



# PALM SPRINGS FRIENDS OF PHILHARMONIC

PROUDLY PRESENT

## Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Vasily Petrenko, Conductor

Olga Kern, Piano

*Sponsored by Roberta Holland and Michael & Gloria Scoby*

Wednesday, January 12, 2022 at 7:30 pm

AND

## Orpheus Chamber Orchestra

Branford Marsalis, Saxophone

*Sponsored by Gail Richards, Rella & Monty Rifkin, Jane & Larry Sherman*

Thursday, January 13, 2022 at 7:30 pm

McCallum Theatre for the Performing Arts

# Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Vasily Petrenko, Conductor      Olga Kern, Piano

*Sponsored by Roberta Holland and Michael & Gloria Scoby*

January 12, 2022

## PROGRAM

**BENJAMIN BRITTEN**  
(1913-1976)

**Four Sea Interludes from *Peter Grimes*, Opus 33a (16 minutes)**

*Dawn*  
*Sunday Morning*  
*Moonlight*  
*Storm*

**EDVARD GRIEG**  
(1843-1907)

**Piano Concerto in A Minor, Opus 16 (31 minutes)**

*Allegro molto moderato*  
*Adagio*  
*Allegro moderato molto e marcato; Quasi presto; Andante maestoso*

Olga Kern, Piano

– INTERMISSION –

**SIR EDWARD ELGAR**  
(1857-1934)

**Enigma Variations, Opus 36 (32 minutes)**

*Theme: Enigma*

1 C.A.E	8 W.N.
2 H.D.S.-P.	9 Nimrod
3 R.B.T	10 ( <i>Dorabella</i> ) Intermezzo
4 W.M.B.	11 G.R.S.
5 R.P.A.	12 B.G.N.
6 Ysobel	13 (***) Romanza
7 Troyte	14 E.D.U.

PROGRAMS AND ARTISTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

### AS A COURTESY TO CONDUCTOR AND ORCHESTRA ...

Please remain seated until the performers leave the stage at intermission and at the end of the program. Also, please do not applaud between movements of any musical composition. Friends of Philharmonic audiences are known for the warm and courteous welcome extended to visiting performers. Please help maintain this fine reputation. THANK YOU.

**Photography and recording of any kind is strictly prohibited. Please remember to silence your cell phone.**

# Program Notes

## Four Sea Interludes from *Peter Grimes*, Opus 33a

BENJAMIN BRITTEN

Born November 22, 1913, Lowestoft

Died December 4, 1976, Aldeburgh

*Peter Grimes*, which depends for so much of its force on Britten's superb evocation of the harsh and violent Suffolk coast, has become one of the great operas of the twentieth century, and so it comes as a surprise to learn that the opera got its start in Southern California. Britten had left England in 1939, believing that his homeland was blocked to him as an artist and intending to make a new life in America. Britten had some success here, but he also suffered bouts of ill health, and—wishing for a warmer climate than Long Island's—he accepted an invitation to spend the summer of 1941 with the duo-pianist team of Ethel Bartlett and Rae Robertson at a home they had rented in Escondido, just north of San Diego. Britten and Peter Pears drove an ancient car across the country, arriving in Escondido that spring.

Two years in this country had made Britten increasingly ambivalent about his separation from England, and the summer in Escondido brought the event that drove him both to return and to compose *Peter Grimes*. Early that summer, Pears bought a volume of the poetry of George Crabbe (Pears was later unable to recall if the bookstore had been in Los Angeles or San Diego), and now the two young men found themselves enthralled by Crabbe's poetry. Crabbe (1754-1832) was from Britten's own Suffolk. His was a bleak vision of mankind and of Suffolk life; Britten probably did not know—but would readily have agreed with—the sonnet in tribute to Crabbe by American poet Edwin Arlington Robinson, which begins "Give him the darkest inch your shelf allows." To a friend in Long Island, Britten wrote: "We've just re-discovered the poetry of George Crabbe (all about Suffolk!) & are very excited—maybe an opera one day—!"

Britten was particularly taken with Crabbe's *The Borough* (1810), which tells of life in a Suffolk fishing village and of the outcast Peter Grimes. When Serge Koussevitzky asked Britten the following winter why he had composed no operas, the young composer spoke of the cost of such a project, and Koussevitzky promptly commissioned an opera from him. Britten

returned to England in April 1942, armed with this commission and fired by a new passion for his native Suffolk; he composed *Peter Grimes* in 1944-45, and its premiere in June 1945 was a triumph. The opera is based on the deadly collision between a fishing village called The Borough—which represents convention, religion, law, and a great deal of smugness—and Grimes, an outcast, violent, perhaps demented, yet longing for acceptance by the community he despises.

The opera is in three acts, and as preludes to the acts or as interludes between scenes Britten composed six orchestral interludes, brief mood-pieces designed to set a scene, establish a mood, or hint at character. Even before the opera had been produced, Britten assembled an orchestral suite made up of four of these, which he called *Sea Interludes*, and led the London Philharmonic Orchestra in its premiere on June 14, 1945.

