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COASTAL SYMPHONY HISTORY



The Coastal Symphony of Georgia began in 1982 with the vision of two public school music teachers, Michelle Lazarus and Michael Smith. Their leadership helped establish the Brunswick Community Orchestra, and in 1994 the organization was renamed The Coastal Symphony of Georgia, Inc. (CSG.) Professional conductors have

included Nicholas Palmer, Roger Born, Richard Suggs, Kermit Breen, Richard Larson, and Vernon Humbert who added a number of professional musicians to the community-based orchestra.

With an organizational vision of providing the best in musical excellence, Maestro Luis Haza was named Music Director and Conductor in 2013, and our first professional General Manager, Jorge Peña was hired. Under Maestro Haza's baton, the orchestra became entirely comprised of professional musicians from throughout the Southeast.

With Maestro Haza's retirement following the 2017-2018 season, we welcomed Michelle Merrill to the podium. As Music Director and Conductor, she is committed to our high quality of excellence and is designing symphony programs of superlative quality for our audiences. She enjoys planning music from both the old masters and newer works alike.

The Symphony Board of Directors has grown to a membership of over 20 community leaders who give us high visibility in the community and provide critically needed financial and volunteer resources for continuing growth. This year, the board is excited to celebrate its 41st Concert Season.

We are grateful to the community for its loyal support, which makes our growth in musical excellence and fiscal health possible. The Coastal Symphony of Georgia is dedicated to providing the very best in symphonic music to the Golden Isles.

MICHELLE MERRILL

Music Director and Conductor



In her sixth season with The Coastal Symphony of Georgia, our dynamic Music Director and Conductor, Michelle Merrill continues her vibrant leadership of our symphony. Beginning this Season, Michelle holds *The Michelle Merrill Music Director and Conductor's Chair* which is sponsored by an anonymous patron. Michelle says the CSG is a special organization and "one I plan on leading for many more years to come."

Our sought-after Music Director has again curated a new season of symphonic music dedicated to presenting new and engaging works alongside beloved classics. "An orchestra is a living art form, and we must constantly challenge ourselves with music from this wide variety of ages and styles if we hope to remain relevant," she notes.

Michelle has conducted numerous symphonic and philharmonic orchestras nationally and internationally including the Detroit Symphony where she worked with Leonard Slatkin, the National Symphony Orchestra's Annual Labor Day Concert at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., a performance of the San Francisco Opera's production of *Carmen* while serving as assistant conductor there, the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, and the Iceland Symphony Orchestra.

Born in Dallas, Texas, Michelle earned a Master of Music Degree in Conducting and a Bachelor of Music in Performance at Southern Methodist University's Meadows School of the Arts. She is the proud recipient of a 2016 Solti Foundation U.S. Career Assistance Award, as well as the prestigious 2013 Ansbacher Conducting Fellowship which enabled her to be in residence at the world-renowned Salzburg Festival. Michelle lives in Jacksonville with her husband, Steve Merrill, principal percussionist of both the Jacksonville Symphony and the CSG. The couple have two young sons Davis and Emmett who often travel with their parents on their musical adventures.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to our 41st Concert Season! We wish to extend our congratulations to our Music Director Michelle Merrill on her new post as Artistic Director of the Winston-Salem Symphony. We are truly blessed to have such a sought-after talent continuing at the helm of the Coastal Symphony of Georgia.

Once again, Merrill has curated a season not to be missed featuring music from America, a performance by a rising operatic star, an exquisite symphony that is being rediscovered, a visit from an old friend, and works from Brahms, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky and more.



Kern Baker, President CSG

We continue to welcome strong support from our Community Partners, Named Chairs, and Crescendo Circle members as we enter this new season. The CSG is deeply grateful to these faithful sponsors and donors whose support allows us to plan for excellence in all of our musical offerings. Check our website for information on how to join these influential donor groups.

Stay tuned for information on upcoming SoundBites, the 2024 Cabaret, and other events being planned for this exciting 41st Season. I look forward to seeing you at the Symphony!

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PROGRAM

Michelle Merrill, Conductor

Joan Tower *Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman, No. 1*

Aaron Copland *Billy the Kid Suite*

The Open Prairie
Street in a Frontier Town
Card Game at Night
Gun Battle
Celebration after Billy's Capture
Billy's Demise
The Open Prairie (Epilogue)

Intermission

Antonin Dvorak *Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Op. 95*
From The New World

I. Adagio - Allegro Molto
II. Largo
III. Scherzo: Molto Vivace

Music Dedications

Symphony No. 9 (New World) Antonin Dvorak
In loving memory of Chuck Cansler

Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman, No. 1 Joan Tower

In loving memory of Elizabeth Freyer, a most uncommon woman
who served as President of The Coastal Symphony of Georgia
and created CABARET, the annual Symphony Signature Event.
The Fred Freyer Family

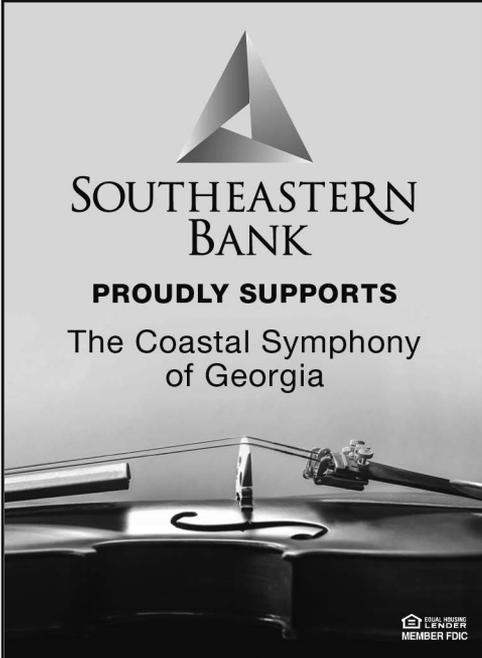
To my dear friend Dr. Faith Willis
who always stands tall for what is fair, right, and just.
Creta Carter Nichols

CONCERT NOTES

Opening Night begins our 41st Season with Music from America

The program opens with *Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman, No. 1* by American composer, Joan Tower. The Fanfare, which Tower says is a tribute to “women who take risks and are adventurous,” is bold music featuring clashing cymbals, huge percussion strokes, and powerful rhythms. It is the first of six short compositions written over a period of nine years and performed as individual fanfares with orchestras nationally.

