

# MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Lina González-Granados, conductor  
Jon Kimura Parker, piano

Friday, August 2, 2024, 8PM | Orchestra Hall

John Harbison	<i>Remembering Gatsby</i> , Foxtrot for Orchestra	CA. 7'
George Gershwin	Concerto in F for Piano and Orchestra Allegro Adagio - Andante con moto Allegro agitato <i>Jon Kimura Parker, piano</i>	CA. 29'

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

CA. 20'

Darius Milhaud	<i>Le Bœuf sur le toit</i> , Opus 58	CA. 15'
George Gershwin	<i>Catfish Row</i> Suite, excerpts arranged from <i>Porgy and Bess</i> Catfish Row Porgy Sings Fugue Hurricane Good Morning, Sistuh	CA. 20'

Lina González-Granados' profile appears on page 42, Jon Kimura Parker's on page 10.

### PRE-CONCERT

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**JOHN HARBISON**

**B:** December 20, 1938  
Orange, New Jersey

*Remembering Gatsby,*  
*Foxtrot for Orchestra*

**PREMIERED:** September 11, 1986

The Minnesota Orchestra’s celebration of the Roaring Twenties picks up this evening with music by contemporary American composer John Harbison inspired by one of the most famous novels of the 1920s: F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*. Fitzgerald’s cautionary portrait of the Jazz Age—a term the author himself helped popularize—was published in 1925 and has been adapted in other mediums many times, including the 2013 film version directed by Baz Luhrmann and starring Leonardo DiCaprio.

Harbison’s musical reimagining dates from the mid-1980s and brings to the fore the foxtrot. This is a natural choice in some ways, since the style was a dance of choice during the famous novel’s setting, but less intuitive in that the foxtrot is mentioned by name just once in *The Great Gatsby*—in reference to a dance shared by the millionaire Jay Gatsby and his former lover, Daisy Buchanan.

**AN OPERA’S PROTOTYPE**

The Minnesota Orchestra performed *Remembering Gatsby* most recently in 2018 on New Year’s Eve, during a season in which the ensemble celebrated Harbison as the year’s featured composer and premiered his major work *What Do We Make of Bach?* for orchestra and organ. Harbison, the 1987 winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Music who is still an active composer at age 85, composed *Remembering Gatsby* in 1985 as part of a project that took several twists and turns. The music grew out of a projected opera based on *The Great Gatsby*, which at the time was left unfinished—but happily, resurrected years later and premiered in 1999 by the Metropolitan Opera.

*Remembering Gatsby*, the composer says, “begins with a *cantabile* passage for full orchestra, a representation of Gatsby’s vision of the green light on Daisy’s dock. Then the foxtrot begins, first with a kind of call to order, then a twenties tune I had written for one of the [opera’s] party scenes, played by a *concertino* led by soprano saxophone. The tune is then varied and broken into its components, leading to an altered reprise of the call to order, and an intensification of the original *cantabile*. A brief coda combines some of the motives and refers to the telephone bell and the automobile horns, instruments of Gatsby’s fate.”

**Instrumentation:** 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 3 clarinets (1 doubling bass clarinet and soprano saxophone), 2 bassoons (1 doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, 4 suspended cymbals, drum set, flexatone, 2 triangles, xylophone, glockenspiel, piano and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY CARL SCHROEDER.



**GEORGE GERSHWIN**

**B:** September 26, 1898  
Brooklyn, New York

**D:** July 11, 1937  
Beverly Hills, California

*Concerto in F for Piano*  
*and Orchestra*

**PREMIERED:** December 3, 1925

The success of *Rhapsody in Blue* in February 1924 propelled George Gershwin overnight from a talented Broadway composer to someone taken seriously in the world of concert music. When conductor Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony Society asked Gershwin to compose a piano concerto the following year, the young composer accepted eagerly—the commission, signed in April 1925, would pay him \$500 for the new concerto.

