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2025-2026 Season

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COLUMBUS SYMPHONY INFORMATION

Venue: RiverCenter for the Performing Arts | 900 Broadway, Columbus GA

Ticket Sales: RiverCenter Box Office, Monday - Friday, 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

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A NOTE FROM THE CONDUCTOR

Greetings, and welcome to this performance by the Columbus Symphony Orchestra.

Let me ask you a question: Why are you here?

There are many answers to this question, some better than others. (I love music. Good. I was trapped into it by my significant other. Not quite as good, but okay.)

Here are some reasons why we respond to music and, therefore, seek to hear it:

1. Listening to music releases “pleasure chemicals” like dopamine, among others, into a key part of our brain’s reward system. (Why go on? Okay, we will.)
2. Music transcends walls and boundaries with its universal language.
3. Music can help reduce anxiety and depression.
4. Music allows you to experience the full range of human emotions.
5. Music can lighten the mood.
6. Music can stave off fatigue and improve our response to pain.
7. Music can bring back memories.
8. All that and much, much more.

Whatever the reason for your presence at this concert, we are most happy to see you, to play for you, and to help make live orchestral music a meaningful part of your life. Come back soon.

George Del Gobbo,
Music Director & Conductor



Young George was always interested in music. From his earliest years he preferred musical toys. This proclivity remained undefined until the seventh grade when he decided he wanted to play the violin in the school orchestra. This turn down the dark path was sealed when he began studying the violin privately. It was a short step from there to the decision to make music his life, and his fate was sealed when he made the irrevocable choice to become an orchestra conductor. He was fortunate to attend the Eastman School of Music for five years on a four-year scholarship. (To date no statues of him have been erected outside that school.) From there it was on to a stint with the U.S. Army Band in Washington, D.C and simultaneously the graduate school at Catholic University. After leaving the army, it was on to Rome, Italy and the tutelage of Maestro Franco Ferrara at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia. After a dozen years working with the Fort Worth Symphony and Ballet, he came to Columbus and discovered the orchestra, the people, and the city that would enrich his life forever.



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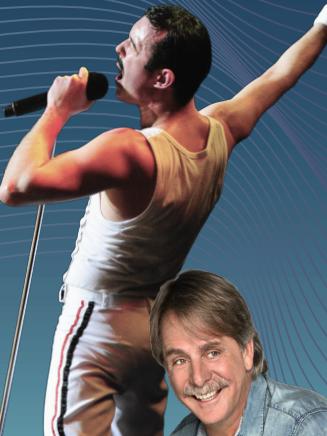


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ABOUT THE CONCERTMASTER



Kerren Berz's talents span the musical spectrum. She has performed, recorded, and toured with the Atlanta Symphony, the Harlem Festival Orchestra, and the Nashville Chamber Orchestra, whose "music without boundaries" mission produced critically acclaimed performances and recordings of music by Aaron Copland, Connell Ellisor, and John Jorgenson. She performs regularly with the Georgia Symphony, Atlanta Pops, the Pullman Pops, and orchestras in Chattanooga, LaGrange, and throughout the southeast.

Her ensemble Sonic Essence regularly performs multi genre music and interactive performances for concert series and corporate events. Other performances include a national tour with Amy Grant and Vince Gill, and shows with Stevie Wonder, Joni Mitchell, The Eagles, Earth Wind and Fire, and many other iconic artists.

As a music arranger and performer, Kerren Berz has worked with Kristian Bush (Sugarland), and is featured on albums by Outkast, Goodie Mob, Pink, Sinead O'Connor, and on the hit single "Survivor," by Destiny's Child. Ms. Berz is a voting member of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences and has served on nominating committees in the Classical categories for the annual Grammy Awards.

She has degrees from Florida State University, where she studied with Eliot Chapo, and the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga, with additional studies at Boston University and with Israeli violinist Yair Kless. She credits her public school music program with giving her the opportunity to play the violin.