Aaron Copland’s *Billy the Kid Suite* follows. Music written for a “cowboy ballet” incorporates cowboy tunes and American Folk songs as it tells the story of infamous outlaw Billy the Kid. The rich music opens with a pastoral setting on the open prairie before moving on to the merry tunes of a busy town, the percussive hurried pace of a gun battle, the celebration of Billy’s capture, and finally his demise at the hands of Sheriff Pat Garrett, set to strings, winds, and brass.




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Following intermission, we experience Czech composer Antonin Dvorak’s incomparable Symphony No. 9, popularly known as *The New World Symphony*. The symphony was composed by Dvorak when he was director of the National Conservatory of Music of America and became greatly influenced by African American Spirituals and Native American music. A New York Herald reporter called it “a noble composition of heroic proportions” and compared the work favorably to those of Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms and Mendelssohn.

This concert will delight us!

THE ORCHESTRA

Michelle Merrill, **The Michelle Merrill Music Director and Conductor's Chair**

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Victoria Stjerna

Ann Hertle

Chi-Yin Chen

Hannah Barrow

Gregory Durozel

Alison Hoffman

Tania Moldovan

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Piotr Szewczyk, Principal

Alexandra Khaimovich

Mario Incorvaia

Alex Heidt

Helen Morin

Corina Donica

Kaitlin Smedley

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Jorge A Peña

The Jane Günter-McCoy Memorial Principal Viola Chair

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Marc Chesanow

Trent Harper

Daniel Peterson

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Danielle Duncan,
Principal

MEET THE COMPOSERS

Joan Tower – 1938 -

Joan Tower is a Grammy-winning contemporary American composer, concert pianist and conductor whose works have been commissioned by major ensembles, soloists, and orchestras around the world. Her over 60-year career has left lasting contributions to musical life in composition, performance, conducting and education earning her praise from *The New Yorker* as “one of the most successful woman composers of all time.”



Born in New Rochelle, New York, she credits a move to Bolivia at age nine with making rhythm an integral part of her work. Her talent in music grew rapidly with consistent training insisted upon by her father. She returned to the United States as a young woman to study at Bennington College and Columbia University where she earned a Masters in Composition and a Doctorate in Musical Arts.

An illustrious career has followed. Tower’s early music was rooted in the sparse texture of serialism, but she later moved to more rhythmically complex and colorful music described as bold, energetic, and by some as impressionistic. She was a co-founder of the Da Capo Chamber Players, as well as composer-in-residence at both the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and the Orchestra of St Luke’s in New York. While in St. Louis, she was commissioned to write a symphony (*Silver Ladders*) which she dedicated to famed conductor Leonard Slatkin who conducted the premier. The piece won her the esteemed Grawemeyer Award for Musical Composition in 1990 - the first woman to win the award. She also won the Delaware Symphony’s prestigious Alfred I DuPont Award for Distinguished American Composer in 1998. She holds a longstanding position as Asher B. Edelman Professor of Music at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York.

Interviewed for *Symphony* magazine, Tower said, “People hold onto dead European males like they are treasures. I get that.” However, she doesn’t understand why there is “so much resistance to newer music and living composers, who have so much to offer.”

Aaron Copland 1900-1990

Aaron Copland came from modest beginnings, but he would go on to become known by his peers and critics as “The Dean of American Composers.” His music had a distinctive characterization of American themes in an expressive modern style.

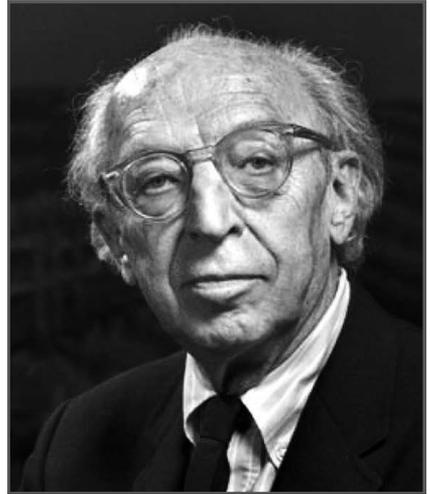
The son of Russian-Jewish immigrants, Aaron learned to play piano from his older sister, and began composing by trying to learn harmony through a correspondence course. A turning point came in 1921

when Copland attended the newly founded school for Americans at Fontainebleau, Paris. There, he came under the influence of Nadia Boulanger, a brilliant teacher who shaped the outlook of an entire generation of American musicians. Copland was her first American composition student.

After three years in Paris, Copland returned to New York City with a commission from Boulanger to write an organ concerto for her American appearances. A period of interest in Igor Stravinsky’s Neoclassicism followed, turning Copland toward an abstract style he described as “more spare in sonority, more lean in texture.”

