

ARKANSAS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA 2024-2025 SEASON



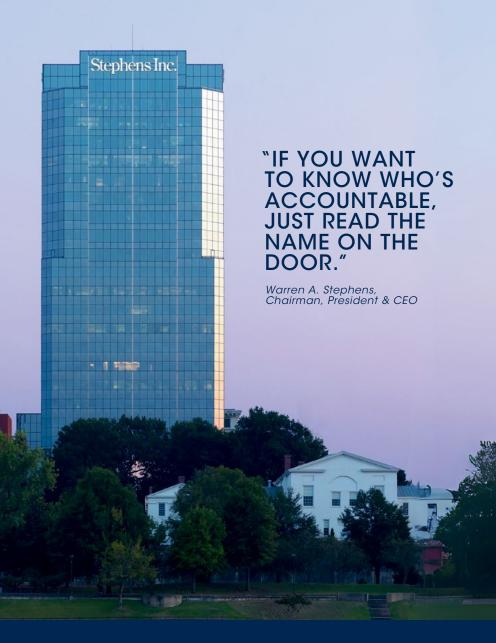




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FROM THE CEO



Dear ASO patrons,

Welcome to the 2024-25 concert season! I am so happy the ASO can perform its full orchestra concerts in this beautiful performance hall, Robinson Center, and I am so grateful the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra now has its first real home—the new ASO Stella Boyle Smith Music Center located at 1101 East Third Street, between Heifer International and the Clinton Presidential Library.



We opened the new Stella Boyle Smith Music Center on September 14 with puppets, jugglers, marching bands, Irish dancers, Mexican dancers, and more. Our aspiration is for the center to be a Radically Welcoming Hub of Musical Activity for all Arkansans and our opening celebration reflected those aspirations. We commissioned ASO Youth Orchestra alum Jeremy Crosmer to write the first piece of music publicly performed by ASO musicians, youth orchestra, and community orchestra members. He named it "Skyward," for the direction your ASO is going. The Sanctuary Choir of Saint Mark Baptist Church joined ASO musicians for an afternoon performance, and all who wished joined Geoff Robson for a Beethoven Five Play-along. The evening culminated with a Masquerade Dance Party where hundreds of people, mostly in their 30s danced the night away to the music of the Dizzy 7. The weekend could not have been more perfect. Outdoor activities with community partners included book reading, balloon making, crafts, instrument petting zoo, bucket band play-along, and more. The rain stopped before the parade and didn't come back until after the outdoor activities were winding up.

So many people worked hard to make this music center a reality for Little Rock and Arkansas, starting with our fantastic architects, WER Architects of Little Rock, Ben Gregory, David Sargent, and team, and Bailey Construction of Little Rock. This music center was built on budget and on time, and it is simply incredible. When you walk into the spaces, you can tell our home is designed for making music, hearing music, and building community through music.

The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra is committed to three things: building our community with music, being artistically innovative, and maintaining financial discipline. The new ASO Stella Boyle Smith Music Center is the manifestation of these core values, and it will enable thousands of Arkansans the opportunity to experience and make music together for generations. ASO is opening a fully funded \$11.75 million Music Center so soon after the pandemic because of three key guiding principles the volunteer leaders of this orchestra embedded in our DNA over the last 50 years: it's about the music and community, show up for the hard work, and have fun. These fundamentals are seen in the ASO administrative team, musicians, board, and throughout the new ASO Stella Boyle Smith Music Center—a radically welcoming hub of musical activity for all Arkansans. Thank you to all the volunteer leaders who have made the music center a reality through the decades and for your participation with ASO this weekend.

Warmly,

Christina Littlejohn



FROM THE MUSIC DIRECTOR



Dear Music Lovers,

Welcome to the '24-'25 season with your Arkansas Symphony Orchestra! It's an honor and joy to serve as the Music Director of this sensational orchestra, and I am thrilled that you are in the concert hall to enjoy their glorious sounds!

On the main stage here at the Robinson Center, we have a season lineup that will once again show off the orchestra as a virtuosic ensemble capable of bringing any music to life. This was encapsulated in our opening night program, which featured jazz star Aaron Diehl playing Gershwin's Concerto in F and Carlos Simon's *Graffiti*, which portrays urban contemporary art through music. We followed our opening night with three performances of *The Empire Strikes Back*, live to film!