The opera opens with a *Prologue*, The Borough's investigation into the death of Grimes' previous apprentice William Sprode, and at its conclusion comes the first interlude, *Dawn*, which functions as the prelude to the opera. Here is gray daybreak on the bleak Suffolk coast, evoked by the high, clear, pure sound of unison flutes and violins. This is haunting, evocative music, full of the cries of sea birds, the hiss of surf across rocky beaches, and—menacing in the deep brass—the swell of the sea itself. *Sunday Morning*, the prelude to Act 2, opens with the sound of church bells pealing madly in the horns and woodwinds. The strings have the theme Ellen Orford sings in praise of the sunny sea: "Glitter of waves / And glitter of sunlight / Bid us rejoice / And lift our hearts high." *Moonlight* is the prelude to Act 3—its portrait of the tranquil sea is broken by splashes of sound from flute, xylophone, and harp. The concluding *Storm* actually comes early in the opera: a depiction of a storm that strikes the coast, it forms the musical interlude between Scenes 1 and 2 of the opening act. The violence of the opening gives way to a more subdued central section before the storm breaks out again and drives the music to its powerful close. Britten noted that "... my life as a child was colored by the fierce storms that sometimes drove ships on our coast and ate away whole stretches of neighboring cliffs. In writing *Peter Grimes*, I wanted to express my awareness of the perpetual struggle

of men and women whose livelihood depends on the sea."

## **Piano Concerto in A Minor, Opus 16**

EDVARD GRIEG

Born June 15, 1843, Bergen, Norway

Died September 4, 1907, Bergen

In June 1867 Edvard Grieg—a struggling 24-year-old composer—married his first cousin, Nina Hagerup, a soprano. It would be a long and happy marriage, and the following April the couple had their only child, a daughter they named Alexandra. That summer, the Griegs wished to take a break from the busy musical life of Norway, and they went to Denmark, where they hoped the milder climate would benefit the composer's often frail health. They rented a two-room garden cottage in the village of Søllerød, a few miles outside Copenhagen, and there—in June 1868—Grieg began his *Piano Concerto in A Minor*. He completed the score early the following year, and Edmund Neupert gave the first performance in Copenhagen on April 3, 1869. The concerto was a great success from that moment and was soon published, but Grieg continued to revise it across the rest of his life: he made the final revisions in 1907, only a few months before his death.

Several years after the premiere, the Griegs traveled to Rome, where they visited Franz Liszt in his villa. Liszt sat down at his piano and sight-read this difficult concerto from Grieg's manuscript. Grieg reported that while Liszt played the first movement too fast, his playing of the cadenza was magnificent, and the older master was so taken with the music at one point that he got up and strolled away from the piano with his arms upraised, "literally roaring out the theme."

Best of all, Liszt recognized how Grieg had amended one of the principal themes of the finale when it comes back for a triumphant reappearance at the end, and he shouted out: "G-natural! G-natural! Not G-sharp! Splendid!" Liszt went back and played that ending one more time, then told Grieg: "Keep on, I tell you. You have what is needed, and don't let them frighten you."

Liszt's judgment was sound: the Grieg *Piano Concerto* has become one of the most popular ever written. Its combination of good tunes alternating with stormy, dramatic gestures, all of it stitched together with some brilliant writing for piano, has made it almost

irresistible to audiences. To some extent, this music has become a victim of its own success: by the middle of the last century, it had become almost too popular. Over the last generation or so it has virtually disappeared from the concert hall, which makes a fresh performance all the more welcome.

Grieg greatly admired the music of Robert Schumann, and the similarity between the beginnings of their respective piano concertos is striking. Each opens with a great orchestral chord followed by a brilliant passage for the solo piano that eases gently into the movement's main theme. Grieg makes his opening even more dramatic by beginning with a long timpani roll: that roll flares up like a peal of thunder, then the piano's entrance flashes downward like a streak of lightning. The movement's march-like main theme, shared on its first appearance by winds and strings, is only the first of many attractive ideas—one observer has counted seven different themes in this movement, and these range from a melting lyricism to heaven-storming violence. That cadenza that Liszt sight-read so well is particularly effective; though it begins quietly, Grieg soon unleashes great torrents of sound from hammered octaves and brilliant runs. It is altogether typical of this movement that Grieg should introduce a new theme after the cadenza.

The mood changes completely in the *Adagio*. Grieg mutes the strings here and moves to the key of D-flat major, which feels soft and warm after the powerful opening movement. A long orchestral introduction leads to the entrance of the piano, which sounds utterly fresh after the dark, muted strings. But this entrance is deceiving, for soon the piano part turns dramatic and drives to its own climax; the music subsides and continues without a break into the finale, marked *Allegro marcato*. After an opening flourish, the piano introduces the main theme, a dancing 2/4 idea that sounds as if it must have its roots in Norwegian folk music. Once again, this movement is built on a wealth of ideas, and at the *coda* Grieg moves into A major and ingeniously recasts his main theme in 3/4.