His mid thirties ushered in his most productive phase of work when he realized a new media of radio, phonograph, and film was creating a new public for modern music. The following decade saw scores that spread Copland’s fame throughout the world – most importantly the three ballets based on American folk material: *Billy the Kid*, *Rodeo*, and *Appalachian Spring*. He also composed a series of film scores including *Of Mice and Men*, *Our Town*, *The Red Pony*, and *The Heiress*. In 1942 he completed *Lincoln Portrait* for speaker & chorus.

Copland composed operas, ballets, orchestral music, band music, chamber music, choral music, and film scores. He was also a teacher, writer, organizer of musical events, and a sought-after conductor. He lived to age 90, having given us incomparable American music that has become a part of our culture, and encouraged young composers.





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~ Plato

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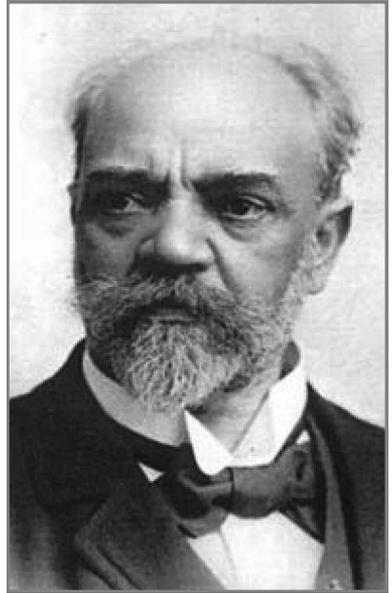
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Antonin Dvorak – 1841-

Antonin Dvorak was one of the first Czech composers to receive worldwide recognition. His style employs rhythms and other aspects of the folk music of Moravia and his native Bohemia in what one critic called “the fullest recreation of a national idiom with that of the symphonic tradition.”

Dvorak brought that notion of a national idiom with him when he came to America in 1892 to serve as the Director of The National Conservatory of Music in New York City. While there, he developed an interest in *Negro Spirituals* and Native American music. “I am convinced that the future music of this country must be founded on



what are called *Negro* melodies,” he said. “These can be the foundation of a serious and original school of composition, to be developed in the United States. These beautiful and varied themes are the product of the soil. They are the folk songs of America, and your composers must turn to them.”

Young Antonin was gifted at an early age, and his musical talents were encouraged, but he was almost unknown outside Prague until age 33. His early leanings were toward Beethoven and Schubert, but he was later influenced by Wagner and Liszt. His great talent for melody and the fresh Czech characteristics of his music were a welcome contrast to some of the heavier pieces of his contemporaries.

“Sometimes it takes an outsider to point out what’s great about a culture,” noted Tom Huizenga of NPR’s *All Things Considered*. “That’s exactly what Czech composer Antonin Dvorak was when he came to the US ... an immigrant thrown into a new world and new sounds. And out of that experience, he wrote a symphony for America.” The symphony continues to be an important part of the repertoire today – often played by orchestras throughout the world.

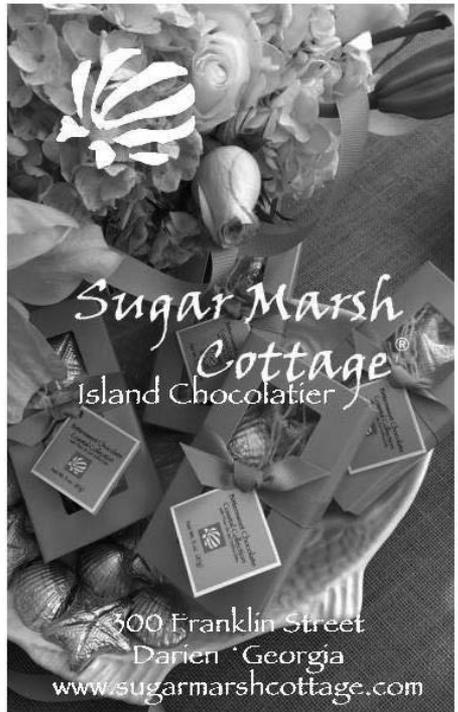
Dvorak composed in all of the genres and left works regarded as classics in all of them with the possible exception of opera. He had an attractive personality and was a humble, deeply religious family man of simple tastes who loved nature.



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**MICHELLE MERRILL
MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR**

SOLOIST

Mezzo-soprano Ashley Dixon is a rising star on the national operatic stage. Hailing from Peachtree City, Georgia, she is currently artist-in-residence at the San Francisco Opera where the San Francisco Chronicle has described her voice as a “robust instrument full of beguiling vocals, as well as formidable technical command.” A Grand Finals winner of the 2018 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, she is quickly establishing herself as one of the most exceptional artists of her generation.

Ashley holds a BA in Music from Louisiana State University, and a Masters of Music from the University of Michigan. Following her 2020 Debut with the Los Angeles Opera, she received critical acclaim for having a “melodious and precise voice” which allows her to navigate her character’s dilemmas with “sure-fire finesse.”

Ashley’s 2023-2024 Season includes performances with the Erie Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Houston Grand Opera, New Orleans Opera, Boston Youth Symphony and San Francisco Opera. She enjoys reading, biking, and cooking, and says if she were not a singer, she would be a chef. She has a passion for French repertoire ranging from Baroque to Berlioz, and enjoys performing with her husband, tenor Carlos Santelli. They shared the stage at the Met’s Council Auditions, and often perform together.

Ashley’s appearance will be a special one for our Music Director, Michelle Merrill. Ashley and Michelle worked together at the San Francisco Opera in 2019 where the conductor “fell in love” with the singer’s voice. Michelle also describes the *Song Cycle* as “absolutely gorgeous.”



