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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

ASO

ARKANSAS
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

Thank you



for your extraordinary support of the

Stella Boyle Smith
MASTERWORKS Series

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 I also can't wait 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!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Geoffrey Robson".

Geoffrey Robson



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Saturday, March 8, 2025 • 7:30 PM Sunday, March 9, 2025 • 3:00 PM

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Chad Bradford, *director* Quinn Gasaway, *narrator*

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(b. 1932)

DANNY ELFMAN Suite from *Batman* (1989)

(b. 1953)

HILDUR GUDNADÓTTIR Bathroom Scene from *Joker*

(b. 1982)

JOHN WILLIAMS Sayuri's Theme from *Memoirs of a Geisha*

(b. 1932)

JAMES HORNER Suite from *Mask of Zorro*

arr. Mauceri

(1953–2015)

Plaza of Execution – Zorro's Theme –
The Ride – Diego's Goodbye

RUPERT GREGSON-WILLIAMS Wonder Woman's Wrath

(b. 1967)

I N T E R M I S S I O N

continued next page

Lights, Camera, Action! *continued*

MARK SNOW Theme from *The X-Files*
(b. 1946)

JOHN WILLIAMS Hymn to the Fallen
(b. 1932) from *Saving Private Ryan*

DANNY ELFMAN Music from *Spider-Man* (2002)
(b. 1953)

MICHAEL GIACCHINO Suite from *Spider-Man: Far From Home*
(b. 1967)

JAMES HORNER Suite No. 2 from *Aliens*
(b. 1953–2015) Newt – Facehuggers

MICHAEL GIACCHINO The Incredibles
arr. Holcombe
(b. 1967)

JOHN OTTMAN You're X-Men from
(b. 1964) *X-Men: Age of Apocalypse*

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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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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 2024-25 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.


QUINN GASAWAY, *Narrator*

Quinn is a performer, educator, and hand soap enthusiast with a passion for theatre and music of all flavors. Born and raised in Little Rock, he got his start in the Coen Brothers' film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* and he's been acting ever since. After getting his BFA in Acting from Oklahoma City University, he spent time in New York, Chicago, and nearly a decade in Los Angeles before returning to his home state to dive into the blossoming theatre scene in central Arkansas. Recent acting credits include Henry

in *Henry V* (Shake on the Lake/Arkansas Shakespeare Theatre) and Alex in the regional premiere of *An Unlikely Hero* (Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts). He made his directorial debut last fall with *Alone Together* (Murry's). As a musician, Quinn has composed music for various film and TV projects including *Nerd Girl Nation*, *Divorcing*, and *Hit Record*. During his time in LA, Quinn developed a passion for teaching acting, and since moving back to Arkansas, he has been teaching at Argenta Contemporary Theatre, where he was recently hired as the Education Coordinator. He'd like to thank Chad for this amazing opportunity, and his incredible girlfriend and his wonderful parents for their endless love and support!

E. Lee Ronnel Music Academy

The E. Lee Ronnel Music Academy expands ASO's capacity to reach and serve Arkansas children and adults through music education programs. These are designed to develop **confidence**, **creative thinking** and **a strong work ethic** that will enhance students' musical endeavors and life skills. The E. Lee Ronnel Music Academy will also support the development of future music programs in the Stella Boyle Smith Music Center that may include adult music classes, bucket band, children's choir and more.

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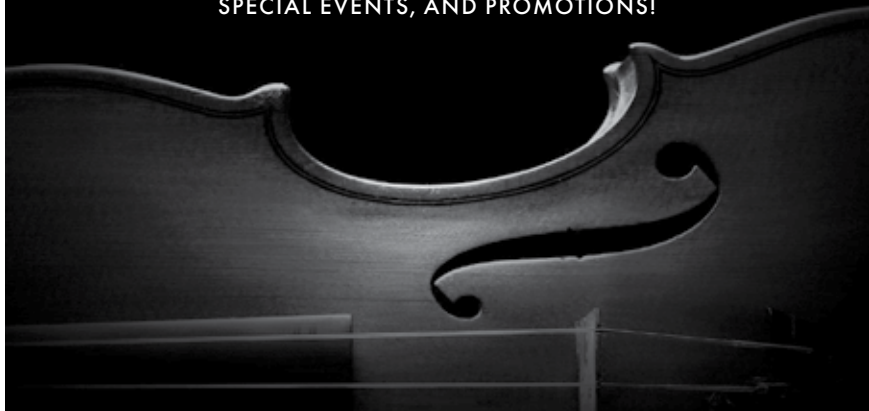
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With the Foundation Board's stewardship and belief in the importance of ASO for the quality of life for Arkansans, the endowment has grown from \$2.7 million in 2009 to \$12.3 million today. Earnings from the endowment now generate close to \$450,000 each year for the ASO's operations. As the endowment has grown over the years, so has ASO's ability to responsibly make long-term commitments to increase the pay for our professional musicians and add music education programs for our young people.