This season we celebrated the return of *Beethoven and Blue Jeans*, a dressed-down affair that encourages you to come enjoy a beautiful symphony concert in a relaxed atmosphere. Throughout the season you'll hear works by great composers like Mendelssohn, Sibelius, Liszt, and more. We will close the Masterworks season with the master of composing at the grandest scale, Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 7.

We will also feature works by some of the greatest living composers. I am thrilled to bring to the stage a violin concerto by Philip Glass, and it was such a pleasure to introduce you to the music of Mexican composer Gabriela Ortiz, whose music is full of pounding rhythms and excitement.

Our *Home for the Holidays* concert was an extravagant celebration of the season, replete with 100 voice choir, and featuring the winners of last year's Arkansas Talent vocal competition, Marcus Murphy and Kim Qualls. Our last concert of the season will be a major collaboration with Arkansas Circus Arts, which will blend live symphonic music with stunning acrobatics. We'll perform some deep cuts of great film music with our *Lights, Camera, Action!* concert, and the best hits of contemporary musical theater with *Broadway Rocks!*

The ASO has been busy demonstrating its commitment to being an artistically innovative organization and a cultural institution accessible to all. This has been embodied in our newly opened ASO Stella Boyle Smith Music Center, our new headquarters and home of our wide-ranging music education programs. It is also the new home of our River Rhapsodies chamber music series, where you can hear small groups of ASO's outstanding musicians perform in an intimate environment.

It is an exciting time for this organization, and we want you to be part of it! Starting at just \$9 per month, our nationally recognized membership program is a great way to enjoy all of our concerts with the ultimate flexibility and ease of access. I encourage you to come see and hear something new, and seek out what you know will be your favorite concerts. Follow us on social media for all the latest news and updates, and I hope you enjoy hearing your marvelous Arkansas Symphony Orchestra perform live all year!

Geoffrey Robson



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Broadway Rocks!

Valery Saul, conductor

Chloe Lowery • LaKisha Jones • Dan Domenech, vocalists
Arkansas Chamber Singers – Lorissa Mason, director

ACTI

SIR ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER Jesus Christ Superstar Overture

CHARLIE SMALLS Everybody Rejoice from *The Wiz*

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MARC SHAIMAN Good Morning Baltimore from Hairspray

CAROLE KING Natural Woman from

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from Dance of the Vampires

SIR ELTON JOHN The Circle of Life from *The Lion King*

JONATHAN LARSON Seasons of Love from Rent

BILLY JOEL Movin' Out from Movin' Out

TINA TURNER Proud Mary from Tina:

arr. Fogerty The Tina Turner Musical

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Broadway Rocks continued

ACT II

JOHN KANDER All That Jazz from Chicago

CLAUDE-MICHEL SCHÖNBERG Bring Him Home from Les Misérables

KRISTEN ANDERSON-LÓPEZ Let It Go from Frozen

DOLLY PARTON I Will Always Love You

from *The Bodyguard*

ALAN MENKEN Suddenly Seymour from

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HENRY KRIEGER And I Am Tellin' You from Dreamgirls

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Broadway Rocks!

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Andrew Irvin
Concertmaster
Dora Paley Ronnel
Concertmaster's Chair
Kiril Laskarov
Concertmaster
Katherine Williamson

Assistant Concertmaster
*†Meredith Maddox Hicks

Principal Second Violin
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ENGLISH HORN

Beth Wheeler Principal

CLARINET

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VALERY SAUL, Associate Conductor

Described as a "powerful presence on the podium" by Marin Alsop, American conductor Valery Saul is recognized for her dynamic leadership, technical command and charismatic rapport with audiences. She is beginning her second season as Associate Conductor of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra and also serves as cover conductor for the Minnesota Orchestra, Oregon Symphony, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, and Charlotte Symphony Orchestra.