PROGRAM

Michelle Merrill, Conductor

Bedřich Smetana

Vltava (The Moldau)

Edward Elgar

Sea Pictures Song Cycle

Sea Slumber Song
In Haven (Capri)
Sabbath Morning at Sea
Where Corals Lie
The Swimmer

Guest Artist: Ashley Dixon, Mezzo-Soprano

Intermission

Johannes Brahms

Symphony No. 1

- I. Adagio—Allegro Molto
- II. Largo
- III. Scherzo: Molto Vivace
- IV. Finale. Allegro con fuoco



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CONCERT NOTES

Our Fall Concert treats us to music of Poetry and Song

The concert opens with a symphonic poem which evokes the flow of the Vltava (Moldau in German) River from its beginning in the Bohemian Forest, through the Czechoslovakian countryside, and on to the city of Prague. Written by Bohemian composer Bedřich Smetana, the piece is devoutly patriotic and captures the composer's love of his homeland. The music constitutes the second movement of a six-movement suite, *Ma vlast* (My Country) which premiered in Prague in 1882 and has been described as "musical pictures of Czech glories and defeats." Moldau remains the most popular of the movements.

Critically acclaimed mezzo-soprano, Ashley Dixon joins the orchestra with Edward Elgar's *Sea Pictures Song Cycle*. Written in 1899, the five songs composing the cycle are taken from 19th Century poetry; while the poetry is considered pedestrian, Elgar manages to touch the words with musical magic. Each poem offers a different response to the ocean: its beauty, its temptations, its symbolism, its dangers, all written with compelling sweep and sincerity. Listen for strokes of timpani, a siciliano rhythm, surging climaxes and strong emotional expressions shifting to graceful winds, harp and string chords and a gloriously dramatic conclusion. This performance will showcase Ms. Dixon's voice which has been described as a "robust instrument."

The concert closes with Brahms' Symphony No. 1 which took over 20 years to complete and was hailed by conductor Hans von Bulow as "Beethoven's Tenth" in 1877. First, there was Brahms' fastidiousness which led him to destroy many of his early works. Then there was the expectation he would continue Beethoven's inheritance and produce a symphony of commensurate dignity and intellectual scope – an expectation he did not believe he could fulfill. In the end, Vienna's most powerful critic, Eduard Hanslick recognized its value and importance. However, perceived similarities to Beethoven annoyed Brahms; he feared they suggested plagiarism, when he saw his use of Beethoven's idiom as conscious homage to his monumental reputation.

This concert will enchant us!

THE ORCHESTRA

Michelle Merrill, **The Michelle Merrill Music Director and Conductor's Chair**

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**Southeast Georgia
 Health System
 Concertmaster's Chair**
 Anastasia Petrunina
 Ingang Han
 Victoria Stjerna
 Ann Hertler
 Hanna Barrow
 Chi-Yen Chen
 Simon Shiao
 David Song
 Gregory Durozel

2nd Violin

Piotr Szewczyk, Principal
 Alexandra Khaimovich
 Thiago Formiga
 Jee-Hee Kang
 Helen Morin
 Alex Heidt
 Corina Donica
 Kaitlin Smedley

Viola

Jorge A Peña
**The Jane Günter-McCoy
 Memorial Principal Viola
 Chair**
 Darryl Manley
 Cynthia Kempf
 Sadie Nichols
 Yvonne Johnson
 Angelo Goderre

Cello

Jin Kim
**The James A. Heagy
 Principal Cello Chair**
 Brian Magnus
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MEET THE COMPOSERS

Bedřich Smetana 1824-1884

Bedřich Smetana was a Czech composer who pioneered development of a musical style closely identified with his people's aspirations to a cultural and political "revival."

Smetana was naturally gifted as a musician and composer; his first public performance was given at the age of six. He studied in Prague and his first nationalistic music was written during the 1848 Prague uprising. He later left for Sweden where he taught, served as choirmaster in Gothenburg, and began to

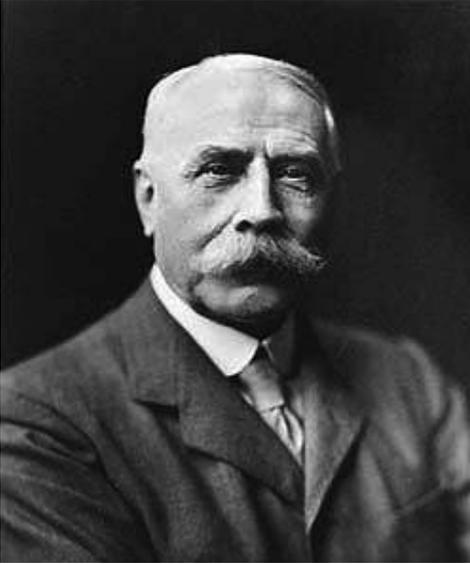


write large scale orchestral works. He returned permanently to Prague where he championed a new genre of Czech opera. However, factions in the city considered his identification with Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner inimical to development of a distinctively Czech opera style.

In 1874, Smetana resigned his position as conductor of the New Provisional Theater; he had become completely deaf and suffered a decline in health. Free of the stress, he began a period of sustained composition and his contributions to Czech music were increasingly recognized and honored. He is probably best known for his opera, *The Bartered Bride*, and the *Ma vlast* suite. In 1884 he suffered a mental collapse and died.

In Czechoslovakia, Smetana's music has endured as has his reputation as the founding father of Czech music. However, few of his works appear in the international repertoire and most foreign commentators today regard Dvorak as more significant.

Edward Elgar, 1st Baronet– 1857-1934



Sir Edward Elgar was an English composer who triumphed late in life, and many of his works have now entered the British and international classical concert repertoire. He is best known for his orchestral works including the *Enigma Variations*, the *Pomp and Circumstance Marches*, concertos for violin and cello, and two symphonies.

