame Rosina Lhevinne. While in New York, he also worked as a jazz pianist, both in nightclubs and on recordings. He returned to Los Angeles and began his career in the film industry, working with a number of accomplished composers including Bernard Herrmann, Alfred Newman, and Franz Waxman. He went on to write music for more than 200 television episodes for anthology series *Alcoa Premiere, Kraft Suspense Theatre, Chrysler Theatre* and *Playhouse 90.* His more recent contributions to television music include the well-known theme for NBC Nightly News ("The Mission"), the theme for what has become network television's longest-running series, *NBC's Meet the Press*, and a new theme for the prestigious PBS arts showcase *Great Performances.*

One of America's best known and most distinctive artistic voices, Mr. Williams has composed music for many important cultural and commemorative events. *Liberty Fanfare* was composed for the rededication of the Statue of Liberty in 1986. *American Journey*, written to celebrate the new millennium and to accompany the retrospective film *The Unfinished Journey* by director Steven Spielberg, was premiered at the "America's Millennium" concert in Washington, D.C. on New Year's Eve, 1999. His orchestral work *Soundings* was performed at the celebratory opening of Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles. In the world of sport, he has contributed musical themes for the 1984, 1988, and 1996 Summer Olympic Games, the 2002 Winter Olympic Games, and the 1987 International Summer Games of the Special Olympics. In 2006, Mr. Williams composed the theme for NBC's presentation of NFL Football.

Mr. Williams was inducted into the American Academy of Arts & Sciences in 2009, and in January of that same year he composed and arranged *Air and Simple Gifts* especially for the first inaugural ceremony of President Barack Obama.

## **SPECK SPEAKS** THE GENIUS OF JOHN WILLIAMS AND *STAR WARS*

It's fair to say that John Williams has created the soundtrack of our lives. He certainly created the soundtrack to mine. Growing up in Boston, I was thrilled when he became the successor to Arthur Fiedler to lead the Boston Pops. The opportunity to see him live, and watch him transform my world, was absolutely formative. Because of John Williams I initially wanted to become a film composer (before I realized that my talents lay elsewhere) – and it was that wish that led me to music school, where I learned the skills that allow me to stand in front of you tonight.

I first became aware of John Williams in 1975, when the movie Jaws burst on the scene. Even then, as a kid, I knew that the music was something special. Not since *Psycho* had there been such a simple yet powerful theme. Using only two notes just a half step apart (the smallest interval in Western music), John Williams compelled us to feel the unrelenting power and terror of a great white shark.

The story goes that when John Williams first played the Jaws theme for Steven Spielberg at the piano, Spielberg said, "You're kidding." But he wasn't kidding, and John Williams became the composer for nearly every Spielberg masterpiece ever since – all the way up to *Disclosure Day*, which he composed in 2026 at a mere 94 years of age.

Can you imagine *Jaws* without those two notes? For that matter, can you imagine Close Encounters without its iconic five-note melody? Or *E.T.* without the flying theme? Can you imagine *Schindler's List* without the searing violin solo, or *Harry Potter* without the opening celesta tune? *Superman* without its unforgettable brass fanfares, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* without the March? How about *Catch Me If You Can* without the jazzy saxophone solo? Or the Olympics without his iconic fanfare? Over the years the music of John Williams has become synonymous with the spirit that we, as Americans, still strive to attain.

Perhaps most indelibly of all, it's impossible to imagine *Star Wars* without the unforgettable leitmotifs for Luke, Leia, Obi-Wan, Yoda, and Darth Vader. In fact, I'll bet a good 50 percent of the success of Star Wars can be attributed to the music. I challenge you to watch any movie in the Star Wars canon without the soundtrack. More than almost any other movie score I can name, the music of John Williams elevated those movies to dizzying heights. Just think of that brassy B-flat major orchestral outburst at the very beginning of each movie. When I first heard it in 1977, it totally rocked my world – and yours too, I'm guessing.

This concert traces the music of *Star Wars* from 1977 to 2019 – music written over 42 years, 6 months, and 25 days. (In contrast, Richard Wagner spent only 26 years on his 18-hour Ring Cycle.) We've collected the most iconic and memorable tunes, including the "Main Title", "Princess Leia's Theme", "Yoda's Theme", "The Imperial March", "Cantina Band", "The Asteroid Field", "Anakin's Theme", "Duel of the Fates", "Rey's Theme", "Battle of the Heroes", and "The Rebellion is Reborn." Among many others! What a thrill to hear the way that John Williams creates and inhabits the musical world of his epic space opera, writing in one consistent style from beginning to end.

It's been fascinating and instructive to watch the "serious" classical musical world's attitudes toward John Williams shift over the past three decades. Like Rachmaninoff and Aaron Copland, John Williams was initially not taken seriously in academic circles, because he was "too popular" – his music was considered too accessible, too easy to understand, too readily appealing to the emotions. I remember that early in my career, all serious orchestras shunned his music, except in the occasional "movie pops" concert. But like Copland in his day, John Williams has now become the Dean of American composers. Five years ago, for the first time, he conducted his music with the venerated (and notoriously stodgy) Vienna Philharmonic orchestra. And they requested "Darth Vader's Theme!"