Valery conducted the Buffalo Philharmonic in a masterclass with JoAnn Falletta and Keith Lockhart in September 2024. She recently was selected by Marcelo Lehninger (Music Director of Grand Rapids Symphony) as the inaugural Conducting Fellow of the Bellingham Festival of Music whose members hail from leading orchestras nationwide. In summer 2023, she was invited by Cristian Măcelaru (Music Director Designate of Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra) as a participant in the Romanian Chamber Orchestra Masterclass and at the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music.

A master of multiple genres, Valery has led the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra to great acclaim in her Pops debut, *Bond and Beyond*, and with her collaboration as music director and conductor of Arkansas Repertory Theater's production of *Hello*, *Dolly!* This season she conducted Ballet Arkansas' production of *The Nutcracker*, and is conducting several concerts with the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra throughout the 2024-2025 season.

Memorable conducting highlights include masterclass invitations with the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center and with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. Valery is a graduate of Peabody Conservatory and has been mentored by Marin Alsop, Cristian Măcelaru, David Danzmayr, Marcelo Lehninger, and George Manahan. In addition to conducting, Valery is a professional opera singer.



CHLOE LOWERY, Vocalist

Chloe Lowery is an American singer/dancer/actress/songwriter born in Largo, Florida. By the age of nine she was performing professionally at corporate events and by age 12 she was signed to RCA Records. She was featured on two movie soundtracks during that time, "Boys and Girls" and "Joe Somebody."

While honing her crafts at prestigious music and acting schools in Boston and New York City, she toured with Big Brother and the Holding Company, filling Janis Joplin's shoes. Chloe simultaneously worked closely with world-renowned

producer, Ric Wake, which led to her collaboration with Yanni. Chloe lent her vocals and songwriting talents to the 2009 Yanni Voices Project produced by the Disney Pearl Imprint. She was featured on PBS as a featured artist in "Yanni Voices Live from

Acapulco." Her most successful performance/release, Change, quickly became a fan favorite. After US and Mexico Tours with Yanni, she was signed to Disney/Hollywood Records as a solo artist. Chloe has since been featured on Yanni's 2013, 2014, and 2016 releases: Truth of Touch, Inspirato, and Sensuous Chill, as vocalist and songwriter.

In the spring of 2010, Chloe joined multi-platinum selling rock band Trans-Siberian Orchestra performing as Theresa on their Beethoven's Last Night Tours. Chloe joined their annual winter tour in 2011 to rave reviews for her renditions of For the Sake of our Brother (Oh Come all Ye Faithful), Prince of Peace, and Music Box Blues. Chloe continues to work with TSO on stage and in the studio. Chloe has since had the privilege to tour with Chris Botti, perform with the New York City Ballet as a featured vocalist, and contribute her songwriting talents for artists like Everclear, among other accomplishments.

In 2019, Chloe released her critically acclaimed debut solo album, "The In-Between," which she self-penned and produced from her Brooklyn Apartment. The album touches on the emotional phases one goes through when facing monumental change. It explores the highs and lows of heartbreak, ending with the emotional "Don't Let Yourself Down," which touches on the root of self-discovery and acceptance. She created music videos as a visual background to every song and interlude on the record, depicting the full emotional ark of the album.

Chloe is also a very active concert soloist with symphony orchestras all over the world including recent and upcoming performances with the Houston Symphony, Colorado Symphony, Charlotte Symphony, Grant Park Music Festival, Florida Orchestra, Reno Philharmonic, Columbus Symphony, Ft. Wayne Philharmonic, Harrisburg Symphony, Youngstown Symphony, Arkansas Symphony, Charleston Symphony, Calgary Philharmonic, Helena Symphony, Gulf Coast Symphony, among others. She was also a featured soloist at the International Music Festival in Cesky Krumlov, Czech Republic.

Chloe released her follow up single, "Girls Like Me" on Decemeber 8th, 2023 to rave reviews. $\mathbf{www.chloelowery.com}$



LAKISHA JONES, Vocalist

Best known to millions of TV viewers as a top four finalist during the 2007 season of "American Idol," LaKisha Jones is ready to reclaim center stage in music, theatre, and television.