As a music educator, Ms. Berz has worked with the Columbus Urban League, TORCH Academy, the Youth Orchestra of Greater Columbus, and strings students throughout the Atlanta area. She is currently on faculty at Georgia Perimeter College, The Atlanta Music Project, and The Lovett School.



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CONCERT TIPS

Accessible Seating: Seating for those in wheelchairs is available. Please state your specific need when arriving to the venue.

Ushers are available to take your tickets, provide you with a program, and direct you to and from your seat.

Restrooms are located in the RiverCenter lobby. Ushers can help direct you to the closest restroom.

Smoking and vaping are not allowed inside the building.

Lost and Found: If you lose an item in the theatre, please notify an usher. Items may be turned in to the RiverCenter Security.

Arrive Early: Although there are occasions when arriving later is considered stylish, a concert isn't one of them. Once the music has begun, latecomers will be asked to remain in the lobby until the first performance break.

Phones: Flash photography and noise disturbances are strictly prohibited. We love engaging with our audience on social media so feel free to check-in on Facebook and take selfies and photos PRIOR to the performance. Before the concert starts, be sure to silence your phone and turn down those brightness settings.

Quiet Company: Unless the concert is deemed a "sing-a-long", you will want to leave the music making to the ensemble... even if you really do know the whole first movement of Beethoven's Seventh. The people around you probably know it too and would rather hear the orchestra's rendition. Silence all cell phones, alarms, or other audible devices before the concert begins.

Applause: Don't know when to clap and cheer? We can make it easy! In classical music concerts, applause is usually held until the conductor faces the audience. Some pieces contain several movements and there will be a brief applause-less pause between them. If you ever feel the overwhelming need to clap and cheer between movements... the orchestra won't mind the appreciation!

Enjoy Each Note: You may simply want to avoid the crowd by leaving five minutes early, but the musicians may mistake that as a sign of disapproval. Sit back, relax, and enjoy every last note!



RiverCenter for the Performing Arts, a 501c3 not-for-profit entity, proudly supports the Columbus Symphony Orchestra as a resident company through generous in-kind donations which include rent-free office and meeting space, reduced fees for use of performance spaces and related services and amenities for the benefit of the Orchestra. For information on renting the facility and how to support the work of RiverCenter, please call 706-256-3607 or visit www.rivercenter.org



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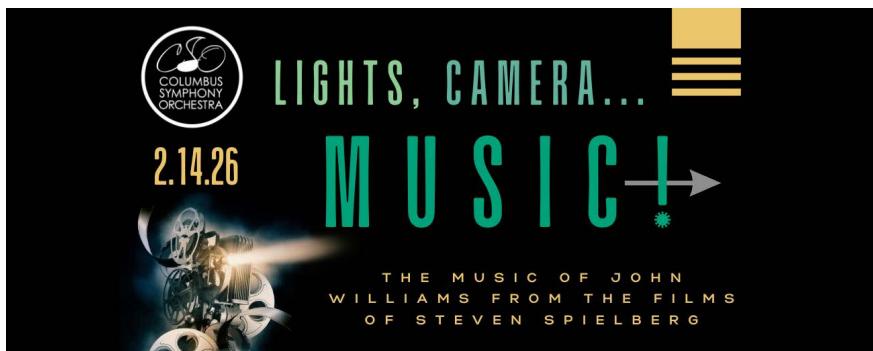
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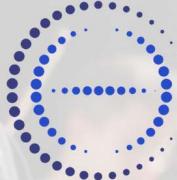
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Musicians employed in this production are represented by the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada.

The CSO uses the revolving seating method for section string players who are listed alphabetically in the roster.