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ASO has served Arkansas through music for nearly 60 years, and **endowment gifts to the Foundation either in present or through legacy gifts make it possible for ASO to keep serving the community for the next 60 years and beyond.**

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The tour will only run the first weekend in May this year. A tour map will be provided. At each residence, there will be docents to assist you and to answer your questions. Our Prelude party will kick off the fun on May 2. Don't miss this fun weekend event!

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HENRY PURCELL (1659-1695)	Act IV Symphony from <i>The Fairy Queen</i> [Allegro] – Canzona – Largo – Allegro – Adagio – Allegro	7'
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JEAN FRANÇAIX (1912-1997)	<i>L'horloge de flore</i> (The Flower Clock) Un poco maestoso – Andantino – Allegro – Andantino – Allegrissimo giusto	17'
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Leanna Renfro, oboe

I N T E R M I S S I O N

continued next page

Faires & Flowers *continued*

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1807-1847)	Incidental Music from <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , Op. 61	45'
	I. Overture	
	II. Scherzo	
	III. Song with Chorus: "You Spotted Snakes"	
	<i>Kara Claybrook and Nisheedah Golden Scarlet Voices</i>	
	IV. Intermezzo	
	V. Notturmo	
	<i>Meredith Loy and Aldrin Vendt</i>	
	VI. Wedding March	
	VII. Funeral March	
	VIII. Dance of the Clowns	
	IX. Finale with Chorus	
	<i>Kara Claybrook and Nisheedah Golden Scarlet Voices</i>	

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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.

Fairies & Flowers

GEOFFREY ROBSON, Conductor, *Pamela Diane Stephens Conductor's Chair*

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KARA CLAYBROOK, *soprano* NISHEEDAH GOLDEN, *mezzo-soprano*

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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 Griebeling. 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.



LEANNA RENFRO, Oboe

Leanna Renfro joined the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra as Principal Oboe in September 2013. In previous positions she has served as Principal Oboe with the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra, the Missouri Symphony Orchestra, and the Kentucky Symphony. She has also performed with the Nashville Symphony, the Alabama Symphony, the Louisville Orchestra, and the New World Symphony in Miami, Florida.

Leanna currently teaches oboe as Visiting Lecturer of Music at Arkansas Tech University. She has held faculty appointments of Adjunct Instructor of Oboe at Belmont University and Lecturer in Oboe at the University of Louisville's School of Music. She also maintains a private oboe studio and busy oboe reed making business.

In 2019, Leanna was a featured soloist with the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra in the world premiere of Michael Fine's Concerto for Oboe Section. Other solo engagements have included Richard Strauss's Oboe Concerto with both the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra and Missouri Symphony Orchestra, and Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante with the Missouri Symphony Orchestra. She has also been involved in several chamber music commissions and world premieres as a member of the DDG Double Reed Trio with her Arkansas Symphony colleagues Beth Wheeler and Lorraine Duso Kitts.

Leanna hails from Kingsport, Tennessee, where she studied oboe and piano and served as English hornist with the Kingsport Symphony. She performed at the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition as a semi-finalist in the junior division. Leanna earned a Bachelor of Music degree from Vanderbilt University's Blair School of Music, where she also received a minor in sociology. She received a Master of Music degree from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. Her primary teachers have included Bobby Taylor, John de Lancie, and Mark Ostoich. While a student she participated in numerous music festivals, including the Aspen Music Festival, the Banff Centre for the Arts, the Chautauqua Institute, and the Bowdoin International Music Festival. In 2005, she was one of five finalists in the prestigious Fernand Gillet-Hugo Fox International Oboe Competition, held at the International Double Reed Society conference in Austin, Texas.

During the summer, Leanna performs as Second Oboe and English horn with the Peninsula Music Festival Orchestra in Door County, Wisconsin.



ALDRIN VENDT, Dancer

Aldrin Vendt started dancing at age 10 in Tyler, Texas. After two years, he moved to Dallas, Texas, where he studied at the Ballet Academy of Texas under the direction of Lisa Slagle. Upon graduation, he attended Texas Christian University's School for Classical and Contemporary Dance under the direction of Elizabeth Gillaspay with a full tuition scholarship. Mr. Vendt joined Oklahoma City Ballet for the 2017/18 and 2018/19 seasons. Here he performed several works

choreographed by Robert Mills, including Russian and lead Chinese in *The Nutcracker* and Czardas in *Swan Lake*. Vendt joined Ballet Arkansas for the 2019/20 season and has since performed leading roles in productions of *The Nutcracker Spectacular*, *Sleepy Hollow*, *Dracula*, *Great Gatsby*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Swan Lake*, *Romeo & Juliet*, among others.