What caused this shift? Many will say it's because, over the course of a 70-year career, he proved his mastery and versatility by composing in practically every musical style known to man. But I think it's a lot simpler than that. I think it's because all of today's discerning voices – critics, academics, artistic administrators, and orchestra musicians alike – grew up watching *Star Wars*.

By the time of this concert, John Williams will be 95 years old. We wish him continued health and success, and I hope the fact that he is one of our favorite American heroes brings him some measure of satisfaction.






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Mobile Symphony is the most important source of music education in our community. More than 10,000 children and young people experience, create and learn music through the MSO's award-winning programs. Our education programs reach students throughout the Mobile Bay area, especially those whose families are least able to afford music lessons and quality arts experiences for their children.

Music learning supports ALL learning. Study after study shows adding music to a child's education develops a long list of skill sets that improves learning across all subject areas, carrying through to success in college and the workforce. Musical kids develop better language skills, increase their IQ, score better on tests, excel at math and gain the discipline to learn difficult skills. We spend almost one-fifth of our budget on education – much more than most orchestras or other local arts organizations. Here are just a few of the ways we make a difference:

- First and second graders in participating schools receive music classes all year through the symphony's award-winning Preludes classes. Our Strings in Schools program offers the only weekly string instrument instruction in Mobile and Baldwin County public elementary schools.
- Internationally acclaimed musicians like this season's Melissa White, Randall Goosby, Grammy-winning Harlem Quartet, pianist Aldo López-Gavilán, Renée Fleming, international mandolinist Avi Avital and local professional ensembles perform for area students in their schools.
- Instrument and tuition scholarships, $10 student tickets and free children's concert tickets on Sundays through Big Red Ticket (sponsored by The Figures Foundation) make classical music accessible to all families.
- Mobile Symphony Youth Orchestra – the region's top youth orchestra – offers high-level instruction and performance opportunities resulting in success on stage and in life.
- You can help support student success and keep this amazing outreach going by contributing today. Every gift makes an impact in the lives of the young people we teach in Mobile and Baldwin counties.

***Find out more at MobileSymphony.org or call us at 251-432-2010 or daniela@mobilesymphony.org***

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**PRELUDES** – Mobile Symphony professional instructors teach weekly general music classes at seven participating elementary schools. These classes reach more than 1,200 1st and 2nd grade students and show how integrating music and music education in the classroom can help in all subjects, making a more well-rounded student.

**STRINGS** – Students in our 24 participating public schools can sign up for group lessons in violin, viola or cello. Taught by professional musicians, these weekly classes are available in grades 2-12 and cover everything from basic string technique to more advanced music concepts, note reading and aural skills.

**SUZUKI CLASSES** – The Suzuki Classes are based on the teaching philosophy of Japanese violinist Shinichi Suzuki that "musical ability is not an inborn talent but an ability which can be developed." Children ages 4-7 are accepted for violin, viola or cello.

**IN-SCHOOL PERFORMANCES** Professional Mobile Symphony ensembles perform for school assemblies throughout the school year. These performances introduce students to orchestral instruments in a fun and casual manner and expose young audiences to classical music, helping them connect it to more familiar genres. MSO guest artists frequently visit area schools to perform, discuss music with older students and coach young musicians.

**INSTRUMENT PETTING ZOO** One of our most popular outreach programs, instrument petting zoos are a unique hands-on experience in which students learn about and experiment with making sounds on the various instruments of the orchestra. The experience can be tailored to all audiences including the hearing or visually impaired, special education students or general education.

**STRING ACADEMY, CHAMBER STRINGS AND EASTERN SHORE STRINGS** – Three training string orchestras for intermediate-level string players. Unlike other instructor-based MSO education programs, these ensembles have a conductor who works with students on their individual skills and ensemble playing. Students in grades 5-12 can work as a team, grow artistically and train in a rehearsal-based environment. In May, we combine all ensembles to present Strings Spectacular, a strings extravaganza showcasing more than 80 students on stage.

**YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONCERTS** The Mobile Symphony presents full-orchestra performances at the Saenger Theatre for children during the school day.

**BIG RED TICKET** – Mobile Symphony's Big Red Ticket program, underwritten by The Figures Foundation, provides any K-12 students (ages 5-18) with free admission to MSO Sunday classical matinee performances when accompanied by a paying adult. The following performances are eligible for Big Red Ticket admission. Please no babies in arms.

