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Wu Tsai Theater
David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center
Home of the New York Philharmonic

2025–26 Season Sponsored by
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Thursday, January 22, 2026, 7:30 p.m.
17,283rd Concert

Friday, January 23, 2026, 7:30 p.m.
17,284th Concert

Saturday, January 24, 2026, 7:30 p.m.
17,285th Concert

Thomas Adès, Conductor
Yuja Wang, Piano
Anna Dennis*, Soprano
University of Michigan Chamber Choir*
Eugene Rogers, Director
EXIGENCE Vocal Ensemble*
Eugene Rogers, Director

Anna Dennis, University of Michigan Chamber Choir, and EXIGENCE Vocal Ensemble are **Chang-Chavkin Debut Artists.**

Major support for these concerts is provided by **Kay and Jackson Tai.**

Generous support for Yuja Wang's appearances is provided by **The Donna and Marvin Schwartz Virtuoso Piano Performance Series.**

This program will last approximately one and three-quarters hours, which includes one intermission.

New York Philharmonic January 22–24, 2026
Thomas Adès, Conductor
Yuja Wang, Piano
Anna Dennis*, Soprano
University of Michigan Chamber Choir*
Eugene Rogers, Director
EXIGENCE Vocal Ensemble*
Eugene Rogers, Director

IVES
(1874–1954)

Orchestral Set No. 2 (1909–19)
I. An Elegy to Our Forefathers
II. The Rockstrewn Hills Join in the People's Outdoor Meeting
III. From Hanover Square North, at the End of a Tragic Day, the Voice of the People Again Arose

EXIGENCE VOCAL ENSEMBLE

RAUTAVAARA
(1928–2016)

Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 45 (1969)
I. Con grandezza
II. Andante
III. Molto vivace

YUJA WANG

Intermission

SAARIAHO
(1952–2023)

***Oltra Mar (Across the Sea): Seven Preludes for the New Millennium,* for Orchestra and Mixed Choir** (1998–99)

I. Départ (Departure)
II. Amour (Love)
III. Vagues (Waves)
IV. Temps (Time)
V. Souvenir de vagues (Memory of Waves)
VI. Mort (Death) (in memory of Gérard Grisey)
VII. Arrivée (Arrival)

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN CHAMBER CHOIR
EXIGENCE VOCAL ENSEMBLE

Thomas ADÈS
(b. 1971)

***America: A Prophecy,* for Voice, Large Chorus, and Large Orchestra** (1999; rev. 2024)

I.
II.
III.

ANNA DENNIS
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN CHAMBER CHOIR
EXIGENCE VOCAL ENSEMBLE

***** New York Philharmonic debut

Thomas Adès's appearances are made possible through the **Charles A. Dana Distinguished Conductors Endowment Fund.**

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Benjamin Adler

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Barret Ham

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Notes on the Program

Orchestral Set No. 2

Charles Ives

Perhaps the most trenchant and telling thing Charles Ives wrote about his art was this: "Music is life." That can be joined with another statement of his: "What does sound have to do with music?" Together, these sentences paint not just an aesthetic but an ethos: the music we hear is the outward symbol of an inner reality, which is the eternal human spirit. It was that spirit, the true music, that Ives was reaching for in his work. To do it he had to create a new kind of music, at once radical and traditional, concrete and spiritual.

While Ives was deeply religious, he was an unconventional man with an unconventional religion that had everything to do with art. It's not that music was his religion. For him they were the same thing. In life he saw holiness anywhere, if it was human and earnest and authentic: in barroom ragtime no less than the works of Bach and Beethoven, in humor no less than in exaltation, in the symphony orchestra no more than in the rough excitement of bands in a parade, some of the players a bit drunk and off the beat. At the height of his powers, before chronic illness struck him, all these elements came together in his Orchestral Set No. 2.

This is one of a number of works Ives called a set, meaning an assemblage of pieces often written separately, often comprising three movements in the slow-fast-slow sequence. The connections among the movements are partly a matter of musical complements, partly of programmatic (extramusical) theme. In the case of his Set No. 2 the connection is the elegiac atmosphere of the outer movements.

The first, *An Elegy to Our Forefathers*, was originally called *An Elegy to Stephen Foster*, the legendary 19th-century songwriter whose works were tinged with Black stories and music. The short movement unfolds like a single breath, a complex of murmuring voices surrounding a sustained folklike melody resembling a dream of Foster tunes.

Ives came to maturity in the ragtime 1890s, which he saw as essentially and powerfully American, mainly because of its Black roots. It became part of his musical language. The middle movement has a broad title, *The Rockstrewn Hills Join in the People's Outdoor Meeting*, but it's mainly a wry and affectionate ragtime filtered through Ives's musical consciousness — a wild collage, the style scissored and rejiggered: a cubist ragtime.

The final movement is one of Ives's climactic masterpieces, arising from his conviction that music is an echo of human feeling and aspiration, a vital part of the spiritual evolution of humanity. It was that

In Short

Born: October 20, 1874, in Danbury, Connecticut

Died: May 19, 1954, in New York City

Work composed: approximately 1909–19

World premiere: January 27, 1966, by the Radio-Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Bruno Maderna, conductor, in West Berlin

New York Philharmonic premiere: these performances

Estimated duration: ca. 20 minutes

inner reality that Ives was trying to convey through notes on the page. Often, as here, it began with something quite concrete. The title is *From Hanover Square North, at the End of a Tragic Day, the Voice of the People Again Arose.* The tragic day was May 7, 1915, when news of a German submarine sinking the passenger ship *Lusitania*, killing more than a thousand people, stunned the world. New York City, where Ives worked at his insurance agency, was everywhere in shock.

When Ives arrived at the Hanover Square train station in the Financial District on the way home, he heard a distant hurdy-gurdy begin to crank out a familiar hymn, *In the Sweet By and By.* The crowd at the station took up the tune and began to sing. It was an unforgettable moment.

Ives begins the movement with an offstage group of instruments that give the music a subtle sonic depth throughout. A choir chants a simple theme based on the *Te Deum.* That old liturgical chant, an image of ritual mourning, is transformed into a song from the hearts and souls

In the Composer's Words

Charles Ives described his inspiration for the final movement of his Orchestral Set No. 2:

New York City's Hanover Square Station, 1936

Some workmen sitting on the side of the tracks [at New York City's Hanover Square Station] began to whistle the tune, and others began to sing or hum the refrain. A workman with a shovel over his shoulder came on the platform and joined in the chorus, and the next man, a Wall Street banker with white spats and a cane, joined in it, and finally it seemed to me that everybody was singing this tune, and they didn't seem to be singing for fun, but as a natural outlet for what their feelings had been going through all day long. There was a feeling of dignity all through this .... Then the first train came and everybody crowded in, and the song eventually died out, but the effect on the crowd still showed. Almost nobody talked — the people acted as though they might be coming out of a church service. In going uptown, occasionally little groups would start singing or humming the tune.