MEREDITH LOY, *Dancer*

Meredith Short Loy, a native of Little Rock, Arkansas, received her early training at Arkansas Academy of Dance and Arkansas Festival Ballet under the direction of Rebecca Miller Stalcup and Melinda Tobian. Meredith holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in ballet performance from the University of Oklahoma. Since joining Ballet Arkansas, Meredith has had the opportunity to perform works by Agnes de Mille, Christopher Wheeldon, Ma Cong, Flock, Mariana Oliveira, Xin Ying, Yury Yanowsky, and George Balanchine. A few of Meredith's most recent and favorite roles include Mina in Michael Fothergill's *Dracula*, *Tchaikovsky's Pas de Deux* by George Balanchine, Swanhilda in *Coppélia & the Toymaker*, Gerald Arpino's *Confetti and Reflections*, the Sugar Plum Fairy in *The Nutcracker*, Odette/Odile from *Swan Lake*, Aurora from *Sleeping Beauty*, and most recently Juliet in *Romeo & Juliet*. In addition to performing, Meredith takes great pleasure in working as a rehearsal director for BA's community casts and as an educator at the Ballet Arkansas School for Dance.

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KARA CLAYBROOK, *Soprano*

Multifaceted soprano Kara Claybrook is a collegiate voice professor, choral conductor, opera director and minister of music from Little Rock, Arkansas. Currently an Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Mobile's Alabama School of the Arts, her prior experience has taken her to seven universities in four states, including Ouachita Baptist University and Hendrix College. With expertise in opera, oratorio, musical theater, contemporary worship, and commercial music, Kara balances a passion for teaching with performing across genres. Her stage credits include Marian in *The Music Man*, Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, Alma in Adamo's *Little Women*, Milly in *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, Gertie in *Oklahoma!*, and more. Professionally, she has worked with First Coast Opera, Opera Mississippi, Opera in the Rock, and Murray's Dinner Playhouse. Kara's contemporary repertoire includes performances at Indiana State University's Contemporary Music Festival and originating the role of Elizabeth of York in Griebing's *Richard III*. In 2019, she made her stage directing debut with Opera in the Rock and served as a directing intern for the Harrower Summer Opera Workshop in Atlanta, Georgia. Kara's instructors have included such celebrated singers as Diane Kesling and Patricia Wise. In 2022, she completed her Doctor of Musical Arts in Voice Performance with a Musical Theatre cognate under Dr. Maryann Kyle. Through her diverse career in academia and performance, Kara continues to mentor future musicians while maintaining an active stage presence.



NISHEEDAH GOLDEN, *Mezzo-Soprano*

Nisheedah Devré Golden, mezzo-soprano, is a graduate of the University of Central Arkansas. Some of her professional opera credits includes, Madame Butterfly, The Mother in *Mavra*, Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus*, Miss Todd in *The Old Maid and the Thief*, Madame Flora in the *Medium*, chorus in *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, and *La Bohème*. She made her international debut as Zita in the opera *Gianni Schicchi* in Shanghai, China. Ms. Golden also had the privilege of playing the lead female role of Azelia in William Grant Still's opera *Troubled Island*. Previously Ms. Golden had the pleasure of appearing as the lead vocalist at the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra Opus Ball honoring Florence Price. She was also the featured vocalist for the ASO's Concert *In Memoriam* in 2022. In 2023, Ms. Golden returned as one of the lead vocalists for the ASO's neighborhood concert series. In addition to opera, Ms. Golden, has a professional background in musical theatre. Some of the professional plays she has been in, include: Bloody Mary in *South Pacific*, Motormouth Mable in *Hairspray*, Missy Judson in *Purlie*, and One Ninth (about the Little Rock Nine), and many more. All Praise be to God!

THE FAIRY QUEEN / *Henry Purcell*

b. London, England / September 10, 1659 – November 21, 1695

Scholars identify Henry Purcell's **The Fairy Queen** as an example of an obscure genre called semi-opera. In the 1690s, semi-operas were a “fad,” and Purcell had some successes with this brand of entertainment. **The Fairy Queen** was first performed in 1692, telling the story of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* using an adapted spoken-word script by an anonymous playwright. An unabridged performance would last around four hours, much longer than the sung operas of the 17th century.

Semi-operas consist of three distinct components:

1. Brief instrumental movements with familiar names like Symphony, Prelude, and Overture that precede the acts of the play. Additionally, common dance types such as Chaconne, Air, or Hornpipe are included.
2. The title story told by actors using spoken word.
3. Masques, a form of courtly entertainment with singing, dancing, and acting, which are interspersed throughout the performance. Strange to our modern sensibilities, the content of the Masques may or may not be associated with the story line!