**October 11, 2026**
**November 8, 2026**
**January 17, 2027**
**February 21, 2027**
**April 11, 2027**
**May 2, 2027**

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# MOBILE SYMPHONY YOUTH ORCHESTRA

IVAN DEL PRADO, MUSIC DIRECTOR





The Mobile Symphony Youth Orchestra features the most talented young musicians along the Gulf Coast. The MSYO is the region's premier training orchestra for accomplished young musicians and is comprised of middle school, high school and early collegiate students through age 21. There is a fee for participation and scholarship assistance is available.

MSYO's 2026-2027 season will feature some of the greatest pieces in the orchestral repertoire performed by the finest young musicians on the Gulf Coast. The MSYO is proud to present up to half of its concerts as community outreach events, taking great orchestral music venues throughout the Mobile Bay region. This season, we present four concerts. We begin in November with a concert featuring one of our concerto winners. We return to Foley, AL for our traditional holiday concert. We add a Spring Concert to the lineup in March 2027 and end our season with a Finale Concert on May 9, 2027.

***For information about concerts or auditions, please call 251-432-2010 or visit mobilesymphony.org.***

## MSYO 2026-2027 SEASON

*All concerts are subject to change.*

**Sunday, November 15, 2026 – 2:30 P.M.**
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**Friday, December 4, 2026 – 7 P.M.**
**Holiday Concert**
Foley Civic Center
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**Sunday, March 21, 2027 – 2:30 P.M.**
**Spring Concert**
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**Sunday, May 9, 2027 – 2:30 P.M.**
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IVAN DEL PRADO, MUSIC DIRECTOR









## This is Dr. Ivan del Prado's eighth season as music director of the Mobile Symphony Youth Orchestra.

Recognized as one of the most gifted Cuban American conductors, he is also the music/artistic director of the Philharmonic Orchestra of the State of Chihuahua, Mexico. He has been the principal conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra of Cuba, artistic and music director of the Gran Teatro de La Habana Symphony Orchestra, founder and general director of the Chamber Orchestra of Havana and music director of the Baja California Orchestra in Mexico.

Del Prado has been guest conductor for numerous orchestras around the world and has been praised by critics for his masterful interpretation on both standard Romantic literature and works from the 20th Century. His versatility spans the genres of symphony, opera and ballet. Opera has given del Prado the opportunity to collaborate with outstanding artists such as Maestro Luigi Alba, José Carreras and Victoria de Los Angeles. Ballet has taken him to conduct the Deutsch Staatsoper Unter den Linden Ballet and the Cuban National Ballet in international tours.

Education has been a central focus in Ivan del Prado's career, and he was founder of the Cuba National Youth Orchestras. Most recently he was an adjunct professor at the University of Southern Mississippi and artistic director of the Premier Orchestral Institute, a project of the Mississippi Symphony Orchestra.