The tune wasn't a Broadway hit, a musical comedy air, nor a waltz tune or a dance tune or an opera tune or a classical tune. It was (only) the refrain of an old Gospel Hymn that had stirred many people of past generations. It was nothing but — *In the Sweet By and By.* It wasn't a tune written to be sold, or written by a professor of music — but by a man who was but giving out an experience.

This third movement is based on this, fundamentally, and comes from that elevated station. It has secondary themes and rhythms, but widely related, and its general makeup would reflect the sense of many people living, working, and occasionally going through the same deep experience, together.

of everyday Americans. From myriad strands *In the Sweet By and By* emerges bit by bit until it is complete in the climax, as if declaimed in sorrow and tears by people who don't sing particularly well but who do so from their hearts. Here is one of Ives's greatest evocations of what he called that raw, timeless song: the music of the ages.

Instrumentation: two flutes (one doubling piccolo), three clarinets, two bassoons, three horns, four trumpets, four trombones, tuba, timpani, bells, snare drum, bass drum with cymbal attached, chimes, gongs, triangle, two harps, organ, two pianos (one offstage), two theremins, two synthesizers, accordion, offstage chorus, and strings.

— Jan Swafford is a composer and writer whose work includes biographies of Ives, Brahms, Beethoven, and Mozart; program notes for the orchestras of Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Cleveland, and London; and liner notes for two Deutsche Grammophon issues of the complete Beethoven symphonies.

George Ives and His Son

George Ives, the father of Charles, was a local band and church choir director in the medium-size town of Danbury, Connecticut, a role that in itself was nothing unusual. What was unusual about George was how seriously he took music as more than a pastime, and how imaginatively he thought about it. In his late teens he had been a soldier in the Civil War, director of what was called the best band in the Union Army. After the war he returned to Danbury, not to join the extensive business interests of his family but to make music.

From top: George Ives; Charles Ives in 1913

He became fascinated by acoustics. One of Charlie's early memories was of his father standing out in the rain listening to the church bell next door, and running in to try to reproduce the sound on piano. He realized that to do that he needed pitches between the notes of the piano, what are called quarter tones, and he began to experiment with gadgets to play them. While teaching his son traditional harmony, George also provided him with new ways to think about sound. He would march parts of his band around the town green playing different pieces, to hear what it sounded like as they approached and passed. He would play his trumpet for Charlie up close, farther away, and across a pond so his son could hear the effects of space on sound.

George was not a composer, but he fostered a unique one. When Charlie was a teenager, a prodigy as both organist and composer, George told him something no budding composer had ever been told before: any harmony at all was acceptable if you knew what you were doing with it. He also told his son that the sentimental tunes and sprightly marches he played as a Civil War musician were profoundly meaningful to soldiers, and because of that impact hymns and popular music could be an art as deep as any. Those insights, working on the imagination of a born creator, were a prime foundation of a music that was and remains unlike any other.

Text

III. From Hanover Square North, at the End of a Tragic Day, the Voice of the People Again Arose, from Orchestral Set No. 2

Charles Ives

We praise Thee, O God:
We acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.
All the Earth doth worship Thee.

— Text from the Latin hymn *Te Deum*

Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 45

Einojuhani Rautavaara

Einojuhani Rautavaara had a traumatic start to life. His father, an operatic baritone, died in August 1939, and Soviet troops invaded Finland three months later. His mother, appointed director of a war hospital that year, died four years later of morphine withdrawal, leaving Rautavaara an orphan at age 14. He took up formal music studies at the unusually late age of 17 but was still admitted to the University of Helsinki and the Sibelius Academy jointly in 1948, from which he received a master's degree in musicology and a composition degree under Aarre Merikanto. He taught at the Sibelius Academy from 1966 to 1991, where his students included Esa-Pekka Salonen, Paavo Heininen, Kalevi Aho, and Magnus Lindberg.

The path to Rautavaara's First Piano Concerto was winding, reflecting his broader creative process. He edited his music obsessively, sometimes rewriting pieces decades later, other times abandoning them altogether. He also frequently repurposed and reconfigured material from earlier works, a common practice among composers historically that is here perhaps best understood as a kind of late-modern self-referentiality — part of a lifelong recursive effort at defining his sense of self. Indeed, these same tendencies were mirrored in Rautavaara's voluminous (and sometimes exaggerated) autobiographical writings, which were in turn folded into his larger creative project of self-mythology.

Rautavaara made his first attempt at writing a piano concerto in 1955, while he was still a student. He had been nominated by Jean Sibelius to participate in a yearlong study-abroad opportunity in the United States funded by the Koussevitzky Foundation. During this time he worked on the concerto with Roger Sessions at the Tanglewood summer course and with Vincent Persichetti at Juilliard, but found himself caught in the middle of larger debates over modern conceptions of harmony and form. As scholar Barbara Hong recounts:

> Sessions had criticized [the concerto's] formlessness. Rautavaara claimed that it represented modern music; Sessions politely objected. Sessions's compositions then were nearly atonal and dissonant. Rautavaara, following the style of his composition teacher, Aarre Merikanto, kept to symmetrical structures, added tones to triadic harmonies, octatonic scales, mixed meters, and employed ostinato patterns.

Though he completed the concerto — and, in fact, won Third Prize in the Suomen Kulttuurirahasto (Finnish Cultural Foundation) competition with it — Rautavaara was dissatisfied with the work and removed it permanently from his composition list.

His decision to return to the genre of the piano concerto at the end of the 1960s came

In Short

Born: October 9, 1928, in Helsinki, Finland

Died: July 27, 2016, in Helsinki

Work composed: 1969, in Helsinki; commissioned by the Finnish Broadcasting Company

World premiere: May 29, 1970, by the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, with Paavo Berglund conducting and the composer as soloist, at the Helsinki Festival

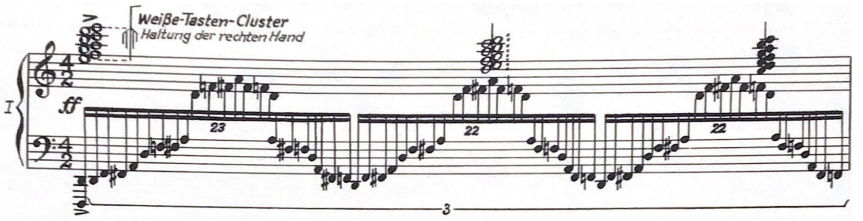
New York Philharmonic premiere: these performances

Estimated duration: ca. 20 minutes

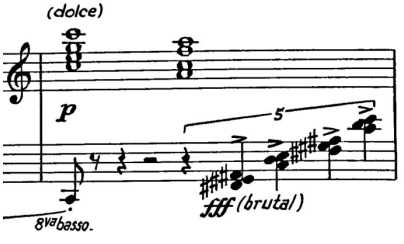
Listen for … Internal Drama

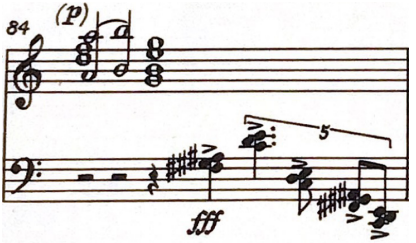
Rautavaara described his concertos in quite traditional terms as "a drama, a conflict between the individual and the collective." In his First Piano Concerto, though, much of the dramatic conflict seems to be reflected in the soloist's part. This was pointed up by the composer's determination to perform the work himself on a Finnish tour in 1970, a fact that lends credence to the autobiographical aspects of the concerto.