**YOUTH AND ENTHUSIASM**

There is no truth to the story, told many times, that Gershwin left the meeting with Damrosch and went straight to a bookstore to buy a book on musical form so that he would know what a piano concerto was. But this story does point to a larger truth: Gershwin was entering an unfamiliar musical world. Ferde Grofé had orchestrated *Rhapsody in Blue* for Gershwin, but now the composer was anxious to do that work himself. He wanted to be taken seriously as a classical composer.

Gershwin had at first planned to call the piece *New York Concerto*, but his desire for respectability won out, and he settled on Piano Concerto in F (it may be a mark of the breezy spirit of this music that it is always called that, rather than the more formal Piano Concerto in F major). F. Scott Fitzgerald nicknamed the 1920s “The Jazz Age” (*The Great Gatsby* was published in the same year Gershwin wrote this concerto), and jazz was very much in the air in 1925—but Gershwin insisted that the Concerto in F was not a jazz piece. Though the concerto employs Charleston rhythms and a blues trumpet, Gershwin wanted it taken as a piece of concert music in the Western classical tradition,

one intended to represent “the young, enthusiastic spirit of American life.”

### THE CONCERTO IN BRIEF

The Concerto in F takes the basic form of the classical concerto: a sonata-form first movement, a lyrical second movement and a rondo-finale.

**ALLEGRO.** The *Allegro* opens with a great flourish of timpani followed by the characteristic Charleston rhythm. Solo bassoon introduces the first theme, gradually taken up by the full orchestra, and the piano makes its entrance with the wonderful second subject, sliding up from the depths on a long glissando into the syncopated tune. Gershwin was willing to bend classical form for his own purposes, and he described this first movement: “It’s in sonata-form—but.” It concludes with a *grandioso* restatement by full orchestra of the piano’s opening tune and an exciting coda based on the Charleston theme.

**ADAGIO-ANDANTE CON MOTO.** Gershwin said that the slow movement “has a poetic nocturnal atmosphere which has come to be referred to as the American blues...” He contrasts the trumpet’s bluesy opening with the piano’s snappy entrance on a variant of the same tune and then alternates these ideas across the span of the movement.

**ALLEGRO AGITATO.** Gershwin described the *Allegro agitato* finale as “an orgy of rhythm,” and the opening plunges the pianist and orchestra into a perpetual-motion-like frenzy. At the end, Gershwin brings back the *grandioso* string tune from the first movement, and the Concerto in F rushes to a knock-out close.

**Instrumentation:** solo piano with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbal, gong, slapstick, triangle, wood block, xylophone, glockenspiel and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.



### DARIUS MILHAUD

**B:** September 4, 1892  
Marseille, France

**D:** June 22, 1974  
Geneva, Switzerland

*Le Bœuf sur le toit*,  
Opus 58

**PREMIERED:** February 21, 1920

Early in the 20th century, Paris was a hub for artists working in various fields, many of them coming together to create revolutionary ballets—none looming larger than Igor Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*. It therefore comes as no surprise that the young Darius Milhaud, freshly returned to Paris in 1919 after a period serving as secretary to the French ambassador to Brazil, would try his hand at the ballet form. However, his first major success in the field, *Le Bœuf sur le toit* (The Ox on the Roof), was originally envisioned for quite a different purpose: to accompany the silent films of Charlie Chaplin. When that vision proved unworkable, the music instead found its way to the ballet stage, and its premiere in February 1920 became one of the composer’s early-career triumphs.

### MOVING TO PLAN B

Milhaud’s initial idea wasn’t entirely far-fetched, since so-called silent films were often accompanied by music from a live pianist, organist or ensemble. Chaplin, however, exercised near-total creative control over his films, and was content to await advancements in synchronized sound technology rather than, as he stated in 1926, relying on “feeble vamping on a piano or the excruciating efforts of an incompetent or ill-led orchestra.” Thus, it seems unlikely he would sanction a concept like Milhaud’s, and there is no record that the filmmaker knew of the composer’s intent. In any event, it became clear that a plan B was needed in order for Milhaud’s new work to reach audiences.