Her last album, "So Glad I'm Me," was full of Jones' expressive, full-bodied and arresting vocals, the same voice that electrified "American Idol" viewers with the Dreamgirls showstopper "And I Am Telling You," and later the Broadway stage in the Oprah Winfrey produced, Tony Award-winning musical, *The Color Purple*.

Her drive and motivation dates back to her childhood in Flint, Michigan. Raised by her mother and grandmother, Jones was exposed to music by legendary singers such as Whitney Houston, Aretha Franklin, and Patti LaBelle, with her grandmother urging the young girl to "let your voice shine," thereby prompting Jones to sing in church choirs and music programs. Joining various chorale groups and a cappella choruses throughout

high school, Jones entered and won the top prize at Flint's local talent contest, The Super Show in 1997.

Jones segued from "Idol" to the Broadway stage for *The Color Purple* where she played two roles: that of a church lady and of the pivotal character Sophia. The latter role she alternated with R&B icon Chaka Khan, who became her mentor. Jones participated in Khan's 35th Anniversary Tour. Following her Broadway stint, Jones provided vocal coaching on MTV's reality competition "Legally Blonde: The Search for Elle Woods," a show designed to find and hone Broadway's next star.

A frequent soloist with symphonies around the world, Ms. Jones has performed as a guest soloist with the National Symphony, San Diego Symphony, Utah Symphony and Opera, Winnipeg Symphony, Evansville Philharmonic, Jacksonville Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Houston Symphony, Phoenix Symphony, Colorado Symphony, Winnipeg Symphony, Windham Chamber Singers, Grand Rapids Symphony, Vancouver Symphony, Calgary Symphony, Battle Creek Symphony, Reno Philharmonic, Oregon Symphony, Long Bay Symphony, and the Festival Cesky Krumlov in the Czech Republic.



DAN DOMENECH, Vocalist

Dan Domenech's versatile vocals have been heard in 49 states and 8 countries. From starring on Broadway to touring with productions like the Tony award-winning musical *RENT*, *Wonderland*, *Sister Act*, *Rock of Ages*, and *Kinky Boots*, Dan has made his mark as one of the industry's leading men.

In concert, Dan's recent and upcoming performances include the Grant Park Music Festival, Houston Symphony, Cleveland Pops, Virginia Symphony, Evansville Symphony, Youngstown Symphony Orchestra, Missouri Symphony,

Fremont Symphony, Lansing Symphony, Orchestra Kentucky, Terre Haute Symphony, Gulf Coast Symphony, and Heartland Festival Orchestra, the orchestral powerhouse Rocktopia, and Nederlander Worldwide's production of Broadway Rox. He's worked with composers Tom Kitt, Laurence O'Keefe, Frank Wildhorn, and Alan Menken on new productions in development and currently on Broadway.

Dan has made guest appearances on *Glee* (Fox), *Gotham* (Fox), *Viva Laughlin* (CBS), consulted on *The Oscars*, *Emmy's*, *Kids Choice Awards*, and worked with directors Ben Stiller, Brett Ratner, Ivan Reitman, and Adam McKay on several films in Los Angeles.

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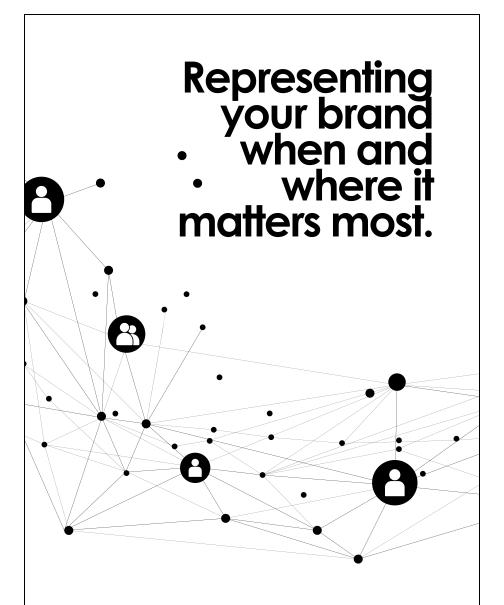
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Arkansas Symphony Orchestra opened its new \$11.75 million Stella Boyle Smith Music Center in Little Rock's East Village in September 2024, creating a first-of-its-kind music-focused headquarters for the state. The new 20,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility is the Symphony's first permanent home in its 58-year history.