Indeed, nothing is more emblematic of a composer's creative frustration than slamming the keys of a piano, and this is precisely how Rautavaara opens the work. The palm of the right hand is used to strike specified clusters of white keys while the left hand plays rapid fire arpeggios. Despite the harsh dissonance of these chords, a melody outlined in the top of each white-key cluster yields a surprisingly clear and musically effective result.

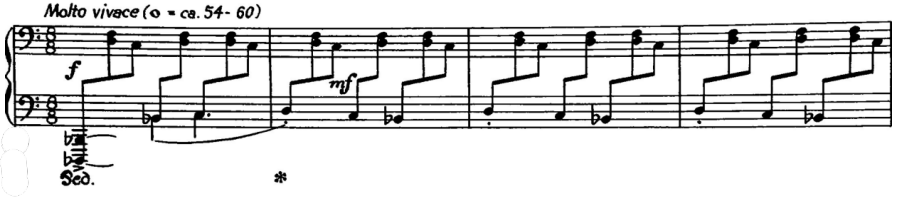


Later a delicate, hymnlike passage in the right hand (marked *dolce*) is violently and repeatedly interrupted by clusters (marked "brutal") in the left hand. In a sense, Rautavaara makes the tension between angular dissonance and tonal harmony a defining feature of the piano part in these passages.





Finnish critics initially heard the uneven 3+2+3 rhythm of the final movement as "Gershwin material." While the orchestration and propulsive rhythm initially evoke Gershwin (or Ravel's G-major Piano Concerto), that rhythmic pattern takes on a violent and increasingly dissonant intensity, à la Bartók, as the soloist races toward the conclusion.



at a time of intense creative and personal crisis. Rautavaara had embraced atonal and serialist practices over the prior decade. By the mid-1960s, however, he had grown increasingly frustrated with the expressive limitations of this approach and began looking for ways to reintegrate aspects of tonal harmony and lyricism into his work. At the same time, his home life had devolved into chaos. Domestic disputes with his wife, Heidi Maria Suovanen, escalated — at times becoming violent — and were reported widely in the Finnish media. Their daughter ran away from home briefly to escape the conflict.

Rautavaara completed what would officially become his Piano Concerto No. 1 in 1969, shortly after the birth of his second son and shortly before moving out of the family home for several years. The work came amid a flurry of piano writing that also produced two piano sonatas and a set of etudes, all of which explored similar harmonic, gestural, and autobiographical ideas. He described his Piano Sonata No. 2, *The Fire Sermon* (1970), for instance, as a reflection of the discord in his personal life that finds programmatic resolution in a D-major sonority. That sonata shares much of its material with the final movement of the First Piano Concerto, so the two works are musically and autobiographically intertwined.

We might understand Rautavaara's return to the piano concerto variously as an attempt to address an earlier creative failure, to overcome a creative block in the present, or to process frustrations in his family life. In any event, it was a significant departure from his previous works, setting the tone for a highly productive and successful period in his career.

Instrumentation: two flutes (one doubling piccolo), two clarinets, four horns, two trumpets, two trombones, timpani, snare drum, tam-tam, cymbal, triangle, wood blocks, and strings, in addition to the solo piano.

— Nicholas Emmanuel has taught musicology at the University at Buffalo and writes on matters of contemporary music, aesthetics, and modernity.

In the Composer's Words

In a liner note for the first commercial recording of his Piano Concerto No. 1, Rautavaara wrote:

> My First Piano Concerto was a very personal composition: it was written for my own idiosyncratic piano technique, and in fact I have performed it myself with many orchestras. I was disappointed at that time with the strict academic structuring of serialist music and the ascetic mainstream style of piano music, which I found anaemic. In the concerto, therefore, I returned to the aesthetics of expressiveness and a sonorous, "grand-style" keyboard technique. One could say that this was a post-modernist work created before anyone had even invented the term. The concerto opens with unabashed palm clusters, which in the recapitulation become forearm clusters; these, however, are underpinned by arpeggios and the overall effect is replete with unbridled singing pathos. From the beginning of the second movement to the end of the work there is a continuous escalation. The slow movement expands, coalesces, and accelerates until a dissonant and dramatic cadenza leads into the unrestrained dance of the concluding movement in 3+2+3 time, a rhythm that can also be found in several of my other works.

Oltra Mar (Across the Sea): Seven Preludes for the New Millennium, for Orchestra and Mixed Choir

Kaija Saariaho

When a single note is played, an astonishing array of stratospheric, practically inaudible pitches rings along with it. These overtones, as they are known, are not easy to hear, but they can be plainly seen on spectrograms, machine-generated maps of sound's development over time. This property was a source of fascination to a band of late-20th-century French composers led by Tristan Murail and Gérard Grisey, who developed ways to write "spectral" music, in which every decision is shaped by the information contained in the spectrograms.

In 1980, soon after completing her undergraduate studies at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Finland, Kaija Saariaho attended a summer course in Darmstadt, Germany, where she heard the music of Grisey and Murail for the first time. "I will never forget the effect it had on me," she later told the broadcaster Tom Service. "It sounded so fresh, it was just unbelievable. Their music gave me confidence." Following that encounter, she developed a singular style that incorporated several elements of spectral music. She wrote monolithic chords in which notes are stacked one at a time in ways that emphasize their resonances with one another and with the natural overtone series. She also deployed instrumental special effects that imitate the wash of sound that is implied by the blotting of a spectrogram. Ultimately, she found the approach of Grisey and his coterie too dogmatic and too focused on predetermined compositional structures (see sidebar, page 32). She strongly believed that composition should ultimately be a personal, imaginative endeavor, so her music always includes moments of intense meaning and individual expression that breach from beneath the throbbing waves of sound that she creates.

Saariaho composed *Oltra Mar* on a commission from the New York Philharmonic for a six-work initiative conceived by then Music Director Kurt Masur to usher in the new millennium. Her piece — which was premiered alongside four others in November 1999 — is organized in seven sections, identified in the title as "Preludes." *Oltra Mar* translates as "Across the Sea" in ancient French, and the work's spectral-sounding, odd-numbered sections create a humming seascape. In the first movement, *Départ (Departure)*, the basses play a low note again and again while other members of the orchestra fan out in majestic arrays of overtones above that pitch. Similar ascending blocks of sound occur in the third, fifth, and seventh movements, though Saariaho is careful to let wavering, haunting lines from individual members of the orchestra

In Short

Born: October 14, 1952, in Helsinki, Finland

Died: June 2, 2023, in Paris, France

Work composed: 1998–99, in Paris, as one of six Messages for the Millennium, works commissioned by the New York Philharmonic

World premiere: November 11, 1999, by the New York Philharmonic, Kurt Masur, conductor, Westminster Symphonic Choir, Joseph Flummerfelt, director

Estimated duration: ca. 15 minutes

pop out against this powerful backdrop. In these "sea" movements, the choir sings on an open syllable, functioning almost as a section of the orchestra.