The alternate plan came courtesy of Jean Cocteau, a versatile artist who was central to the avant-garde scene in Paris of the day. After convincing Milhaud that his music was a better fit for the ballet, Cocteau created a cast of eccentric characters and a surrealist plot for the new production, which premiered at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées in Paris on February 21, 1920. The ballet’s success opened new opportunities for Milhaud, who composed 17 more pieces with choreography during his lengthy career, including one of his best-known works, the ballet *La création du monde* of 1923. Nowadays, *Le Bœuf sur le toit* is heard most often in the concert hall. The music also has a physical legacy in the form of the celebrated Parisian

cabaret-bar *Le Bœuf sur le toit*, which opened in 1921 and became a gathering place for the avant-garde arts scene during the period between the world wars.

### IMPORTED FROM BRAZIL

Milhaud had more than just Charlie Chaplin's films in mind while composing *Le Bœuf sur le toit*. The music's high-spirited style and many of its melodies stemmed from Milhaud's time in Brazil, where he was immersed in that country's musical culture and its dance forms of samba and maxixe, among others. Some critics and musicologists have bandied about words like "pastiche" and even "plagiarism" in describing the music, while others have perceived a blending of French and Brazilian musical elements reflective of Milhaud's ability to transcend cultural boundaries.

Spanning about 15 minutes, *Le Bœuf sur le toit* is in the form of a rondo, in which a recurring theme alternates with a series of contrasting episodes. Along the way, we hear at least 20 Brazilian popular tunes and dance melodies, along with several themes that are apparently of Milhaud's own invention. The catchy main theme immediately sets a festive and syncopated tone, while the subsequent episodes introduce a variety of moods, often as whimsical as the antics in a Chaplin film. To close, an extended coda brings together many of the themes.

Throughout *Le Bœuf sur le toit*—and in many of his other works—Milhaud employs bitonality, a technique in which two different musical keys are used simultaneously. The orchestration, rich and colorful, further enhances the work's lively character, with a guiro and tambourine contributing to the music's Brazilian flavor.

Regardless of the composer's original intent, and now separated from the surrealist ballet scenario, the music's vibrant energy and playful spirit continue to captivate audiences more than a century since the ballet's premiere. Few listeners will manage to suppress a smile along the way.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), oboe, 2 clarinets, bassoon, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, trombone, bass drum, cymbals, guiro, tambourine and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY CARL SCHROEDER.

## GEORGE GERSHWIN

### *Catfish Row Suite, excerpts arranged from Porgy and Bess*

PREMIERED: January 21, 1936

Historically, many orchestral composers who feared their works might not achieve their desired success would write a suite of selections to be performed more simply, and hopefully more frequently, than the original work. Think Prokofiev's and Bernstein's movie scores *Alexander Nevsky* and *On the Waterfront*, respectively, and Richard Strauss' opera *Der Rosenkavalier*.

George Gershwin originally intended his folk opera *Porgy and Bess* to open at the Metropolitan Opera, but he decided against it. He told *The New York Times*, "The reason I did not submit this work to the usual sponsors of opera in America was that I hoped to have developed something in American music that would appeal to the many rather than to the cultured few." The long-standing debate of whether *Porgy and Bess* is an opera is primarily the realm of scholars rather than audiences. The late Stephen Sondheim once told me that "If it runs on 45th and Broadway, it's a play. If it runs 20 blocks north, it's an opera."

*Porgy and Bess* is set in Jim Crow-era Charleston, South Carolina. In a Black neighborhood called "Catfish Row" the vicious bully Crown murders a resident and deserts his lover Bess when he flees. Porgy, who has a mobile disability, shelters Bess, whose dubious reputation is further complicated by her use of cocaine supplied by the character Sportin' Life. The Gershwin Estate mandates that the Black characters in *Porgy and Bess* be portrayed by performers of the same racial background. The opera thus offered opportunities for Black performers, but some of the opera's characters have roots in demeaning stereotypes.