PHOTO: DERO SANFORD AND WER ARCHITECTS

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The new music center is a radically-welcoming hub of musical activity for all Arkansans, serving youth and adults of all ages with an array of musical offerings. The building provides access to music education, music performances, and music-making to residents of all corners of the state through new spaces and a broadcast and recording studio.

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Saturday, February 22, 2025 • 7:30 PM Sunday, February 23, 2025 • 3:00 PM Robinson Performance Hall Little Rock, Arkansas

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Sibelius Symphony No. 1

Geoffrey Robson, *conductor* Simone Porter, *violin*

VALERIE COLEMAN (b. 1970)	Umoja: Anthem of Unity	11′
PHILIP GLASS	Violin Concerto No. 1	25
(b. 1937)	Simone Porter, violin	

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JEAN SIBELIUS	Symphony No. 1, Op. 39	38'
(1865-1957)	I. Andante ma non troppo –	
	Allegro energico	
	II. Andante	
	III. Scherzo: Allegro	
	IV. Finale (quasi una fantasia)	

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The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra is supported in part by a grant from the Arkansas Arts Council, an agency of the Department of Arkansas Heritage.



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GEOFFREY ROBSON, Music Director

Geoffrey Robson, violinist and conductor, is the Music Director of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra. Prior to his appointment, his tenure as the Arkansas Symphony's Artistic Director and Principal Conductor was a significant success. His dynamic leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in national and state-wide visibility for the organization. The orchestra's *Bedtime with Bach* online concert series received nationwide acclaim and was featured by the *Washington Post* and the *Kelly Clarkson Show*.

During his tenure with the ASO, Robson has conducted critically acclaimed and sold-out masterworks, pops, chamber, and educational concerts throughout the state. His innovative programming has brought new audiences into the hall and made all feel welcome and has inspired and energized the orchestra.

In 2021, he conducted and served as executive producer for the recording of Florence Price's *Concerto in One Movement* with the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, featuring pianist Karen Walwyn. This was the orchestra's first commercial release in over 20 years. In the fall of 2024, the orchestra will release a recording of Christopher Theofanidis' *The Wind and Petit* Jean, also conducted and produced by Robson.

A champion of new music, he collaborates with and explores the music of renowned living composers. In 2016, he conducted the world premiere of James Stephenson's *Concerto for Hope* with celebrated trumpeter Ryan Anthony. He served as arranger, conductor, and violinist for the world premiere of *Billy Blythe*, a one-act opera based on the life of the young Bill Clinton, by Bonnie Montgomery. He conducted the premiere of *Into the Beautiful North* by Joe Brent, performed by the 9 Horses trio, as well as the premiere of *Richard III*, *A Crown of Roses*, *A Crown of Thorns*, an opera by Karen Griebling. In 2021 and 2022, he secured co-commissions of new works by Tania León and James Lee III, which were performed by the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra.

An active violinist, Robson is an avid chamber musician and regularly collaborates with musicians across the country. He also serves as the Artistic Director of the Faulkner Chamber Music Festival, curating a summer concert series and directing the chamber music camp for students.

He served as concertmaster of the Connecticut Virtuosi Chamber Orchestra and as Assistant Concertmaster of the Waterbury Symphony. He is also recognized for his skill and versatility as a fiddle player and has established himself as a highly sought-after studio musician. He writes and performs string and orchestral arrangements for recording artists to assist them in achieving their goals in the studio. His arrangements have also been featured on numerous Arkansas Symphony Orchestra performances.

Robson studied orchestral conducting at the Mannes College of Music in New York City under the tutelage of David Hayes, and he holds violin performance degrees from Yale University and the Michigan State University Honors College. Primary violin teachers include Erick Friedman, Dmitri Berlinsky, James Krehbiel, and I-fu Wang.

He studied conducting at Yale University with Lawrence Leighton Smith, Edward Cumming, and Shinik Hahm. Other notable teachers include John Farrer, Neil Thomson, Joana Carneiro, Dirk Brossé, and Larry Rachleff.