In the even-numbered movements the chorus sings texts that come from a wide range of sources. The second movement, *Amour (Love)*, sets words by 11th-century poet Abū Saîd using seductive soprano melodies accompanied by a haunting harp line. Some of the musical ideas also appear in Saariaho's first opera, *L'Amour de loin*, which she worked on contemporaneously with *Oltra Mar*. Movement Four, *Temps (Time)*, illustrates the passing of time using an excerpt from the novel *Samarcande* by Amin Maalouf, who wrote librettos for several of Saariaho's major stage works. "Every text I have chosen [results from] long reflection," she explained in a 2012 interview. "I choose the texts intellectually, but also very intuitively. In a way, all my vocal music is like my diary. I choose texts which very personally touch me at that moment."

In November 1998, while Saariaho was working on this piece, Grisey died suddenly of a brain aneurysm, and she dedicated the sixth movement, *Mort (Death)*, to him. The choir chants part of a Pygmy funeral lament in dissonant, blocked chords. In a particularly gripping passage one section of the choir sings the text while the others whisper it, producing a sense of mourning gasps. It's spectral in a new way: ghostly — appropriate to the sentiment contained in the words, which

In the Composer's Words

In a 2011 interview with broadcaster Tom Service Kaija Saariaho explained how she differed from Gérard Grisey, despite her admiration for him:

> I became his friend, but he had a very systematic way of analysing his [spectrograms]; his orchestration was mathematical, and my work is not at all systematic or mathematical. It comes back to what I learnt from the technology at IRCAM [the center for computational music research in Paris founded by former New York Philharmonic Music Director Pierre Boulez] and elsewhere. The technology, the machine, only gives you what you put into it, what you ask it. There are no wonders with it. The machine cannot compose for you, cannot make you better. And I don't want the machine to compose for me — I like composing! I didn't have any ambition to create a program that would do something complex and wonderful, because I want to do the complex and wonderful myself.

read, “The man has passed, the shadow has disappeared, the prisoner is free.”

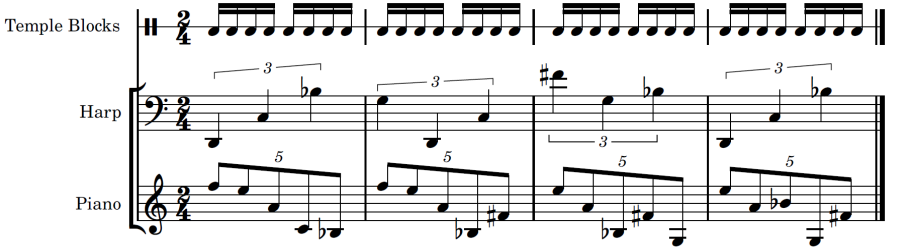
Instrumentation: four flutes (one doubling piccolo, another doubling alto flute), four oboes, four clarinets, four bassoons, four horns, four trumpets, four trombones, tuba, timpani, crotales, triangles, temple blocks, log drum, vibraphone, graduated bells, bass drum (with a soft skin, with no audible pitch), tom-tom, suspended cymbals, tam-tam, marimba, bass drum, harp, piano, strings, and chorus.

— Nicky Swett is a cellist, writer, and music researcher who holds a PhD from the University of Cambridge, where he was a Gates Scholar, and who has annotated programs for Carnegie Hall, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the BBC, Music@Menlo, The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and others.

Listen for … Stretching Time

Temps (Time), the fourth movement of Saariaho’s *Oltra Mar,* is a disquisition on the rigidity and flexibility of our experience of time. She sets words by Amin Maalouf that describe time as having two dimensions: “the length is to the rhythm of the sun / the thickness to the rhythm of the passions.” Maalouf’s words articulate how time on the clock might run at a steady pace, but our emotional experience of specific moments can be expansive and broad.

Saariaho uses many musical methods to express the paradox of the simultaneous rigidity and suppleness of passing time. Running 16th notes are played by different voices throughout the movement, giving the music a metronomic motor, but they sometimes drop out. There are several moments when the speed is briefly warped, as if the players have passed through a multidimensional vortex. Even when the pulse is steady, she makes liberal use of polyrhythms. As one voice plays eight notes per bar, others must fit three notes or five notes into the same space.



In such passages only the first beat of the measure is played together, and all the other notes should be slightly off from one another. This creates the illusion that there is extra space between the notes, giving these sections the passionate breadth that Maalouf describes.

Texts and Translations

Oltra Mar (Across the Sea): Seven Preludes for the New Millennium

Kaija Saariaho

II. Amour (Love)

Avant que fût posé l'arceau du ciel sublime,
avant que fût fixé ce globe de cristal,
alors que je dormais dans l'éternel néant,
le trait de ton amour était tracé sur moi.

Before the arch of the sublime sky was set,
before this crystal globe was fixed,
as I slept in eternal nothingness,
the line of your love was drawn on me.

— From Abū Saîd's *Robâ'is*

IV. Temps (Time)

Le temps a deux visages,
il a deux dimensions,
la longueur est au rythme du soleil,
l'épaisseur au rythme des passions.

Time has two faces,
it has two dimensions,
the length is to the rhythm of the sun,
the thickness to the rhythm of the passions.

— From Amin Maalouf's *Samarcande*

VI. Mort (Death): in memory of Gérard Grisey

Le ciel s'est éclairé,
les yeux se sont éteints,
l'étoile resplendit.
L'homme a passé,
l'ombre a disparu,
le prisonnier est libre.

The sky lit up,
the eyes went out,
the star shines brightly.
The man has passed,
the shadow has disappeared,
the prisoner is free.

— From a Pygmy funeral lament

America: A Prophecy, for Voice, Large Chorus, and Large Orchestra

Thomas Adès

On November 11, 1999, the New York Philharmonic gave an extraordinary concert. All five pieces on the program were being played for the first time, commissioned by the Orchestra and then Music Director Kurt Masur as Messages for the Millennium.

Masur was hoping for hope, which seemed plausible at the time. In the Middle East a precarious peace was holding. The wars in the former Yugoslavia were settling. Russia was bumbling along under Boris Yeltsin and a bevy of oligarchs, its days as a superpower seemingly over. The man most likely to succeed Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin, was only dimly known in the West. The prospects on offer that night were accordingly positive in the main: the electrification of the symphony orchestra in John Corigliano's *Vocalise*, universal brotherhood in Hans Werner Henze's *Fraternité*.