## **Enigma Variations, Opus 36**

SIR EDWARD ELGAR

Born June 2, 1857, Broadheath

Died February 23, 1934, Worcester

One evening in 1898, Edward Elgar was improvising for his wife at the piano and just for fun

tried varying a theme to suggest the personality of a different friend in each variation. Suddenly a musical project occurred to him, and what had begun "in a spirit of humour ... continued in deep seriousness." The result was an orchestral theme and fourteen variations, each a portrait of a friend or family member, headed in the score by their initials or some other clue to their identity. The score attracted the attention of conductor Hans Richter, who led the first performance in London on June 19, 1899, and the *Enigma Variations* quickly became Elgar's most popular work—Gustav Mahler conducted this music (then only a few years old) during his brief tenure as conductor of the New York Philharmonic.

Elgar dedicated the variations "To my friends pictured within," and the subject of each musical portrait was soon identified, but mystery surrounded the theme itself, a six-bar melody full of the rises and falls that make it an ideal candidate for variation. Elgar himself fed that mystery, naming the theme "Enigma" and saying: "the 'Enigma' I will not explain—its 'dark saying' must be left unguessed ... further, through and over the whole set another and larger theme 'goes,' but it is not played." Despite many attempts to identify this "larger" theme (including theories that it is *Auld Lang Syne* or *God Save the Queen*), the "enigma" remains just as mysterious now as it did when the music was written over a century ago.

What is not mysterious is the success of this music, with its promising theme, a wonderful idea for a set of variations, and a series of imaginative musical portraits. Part of the charm of this music is that—unlike the orchestral variations of Brahms or Schoenberg, which exist outside time and place—the *Enigma Variations* are very much in time and space, for they offer a nostalgic vision of a lost age. The music begins, and suddenly we are in late-Victorian England, with its civilized manners, garden parties, friends bicycling over for a visit, and long steamer trips abroad.

*Theme: Enigma* Strings alone announce the noble, wistful theme, which Elgar marks *molto espressivo* and then extends briefly before the music leads directly into:

1 C.A.E. This is a gentle portrait of the composer's wife, Caroline Alice Elgar, musically similar to the first statement of the theme.

2 H.D.S.-P. Hew David Stewart-Powell, a piano-teacher. This variation, marked *Allegro*, echoes his practicing staccato runs.

3 R.B.T. Richard Baxter Townshend, described by Elgar as "an amiable eccentric."

4 W.M.B. William Meath Baker was a bluff and peremptory country squire; his variation thunders past in barely thirty seconds.

5 R.P.A. Richard Penrose Arnold was the son of Matthew Arnold; Elgar described him as a "gentleman of the old school," and his variation combines a noble violin line with flights of fancy from the woodwinds.

6 Ysobel Isabel Fitton, a viola-player. This gentle variation depicts an exercise in string-crossing for violists.

7 Troyte Arthur Troyte Griffith, an argumentative architect. His *Presto* variation features *brillante* runs from the violins and ends with the sound of a slamming door.

8 W.N. Winnifred Norbury, a dignified older acquaintance of the Elgars. This variation incorporates the sound of her "trilly laugh," but some believe it actually pictures her family home.

9 Nimrod August Jaeger, one of Elgar's closest friends and supporters (*Jaeger* is German for hunter; Nimrod was the mighty hunter in Genesis). This noble slow movement is sometimes performed separately as a memorial. Strings alone announce the theme, which grows to a triumphant climax and subsides to end quietly.

10 Dorabella Dora Penny was a friend whose slight stammer is heard in the music, where there is a brief hesitation at the start of each woodwind phrase. Elgar renamed her "Dorabella" for this variation, after the character in *Così fan tutte*.

11 G.R.S. George Robertson Sinclair, the organist at the Hereford Cathedral. This variation features the sound of his bulldog Dan in the growling lower instruments and the tinkling sound of his bicycle bell in the triangle.

12 B.G.N. Basil Nevinson was a cellist, and noble solos for that instrument open and close this cantabile variation.

13 (\*\*\*) *Romanza* Lady Mary Lygon was on a steamship to Australia when Elgar wrote this music, and he remembered her with a variation in which the sound of the ship's vibrating engines is heard as side drum sticks softly roll on the timpani. Over this low



rumble, Elgar quotes Mendelssohn's *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage Overture*, putting quotation marks around the excerpt in his score.

14 *E.D.U.* "Edu" was his wife's nickname for the composer, and this musical self-portrait—by turns powerful, striving, and gentle—was "written at a time when friends were dubious and generally

discouraged as to the composer's musical future." Included along the way is the whistle Elgar used to announce his arrival at home, and he weaves in a reminiscence of his wife's variation before the music concludes in triumph.

*Program notes by Eric Bromberger*

## Vasily Petrenko

### Conductor

The 2021–2022 season marks the start of Vasily Petrenko's tenures as Music Director of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and as Artistic Director of the State Academic Symphony Orchestra of Russia (where he held the position of Principal Guest Conductor from 2016–2021). He becomes Conductor Laureate of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, following his hugely acclaimed fifteen-year tenure as their Chief Conductor from 2006–2021, and continues as Chief Conductor of the European Union Youth Orchestra (since 2015).