Most of Elgar's musical influences came from continental Europe, not England. In his first trips

abroad, he visited Paris in 1880 and Leipzig in 1882, writing "I got pretty well dosed with Schumann (my ideal!), Brahms, Rubinstein and Wagner, so had no cause to complain." He felt himself an outsider in Britain, not only musically, but socially. He was a self-taught composer from humble beginnings and a Roman Catholic in a Protestant country. He struggled to achieve success until his forties when his *Enigma Variations* (1899) became immediately popular in Britain and overseas. In his fifties, Elgar composed a symphony and a violin concerto that were immensely successful.

In 1902 Richard Strauss hailed Elgar as the "first English progressivist," but 20 years later, he was seen as hopelessly out of date, a victim of a world and musical aesthetics turned upside down by World War II. At his death, he was viewed as a total anachronism, a throwback to the golden, irretrievable days of Edward VII. Posthumously he was passed over in favor of Benjamin Britten and William Walton. However, his stock began to revive significantly in the 1960s, helped by new recordings of his works, and in recent years, some have been taken up internationally.

Johannes Brahms -1833-1897



Johannes Brahms was a champion of the Classical Tradition of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. In 1860, he co-published a manifesto against Franz Liszt, who had created a musical form known as a symphonic poem, and other modern composers of the New School. Brahms and Robert Schumann and other traditionalists felt the new ideas, which looked for ways to expand on non-musical forms and unite music and drama, were pure indulgence on the part of their composers. For their part the New School composers rebuked

the music of Brahms and Schumann as old fashioned.

Born in Hamburg, Germany, Brahms was taught piano by his father and was mentored by Schumann. He met Liszt in 1853 at the Court of Weimar where Liszt was playing Brahms' Scherzo, Op, 4 at sight. Brahms enjoyed steady success in Vienna, and both men became giants of their time leaving us with lovely, enduring musical works.

Brahms was considered a master of counterpoint, the complex disciplined art of Bach. He aimed to honor the purity of these German structures and advance them into the Romantic idiom, creating old new approaches to harmony and melody. His German Requiem for chorus, solo voice, and complete orchestra is a multi-layered piece, confirming his European reputation as a solid symphonic composer.

Brahms music sold and he invested wisely. He also supported friends and young musical students. It is said Brahms was moved to tears when his fourth and final symphony was performed by the Vienna Philharmonic, receiving thunderous applause from the audience. Sick with liver cancer, he seemed to be saying, "Farewell!" Brahms died just a month later.

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TIMELESS TREASURES



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MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR**

SOLOIST

Christopher Bassett currently serves as Acting Bass Trombone with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. He was a member of the Jacksonville Symphony from 2017 to 2022 and played with the Coastal Symphony of Georgia. He played in the *Three Trombones and a Tuba* SoundBite at Thrive (now Vitality Living Frederica.) Welcome back, Christopher!



Christopher is excited to make his debut as an orchestral soloist, performing the Sachse Concertino for Bass Trombone. Noting the brass section can usually be found hiding in the back of the orchestra, he says “It’s quite an opportunity for a trombonist to step up front and perform a concerto.” The solo repertoire for trombonists is quite vast but “the instrument rarely gets the same chance to shine like other instruments do”. He explains that for brass players, their embouchure (or lips) gets tired very quickly because of the strength it must endure to create the sound.

Christopher began playing trombone at the age of ten. He attended the New England Conservatory Preparatory School and completed a Bachelor of Music degree at the Conservatory. He plays with the Santa Fe Opera Orchestra in the summer and performed with the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival. Chris has performed with the Boston, Cincinnati, Detroit, Indianapolis, and Richmond Symphonies, the Boston Pops, and the Cleveland Orchestra. He is a performing artist for Edwards Instrument Co., Griego Mouthpieces, and Peck Custom Designs. He was also a 2016 Fellow at Tanglewood Music Center.

A committed educator, Chris has given Master Classes and Recitals coast to coast, and is a founding member of the Santa Fe Trombone Summit – a college level week-long trombone seminar, hosted by the trombones of the Santa Fe Opera.

Christopher enjoys travel, cooking, photography, reading, and getting out in nature. He currently lives in St. Louis with his wife, Siyu, who is a member of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra’s violin section.

PROGRAM

Michelle Merrill, Conductor

Ludwig van Beethoven

Coriolan Overture

Ernest Sachse

Concertino in F major
for Bass Trombone

Guest Artist: Christopher Bassett

Intermission

Louise Farrenc

Symphony No. 1

- I. Andante sostenuto - Allegro
- II. Adagio cantabile
- III. Minuetto moderato
- IV. Finale: Allegro con fuoco

Special appreciation to the following Foundations for their support of
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CONCERT NOTES

Our Winter Concert Brings Us Timeless Treasures

The concert opens with Beethoven's *Coriolan* Overture written for Henrich Joseph von Collins' tragedy, *Coriolan*. The overture begins in a main C minor theme representing Coriolanus' resolve and war-like tendencies before moving into the more tender E-flat major theme reflecting the pleading of his mother to desist fighting. There is a sense of urgency in the music and then a more calming theme as the music follows the story of the play.

An old friend of the symphony joins us for the second piece on the program. Trombonist, Christopher Bassett will play the Concertino in F major from German composer Ernst Sachse. The music is at first merry and fast-paced, followed by a lovely legato section, before returning to the original tempo. The bass trombone has a three-octave range and fingering can be particularly challenging as the soloist explores the amazing sounds of this "low brass" instrument. Prepare to be surprised!