One composer, however, had a very different story to tell: Thomas Adès, through the work we hear this evening in an extended version he made in 2024. Adès took his title, *America: A Prophecy*, from a book by the English poet William Blake. The words he set, though, came from three centuries before Blake, during the period when forces from Spain arrived in Central America and destroyed the rich civilization of the Maya. What remains Blakean in the work is how Adès implicitly asks us to find enlightenment and wisdom in the study of history. Though the future is unknowable, we can foresee what may happen by looking back on what happened before.

Though Adès was, at 28, a little young for a prophet, he took on the role with emphatic authority. It must have helped that he had already acquired a full decade of experience as a composer. He started out, in his late teens, with sophisticated technical skills. His range of reference had since widened to include art music ranging from Tallis to Ligeti, and everything in popular dance from the foxtrot to what was playing last night in the hottest clubs. He had already composed a full-length opera *(Powder Her Face)*, a symphony *(Asyla)*, a string quartet *(Arcadiana)*, as well as a variety of piano pieces, choral settings, and songs. Even so, the new work was a shock. It was as brilliant as what went before, but it was by no means as playful.

Adès had been very much an English composer, concerned with a decaying England in works across the board, from his quartet to his opera, and touched with

In Short

Born: March 1, 1971, in London, United Kingdom

Resides: in London

Work composed: 1999, commissioned by the New York Philharmonic as one of six Messages for the Millennium; expanded and revised in 2024

World premiere: the original version, November 11, 1999, by the New York Philharmonic, Kurt Masur, conductor, Beth Clayton, mezzo-soprano, Westminster Symphonic Chorus, Joseph Flummerfelt, director; the revised version (commissioned by the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, The Cleveland Orchestra, and the Hallé), December 19, 2024, in Leipzig, Germany, by the Leipzig Gewandhaus with soprano Kelley O'Connor and the MDR Rundfunkchor, Andris Nelsons, conductor

Estimated duration: ca. 21 minutes

an English wit and irony. *America* took him into different hemispheres, of the world and of his brain.

The work begins as if in the forests of the Yucatán, with green light filtering through the leaves in the form of little patterns rotating in the woodwinds. As this music develops, it keeps suddenly stopping for the vocalist to come forward with what is indeed a prophecy, delivered in words from the books of the *chilim balam* (jaguar seers), collections of Mayan poetry written down after being transmitted orally through the two centuries that had passed since the Spanish conquest. The soloist's prediction continues, at first withdrawn, then increasingly heated, until the Spaniards burst in, represented by a chorus drawing on music of the period.

In the short second movement, the soloist has a vision of the post-catastrophe. The world is burnt out. Even the choral voices of the victors are ashen. That was where the score ended in 1999.

After the first performance, *The New Yorker* wrote that the work "came across not as a message but a cry of pain." According to *The Times Literary Supplement:* "It seems to be saying that something momentous is coming and we do not know which side we will be on."

With the benefit of a quarter-century of creative growth, Adès has now added a movement in which the events and the music are replayed in slow motion. The words are from the same Mayan anthologies, but the dynamic rush toward disaster is now seen from a greater distance as part of a circle, eternally turning. What was a "cliffhanger," Ades says, is now "a summary, and a moral, and a looking-forward."

In the Composer's Words

In an interview with The Cleveland Orchestra, Thomas Adès discussed this revised version of his *America: A Prophecy:*

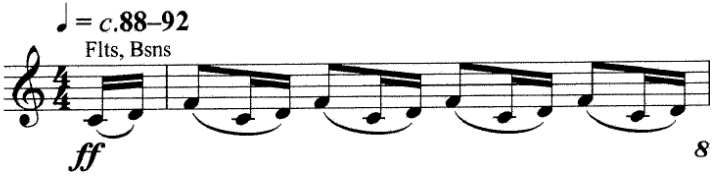
> The suggestion for Messages for the Millennium was that they should be messages of hope for the millennium. My version of this came out in a not notably optimistic way …. Nobody knew what was going to happen. Some people thought there was possibly going to be a computer meltdown. It was a strange atmosphere at the time — complicated.
>
> The original version lasted about ten minutes, which was quite short to have a full chorus, so I've added another movement, where they sing more. The other thing about the earlier version is that it ends with a cliffhanger, and is stark. The new movement adds a summary, and a moral, and a looking-forward. I would not have known how to do it in 1999, but I've thought about it a lot, and I was able to find a text in the same book of Mayan prophecies as I used before.

Instrumentation: four flutes (two doubling piccolo), four oboes, two clarinets plus bass clarinet and contrabass clarinet, four bassoons (one doubling contrabassoon), four horns, three trumpets (one doubling piccolo trumpet), three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, small temple bells, drums, rattle, roto-toms, harp, piano, and strings, in addition to soprano or high mezzo-soprano soloist and optional large chorus, which is used in these performances.

— Paul Griffiths has been a music critic for many years and is the author, most recently, of let me tell you / let me go on *(New York Review Books).*

Listen for … a Meaningful Motif

Adès's *America: A Prophecy* offers many lessons, several of them in compositional discipline. The first sound we hear, repeated over and over by flutes and bassoons in unison, is a little skip rising through three notes: the first of the scale, the second, and the fourth.



This motif recurs in different contexts. It can change, jumping not to the fourth note but to the fifth, then going down to the fourth. We might feel this as a jolt of added excitement — the excitement of being in a new environment (think tropical forest), and then more and more, as density and loudness increase, the excitement of dance.

The simplicity of the basic element here — only three notes, a maximum of four — might evoke the Maya, even though we know that their mathematical understanding was advanced. But the dance seems to be heading for our time as well as the past by evoking a condition in which the dancers are taken over by the dance, common to tribal ritual and modern nightclubs.

The basic three-note element is taken up by the soloist as she has a premonition of the Europeans arriving: "They will come," she sings, to that same pattern, again rapidly repeating it. What was an image of verdant nature has gone through dance and come out speaking of fear to the point of frenzy.

Texts and Translations

America: A Prophecy

Thomas Adès

I.

Soloist
Oh my nation
Prepare

The people move as if in dreams
They are weak from f*ck and drink
The prophets and the priests are blind
In his bed the governor weeps.
It is the end of all our ways.

Oh my nation
Prepare

They will come from the east
Their god stands on the pole
They will burn all the land
They will burn all the sky
They will break with a cross
(Oh my nation)

Chorus

Todos los buenos soldados
que asentaren a esta guerra
no quieren ir descansados.
Si salieren con victoria,
la paga que les darán
será que sempre tendrán
en el cielo eterna gloria.

All the good soldiers
who enlist in this war
do not wish to be rested.
If they emerge with victory,
the reward they will be given
shall be that they will ever have
in Heaven eternal glory.

Soloist
Your gods, your fathers, your children.
Your cities will fall.
Your trees will be scaffolds.
They will rule from the backs of your fallen.
It is foretold.
Prepare.

— From *La Guerra* (Latin text)
by Matteo Flexa (ca. 1481–1553)

II.

Soloist
Burn, burn, burn
On earth we shall burn
We shall turn to ash
Drift across the land, over the mountains, out to sea.
Weep, weep, weep
But know this well:
Ash feels no pain.

Chorus
Haec est Victoria
qua vincit mundum fides nostra.