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COLUMBUS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

George Del Gobbo, Music Director & Conductor
The Dr. & Mrs. Steven Leichter Chair

Saturday, January 31 2026 | 7:30PM

PROGRAM

Aaron Jay Kernis Musica Celestis

Francis Poulenc Concerto for Two Pianos in D Minor
I. Allegro non troppo
II. Larghetto
III. Finale: Allegro molto
Duo Amaedae: Esther Park and Sun-A Park, pianos

-Intermission-

Aaron Copland Appalachian Spring

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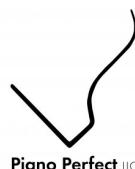
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Duo Amaedae: Esther Park and Sun-A Park



Duo Amadeae, formed in 2014 by sister pianists Esther and Sun-A Park, is enjoying both their solo and duo career internationally. Winners of the Chicago International Duo Piano Competition, Duo Amadeae has performed at prestigious venues such as Chicago Cultural Center, Konzert Saal at the Hochschule für Musik, Munich, to name a few. Both Esther and Sun-A received international recognition in several competitions including first prizes at the 61st Kosciuszko Foundation Chopin Competition (New York), and top prizes at the 5th International Sendai Music Competition (Sendai, 2013), Jose Roca Piano Competition (Valencia, 2013), 58th Ferruccio Busoni International Piano Competition (Bolzano, 2011), Paderewski International Piano Competition (Bydgoszcz) and the Gina Bachauer International Piano Competition (Salt Lake City).

As active performers, the two pianists performed recitals in major venues in United States, Europe, South America, and Asia. Concerto engagements include the Houston Symphony Orchestra, Sendai Philharmonic, San Marino Republic Orchestra, Orchester Haydn, New Jersey Symphony, Albany Symphony, and the Symphonie Orchestra of Castilla y León under the direction of such conductors as Eiji Oue, Arthur Hagen, Krzysztof Urbanski, Alastair Willis, and Murry Sidlin.

The duo's broad musical interests allow them to move with ease between concertos, recitals, and chamber music, enjoying appearances around the world at important venues including the Avery Fisher Hall and the Benaroya Hall in the United States, Het Concertgebouw in the Netherlands, Slovak Philharmonic Hall in Slovakia, National Dublin Hall in Ireland, Sejong Arts Center in Korea, Sendai Cultural Center in Japan, and Miguel Delibes Cultural Center in Spain. Upcoming concert engagements for Duo Amadeae includes a performance with Columbus Symphony Orchestra, recital appearances in New York, Tennessee and Georgia.

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PROGRAM NOTES

Musica Celestis

Aaron Jay Kernis (b. 1960)

Premiered on March 30, 1992 by the Sinfonia San Francisco with conductor Ransom Wilson

Aaron Jay Kernis is one of the leading American composers of his generation, known for music that blends contemporary techniques with an expressive and often lyrical voice. Born in Philadelphia, he began studying the violin at a young age before teaching himself piano and composition. His formal training included studies at the San Francisco Conservatory, the Manhattan School of Music, and Yale University. Kernis's wide-ranging catalogue spans orchestral, chamber, choral, and solo works, and his achievements have been recognized with major honors such as the Pulitzer Prize, the Grawemeyer Award, and multiple Grammy Awards. He has been commissioned by major soloists and orchestras worldwide and has been an influential teacher and advocate for new music.

Musica Celestis first appeared in 1990 as the second movement of Kernis' String Quartet No. 1 and was later arranged by the composer for string orchestra. The title translates from Latin as "heavenly music," and reflects the otherworldly and suspended soundscapes found in this meditative piece. Kernis writes in his own program notes:

"...Musica Celestis, is inspired by the medieval conception of that phrase which refers to the singing of the angels in heaven in praise of God without end. 'The office of singing pleases God if it is performed with an attentive mind, when in this way we imitate the choirs of angels who are said to sing the Lord's praises without ceasing.' (Aurelian of Réome, translated by Barbara Newman) I don't particularly believe in angels, but found this to be a potent image that has been reinforced by listening to a good deal of medieval music, especially the soaring work of Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179). This movement follows a simple, spacious melody and harmonic pattern through a number of variations (like a passacaglia) and modulations, and is framed by an introduction and codas."