Following intermission, the orchestra will play an exquisite symphony from little known French composer, Louise Farrenc. Her first symphony shows an individual voice of considerable originality along with influences of Beethoven and Schuman, both of whom were writing at the time. Farrenc's music is full of melody and expressive use of each section. In June 2020, *BBC Music Magazine* noted that some were saying the symphony was hard to pin down, but then wondered why should we feel the need to pigeonhole the work calling it "... a fluent, feisty essay; a work shot through with bold strokes and a fertile orchestral imagination..."

This concert will intrigue us!

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Ingang Han

Victoria Stjerna

Ann Hertler

Jee-Hee Kang

2nd Violin

Piotr Szewczyk, Principal

Hannah Barrow

Thiago Formiga

Chi-Yin Chen

Gregory Durozel

Viola

Jorge A Peña

The Jane Günter-McCoy Memorial Principal Viola Chair

Darryl Manley

Angelo Goderre

Jessye Russom

Cello

Jin Kim

The James A. Heagy Principal Cello Chair

Betsy Federman

Brian Magnus

Bass

Paul Strasshofer, Principal

Marc Chesanow

Flute

Les Roettges

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Aaron Brask

Trumpet

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MEET THE COMPOSERS

Ludwig van Beethoven – 1770-1827

The person widely considered the greatest composer of all time completed some of his most important work when he was quite deaf. Yet he became an innovator, widening the scope of sonata, symphony, concerto, and quartet, and combining vocals and instruments in a new way.



Born in Bonn, Germany, Beethoven was taught piano, violin, and clavier as a small child by his father who was an alcoholic mediocre court singer. The father would flog the son for mistakes, lock him in the cellar, and deprive him of sleep for extra hours of practice – a brutality that affected him all of his life. Through it all, he became a prodigiously talented musician from his earliest days, displaying flashes of the creative imagination that would eventually reach farther than any composer’s before or since. Beethoven would come to be considered the predominant musical figure of the transitional period between the Classical and Romantic eras of music.

Beethoven was a poor student in a Latin grade school, struggling with sums and spelling which would become a lifelong challenge. He dropped out at age 10 and went on to study music with a court organist. He was introduced to Bach, published his first composition at the age of 12, and at age 14 became the family breadwinner when his father could no longer support the family. Young Ludwig worked as a court organist and was later sent to Vienna where he made his long-awaited public debut in 1795. Tradition has it that upon hearing Beethoven play, Mozart said, “Keep your eyes on him. Some day he will give the world something to talk about.”

As the new century progressed Beethoven composed piece after piece. His “middle period” between 1803-1812 is unrivaled by any other composer in history in terms of the astonishing output of superlatively complex, original, and beautiful music. However, his hearing loss progressed along with his success, and he became a lonely, frequently

miserable man throughout his adult life. Short-tempered, absent-minded, greedy and suspicious to the point of paranoia, he feuded with his brothers, publishers, housekeepers, pupils, and patrons. He never married, and was thought to be in love with a married woman.

Some of his greatest music came near the end of his life. It is said that the audience for his monumental Ninth Symphony gave him five standing ovations with raised hats and hands waving handkerchiefs so he could see, if not hear, their thunderous applause. On his death at age 56, a personal note that he had concealed all his life was found. It said, in part, “Ah, it seemed impossible to leave the world until I had brought forth all that I felt was within me.”

Ernst Sachse – 1813-1870

Ernst Sachse was a popular German composer who worked as a court musician in Weimar. He often worked with Franz Liszt and was trombonist in the orchestra at the premiere of Richard Wagner’s “Lohengrin” (1855.) His Concertino for Trombone has secured him a place in the repertoire of every good trombonist.

Little is known about the composer’s life. Born in Altenberg, south of Leipzig, his early performances were under the direction of Johann Nepomuk Hummel and Franz Liszt. Considered a virtuoso trombonist, Sachse was often featured as soloist in his



own compositions. However, he was more famous for his compositions than his performances. He left works for orchestra and chamber music, and wrote studies that are still used today in conservatories. His concertos for bass trombone enjoyed modest popularity, and they are occasionally performed today.

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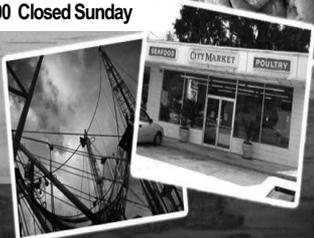


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Louise Farrenc – 1804–1875

Louise Farrenc was a well-respected 19th Century French composer, virtuoso pianist, and teacher. She had an impressive career, especially for a woman composing in the 19th Century.

Farrenc was born into a family of sculptors that could be traced back to the 17th Century. Their works were shown at the Louvre, Versailles, and in the important cultural capital of Rouen. She quickly became part of the Bohemian life in Paris where she was allowed to express her musical passions. At age 15, she enrolled at the Paris Conservatoire where she studied piano and composition.



Two years later, Louise married Aristide Farrenc, a flutist ten years her senior, and set her studies aside to go on concert tours with him. Aristide soon tired of the touring life, and the couple returned to Paris where they opened a successful publishing house, Editions Farrenc; it became one of France's leading music publishers for nearly 40 years. In 1826, they welcomed a daughter, Victorine; the child would become a concert pianist but she died at age 33.

During the 1830s, Farrenc resumed her touring career, gaining fame as a performer, and in 1842 she was appointed as permanent Professor of Piano at the Paris Conservatory, the only woman to hold the esteemed position throughout the 19th Century. She was paid less than her male counterparts for nearly a decade in spite of a reputation for excellent instruction and many students graduating with first prizes and gaining professional careers. Only after the triumphant premiere of her nonet, performed by the famous violinist Joseph Joachim, did she demand and receive equal pay.