He has also served as Chief Conductor of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra (2013–2020), Principal Conductor of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain (2009–2013), and Principal Guest Conductor of St Petersburg's Mikhailovsky Theatre, where he began his career as Resident Conductor (1994–1997).

Vasily was born in 1976 and started his music education at the St Petersburg Capella Boys Music School – Russia's oldest music school. He then studied at the St Petersburg Conservatoire where he participated in masterclasses with such luminary figures as Ilya Musin, Mariss Jansons and Yuri Temirkanov. He has worked with many of the world's most prestigious orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony, Leipzig Gewandhaus, London Symphony, London Philharmonic, Philharmonia, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia (Rome), St Petersburg Philharmonic, Orchestre National de France, Czech Philharmonic, NHK Symphony and Sydney Symphony orchestras, and in North America has led the Philadelphia Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, and the San Francisco, Boston, Chicago and Montreal Symphony orchestras. He has appeared at the Edinburgh Festival, Grafenegg Festival and made frequent appearances at the BBC Proms. Equally at home in the opera house, and with over thirty operas in his repertoire, Vasily has conducted widely on the operatic stage, including at Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Opéra National de Paris, Opernhaus Zürich, the Bayerische Staatsoper and Metropolitan Opera, New York.



In the 2021–2022 season, Vasily inaugurates his Music Directorship at the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra with a series of major British symphonic and choral works at both the Southbank Centre’s Royal Festival Hall and Royal Albert Hall, and a major North American tour culminating at New York’s Carnegie Hall.

He also returns as a guest to work with orchestras across the globe including the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, the Dresden, Israel and Netherlands Radio Philharmonic orchestras, the New Zealand Symphony and Melbourne Symphony orchestras, and the NHK Symphony Orchestra of Tokyo, in repertoire ranging from Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis* to Stravinsky, Sibelius and Zemlinsky.

Future projects with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra also include performances of Mahler’s choral symphonies at the Royal Albert Hall. Vasily has established a strongly defined profile as a recording artist. Amongst a wide discography, his Shostakovich, Rachmaninov, and Elgar symphony cycles with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra have garnered worldwide acclaim. With the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, he has recently released cycles of Scriabin’s symphonies and Strauss’ tone poems, and selected symphonies of Prokofiev and Myaskovsky. In September 2017, Vasily was honored with the Artist of the Year Award at the prestigious annual Gramophone Awards, one decade on from receiving their Young Artist of the Year Award in October 2007. In 2010, he won the Male Artist of the Year at the Classical BRIT Awards and is only the second person to have been awarded Honorary Doctorates by both the University of Liverpool and Liverpool Hope University (in 2009), and an Honorary Fellowship of the Liverpool John Moores University (in 2012), awards which recognize the immense impact he has had on the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and the city’s cultural scene.

## Olga Kern

Piano

Russian-American pianist Olga Kern has established herself as one of the leading pianists of her generations. Born in Moscow in a family of musicians, she jumpstarted her U.S. career with her historic Gold Medal win at the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in Fort Worth, Texas as the first woman to do so in more than thirty years.

First prize winner of the Rachmaninoff International Piano Competition at seventeen, Ms. Kern is a laureate of many international competitions. In 2016 she served as Jury Chairman of both the Seventh Cliburn International Amateur Piano Competition and the first Olga Kern International Piano Competition, where she also holds the title of Artistic Director. Ms. Kern frequently gives masterclasses and since September 2017 has served on the piano faculty of the prestigious Manhattan School of Music. Beginning with the 2019 season, Ms. Kern was appointed the Connie & Marc Jacobson Director of Chamber Music at the Virginia Arts Festival. Ms. Kern was honored with the Ellis Island Medal of Honor in New York City in 2017.





Recent and upcoming highlights include performances with the Minnesota Orchestra, the symphony orchestras of Baltimore, St. Louis, Grand Rapids, Colorado and Toledo, the New Mexico Philharmonic, the National Symphony of Washington DC, the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, the Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie, the Orquesta de Sao Paulo, and the New West Symphony. In 2017-2018, she served as Artist in Residence with the San Antonio Symphony and made her debut with the National Youth Orchestra on their China tour. Ms. Kern has toured extensively in the United States with many international orchestras such as the Royal National Scottish Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic, the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine and many others. In 2019 she helped celebrate Leonard Slatkin's 75th Birthday in a series of special concerts with the National Symphony at the Kennedy Center. She will appear in recitals in Orford, Sunriver, Fort Worth (Cliburn), Carmel, San Francisco, Sicily, and Calvia. In spring of 2020 Olga Kern has hosted her Second Olga Kern International Piano Competition. In the coming seasons, she will serve on the jury of many international competitions.