Much has been made of two Jewish brothers from lower Manhattan—George and his lyricist brother, Ira, both White—taking on a story set in the American South with Black lead characters. The physical and cultural gap was bridged in part through DuBose Heyward, a White Charleston native, who wrote the 1925 novel *Porgy* and, together with his wife Dorothy, adapted the novel into a play that opened on Broadway in 1927. As such, Heyward, rather than the Gershwins, was the source of *Porgy and Bess*'s characters and plot. He also wrote some of the lyrics. To prepare for the opera's creation, George Gershwin made an extended visit to Heyward in the summer of 1934, to experience Charleston and the Sea Islands, and observe and sometimes participate in African American church services and local customs.

The opera's distinctively Gullah-sounding text was inspired by their experience that summer, although Ira Gershwin explained: "It didn't matter too much if dialect was exact or not, considering the stylized and characteristic music. All that was required was a suggestion of regional flavor." The music's jazz elements are apt for several reasons; although jazz originated in the African American musical tradition, George Gershwin played a major role in its popularization to wide audiences and authored many jazz standards.

## DISTILLING THE OPERA

*Porgy and Bess* opened on Broadway in 1935 and, with 124 performances, was a moderate success. When the Broadway run closed, Gershwin composed a suite from the production, and conducted it in several cities. But after his untimely death in 1937 at age 38, it was virtually forgotten until rediscovered in Ira Gershwin's library in 1958. Meanwhile, in 1942, the accomplished Broadway orchestrator Robert Russell Bennett was spurred by the conductor Fritz Reiner to create a "Symphonic Picture," which for years was the definitive distillation of the show.

However, once Gershwin's own suite was found, and given the name *Catfish Row* by Ira to differentiate it, it overtook Bennett's. Leonard Slatkin, who founded the Minnesota Orchestra's Sommerfest, noted that "Gershwin's suite takes the orchestration scoring from the actual opera, as opposed to the full symphony palette. This gives the music a leaner, and more original sound. Perhaps it is not as sweeping as the Bennett, but it is good to learn the composer's own thoughts on what he believed audiences should hear." JoAnn Faletta, music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic, who recorded the suite for the Naxos label, sums it up: "Gershwin's *Catfish Row* is a more complete expression of the complicated tapestry of the composer's masterpiece."

## THE MUSIC

Unlike Bennett's suite, Gershwin's generally—though not entirely—follows the opera's plot, beginning with the overture, Jazzbo Brown's out-of-tune piano, and the opening chorus. Listen for the xylophone, wood block and timpani as Gershwin forcefully segues to the show's most popular hit, Serena's "Summertime," first in the strings and then in the reeds. One can almost feel Charleston's heat and humidity.

The mood changes as we hear the percussion's rolling of the dice in a heated game. The brilliant banjo plays Porgy's "I Got Plenty of Nuttin'" sung in the opera as Porgy falls for Bess. (Not so coincidentally, both suites use the banjo for the same passage.) "Porgy change since that woman come to live with he," the women observe. The mood changes again as he encourages Bess to join the others for the picnic on Kittiwah Island, a fateful mistake, since Crown is hiding

there. Confidently, but naively, Porgy declares, "Bess, You Is My Woman." Gershwin's strings are simply luscious, but they belie reality.

A fugue follows as an accompaniment to the fight where Porgy, who is confined to a goat cart, fatally chokes Crown, the stevedore bully. We hear distorted suggestions of Bess' earlier plea to Crown, "What you want wid Bess," sung during the encounter on Kittiwah Island where she ultimately submits to him. The segment ends with thunderous chords signifying Crown's violent death literally at the hands of the strengthened Porgy. The chimes announce a bright new day on Catfish Row, but the sounds of the hurricane, including the unheeded fishermen's warning bell, overtake the score.