SIMONE PORTER, Violin

Violinist Simone Porter has been recognized as an emerging artist of impassioned energy, interpretive integrity, and vibrant communication. She has debuted with the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Seattle and Pittsburgh Symphonies, and with a number of renowned conductors, including Stéphane Denève, Gustavo Dudamel, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Nicholas McGegan, Ludovic Morlot, Donald Runnicles, David Robertson, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Manfred Honeck, Louis Langrée, and David Danzmayr. Simone made her professional solo debut at age 10 with the Seattle Symphony and her international debut with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in London at age 13.

In March 2015, Simone was named a recipient of an Avery Fisher Career Grant.

Porter's recent seasons include extensive US touring with debuts and return visits to orchestras such as Colorado, North Carolina, St. Louis, Oregon, Hawaii, Grand Rapids, Omaha, Quebec, Jacksonville symphonies, Erie Philharmonic, Florida Orchestra, and many more. In the 24/25 season Porter will return to Nashville and Baltimore symphonies, as well as Santa Rosa, Monterey, and Westchester symphonies, with a debut with Arkansas Symphony performing Glass' 1st Violin Concerto and a visit to Johnson City Symphony in Tennessee. Internationally, Simone has performed with the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra with Gustavo Dudamel; the Orquestra Sinfônica Brasileira in Rio de Janeiro; the National Symphony Orchestra of Costa Rica; the City Chamber Orchestra of Hong Kong; the Royal Northern Sinfonia; the Milton Keynes City Orchestra in the United Kingdom; Orquesta Clásica Santa Cecilia de la Fundación Excelentia in Madrid; the Opera de Marseille, and at the Edinburgh Festival performing Barber under the direction of Stéphane Denève.

Recent recital highlights include a tour in Spain with pianist Pallavi Mahidhara and debuts at Celebrity Series in Boston and NY92, both of which featured the newly commissioned piece by composer Reena Esmail. She will return to FL in recital in January of 2025. An avid chamber musician, Porter can be heard at La Jolla Summerfest in August of 2024, followed by projects with Bay Chamber Music, Moab Music Festival, and Charlottesville Chamber Music Festival. Together with her colleagues violinist Blake Pouliot and pianist Hsin-I Huang, Porter will present a program at Cliburn Foundation in Fort Worth, TX and Broad Stage in Santa Monica, CA in spring of 2025.

At the invitation of Esa-Pekka Salonen, Simone performed his work 'Lachen verlernt' ('Laughing Unlearnt') at the New York Philharmonic's "Foreign Bodies," a multi-sensory celebration of the work of the composer and conductor. Simone made her Carnegie Zankel Hall debut on the Emmy Award-winning TV show "From the Top: Live from Carnegie Hall" followed in November 2016 by her debut in Stern Auditorium. She will return to Carnegie in December of 2024 together with cellist Joshua Roman as a part of their Well-Being Concert. In June 2016, her featured performance of music from *Schindler's List* with Maestro Gustavo Dudamel and members of the American Youth Symphony was broadcast nationally on the TNT Network as part of the American Film Institute's Lifetime Achievement Award: A Tribute to John Williams.

Raised in Seattle, Washington, Simone studied with Margaret Pressley as a recipient of the Dorothy Richard Starling Scholarship and was then admitted into the studio of the renowned pedagogue Robert Lipsett, with whom she studied at the Colburn Conservatory of Music in Los Angeles. Summer studies have included many years at the Aspen Music Festival, Indiana University's Summer String Academy, and the Schlern International Music Festival in Italy.

Simone Porter performs on a 1740 Carlo Bergonzi violin made in Cremona Italy on generous loan from The Master's University, Santa Clarita, California.

simoneporterviolin.com | facebook.com/simoneporterviolin | x.com/simonaportervln



PROGRAM NOTES



UMOJA, ANTHEM OF UNITY / Valerie Coleman

b. Louisville, Kentucky, USA / September 3, 1970

Commissioned by the Philadelphia Orchestra in 2019, *Umoja: Anthem of Unity*, is the most ambitious effort by composer and flutist Valerie Coleman that includes the word "Umoja" (the Swahili word for "unity") in the title. The composer states that this work for a large orchestra "brings an expansion and sophistication to the short and sweet melody" she composed to include in some earlier compositions.