For listeners, Musica Celestis unfolds as a continuous arc, beginning with a quiet, luminous atmosphere of overlapping notes. The sound begins to warm as the lower strings enter, followed by several stunning string solos that ebb and flow within the growing texture. An active middle section features accented rhythmic figures that spill into racing passages, climbing higher and higher in register. Several poignant releases signal the gradual descent of the arc and the return of glowing sustained lines, which fade into a quiet, peaceful ending.

Concerto for Two Pianos in D Minor

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Premiered on September 5, 1932 at La Scala with soloists Francis Poulenc and Jacques Février

Francis Poulenc was one of the most distinctive voices of 20th-century French music. A pianist and composer, Poulenc was a member of Les Six - a group of young French composers and admirers of Eric Satie who rejected the emotional excesses of late Romanticism in favor of flippancy and wit. Poulenc's career can be described as encompassing two contrasting sides: his earlier works are marked by lightness, humor, and playful charm, while his music written after the mid-1930s reflects a deepened seriousness, including a growing focus on sacred and contemplative subjects. His output spans orchestral works, chamber music, songs, choral music, and opera, including such enduring pieces as *Gloria*, *Dialogues des Carmélites*, and numerous piano works.

Poulenc's Concerto for Two Pianos in D Minor was composed in 1932 and commissioned by Princess Edmond de Polignac. The work was premiered with great success in Venice at the Festival of the International Society of Contemporary Music, with Poulenc and his friend Jacques Février appearing as the soloists. Written during Poulenc's early, more playful period, the concerto reflects his fascination with Mozart as well as contemporary influences encountered during his travels, including Balinese gamelan music heard at the Paris Colonial Exposition of 1931. Scored for two pianos and orchestra, the work showcases Poulenc's love of the piano and his flair for combining virtuosity with humor and lyricism.

The first movement bursts to life with crisp energy and rhythmic sparkle. Bright, percussive piano writing propels the music forward, often in lively dialogue between the two soloists and orchestra. The mood is buoyant and playful, with sharp contrasts between bustling passages and more lyrical moments. Near the end, listeners can hear the influence of the Balinese gamelan. Overall, Poulenc's energetic writing and unexpected harmonic turns create a sense of playful instability while maintaining joy and momentum throughout the movement.

In striking contrast, the second movement offers a moment of calm and introspection. Long, singing lines unfold with a simplicity reminiscent of Mozart, whom Poulenc openly admired. The two pianos often share gentle, flowing melodies creating an atmosphere of tenderness and restraint. A middle section gathers motion with repetitive eighth notes and dramatic figures in the pianos and orchestra before returning to the original calm and somber melodies.

The final movement restores high spirits with dazzling speed and wit. Rapid figurations, playful exchanges between the pianos, cheeky melodies, and bursts of orchestral color create a sense of mischievous excitement. Light on its feet, the music is full of sudden turns and sparkling humor, yet tightly constructed. A racing conclusion brings Poulenc's witty, charming, and virtuosic concerto to a bright close.

Appalachian Spring

Aaron Jay Kernis (b. 1960)

Premiered on October 30, 1944 at the Library of Congress in Washington D.C.

Aaron Copland is widely regarded as one of the architects of an unmistakably American musical voice. Born in Brooklyn, New York, he studied composition in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, where he absorbed modern European techniques and later forged his own style defined by open harmonies, transparent textures, and an ability to evoke the character of American landscapes and ideals. His career encompassed concert works, ballets, film scores, chamber music, and vocal writing, with major works such as Appalachian Spring, Rodeo, Billy the Kid, and Fanfare for the Common Man bringing him broad public recognition. Beyond composition, Copland was an influential conductor, teacher, and writer who played a central role in promoting contemporary music in the United States.