In the final movement, the light-hearted street sounds of "Good Morning, Sistuh," are followed by the children's charming "Sure to go to Heaven." The suite concludes with the optimistic "Oh, Lawd, I'm On My Way." Released from jail, Porgy learns that Sportin' Life has convinced Bess to run off with him to New York. Porgy asks the way to New York and sets out in his cart to find her. Excerpts from the overture return briefly, with echos of Porgy's "I Got Plenty of Nuttin'," Bess' "What you want wid Bess," and, ironically, his "Bess, You Is My Woman." We are painfully aware that Porgy will never see Bess again.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 4 clarinets (1 doubling bass clarinet), bassoon, 3 horns, 3 trumpets, 2 trombones, tuba, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, wood block, tamtam, tom-tom, xylophone, glockenspiel, chimes, timpani, banjo and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY PHILLIP GAINSLY.





**CARMEN BRADFORD,**  
VOCALS

Born in Austin, Texas, and raised in Altadena, California, Grammy nominee Carmen Bradford grew up with music in her home and in her heart. It was only natural that she would follow in the footsteps of her great family legacy, being the daughter of legendary trumpeter-composer Bobby Bradford and world-renowned vocalist-composer Melba Joyce. Her grandfather Melvin Moore sang with Lucky Millender and Dizzy Gillespie's Big Band in the 1940s and sang with the Ink Spots, making Bradford the third generation of incredible musicians. Bradford was discovered and hired by William "Count" Basie, and was the featured vocalist in the legendary Count Basie Orchestra for nine years. She has since performed and/or recorded with Wynton Marsalis, Shelly Berg and John Clayton, among numerous other artists and ensembles. She performed on two Grammy Award-winning albums with the Basie band in the 1980s and later collaborated on a third Grammy Award-winning album, *Big Boss Band*, with guitarist George Benson in 1991. In 2016 Bradford was asked by South African trumpeter Darren English to be a part of his new critically acclaimed CD *Imagination Nation*. She is the resident professor of jazz voice and director of vocal jazz studies at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. More: [carmenbradford.com](http://carmenbradford.com).



**STEPHANIE CHILDRESS,**  
CONDUCTOR

Strong ideas, lucid communication and intensely focused energy are among the qualities that define Stephanie Childress among today's most compelling young musicians. Recently appointed principal guest conductor of the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra, she is known for her musicianship and command of a broad scope of repertoire that have led her to establish herself on both sides of the Atlantic. She began her 2023-24 season making her Hamburg Staatsoper debut and returning to Glyndebourne's autumn season. She also made her conducting debut with Detroit Opera this season in Missy Mazzoli's *Breaking the Waves*. On the orchestral podium, Childress continues to be reinvented internationally and this season returned to the Barcelona and North Carolina symphonies, and debuted with the Cleveland Orchestra, Detroit Symphony, National Arts Centre Ottawa, Ulster Orchestra and Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra, among other ensembles. She previously served as assistant conductor of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and music director of the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra. A passionate advocate for amplifying the role of music within today's world, Childress previously undertook an artistic residence at the Villa Albertine, a network for arts and ideas spanning France and the U.S. More: [harrisonparrott.com](http://harrisonparrott.com), [stephaniechildress.com](http://stephaniechildress.com).



**LINA GONZÁLEZ-GRANADOS,**  
CONDUCTOR

Praised for her rhythmic vitality and the raw power of her conducting, Colombian-American Lina González-Granados has distinguished herself as a powerful interpreter in the classical music field. Named part of Bloomberg Línea's "100 Influential Latinos of 2022," González-Granados is a recipient of the 2021 Sphinx Medal of Excellence (third prize), the ECHO Special Award of La Maestra Competition, the 2020 and 2021 Solti Foundation U.S. Career Assistance Award, among many other honors. In the fall of 2022, she was appointed resident conductor by the LA Opera, a post she will hold through June 2025. Her 2024-25 season highlights include an extensive tour across Colombia with Filarmónica Joven de Colombia, debuts with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic and the Phoenix, New Jersey and National Dublin symphonies and the National Arts Center Ottawa. Recent highlights include debuts with Opera Philadelphia, the Orchestre Métropolitain, and the Indianapolis, Atlanta and New World symphonies. Born and raised in Cali, Colombia, she made her conducting debut with the Youth Orchestra of Bellas Artes. She holds a master's degree in conducting, a graduate diploma in choral conducting from New England Conservatory and a doctor of musical arts degree in orchestral conducting from Boston University. More: [linagonzalezgranados.com](http://linagonzalezgranados.com).