The opening creates an atmospheric soundscape reminiscent of the style of Aaron Copland. The Umoja melody emerges first from the solo violin — Coleman explains "... here the melody is sweetly singing in its simplest form...reminiscent of Appalachian style music." Strings follow with the melody, then muted trumpet, and finally piccolo, which, along with the flute, leads the transition to a faster tempo.

The middle of the work is rhythmically driven with all sections of the orchestra contributing to the unpredictable but mostly joyous sound, peppered with occasional filigree in high instruments. The composer articulated her expressive intention: "...the melody dances and weaves throughout the instrument families, interrupted by dissonant viewpoints led by the brass and percussion sections, which represent the clash of injustices, racism and hate that threatens to gain a foothold in the world today."

In the final section we hear the orchestra state the Umoja melody in a unified way. The folk-like melody, simple harmony, and influence of African rhythm combine to cause this part of the piece to veer toward the sound of jazz or popular music. Coleman clarifies, "through the brass-led ensemble tutti, the journey ends with a bold call of unity that harkens back to the original anthem."

VIOLIN CONCERTO NO. 1 / Philip Glass

b. Baltimore, Maryland, USA / January 31, 1937

Philip Glass is one of the best-known and most successful living composers. His prolific output includes operas and choral music, symphonic and chamber works, film and theatre music. The 1987 composition *Violin Concerto No. 1* was his first strictly instrumental work using orchestra, and it has proven to be among his most frequently performed compositions. This was a commissioned work, but Glass revealed a personal inspiration. In honor of his father, who had died years earlier, Glass stated, "let me write a piece that my father would have liked…a very smart nice man who had no education in music whatsoever, but the kind of person who fills up concert halls."

Glass adheres to the standard concerto format that would have been familiar to his father — a slow movement sandwiched between two fast movements — however, his instruction regarding the tempo of each movement is given as a precise beats-perminute metronome setting instead of as a conventional word or phrase in Italian or in the composer's vernacular. Like Glass' dad, any concert attendee would expect there to be a violin soloist of the highest caliber to navigate the technical twists, turns, and traps demanded by the composer. Beyond those parameters, only some previous knowledge of "minimalist" composition techniques might fully prepare the ears of the elder Glass, or any concertgoer, for this novel concerto that does not sound remotely like any previously composed violin concerto!

Unlike music based on singable melodic phrases and thematic development, this minimalist concerto has recognizable musical ideas, or "cells," repeated many times and often have gradual changes. As the music starts, our ears will tell us instantly and with certainty that this is a fast movement as we sense the first cell, the orchestra playing continuous eighth note patterns, the second cell, sporadic longer notes in the bass, and the third, the solo violinist's entrance starting with upward sixteenth note arpeggios in groups of three. Since it's the soloist's role in a concerto to show off, there is more variation in the soloist's part than in the other cells. About one-third of the way through this movement, the percussion section joins in with several new rhythmic patterns, followed by the brass section playing a syncopated cell. The tempo change occurs at the same moment as the percussion entrance, but it is barely perceptible because Glass employs the compositional "trick" of metric modulation achieved by making subtle changes to the repetitive patterns. Listen for more subtle changes to cells, and to any newly added musical ideas, to understand and enjoy this type of music.

The slow second movement employs "ground bass," a technique used effectively during the Baroque Era. Here it finds a welcome place in modern minimalist music because of its repetitive nature. We hear a slow, descending bass line that continues nearly verbatim throughout the movement while providing the tragic minor key harmonic underpinning. The soloist introduces the other most prominent cell, a rising interval to complement the descending bass. About halfway through this movement the volume increases incrementally, and an emotional peak is reached before a gradual relaxation and a harmonically uncertain ending.

As expected, the third and final movement is the fastest one, technically challenging the soloist and the entire orchestra while keeping the percussion section very busy. Glass lets us know that there will be a slowdown at the end, but the slow ending is a surprise until we become enveloped in its beauty. There are elements from movements one and two that reappear integrated into this coda bringing the entire work to a fitting conclusion.