Today we hear a single excerpt from **The Fairy Queen**, a movement labeled *Act IV: Symphony* that introduces the final act of this semi-opera. The excerpt does not resemble any symphony of the Classical or Romantic Eras—it is a modest instrumental tidbit lasting only a few minutes, but it traverses some tempo changes in rapid succession. The opening suggests a royal procession before moving on to sections of contrasting moods, slow and somber, then fast and dance-like. Savor these sounds as we rarely hear music of the late 17th Century in orchestra concerts.

L'HORLOGE DE FLORE FOR OBOE AND ORCHESTRA / *Jean Francaix*

b. LeMans, France / May 23, 1912 – September 25, 1997

Think flowers—blooming flowers! That's what Jean Francaix wants us to associate with this piece of music, the only program music composition this writer knows of that is a tribute to flowering plants. It is also a tour de force oboe concerto, commissioned in 1959 by John de Lancie, longtime principal oboist of the Philadelphia Orchestra. At that time, Francaix was at the height of his career, and he was the mantle bearer of the “French School” of composition that perpetuated a musical style which began in the 19th Century at the time of Claude Debussy. Having outlived most of his French compatriots, Francaix was the go-to person to create the musical impression that Mr. De Lancie was seeking for his commission. The colorful and expanded tonal language used by Francaix includes bits and pieces of Impressionism, Neoclassicism, and even formulas of melody and harmony used in jazz of the 1950s. The intimate orchestration is just as luminous as the harmony, and it is well-suited to complement the sweet sound of the solo oboe. The woodwinds of the orchestra, and the French horns, interweave melodies with the soloist, and provide moments of respite for the oboist who rarely has a moment's rest. Strings are a light but sturdy presence throughout the work.

Regarding the botanical aspects underpinning this work, the Enlightenment Era Swedish scientist, and founding father of the modern botanical classification system, Carl Linnaeus, devised the name “Floral Clock” to describe his classification of a group of plants that will dependably open and close their flowers at specific hours of the day and night.

Jean Francaix includes seven flower depictions in **L’horloge de flore** for oboe and orchestra. Each flower has its own musical personality, but each section is relatively short, and the music is often performed without pause. If you know your plants, and you want to match the music with its flower clock companion, then here is the sequence of flowers in English: poisonberry, blue catananche, torch thistle, Malabar jasmine, deadly nightshade, mourning geranium, and night-flowering catchfly.

INCIDENTAL MUSIC FROM A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM

Felix Mendelssohn

b. Hamburg, Germany / February 3, 1809 – November 4, 1847

Felix Mendelssohn was a musical prodigy who became a well-regarded and influential composer during the first half of the 19th century. This collection of movements represents two distinct parts of the composer’s life, with two separate muses motivating him.

The “Overture” is a youthful work inspired by Mendelssohn’s excitement when, in 1826, he read Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in a German translation. That same year, he composed the “Overture” which received a designation of Opus 21. It is by far the longest movement in this collection, and its structure demonstrates a level of skill unexpected from a composer of only seventeen years old. Scholars seem to go overboard trying to pair musical gestures with elements of Shakespeare’s story. Forest music, fairy music, a love theme, and braying are identified, while at the same time it is often suggested that the music fits the guidelines of sonata form, a template that has a series of musical events usually associated with music composed without the intention to represent or illustrate something else. The “Overture” existed for around sixteen years as a stand-alone concert overture.

In 1842, Mendelssohn composed **Incidental Music** for an actual production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. His inspiration this time was a paycheck from the King of Prussia. The “Overture” was added to the 13 new movements under the banner of Opus 61. One of the movements will stand out to listeners because nearly everyone will recognize it—the “Wedding March” is the music-of-choice for the bride and groom to exit after a wedding ceremony. It is celebratory music of the highest order that still has the power to inspire goosebumps.

In addition to the “Overture” and the “Wedding March,” the other instrumental movements included in this performance have the titles “Scherzo,” “Intermezzo,” “Notturmo,” “Funeral March,” and “Dance of the Clowns,” each of whose title points to the nature of how the music will sound. This ASO performance will also include two movements featuring a vocalist and a chorus. Two dancers from Ballet Arkansas will perform on “Notturmo.”

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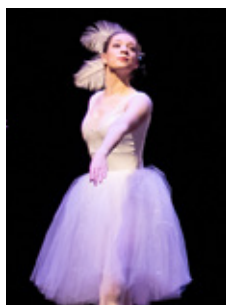
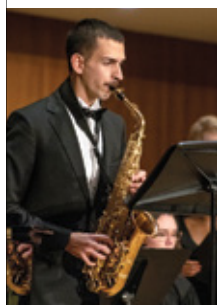
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