Ms. Kern's discography includes her Grammy Nominated recording of Rachmaninoff's *Corelli Variations* and other transcriptions (2004), Brahms *Variations* (2007) and Chopin *Piano Sonatas No. 2 and 3* (2010), the Tchaikovsky piano concerto with the Rochester Philharmonic, a CD of Russian composers including works by Balakirev, the Chopin concerto with the Warsaw Philharmonic and a CD of the Rachmaninoff cello sonatas with Sol Gabetta. She was featured in several documentaries including the award-winning films about the 2001 Cliburn Competition, *Playing on the Edge*; "They came to play" and "Olga's journey".

## Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

As the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO) celebrates its seventy-fifth anniversary, its mission to enrich lives through orchestral experiences that are uncompromising in their excellence and inclusive in their appeal, places the RPO at the forefront of music-making in the UK and internationally. Typically performing approximately 200 concerts each season and with a worldwide audience of more than half-a-million people, the Orchestra embraces



a broad repertoire that enables it to reach the most diverse audience of any British symphony orchestra. Whilst artistic integrity remains paramount, the RPO is unafraid to push boundaries and is equally at home recording video game, film and television soundtracks and working with pop stars, as it is performing the great symphonic repertoire.

The RPO collaborates with the most inspiring artists and was thrilled to welcome Vasily Petrenko as its new Music Director in August 2021. His appointment stands as a major landmark in the Orchestra's history, signaling its determination to broaden the audience for orchestral music while enhancing its reputation as one of the world's most versatile ensembles. Vasily Petrenko made his debut with the RPO at London's Royal Albert Hall in March



2016 delivering a powerful interpretation of Mahler's *Symphony No.2, 'Resurrection'*. His rapport with the Orchestra's players has been reaffirmed with subsequent London performances, and forthcoming plans include a series of Mahler's choral symphonies at the Royal Albert Hall, the great works of English composers at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall, and tours to Germany and leading European festivals. Vasily Petrenko joins a roster of titled conductors that includes Pinchas Zukerman (Principal Guest Conductor), Alexander Shelley (Principal Associate Conductor) and Grzegorz Nowak (Permanent Associate Conductor).

In addition to the Orchestra's annual season of concerts in London's Royal Albert Hall, Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall, and its home Cadogan Hall, the RPO is a respected cultural ambassador and enjoys a busy schedule of international touring, performing in the world's great concert halls and at prestigious international festivals. The RPO is recognized as being the UK's most in-demand orchestra, an accolade that would have pleased Sir Thomas Beecham, who founded the RPO in 1946. His mission was to lead a vital revival of UK orchestras after World War II and form an ensemble that comprised the finest musicians in the country. The Orchestra has since attracted a glittering list of principal conductors, including Rudolf Kempe, Antal Doráti, Walter Weller, André Previn, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Yuri Temirkanov, Daniele Gatti and Charles Dutoit. The RPO aims to place orchestral music at the heart of contemporary society, collaborating with creative partners to foster a deeper engagement with communities to ensure that live orchestral music is accessible to as inclusive and diverse an audience as possible. To achieve this, in 1993 the Orchestra launched RPO Resound, which has grown to become the most innovative and respected orchestral community and education program in the UK and internationally.

The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra has always been entrepreneurial and in 1986 it was the first UK orchestra to launch its own record label. The RPO has gone on to embrace advances in digital technology and now achieves nearly thirty million downloads of its recorded music each year. The Orchestra is increasingly active online ([rpo.co.uk](http://rpo.co.uk)) and on social media (@rpoonline) providing audiences with the opportunity to engage with the RPO and enjoy 'behind-the-scenes' insights.

Passion, versatility and uncompromising artistic standards are the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's hallmarks, and as it looks forward to an exciting future with its new Music Director, Vasily Petrenko, it will continue to be recognized as one of the world's most open-minded, forward-thinking and accessible symphony orchestras.

# Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Vasily Petrenko, Music Director

## FIRST VIOLINS

Duncan Riddell  
Tamás András  
Shana Douglas  
Esther Kim  
Eriko Nagayama  
Andrew Klee  
Kay Chappell  
Anthony Protheroe  
Erik Chapman  
Sophie Mather  
Imogen East  
Joanne Chen  
Patrycja Mynarska  
Rosemary Hinton  
Caroline Frenkel  
Judith Choi-Castro

## SECOND VIOLINS

Andrew Storey  
David O'Leary  
Jennifer Christie  
Charlotte Ansbergs  
Jennifer Dear  
Peter Graham  
Stephen Payne  
Manuel Porta  
Sali-Wyn Ryan  
Siân McNally  
Nicola Hutchings  
Joanna Watts  
Nicole Crespo  
O'Donoghue  
Sarah Thornett

## VIOLAS

Abigail Fenna  
Liz Varlow  
Ugne Tiškuté  
Chian Lim  
Esther Harling  
Jonathan Hallett  
Triona Milne  
Clive Howard  
Raymond Lester  
Joseph Fisher  
Pamela Ferriman  
Rebecca Carrington