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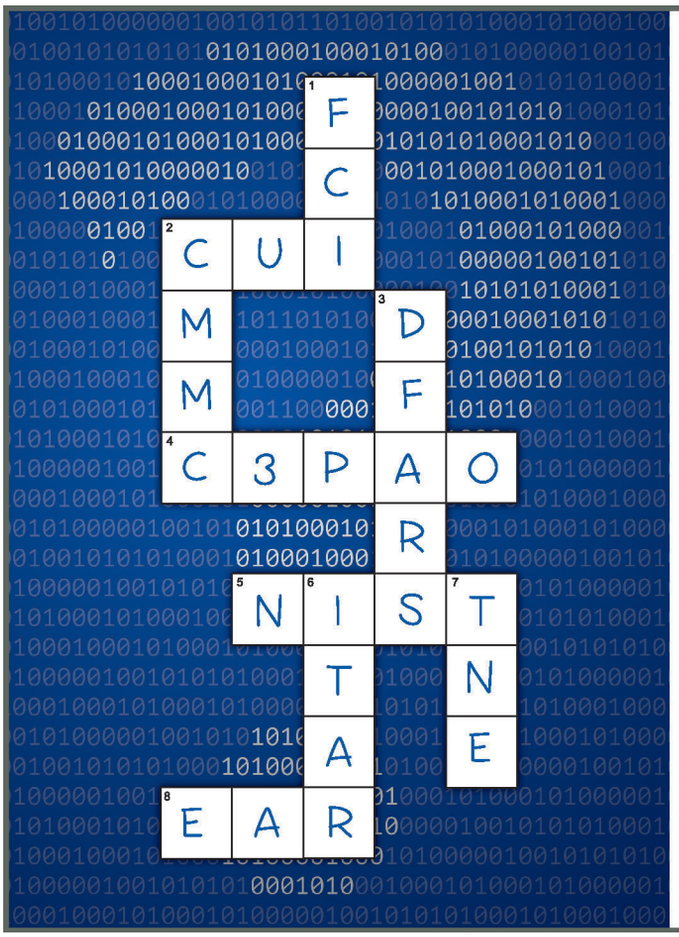
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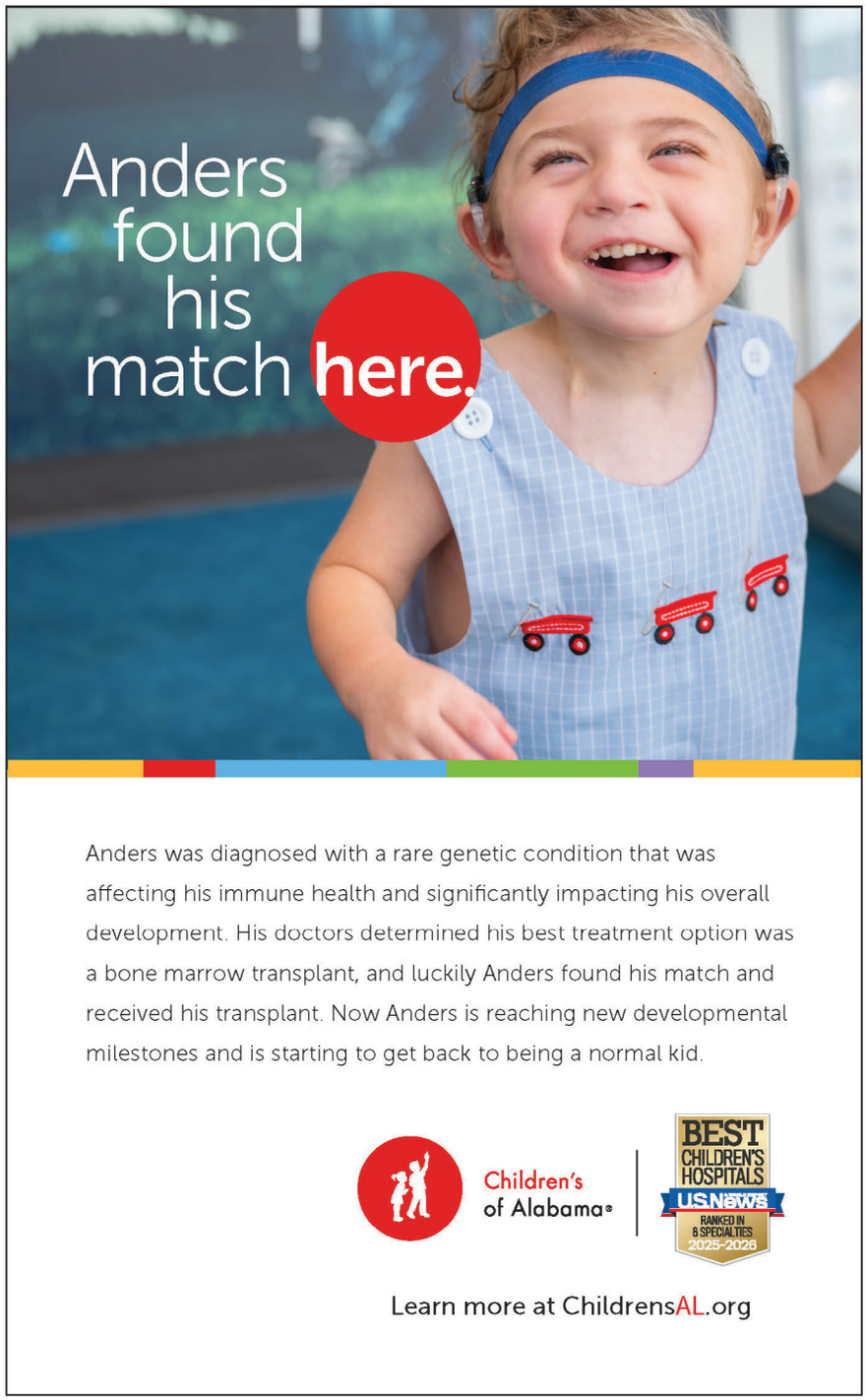