SYMPHONY NO. 1 / Jean Sibelius

b. Hämeenlinna, Finland / December 8, 1865 - September 20, 1957

The year 1899 was one of political instability in Finland as it sought greater independence. It was also an important year for native son Jean Sibelius, who in the 1890s was associated with vocal and instrumental music of a narrative nature, works that were manifestations of a nationalistic cultural awakening in Finland. In November 1899, Sibelius' orchestral composition that came to be known as *Finlandia* was introduced and quickly adopted as a patriotic anthem. It endures today as Sibelius' most famous work. Earlier in the year he completed and led a performance of his *Symphony No. 1 in E minor*, the first of his seven symphonies. The success of these two works gave Sibelius strong footing as he continued the creative path that led him to become a national hero in Finland.

Movement one starts *Symphony No. 1* in an uncommon way. A clarinet gently introduces some thematic raw materials, with just enough timpani accompaniment to confirm a minor tonality. The full orchestra enters with a strong theme that prevails until flutes and harp change the mood. A lengthy accelerando leads into some developmental material before a return to the strong theme. Noted Finnish conductor Santtu-Matias

PROGRAM NOTES continued

Rouvali casually identified some compositional traits found in Sibelius' symphonies, traits that are apparent in this movement and throughout the work. Rouvali says, "Sibelius' music is always difficult, a lot of syncopations, a lot of messy things. But then suddenly comes the happy melodic thing with nice chords supporting it — that's typical."

The second movement starts with slow music that is languid and haunting. The music eventually becomes more active as the basic ingredients are presented in varied ways before returning to the calm of the opening.

The third movement, *Scherzo*, is the shortest part of the work. The first section is bursting with energy in the form of a fast tempo with a pulsating rhythmic undercurrent, and sprightly passages in the woodwinds and strings. The horns bring this to a halt and lead into music of a contrasting nature, slow and calm with a *Lento* tempo marking, but it's also emotionally charged. Predictably there is a return to a truncated version of the opening section to close the movement.

The fourth movement *Finale* begins with the strings playing a dramatic restatement of a melody played by the clarinet at the opening of the symphony. After some gentle and harmonious music from the woodwinds, the strings shift the tempo to Allegro. Sibelius labels this movement *Quasi una fantasia*, a designation that gives the composer artistic license to do just about anything he wants to do. The rest of the movement is unpredictable, but a highlight is a long build-up to a climax that is reminiscent of music by Pyotr Tchaikovsky, a composer whom Sibelius admired. The ending is signaled by an ascending arpeggio and some strong timpani rolls with a surprising diminuendo and plucked strings, a conclusion that will, no doubt, make it harder to know when to applaud.

PROGRAM NOTES BY BARRY MCVINNEY © 2025











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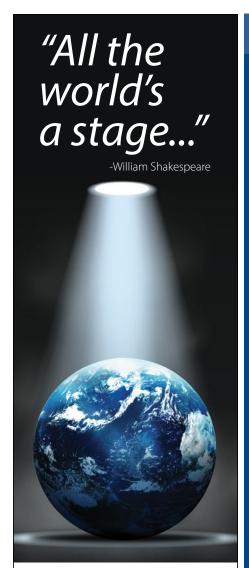
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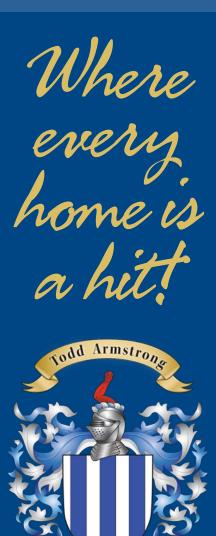


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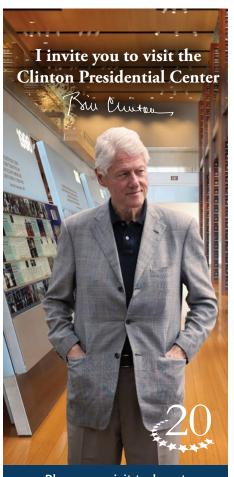
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