## CELLOS

Richard Harwood  
Jonathan Ayling  
Chantal Webster  
Roberto Sorrentino  
Jean-Baptiste Toselli  
William Heggart  
Rachel van der Tang  
Naomi Watts  
Anna Stuart  
George Hoult

## DOUBLE BASSES

Colin Paris  
David Gordon  
Benjamin Cunningham  
Ben Wolstenholme  
Mark O'Leary  
Marianne Schofield  
David FC Johnson  
Alice Durrant

## FLUTES/PICCOLOS

Emer McDonough  
Jenny Farley

## OBOES

John Roberts  
Timothy Watts

## CLARINETS

Sonia Sielaff  
James Gilbert

## BASS CLARINET

Katy Ayling

## E-FLAT CLARINET

James Gilbert

## BASSOONS

Richard Ion  
Emma Harding

## CONTRABASSOON

Fraser Gordon

## FRENCH HORNS

Alexander Edmundson  
Christopher Gough  
Finlay Bain  
Andrew McLean  
Flora Bain

## TRUMPETS

Jason Evans  
Mike Allen  
Adam Wright

## TROMBONES

Matthew Gee  
Matthew Knight

## BASS TROMBONE

Josh Cirtina

## TUBA

Kevin Morgan

## TIMPANI

Christopher Ridley

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Martin Owens  
Gerald Kirby  
Richard Horne

## HARP

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# Orpheus Chamber Orchestra

Branford Marsalis, Saxophone

*Sponsored by Gail Richards, Rella & Monty Rifkin, Jane & Larry Sherman*

January 13, 2022

## PROGRAM

**GIOACCHINO ROSSINI**    **Overture to *The Barber of Seville* (7 minutes)**  
(1792-1868)

**CLAUDE DEBUSSY**    **Rhapsody for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra (10 minutes)**  
(1862-1918)

Branford Marsalis, Alto Saxophone

**JACQUES IBERT**    **Concertino da Camera (13 minutes)**  
(1890-1962)

*Allegro con molto*

*Larghetto*

*Animato molto*

Branford Marsalis, Alto Saxophone

## – INTERMISSION –

**JOAQUIN TURINA**    **La oración del torero, Opus 34 (10 minutes)**  
(1882-1949)

**COURTNEY BRYAN**    **Carmen, Jazz Suite on Themes by Bizet (20 minutes)**  
(b. 1982)

featuring Branford Marsalis, Alto Saxophone

Commissioned by Orpheus Chamber Orchestra

*Reimagining Carmen: Courtney Bryan's Carmen Jazz Suite on Themes by Bizet was supported by New Music USA, made possible by annual program support and/or endowment gifts from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Francis Goelet Charitable Lead Trusts, Fidelity Foundation, The Rogers & Hammerstein Foundation, Anonymous. This concert is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council. Orpheus is represented by Dorn Music. Orpheus has recorded for Deutsche Grammophon, Sony Classical, EMI Classics, BMG/RCA Red Seal, Decca, Nonesuch, Verve, Avex Classics, and its own label, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra Records*

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# Program Notes

## Overture to *The Barber of Seville*

GIOACCHINO ROSSINI

Born February 29, 1792, Pesaro

Died November 13, 1868, Paris

From the moment of its premiere in Rome on February 20, 1816, Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* has been an audience favorite. The opera is one of the finest examples of opera buffa, full of witty music and comic intrigue in the battle of the sexes, and one of the most popular parts of *The Barber* has always been its overture, which sets exactly the right mood for all the fun to follow.

Yet this overture had originally been composed three years earlier as the introduction to a tragic opera, *Aureliano in Palmira*. And, two years later, Rossini used it again as the overture to his historical opera about Queen Elizabeth I, *Elisabetta, Regina d'Inghilterra*. Finally, in 1816, it became the overture to *The Barber of Seville*. It seems hard to believe that an overture composed for a tragic opera could function so perfectly as the introduction to a comic tale, yet it does, and—on the stage or in the concert hall—this music continues to work its charm.

In modified sonata-form, the overture is scored for Mozart's orchestra (pairs of winds, plus timpani and strings) with the addition of one very non-classical instrument, a bass drum. The overture begins with a slow introduction marked *Andante maestoso*, which features crashing chords, gathering energy, and a beautifully poised melody for violins. The music rushes ahead at the *Allegro con brio*, with its famous "laughing" main theme, full of point and expectancy. Solo oboe introduces the second theme-group, marked *dolce*, and this alternates with the main violin theme. Along the way are several of the lengthy crescendos that were a virtual Rossini trademark (his nickname was "Monsieur Crescendo"), and one of these drives this sparkling music home in a great blast of energy.