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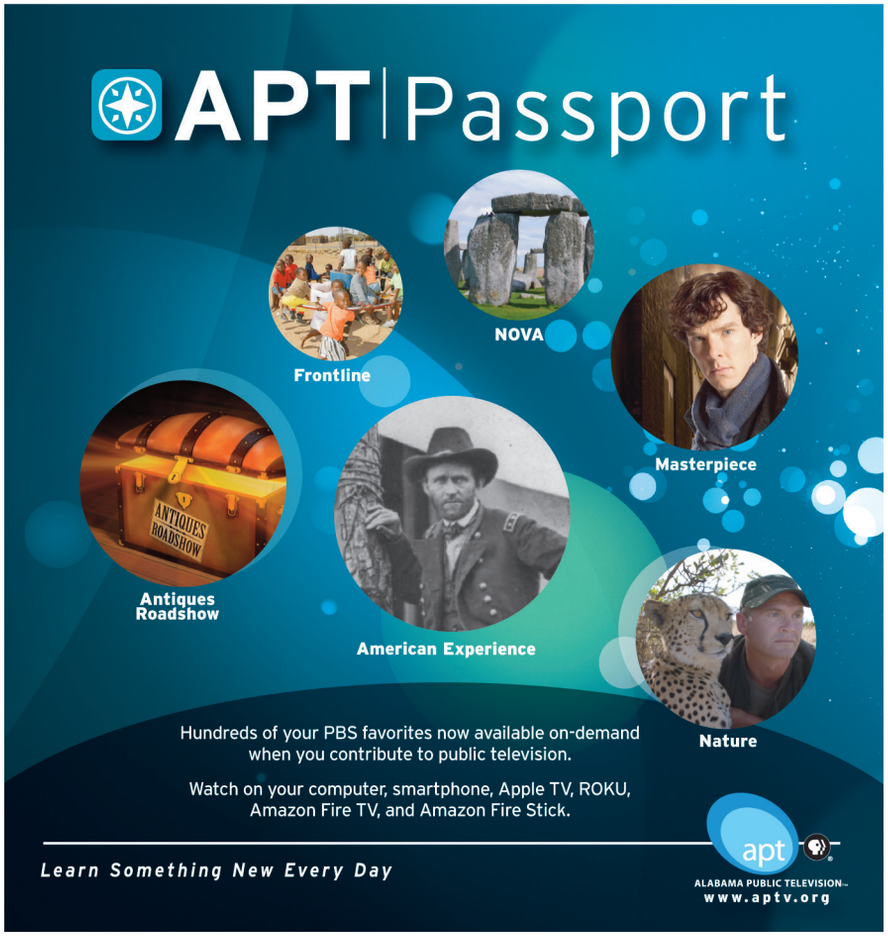
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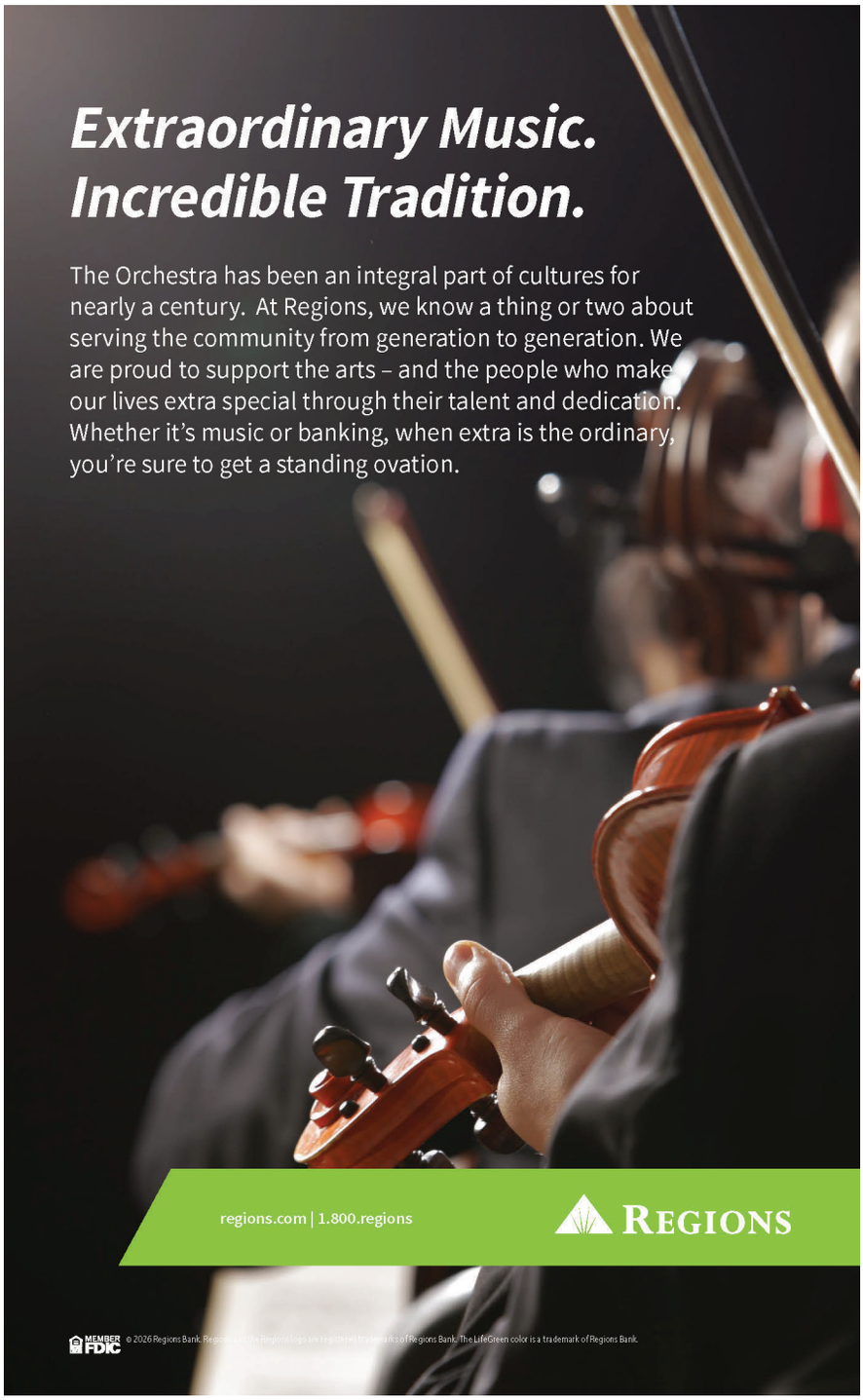
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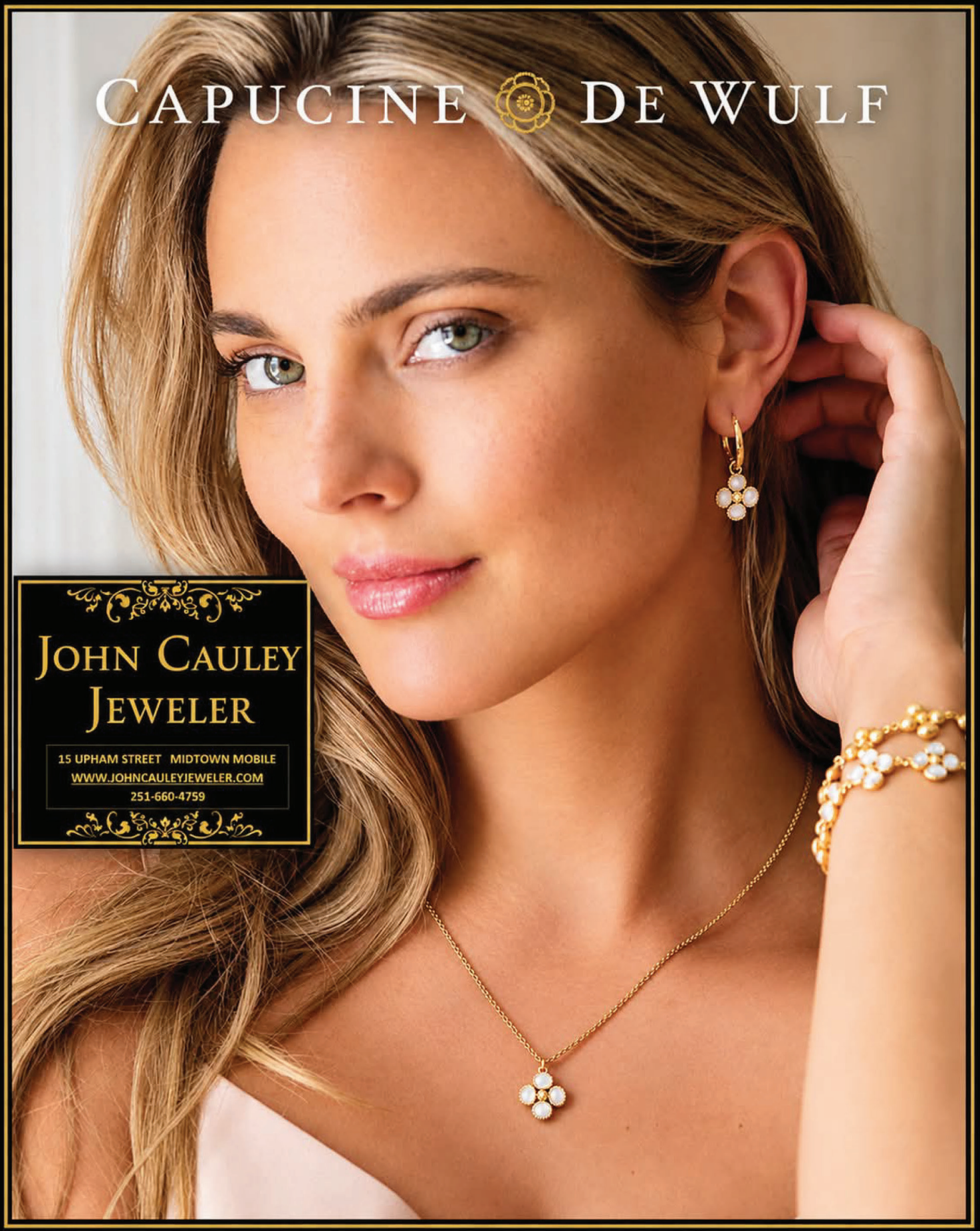
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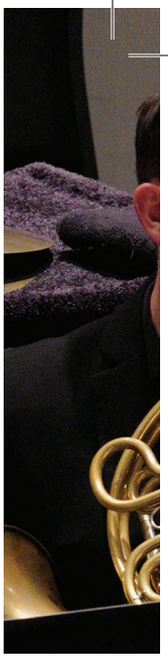
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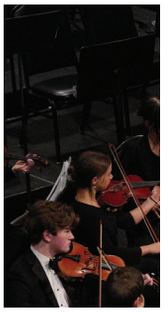