This is our victory
by which our faith conquers the world.

— From *La Guerra* (Latin text)
by Matteo Flexa (ca. 1481–1553)

III.

Chorus
In every birth a death
In every death a birth
This is the story of the world
The way it was
The way it shall be
As it was after the flood
Before the sky fell
Before the cities
Before the cornfields
In the twilight between nothing
and being

Soloist and Chorus
In every form a ruin
In every ruin a form
The wheel of time counts off the days
the years
the æons
Shows us the signs for life
Shows us the signs for death
Leads us to the rose
On whose petals are inscribed

(Please turn the page quietly.)

The book of years
The eternal turning
towards our end

— From the books of *Chilam Balam* (Mayan in English translation)
Includes an adaptation by the composer of the text from
The Destruction of the Jaguar by Christopher Sawyer-Laucanno
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The Artists

Thomas Adès is acclaimed as both a composer and as a conductor. Among his compositions are three operas: he conducted the premiere of the most recent, *The Exterminating Angel*, at the 2016 Salzburg Festival and subsequently at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, and London's Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. He led the premiere and revival of *The Tempest* at the Royal Opera House and in a new production at the Met, Vienna Staatsoper, and, in November 2022, at Milan's Teatro alla Scala. Adès conducted the world premiere of his full-evening ballet *The Dante Project* at Covent Garden, and again in May 2023 at the Opéra Garnier in Paris. He led a new production of *The Exterminating Angel*, featuring a critically acclaimed staging from Calixto Bieito, at Paris's Opéra Bastille in the spring of 2024.

Adès frequently conducts performances of his orchestral works: *Asyla* (1997), *Tevot* (2007), *Polaris* (2010), Violin Concerto *Concentric Paths* (2005), *In Seven Days* for piano and orchestra (2008), *Totentanz* for mezzo-soprano, baritone, and orchestra (2013), and the Concerto for Piano and Orchestra (2019). His other recent compositions include *Shanty — Over the Sea* for strings (2020), *Märchentänze* for solo violin and piano and a separate version with orchestra (2021), *Air — Homage to Sibelius* for violin and orchestra, a Roche commission for violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter (2022), and *Aquifer*, an orchestral work commissioned by the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, with support from Carnegie Hall and Vienna's Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde.

In the 2025–26 season Adès makes his debut with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Gürzenich-Orchester Köln. His return engagements include the BBC Symphony (at the Proms), London Symphony, Hallé, Czech Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Vienna Radio Symphony, and Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw orchestras, as well as with the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France. Thomas Adès also serves as the creative chair of the Zürich Tonhalle Orchester, and is celebrating the 100th birthday of György Kurtág at the Budapest Music Center.

Pianist **Yuja Wang** is celebrated for her charismatic artistry, emotional honesty, and captivating stage presence. She has performed with the world's most venerated conductors, musicians, and ensembles, and is renowned not only for her virtuosity, but her spontaneous and lively performances.

Yuja Wang was born into a musical family and began studying the piano at age six. She received advanced training in Canada and at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where she studied with Gary Graffman. Since signing an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon in 2009 she has established her place among the world's leading artists. Her recordings have garnered multiple awards, including five Grammy nominations and her first Grammy win, for Best Classical Instrumental Solo, with her 2023 release *The American Project*.

In the 2025–26 season Yuja Wang opened the seasons of many major US orchestras, including the San Francisco Symphony and The Philadelphia Orchestra, as well as Carnegie Hall, where she played-directed Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1. Among her orchestral performances, she embarks on a major European tour with the Swedish Radio Orchestra. Her play-directing continues with tours to Spain and the US with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, where she is an artistic partner, and she gives a recital tour throughout Asia. In November 2025, *Playing with Fire: An*

Immersive Odyssey with Yuja Wang opened at the Paris Philharmonie. This groundbreaking, multisensory installation takes visitors behind the scenes and offers a rare perspective on the emotion and artistry behind her performances.

Soprano **Anna Dennis** was the recipient of the 2023 Royal Philharmonic Society's Singer award. Her opera performances include Katie Mitchell's devised music theater piece *New Dark Age* at The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* at Drottningholms Slottsteater in Stockholm; Queen of the Night in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* at Opera North; Handel's *Rodelinda* at the Göttingen Handel Festspiel; and roles in all three Monteverdi operas during John Eliot Gardiner's world tour of the trilogy. She recently created the title role in *Violet*, Tom Coult's debut opera premiered at the Aldeburgh festival.

Recent concert highlights have included Boulez's *Pli selon pli* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican Centre's centenary celebration of the composer, Haydn's *The Seasons* with the Düsseldorf Symphony Orchestra and Adam Fischer, and Handel's *Orlando* with the Academy of Ancient Music and Laurence Cummings. Dennis's recordings include the Grammy-nominated Kastalsky Requiem with the Orchestra of St. Luke's and Leonard Slatkin, two orchestral song cycles on Tom Coult's debut disc, *Pieces that Disappear* with the BBC Philharmonic, and Handel's *Amadigi di Gaula* with The Early Opera Company and Christian Curnyn.

Her 2025–26 season engagements include the title role in a staged production of Handel's *Susanna* for Opera North, the premiere of Tansy Davies's *Passion of Mary Magdalene* with the Dunedin Consort at the Edinburgh International Festival, Mozart concert arias at London's Wigmore Hall, a new orchestral song cycle by Elena Langer with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, and Poulenc's Gloria with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

University of Michigan Chamber Choir is known for its long tradition of artistic excellence, dynamic programming, and commitment to premiering new choral works. Comprising both undergraduate and graduate students, the choir performs a wide range of choral music, ranging from classical masterpieces to contemporary works. Recent performances and collaborations have included masterworks such as Felix Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Duruflé's Requiem, and Smith-Moore's *Scenes from the Life of a Martyr*, as well as premieres of works by Christopher Theofanidis, Tarik O'Regan, Damien Geter, Nkeiru Okoye, and Jocelyn Hagen.

With a rich recording history, the choir has been featured on Grammy-winning and nominated albums, including Milhaud's *L'Orestie d'Eschyle (The Oresteia of Aeschylus)* and William Bolcom's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. The latest release, Jocelyn Hagen's *amass*, highlights the ensemble's dedication to contemporary choral music, also reflected in having premiered Nkeiru Okoye's multigenre work *When the Caged Bird Sings* with the University of Michigan Symphony Orchestra and the Sphinx Organization's EXIGENCE Vocal Ensemble, to be released on the Naxos label in March 2026.

The choir has performed at National and Regional American Choral Director Association and National Collegiate Choral Organization conferences and tours both nationally and internationally. Most recently they traveled throughout Argentina, performing alongside The Washington Chorus and renowned baritone Will Liverman.

EXIGENCE Vocal Ensemble, the premier professional vocal group of the Sphinx Organization, is dedicated to transforming lives through powerful performances that showcase the artistry within our communities. Led by founding conductor Eugene Rogers, a visionary artist and educator, EXIGENCE brings together a diverse group of solo performers, educators,

conductors, and composers committed to promoting choral excellence. Inspired by the mission of the Sphinx Organization, EXIGENCE provides a platform for soloists and composers of color, intending to inspire, challenge, and engage audiences worldwide through dynamic choral music.