## Rhapsody for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Born August 22, 1862, St. Germain-en-laye

Died March 25, 1918, Paris

About 1895 Debussy received an unusual commission for a new piece. An American patron of the arts,

Mrs. Elisa Hall of Boston, played the saxophone—still a relatively new instrument at that time—and was trying to create a repertory for by commissioning new pieces. She commissioned a piece for saxophone and orchestra from Debussy and paid him for it; he promptly spent the money and forgot about the piece. Then, to his astonishment, Mrs. Hall showed up several years later in Paris, asking about her piece. Debussy's biographer Leon Vallas describes what happened:

For the sake of her health this lady [Mrs. Hall] had devoted herself to an instrument which had not yet achieved the popularity it has since acquired, thanks to the triumph of jazz. Wishing, regardless of cost, to build up a special repertoire for herself, she had given various French composers orders for important compositions. Debussy was very dilatory in the matter; he was almost incapable of composing to order, and, besides, he knew very little about the technique of this solo instrument. On 8th June [1903] he wrote to Messager: 'The Americans are proverbially tenacious. The saxophone lady landed in Paris at 58 Rue Cardinet, eight or ten days ago, and is inquiring about her piece. Of course, I assured her that, with the exception of Rameses II, it is the only subject that occupies my thoughts. All the same, I have had to set to work on it. So here I am, searching desperately for novel combinations to show off this aquatic instrument ... I have been working as hard as in the good old days of *Pelléas* ...

The actual composition of the piece for Mrs. Hall was spread over several years, and it took some time to complete. Debussy appears to have worked on it from 1901 until 1908. At that point, he sent his version for saxophone and piano to her; the piano part was orchestrated in 1919, the year after Debussy's death, by the French composer Jean Roger-Ducasse.

In the ten-minute *Rhapsody* Debussy seems not so interested in virtuosity as in exploring the sound and character of what was for him a new instrument. Everyone is struck by the exotic sound of this music: one observer hears "Spanish or Moorish associations" in this music. The delicate, evocative beginning certainly sounds exotic, and its atmosphere is intensified in the orchestral version by a subtle use of tambourine here. This opening section, in 2/4, is rather free rhythmically, in the manner of a rhapsody, but the music eases ahead as it moves into 6/8, and in the closing pages Debussy finds some unexpected strength in this new instrument he knew so little about.



## Concertino da Camera

JACQUES IBERT

Born August 15, 1890, Paris

Died February 5, 1962, Paris

An affinity for wind instruments appears to be imprinted on the DNA of French musicians—when Francis Poulenc spoke rapturously of “the wind instruments I have loved from the moment I began composing,” he might have been speaking for the national musical consciousness. France has also produced some of the finest wind players in history, and French composers seem to delight in writing for them. This was particularly true of Jacques Ibert, who wrote for wind instruments across the span of his career: among his varied compositions are a *Flute Concerto*, a *Woodwind Quintet*, and numerous short pieces for clarinet, flute, oboe, trumpet, and many combinations of winds.

Ibert composed his *Concertino da Camera*—or “little chamber concerto”—in 1935 for the saxophonist Sigurd Rascher. Originally scored for saxophone and an eleven-piece orchestra, the *Concertino* is an extremely difficult work for the saxophonist, who must not only play at a blistering pace but also take the instrument into its highest register. Jazz was very much in the air in Paris in the 1930s, and listeners may sense that influence at moments in the *Concertino*. It is in three brief movements, the final two played without pause. The *Allegro con molto* is based on two themes: an opening idea full of non-stop motion and a more relaxed (and jazz-tinged) second subject; the first of these brings this movement to its sudden close. The *Larghetto* begins with a long saxophone solo, and the music turns into a quiet nocturne with the entrance of the accompaniment. This proceeds suddenly into the concluding *Animato molto*. Jaunty and bubbly music somewhat in the manner of the opening movement. Ibert offers the soloist a brief cadenza just before the rush to the close.

## La oración del torero, Opus 34

JOAQUIN TURINA

Born December 9, 1882, Seville

Died January 14, 1949, Madrid

In 1925, Spanish composer Joaquin Turina was asked by the Aguilar family—a family of lutenists—to write a work for a quartet of lutes, and he responded with a brief work called *La oración del torero*: “The Bullfighter’s Prayer.” The Aguilars successfully took

the new work on tours throughout Europe and the Americas, and Turina quickly arranged the music for string quartet and for string orchestra; this last version was first performed on January 7, 1927. This attractive music has subsequently appeared in many other forms, including an arrangement for violin and piano by Jascha Heifetz.

Turina outlined the situation his music describes: it is the afternoon of a bullfight in Madrid, and a bullfighter ducks through a small door into a tiny chapel, where he offers a quiet prayer before entering the noisy bullring to confront death. But rather than trying to offer a literal depiction of these events, Turina instead writes a brief mood-piece that evokes that intense atmosphere. The music falls into several short sections: the muted beginning gives way to an expressive, almost sultry opening theme. There follows several brief episodes (Turina has noted that one of these is based on the *pasodoble*, an old Spanish dance in duple time); the music rises to a climax, then the themes are recalled as this evocative music makes its way to the delicate (and peaceful) close.