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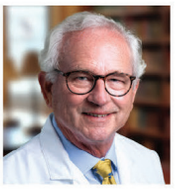
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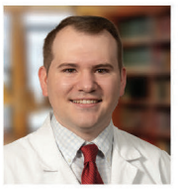
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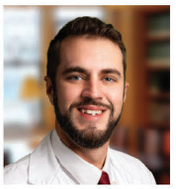
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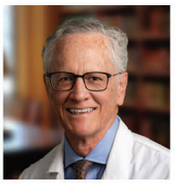
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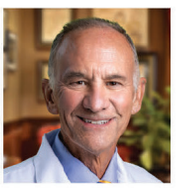
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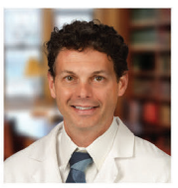
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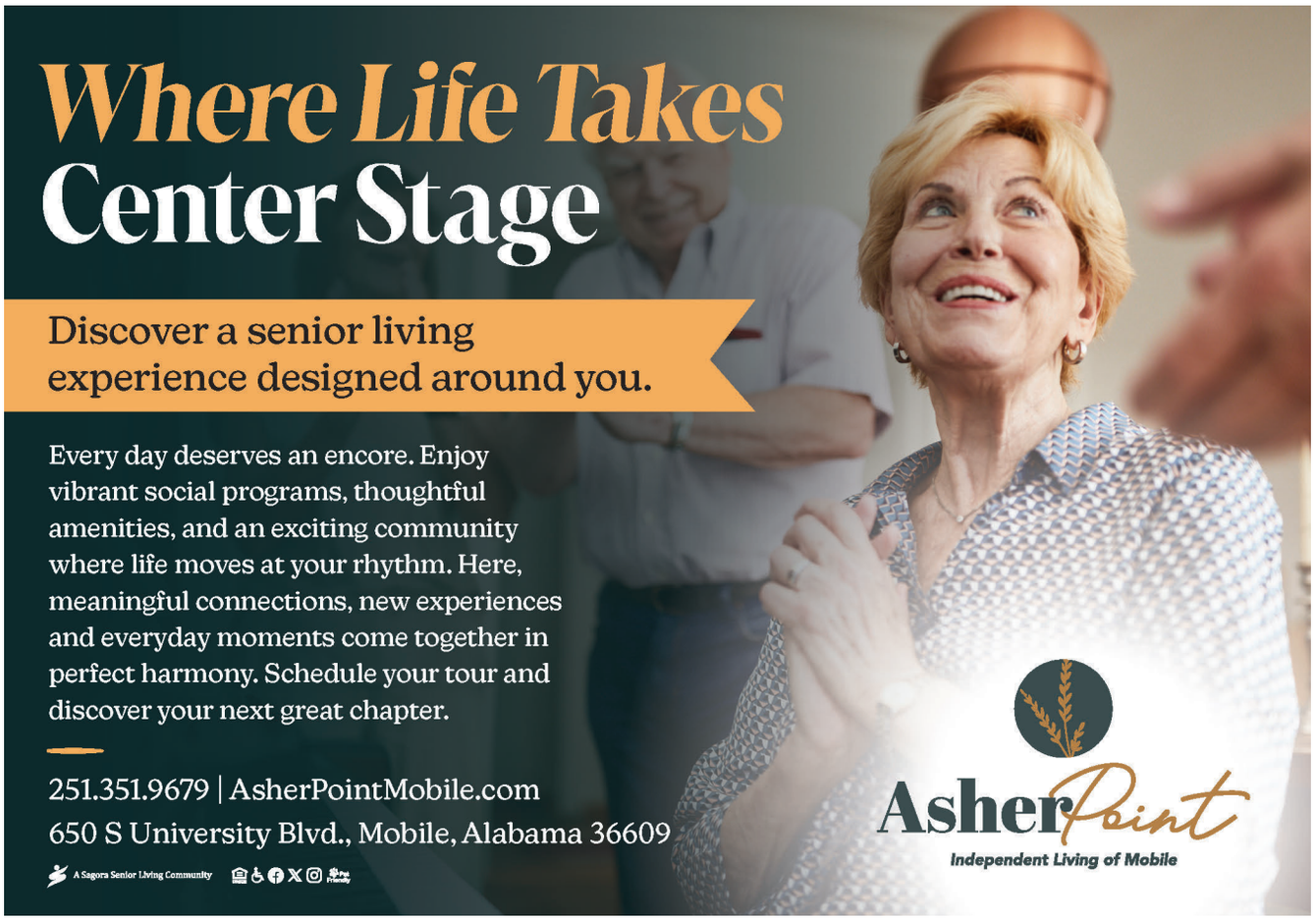
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**2026-2027 SEASON**