Farrenc left us 3 symphonies, 2 piano quintets, 4 piano trios, 1 sextet, 1 nonet, 2 violin sonatas, 1 cello sonata, and many solo piano pieces. As a woman, she faced monumental challenges getting her work performed, and her pieces were forgotten for a while. A late 20th Century interest in women composers led to their rediscovery and the performance and recording of many of her works. Today, they are earning a respected place in the repertoire. You might say Louise Farrenc was a woman born before her time.

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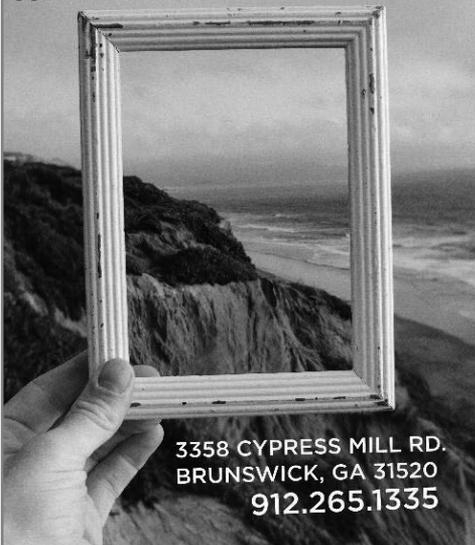
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PROGRAM

Michelle Merrill, Conductor

Joseph Bologne
Chevalier de Saint George

Symphony No. 1 in G major

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante
- III. Presto

Maurice Ravel

Le Tombeau de Couperin

- I. Prélude: Vif
- II. Forlane: Allegretto
- III. Minuet: Allegro moderato
- IV. Rigaudon: Assez vif

Intermission

Piotr Tchaikovsky

Serenade for Strings in C major

- I. Pezzo in forma di sonatina: Andante
non troppo-Allegro moderato
- II. Valse: Moderato-Tempo di valse
- III. Élégie: Larghetto elegiac
- IV. Finale (Tema russo): Andante-
Allegro con spirito

CONCERT NOTES

Our Season Finale features heartfelt, finely crafted music.

The concert opens with a lively, elegant, and well-crafted example of a classical symphony by 18th Century French composer Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint George. His Symphony No. 1 includes a spritely opening sonata with a lyrical theme and a zippy close, followed by an elegant ballroom dance, and a closing Presto that has been called a “scamper” in the way it builds in excitement and finishes with exuberant horns at the end. It all reflects a solid education in composition, and the music makes a delightful opening to the concert.

The symphony is followed by a light-hearted, sometimes reflective, but never somber memorial from another French composer, Maurice Ravel. Titled *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, meaning a piece written as a memorial, the suite was originally intended for solo piano with six movements in the style of the Baroque dance suite. He dedicated each to a friend or acquaintance who had fallen in the war. An orchestral version was produced in 1919, omitting two of the original movements, and later composers added the missing two movements back into the orchestration. Ravel’s delight in imagery and evocation shines through in what is meant to be thoughtful but not sad music. “The dead are sad enough in their eternal silence,” he said.

The concert closes with Piotr Tchaikovsky’s stirring *Serenade for Strings* in C major, a composition he called “heartfelt.” The music is graceful, poised, and full of familiar passages we have heard at the ballet, movies, or on television. It is considered one of the late Romantic era’s definitive compositions, and is a masterpiece for strings. In fact, Tchaikovsky wrote on the score, “The larger number of players in the string orchestra, the more this shall be in accordance with the author’s wishes.”

This concert will engage us!

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Aurica Duca
**Southeast Georgia
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 Concertmaster's Chair**
 Anastasia Petrunina
 Ingang Han
 Victoria Stjerna
 Ann Hertle
 Hannah Barrow

2nd Violin

Piotr Szewczyk, Principal
 Alexandra Khaimovich
 Thiago Formiga
 Chi-Yin Chen
 Jee-Hee Kang

Viola

Jorge A Peña
**The Jane Günter-McCoy
 Memorial Principal Viola
 Chair**
 Darryl Manley
 Yvonne Johnson
 Angelo Goderre

Cello

Jin Kim
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 Betsy Federman
 Brian Magnus

Bass

Paul Strasshofer, Principal
 Marc Chesanow

Flute

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 Lorraine Roettges
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MEET THE COMPOSERS

Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint George—

1745-1799



Joseph Bologne was a classical composer, virtuoso violinist, conductor, and champion fencer. The son of a married Guadeloupean planter and his wife's African slave, Bologne was educated in France. When he graduated from the Royal Polytechnique Academy in 1766, he was made both a gendarme and a chevalier. He enjoyed popularity in France and was a favorite of Marie Antoinette, but was forced to play

privately for her due to his race. During the French Revolution, Bologne joined the National Guard and served as a colonel in a corps of one thousand "citizens of color" that became known as Legion St.-Georges. Because of his association with the court, he became a victim of the Reign of Terror, and was imprisoned for at least eleven months.