*Program notes by Eric Bromberger*

## Carmen, Jazz Suite on Themes by Bizet

COURTNEY BRYAN

Born 1982, New Orleans

*Carmen Jazz Suite on Themes by Bizet*, written for the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra featuring Branford Marsalis, is a contemporary take on Bizet’s classic 1875 opera, *Carmen*. In this version of the timeless story, Carmen’s voice is centered, as portrayed by Branford Marsalis. The music features her freedom, love, and fearlessness, celebrating an imagined world in which Carmen lives and wins.

The suite begins with *Carmen’s Freedom*. Carmen is free and unbound. Following an improvised introduction by Marsalis, the celli enter with Bizet’s iconic ostinato from “L’amour est un oiseau rebelle,” which is based on the Cuban rhythm, *habañera*. In honor of the historical music of Congo Square of New Orleans, the hometown of Branford Marsalis and myself, the string section layers entrances with figures based on various African-derived rhythmic cells (by West Africa, often by way of Haiti and Cuba) that would have been heard at Congo Square – the *habañera*, *tresillo* or *bamboula*, *cinquillo*, and a 3-2 clave. Bizet’s melody is played by Marsalis with

responses from the orchestra and continues into an improvisation on the themes.

*Carmen's Loves* begins with a 2-3 clave in the percussion. Carmen is still free and unbound and begins to contemplate her loves. While Marsalis plays Carmen's seguidilla melody, "Près des remparts de Séville," the clarinet and oboe later state Bizet's theme of danger before the bassoon enters with a theme from Don José's "La fleur que tu m'avais jetée." Later in this section, the horn and trumpet alternate playing the theme from Escamillo's toreador song, "Votre toast je peux pas le rendre," supported by the string section figures from the initial Habanera theme. Carmen's two loves serve as secondary themes, while her seguidilla melody remains the primary theme.

*Carmen's Omen of Death* is based on the card scene when Carmen sings of her impending fate in the original opera. This theme is a key part of the story, and here it is expanded upon including improvisation. There is a feeling of defiance and yet one of resignation. Yet, for the final section, in a twist on the original story, *Carmen Defeats Death*. This section is based on themes from Act IV, from the duet between Don José and Carmen, "C'est toi? C'est moi!" Particularly, inspiration comes from Carmen's statement, "Jamais Carmen ne cédera! Libre elle est née, et libre elle mourra!" ("I won't give in, this is goodbye! Free I was born, and free I shall die!") Yet, Carmen escapes her expected fate. She lives and is heard rising towards freedom.

*Program note by Courtney Bryan*

## Branford Marsalis

### Saxophonist

New Orleans-born Branford Marsalis is an award-winning saxophonist, band leader, featured classical soloist, and a film and Broadway composer. In the process, he has become a multi award-winning artist with three Grammys, a citation by the National Endowment for the Arts as a Jazz Master and an avatar of contemporary artistic excellence. The Branford Marsalis Quartet, formed in 1986, remains his primary means of expression. In its virtually uninterrupted three-plus decades of existence, the Quartet has established a rare breadth of stylistic range as demonstrated on the band's latest release: *The Secret Between the Shadow and the Soul*. But Branford has not confined his music to the jazz quartet context.

A frequent soloist with classical ensembles, Branford has become increasingly sought after as a featured soloist with acclaimed orchestras around the world, performing works by composers such as Copeland, Debussy, Glazunov, Ibert, Mahler, Milhaud,



Rem, Vaughan Williams and Villa-Lobos. And his legendary guest performances with the Grateful Dead and collaborations with Sting have made him a fan favorite in the pop arena. His work on Broadway has garnered a *Drama Desk Award* and Tony nominations for the acclaimed revivals of *Children of a Lesser God*, *Fences*, and *A Raisin in the Sun*. His screen credits include original music composed for: Spike Lee's *Mo' Better Blues*, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* starring Oprah Winfrey and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* starring Viola Davis and Chadwick Boseman. *Ma Rainey* is the Netflix film adaptation of two-time Pulitzer Prize winner August Wilson's play, produced by Denzel Washington and scheduled for release in December 2020.



## Courtney Bryan

### Composer

Courtney Bryan, a native of New Orleans, LA, is "a pianist and composer of panoramic interests" (*New York Times*). Her music is in conversation with various musical genres, including jazz and other types of experimental music, as well as traditional gospel, spirituals, and hymns. Focusing on bridging the sacred and the secular, Bryan's compositions explore human emotions through sound, confronting the challenge of notating the feeling of improvisation. Bryan has academic degrees from Oberlin Conservatory (BM), Rutgers University (MM), and Columbia University (DMA) with advisor George Lewis, and completed postdoctoral studies in the Department of African American Studies at Princeton University. Bryan is the Albert and Linda Mintz Professor of Music at Newcomb College in the School of Liberal Arts, Tulane University and a Creative Partner with the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra. She was the 2018 music recipient of the *Herb Alpert Award* in the Arts, a 2018 *Hermitage Fellow*, a 2019 *Bard College Freehand Fellow*, a 2019-20 recipient of the *Samuel Barber Rome Prize* in Music Composition, a 2020 *United States Artists Fellow*, and a 2020-21 *Civitella Ranieri Fellowship* recipient.



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