EXIGENCE's performances have resonated across a variety of prestigious stages. The ensemble has collaborated with prominent orchestras such as the National Symphony Orchestra (Washington, DC), Kansas City Symphony, and Sphinx Symphony Orchestra, along with the Eugene Concert Choir and Orchestra (in Oregon). The group has also graced major choral gatherings, including performances at the North Carolina and Southern Region American Choral Directors Association conferences and the National Chorus America Conference.

EXIGENCE's recordings include *Door Out of the Fire* (on Albany Records), featuring compositions by Christopher Theofanidis with guitarist Nicolò Spera, and *Black Is Beautiful*, recorded with the Eugene Concert Choir and Orchestra (Navona Records). Upcoming projects include Nkeiru Okoye's *When the Caged Bird Sings* (Naxos), to be released in March 2026, and music by Ysaye M. Barnwell. EXIGENCE has premiered works by Joel Thompson, Derrick Skye, Chris Thile, Carolina Heredia, Julio Morales, and Carlos Codero, further solidifying its commitment to contemporary choral music.

Eugene Rogers is a leading American conductor known for his wide-ranging artistic vision in choral music through championing new works and supporting emerging artists. A two-time Michigan Emmy Award winner, 2017 Sphinx Medal of Excellence recipient, and 2015 Grammy nominee, he has been recognized by *Musical America* as one of the top music industry professionals. His work has been featured on CNN, PBS, and various global platforms. A frequent guest conductor, he has led notable ensembles such as the Chicago Symphony Chorus, the State Choir of Latvia, and the Grant Park Symphony Chorus, and worked alongside renowned conductors such as James Conlon, Gianandrea Noseda, Marin Alsop, Jonathon Heyward, and Anthony Parnther. Since 2018 Rogers has been director of university choirs at the University of Michigan, overseeing the graduate choral conducting program and nine choral ensembles. In 2020 he became the fifth artistic director of The Washington Chorus, and in 2018 he founded the Sphinx Organization's EXIGENCE Vocal Ensemble.

University of Michigan Chamber Choir
Eugene Rogers, *director*
Scott VanOrnum, *collaborative pianist*
Jonathan Thomas Madden, *assistant conductor*
Benjamin Gaughran, *manager*

SOPRANOS
Hallie Ackerman
Angela Bonello
Sophie Choate
Laura Clapp
Reese Ford
Allison Gaines
Gukhui Han
Shirley Han
Jamiyah Hudson
Nadia Johnson
Marisa Redding
Madeleine Rodgers
Juliet Schlefer
Maitri White

ALTOS
Eliana Barwinski
Joanna Blackman
Delaney Finn
Eliana Gross
Sadie Holloway
Mary Levin
Xinmeng Li
Abigail Lysinger
Elisha Miller
Aileen Pereda
Ella Peters
Grace Ryan
Sofia Vazquez
Shuyao Wang

TENORS
William Fishwick
Ryan Hughes
Nathan Jeffery
Jack Kernan
Nicholas Music
Mark Pettaway III
Hunter Reid
Trevor Scott
Kenneth Sieloff
Jack Stoll
Asher Strayhorn
Theodore Sweeney
Maxwell Vernon
Keen Williams

BASSES
Seth Amoguis
Jack Bishop
Noah Bishop
Plamen Fung
Micah Huisman
Yong Min Kim
Aaron Levine
Brendan Lockhart
Jonathan Madden
Charles Morrison
Mateo Salazar
Joseph Schnack
Thomas Sikes
Oliver Steissberg
Gavin Tomasco

EXIGENCE Vocal Ensemble
Eugene Rogers, *founding conductor*
Afa S. Dworkin, *president and artistic director, Sphinx Organization*
Andre Dowell, *chief programming officer, Sphinx Organization*

SOPRANOS
Taylor Adams
Rabihah Davis Dunn
Nicole Joseph*
Amber Merritt
Lenora Green-Turner
Kaci Timmons

ALTOS
Rebecca Castillo
Melissa Connor
Lori Celeste Hicks
Monique Spells*
Betzabe Juarez Vargas
Lianna Wimberly Williams

TENORS
Tyrese Byrd
LaVonté L. Heard
Ariel Merivil
David Miranda
Lonnie Reed
Matthew Valverde*

BASSES
Steven Berlanga
Lucas DeJesus
Branden Hood
Stephen Lancaster
Andrew Smith
Joel Thompson*
Alan Williams

* Section leaders

(Current as of January 16, 2025)

Gustavo Dudamel and the New York Philharmonic

Gustavo Dudamel is committed to creating a better world through music. Guided by an unwavering belief in the power of art to inspire and transform lives, he has worked tirelessly to expand education and access for underserved communities around the world, and to broaden the impact of classical music to new and ever-larger audiences. His rise, from humble beginnings as a child in Venezuela to an unparalleled career of artistic and social achievements, offers living proof that culture can bring meaning to the life of an individual and greater harmony to the world at large. He currently serves as the Music & Artistic Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela, and the Tang Music & Artistic Director Designate of the New York Philharmonic. He will become the NY Phil's Oscar L. Tang and H.M. Agnes Hsu-Tang Music & Artistic Director in September 2026, continuing a legacy that includes Gustav Mahler, Arturo Toscanini, and Leonard Bernstein. Throughout 2025, Dudamel celebrates the 50th Anniversary of El Sistema, honoring the global impact of José Antonio Abreu's visionary education program across five generations, and acknowledging the vital importance of arts education.

The **New York Philharmonic** plays a leading cultural role in New York City, the United States, and the world, connecting with millions of music lovers through live concerts in New York and beyond, as well as broadcasts, recordings, and education programs. Gustavo Dudamel serves as the Oscar L. Tang and H.M. Agnes Hsu-Tang Music & Artistic Director Designate in the 2025–26 season, before beginning his tenure as Music & Artistic Director in 2026. The Orchestra's legacy of commissioning and / or premiering works by leading composers runs from Dvořák's *New World* Symphony to Pulitzer Prize winners by John Adams and Tania León, the latter made possible through *Project 19*, the world's largest women-only commissioning project. The Philharmonic has released more than 2,000 recordings since 1917, and in 2023 announced a partnership with Apple Music Classical. Performances can be heard on the nationally syndicated radio program *The New York Philharmonic This Week*, and the Orchestra's history is available free online through the New York Philharmonic Shelby White & Leon Levy Digital Archives. Annual free concerts are complemented with the Phil for All: Ticket Access Program, education projects including the Young People's Concerts and the New York Philharmonic Very Young Composers Program, and free discussion series. Founded in 1842, the New York Philharmonic — which has appeared in 437 cities in 63 countries — is the oldest symphony orchestra in the US and one of the oldest in the world; past Music Directors include Bernstein, Toscanini, and Mahler.