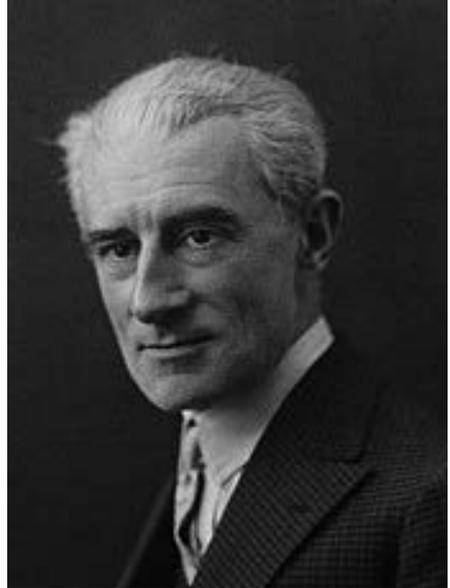
A Creole freeman of color, Bologne is considered the first classical composer of African descent to receive widespread critical acclaim. He composed string quartets, sonatas, violin concertos, symphonies, *sinfonia concertantes*, and opera comique. He was a good athlete, and fine dancer. The combination of artist, athlete, and man of action is unique in the history of music. In 1775, he was considered for the post of artistic director of the Royal Academy of Music at the Opera. However, famous female singers refused to sing with a "mulatto," and the nomination collapsed. He was named director of a new orchestra, *Le Cercle de L'Harmonie* which performed in the former residence of the Duke of Orleans who had long championed Bologne.

Bologne would forever be denied the privileges of a white man – even marriage was forbidden. He always trod a fine line between his status in French society and as an outsider, a man of color who supported the people in the Revolution. Bologne died in 1799 from bladder disease. There was no knowledge of any family, and he ended his remarkable life with only a few faithful companions by his side.

Some called Bologne the "Black Mozart." In 2022, an American biographical drama of his life was made - now streaming on TV.

Maurice Ravel – 1875-1937

He left us one of the richest and most important bodies of work of any early 20th Century composer. Yet, Maurice Ravel is perhaps most remembered for an arrangement of another man's music, and a piece he considered among his least significant. He composed with elegant precision in every genre except symphony and liturgy, but it was his arrangement of Modest Mussorgsky's piano suite "Pictures at an Exhibition" that became wildly popular and earned royalties making him rich. And the 15-minute Spanish dance *Bolero*, originally composed in ballet form and ridiculed for its repetitiveness, is still regularly performed and enjoyed.



Joseph Maurice Ravel was born into an artistic, cultured family in Cibourne, France, and was given every opportunity for enrichment. In 1889, he attended the Paris Conservatory at age fourteen where he excelled until 1895, and again from 1897 to 1903. Ravel established himself as a composer of prominence, but his association with Claude Debussy, who was considered *avant garde*, and his interest in non-French traditions like the music of Wagner worked against him. He was rejected three times for the prestigious Prix de Rome award. The rejection in 1905 was considered a scandal, and the director of the Conservatory had to resign. Gabriel Faure, who had been his composition teacher, was named director.

Prior to 1905, Ravel's music reflected an early perfection of style and craftsmanship. Later, he composed what would be his most ambitious work, *Daphnis et Chloe*; the ballet is considered his masterpiece. In 1928, he embarked on a four-month tour of the United States and Canada, enchanted with American jazz and blues. He met George Gershwin and immersed himself in the American music genre. His late works show the influence of that trip. Before returning home, he went to London to receive an Honorary Doctorate of Music from Oxford.

Ravel never married nor had children. He served as an ambulance driver in World War I, but was sent home in 1917 because of a weak constitution. He lived as a semi recluse at a country retreat at Montfort -L'Amaury near Paris. Ravel suffered from aphasia during the last five years of his life, and he could no longer compose music, speak, or write his name. He died in 1937 and was buried at Levallois, Paris.

When Ravel's career began, his friendship with Debussy cooled because of professional jealousy, and he became friends with Russian composer Igor Stravinsky. At Ravel's funeral, Stravinsky compared him to "the most perfect of Swiss watchmakers." Maurice Ravel said, "The only love affair I have ever had was with music."

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Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky – 1840-1893



Given Tchaikovsky's turbulent personal life, the times in which he lived, and the obstacles he faced, it is easy to understand why music provided him with a personal sanctuary.

Tchaikovsky was born in Vyatka, Russia, into a family with a long line of military service. He was one of six siblings whose parents thought a life of civil service should be his calling. Pyotr entered a military boarding school at age ten, and at the age of nineteen honored his parents' wishes by taking up a bureau clerk post with the Ministry of Justice.

He also began a lifelong passion for music with piano lessons at the age of

five. He was taken to the theater and opera where he was impressed with the works of Rossini, Bellini, Verdi, and Mozart. His father funded private studies until his piano teacher reported nothing suggested a potential composer or even a fine performer; the boy's lessons ended. At age 21, he began taking music lessons at the Russian Musical Society and later enrolled at St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1863.

Throughout his life, Tchaikovsky struggled with his homosexuality which was illegal in 19th Century Russia; one could be imprisoned, lose his rights or be exiled if discovered. Social and legal pressures made him marry a young music student, which was a disaster. Pyotr abandoned his wife within weeks, attempted suicide, and fled abroad. Music became an imperative and increasingly intense outlet for him. During a "rest cure" in Switzerland, he completed two of his finest works, Symphony No. 4 and the opera, *Eugene Onegin*.

Tchaikovsky's symphonies were equated with Dostoyevsky's psychological novels, with both the music and literature reflecting suffering. Nadezhda von Meck, a wealthy widow, became his patron. She ended the relationship after 13 years and 1200 letters, but Tchaikovsky was already successful in Europe and the United States.

His work includes symphonies, operas, ballets, concertos, cantatas, and songs. He became one of the most loved of Russian composers and gave the world strongly emotional, lush melodies of lasting appeal.

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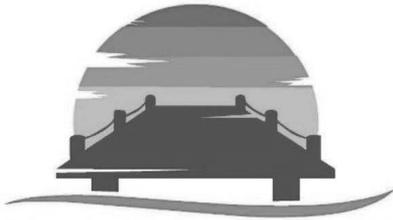
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