Known for his passionate artistry and engaging stage presence, pianist Jon Kimura Parker has performed regularly at the Berlin Philharmonie, Carnegie Hall, London’s South Bank, the Sydney Opera House and the Beijing Concert Hall. In 2019 he was appointed the Minnesota Orchestra’s first-ever creative partner for Summer at Orchestra Hall, a new role in which he is serving as a creative force behind the Orchestra’s summer festival and appearing each summer as a host, performer and personality. He is also artistic director of the Honens International Piano Competition and artistic advisor for the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival.

Highlights of Parker’s 2023–24 season included multiple performances of nine different piano concertos, including appearances with the Taiwan National Symphony Youth Orchestra and the Austin (Minnesota) Symphony Orchestra; a solo recital in Los Angeles; performances on the Chamber Music Society of Palm Beach, Phoenix Chamber Music Society and Rice University Faculty series; multiple appearances at the Sun Valley Music Festival; and performances with Aloysia Friedmann and Melissa Ousley on an Earthbound Expeditions “April in Paris” Seine River cruise, among numerous other engagements. Next season is highlighted by two engagements playing Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*, at the Kennedy Center in Washington, and here in Orchestra Hall for the Minnesota Orchestra’s New Year’s Celebration concerts.

A collaborator in a wide variety of styles, Parker has performed with Doc Severinsen, Audra McDonald, Bobby McFerrin, Pablo Ziegler, Sanjaya Malakar and Dessa, among many others. As a founding member of Off the Score, he also performed with Stewart Copeland—the legendary drummer of The Police—for the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival’s 20th anniversary season, featuring his own arrangements of music by Prokofiev, Ravel and Stravinsky. He has accompanied Frederica von Stade, Susan Graham and Luca Pisaroni in recital.

A committed educator, Parker is professor of piano and keyboard chair at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University. His students have won prizes in major competitions internationally and given concerto performances in the U.S., Europe, Russia and China. He has also lectured at the Juilliard School and given master classes at Yale and Princeton. Last summer he was featured in a special role coaching the finalists of the Cliburn Junior Competition in their concerto rehearsals.

Parker’s discography of a dozen albums features music ranging from Mozart and Chopin to Barber, Stravinsky and John Adams. His most recent recording *Fantasy*, built around William Hirtz’s *Wizard of Oz Fantasy*, was described by *Musical Toronto* as giving “a big, clear picture window of a rich soul and great artistic depth.” His YouTube channel features a series of *Concerto Chat* videos that explore the piano concerto repertoire. In addition, his *Whole Notes* series, featuring



Josh Kohanek

performances of great composers, is available on Amazon Prime Video. His recent Tonebase video on the 15th Variation of the Rachmaninoff Paganini Rhapsody has over a half million views.

Parker studied with Edward Parker and Keiko Parker, Lee Kum-Sing at the Vancouver Academy of Music and the University of British Columbia, Marek Jablonski at the Banff Centre and Adele Marcus at the Juilliard School. Winner of the Gold Medal at the 1984 Leeds International Piano Competition, Parker is an Officer of The Order of Canada and has received honorary doctorates from the University of British Columbia and the Royal Conservatory of Music, Toronto.

Known to friends—new and old—as “Jackie,” Parker is married to violinist/violist Aloysia Friedmann, and their daughter Sophie graduated from Rice University in 2021. For more information, visit [jonkimuraparker.com](http://jonkimuraparker.com).