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David Geffen Hall

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Accessible seating is available in all performance areas and can be arranged at point of sale. For guests transferring to seats, mobility devices will be checked by staff, labeled, and returned at intermission and after the performance. Extra width seating is available on the Orchestra level and on Hearst Tier I and Tier 2. Accessible entrances are on the Josie Robertson Plaza. Accessible routes from the Karen and Richard LeFrak Lobby to all tiers and performance spaces are accessible by the Susan and Morris Mark Elevator.

Access Reps support guests with disabilities and their parties who request this service in advance. Services include: being met on arrival, escorted through the performance space, and assisted with requested accommodations; wheelchairs, including being pushed; sighted guide technique; and more. To learn more, visit the David Geffen Hall Welcome Center, contact NY Phil Customer Relations, or email guestexperience@lincolncenter.org.

For more information or to request additional accommodations, please contact Customer Relations at (212) 875-5656 and visit lincolncenter.org/visit/accessibility.

For Your Safety

For the latest on the **New York Philharmonic's health and safety guidelines** visit nyphil.org/safety.

Fire exits indicated by a red light and the sign nearest to the seat you occupy are the shortest routes to the street. In the event of fire or other emergency, do not run — walk to that exit.

If an evacuation is needed, follow the instructions given by the House Manager and Usher staff.

Automated external defibrillators (AEDs) and **First Aid kits** are available if needed during an emergency.

Q&A: Sofia Basile, Viola

nyphil.org/sofia-basile

BRANDON PATOC

The facts: From Watertown, Massachusetts. Studied with Dimitri Murrath at New England Conservatory of Music and Carol Rodland at The Juilliard School. Prior to the Philharmonic: member of the Colorado Symphony's viola section, 2019–23. **At the Philharmonic:** Joined in 2023.

What are your earliest musical memories? I started playing the violin when I was three; I'm the youngest of five, and all my siblings played instruments. I remember learning how to read music and giving genders and characters to the notes as an aid (e.g. the A on the E string is a "princess").

Are there other musicians in your family? My brother Aidan is a fantastic French horn player. We both were full scholarship students at Walnut Hill School for the Arts in Natick, Massachusetts. I am so grateful I was able to go to a performing arts high school and be surrounded by other teens with the same goals and dedication to their craft.

Who are your biggest musical influences? At a young age I fell in love with the late 1970s New York City punk scene — the Ramones felt like family. Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen, and the Velvet Underground were also major influences. Although they aren't quite what one would think of as inspirations for a classical violist, they helped shape my love of music.

Who are your favorite composers? Schubert, Robert Schumann, and J.S. Bach

Philharmonic highlights: I've loved working with Gary Padmore (Vice President, Education and Community Engagement, The Sue B. Mercy Chair) and the amazing Education department! Playing concerts out in the larger New York City community, especially for those who may not have the ability or resources to come to a concert at David Geffen Hall, is what feeds my soul, and I believe it's imperative.

What would you be if not a musician? I love libraries for their cozy nooks, calmness, and the resources and sense of community they provide. I worked in them throughout my time as a student and seriously considered getting a master of library science degree.

What music are you listening to right now? A lot of Judee Sill, Jonathan Richman, and the Talking Heads. Newer artists I've been digging into more are Weyes Blood, Ruth Garbus, and ML Buch.

What do you like to do outside of work? I'm a passionate thrifter / tchotchke collector! I also love reading, crocheting, crafting, and spending time with my three cats.

What advice would you give to young musicians considering an orchestral career? Play for as many people as you can — not just teachers in lesson settings, but friends, family, and colleagues! Record yourself and keep a notebook to jot down what to work on as well as the things you liked about your playing. It's so easy to hyperfocus on the negatives but remember to celebrate what you do well, too!

Q&A: Benjamin Adler, Associate Principal Clarinet

nyphil.org/benjamin-adler

BRANDON PATOC

The facts: From Brooklyn, New York. Studied with Steve Cohen at Northwestern University, and with Yehuda Gilad at University of Southern California and the Colburn School. Prior to the Philharmonic: assistant principal clarinet and E-flat clarinet for the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra; second clarinet and E-flat clarinet for the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. During the COVID-19 lockdown, founded the Clarinet Maestro Festival to make high-quality education accessible to all clarinetists. **At the Philharmonic:** Joined in 2023.

Earliest musical memories: My mother teaching clarinet to her students in our Brooklyn apartment — as a small child I would sit on her lap or beside her during lessons. Both of my parents are clarinetists and also play an assortment of world instruments, so music was a constant presence at home. At one point we all played the clarinet, including my sister. She managed to escape and became a photographer instead. Still in the creative field, but she brought some variety to the family!

Who are your biggest musical influences? Many of my fellow students at USC and Colburn were among my greatest influences. I was fortunate to have a teacher who emphasized the importance of working together to improve, rather than tearing each other down through competition. He taught us to recognize and celebrate our own unique voices.

Who are your favorite composers? The answer to theis question has changed along with my taste. My favorite used to be Mahler because of his rich orchestral writing. Lately I've been gravitating toward Sibelius and Robert Schumann — Sibelius for his distinctive, non-traditional writing style, and Schumann for his intensity of character without being overly dramatic.

What are your highlights with the Philharmonic? This may sound cheesy, but the first time I played a concert with the Orchestra, I looked out into the audience and felt like I was playing for my home crowd. I hadn't lived in New York for a long time, but in that moment it felt like I was finally home. It was a surreal and incredibly cool feeling. Also, playing in Vail, Colorado, has been a yearly summer highlight for me. It's a beautiful venue in the heart of the Rocky Mountains, packed full of different programs.

What music are you listening to right now? In addition to classical, I enjoy listening to different styles of popular music. Right now, I'm really into K-pop, but I also listen to reggaeton, alternative rock, and old-school hip-hop.

What do you like to do outside of work? I play golf, lift weights, read, spend time with friends and family, and take walks around the city. I follow most New York sports, but I'm a die-hard Mets fan. LGM!

What advice would you give to young musicians considering an orchestral career? You'll never know what you're capable of unless you reach for your highest goals. Don't let the discouraging voices of others hold you back. Keep moving forward!

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Member event photos by Chris Lee; chamber orchestra by Fadi Kheir

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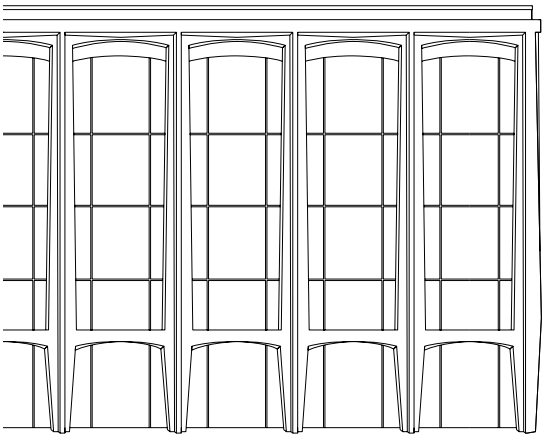

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