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# ABOUT THE SAENGER

## A JEWEL OF MOBILE'S HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE

**The Mobile Symphony has performed in the historic Saenger Theatre since 1997.**

Built as part of a chain of Saenger Theatres along the Gulf Coast, Mobile's Saenger opened on January 19, 1927, and hosted everything from vaudeville shows to silent films. It also was the setting for the first America's Junior Miss pageant in 1958. Construction cost approximately $500,000 and took a year to complete. The Saenger's style was intended to resemble European opera houses and the decoration was inspired by classical Greek mythology and Mobile's coastal location.

The theater was closed in 1970 and later, like many of America's grand movie palaces, was prepared for demolition. On the eve of its destruction, the University of South Alabama bought the Saenger, and the theater was renovated and reopened as the USA Saenger Theatre, a performing arts center.

In 1999, the City of Mobile purchased the Saenger from USA. A nonprofit organization, the Centre for the Living Arts, Inc., was formed in 2000 to operate the theater. The CLA, with generous donations from the community, restored the historic building to its former glory at a cost of about $6 million. In early 2013, the CLA ended its contract and management of the Saenger. It is now in the hands of OVG, Oak View Group.

In 2014, the Mobile Symphony was pleased to donate a new $373,000 acoustical shell to the City of Mobile for use in the Saenger Theatre. The shell consists of movable white panels that are situated around and above the orchestra during a performance. This structure optimizes the sound of our musicians so that the softest stroke of a bow can be heard in the farthest seat.






## PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

**PERSONAL PROPERTY** – We regret that the management cannot be responsible for patrons' personal apparel or property. Lost and found inquiries may be directed to the Mobile Symphony Box Office, (251) 432-2010.

**CELL PHONES, PHOTOGRAPHY & RECORDING** – As a courtesy to other patrons, please turn off or silence all electronic devices during performances. The use of cameras and recording devices in any form during a Mobile Symphony Orchestra performance is not allowed and may be a violation of federal copyright laws.

**RESTROOMS** – Restrooms are located in the Saenger Theatre Arcade and on the mezzanine and balcony levels.

**SMOKING** – The Saenger Theatre is a smoke-free facility.

**FIRE NOTICE –** The exit sign nearest the seat you occupy is the shortest route to the street in the event of fire or other emergency. Please follow the instructions of ushers or other theatre personnel.

**FOOD AND BEVERAGES** – Beverage service is available in the lobby before performances and during intermission. Alabama law prohibits the sale of alcoholic beverages to minors. No outside food or beverages may be brought into the theatre. No food is allowed in the theatre during the performance.

**LATECOMERS** – Latecomers will be seated at the discretion of Mobile Symphony management during appropriate pauses in the program. MSO policy is to begin performances at the advertised curtain time.

**NO BABIES IN ARMS –** We recommend ages 5 and up. All patrons must have a ticket to enter the theatre and occupy their own seat.

**SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS–** Wheelchair seating locations are available upon request from the Mobile Symphony Box Office. Patrons with special needs are encouraged to contact the Mobile Symphony Box Office in advance by calling (251)432-2010.

**MSO TICKET POLICY** – *All ticket sales are final.* There are no cash, check or credit card refunds for returned tickets, coupons or gift certificates. **Exchanges are offered to MSO Subscribers only**. Special rules and regulations apply to all exchanges. MSO Subscribers have the option to donate tickets back as a tax-deductible donation. Please call the MSO Box Office at (251)432-2010 for more information.

MSO MOBILE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
SCOTT SPECK MUSIC DIRECTOR









# SAENGER SECURITY POLICIES

*In order to create a safe, enjoyable experience for all our guests, the Saenger Theatre has implemented the following security policies:*

## SCREENING AND BAG POLICY

All guests entering the Saenger Theatre will be screened by walk-through magnetometers and may undergo additional wand screening. To enhance security and expedite entry, the Saenger Theatre has implemented a restricted bag policy.

### APPROVED BAGS



- Clear bags no larger than 12″ x 12″ x 6″



- Non-clear clutches or purses no larger than 8.5″ x 5.5″ x 2″



- Approved medically necessary device bags



- Diaper bags are allowed when escorting small children only.

### PROHIBITED ITEMS

- Knives, including small pocket knives
- Firearms (permitted or not) or weapons of any kind
- Backpacks
- CamelBak type packs
- Fanny packs
- Flasks
- Video or audio recorders, I-pads, tablets or lap-computers
- Professional quality camera equipment or bags
- Selfie sticks/poles
- Glass, plastic or metal containers
- Food, except for certain medical conditions
- Coolers
- Illegal drugs or substances
- Seat cushions
- Baby seats
- Folding chairs
- Laser pointers
- Fireworks
- Noise makers or horns
- Balloons and streamers
- Signs, posters, banners or flags
- Parcels, packages or any items the contents of which are not displayed
- Gifts of any kind for the entertainer(s)

**Subscribers will still be able to visit and return from the Subscriber Lounge during intermission.**

Any prohibited items will need to be returned to your vehicle or disposed of before entering.



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