The Appalachian Spring ballet was composed in 1943–44 for choreographer Martha Graham and premiered in 1944 at the Library of Congress. Originally scored for a small chamber ensemble of 13 instruments, the ballet depicts scenes of frontier life in rural Pennsylvania, centered on a young pioneer couple beginning their life together. Martha Graham herself titled the work after a phrase from the poem “The Dance” by Hart Crane, desiring the ballet to reflect American life, of which the Appalachian Mountains were an icon. Copland received a Pulitzer Prize for the ballet in 1945 and later arranged the music into the orchestral Appalachian Spring Suite, which quickly became one of his most beloved concert works.

For this evening’s performance, the CSO will be playing the ballet score in its entirety, performed continuously as it shifts seamlessly from scene to scene. Regarding the plot, Copland writes,

“The bride-to-be and the young farmer-husband enact the emotions, joyful and apprehensive, which their new domestic partnership invites. An old neighbor suggests, now and then, the rocky confidence of experience. A revivalist and his followers remind the new householders of the strange and terrible aspects of human fate. At the end the couple are left quiet and strong in their new house.”

For the listener, the opening section is sparse and luminous, with widely spaced harmonies that suggest open landscapes and a sense of beginning. Livelier sections later introduce buoyant rhythms and folk-like gestures, evoking moments of communal activity and celebration. One of the most recognizable sections features the Shaker tune “Simple Gifts.” Here, Copland presents the melody plainly then gradually expands it through a series of variations. Throughout, Copland favors clarity, balance, and spacious textures, allowing each idea room to breathe. The score closes quietly, leaving an impression of confidence, optimism, and enduring simplicity.

Program Notes Compiled and Written by Leah Eckstrom

GLOSSARY OF MUSICAL TERMS

Cadenza (It. Cadenza): an improvised or written-out decorative passage performed by a soloist, with accompaniment, usually near the end of a concerto movement.

Concerto (fr. Lat. Concertare, to contend): a composition for featured instrument(s) and orchestra often cast in three movements marked fast-slow-fast. The contrast in sound between the soloist(s) and the large ensemble is the principal characteristic of the genre.

Concerto grosso (It. large concerto): a type of concerto common to the Baroque era in which a small group of solo instruments (concertino) is contrasted to the large ensemble (ripieno)

Finale (Lat. Finalis, to end): the name sometimes given to the last movement of a longer composition.

Minuet: a stately court dance in three-four time which is often used as the third movement of the classical symphony. It was replaced in the nineteenth century by the scherzo and other dance-like movements.

Movement: an independent section of a larger work, usually separated by a brief pause.

Opus (Lat. Opus, work): a number assigned to a musical composition either by the composer or by the work's publisher (abbreviated as Op.)

Orchestra: the generic name for an ensemble of diverse instruments. The modern orchestra includes instruments from the four major groups: strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion.

Rondo: a musical form in which a theme recurs three or more times with each occurrence separated by a contrasting episode.

Scherzo (It. Scherzo, joke): a fast moving piece, usually in triple meter. Scherzos became common with the symphonies of Beethoven and eventually replaced the Minuet.

Suite: a succession of related movements, often dance inspired, sometimes extracted from larger works.

Symphony (Gr. Symphonia, sounding together): an elaborate musical composition for full orchestra, typically in four movements

Tempo: Many words are used to designate the speed and/or character of a piece of music. Here are some of the most commonly encountered terms for tempo and style modifiers:

Adagio: on the slow side

Lento: slow

Allegretto: a fairly brisk tempo

Maestoso: majestically

Allegro: "lively," the most common indication for a fast tempo

meno: less

Andante: "to walk or go," interpreted as moderately slow.

molto: much

Andantino: a bit faster than Andante

mosso: moved

Cantabile: in a singing fashion

non troppo: not too much

con brio: with spirit and vivacity

piu: more

con fuoco: with fire

poco: little

con moto: with movement

Presto: very fast, sometimes modified as Prestissimo, meaning as fast as possible.

Grave: more a style than speed, but often interpreted as slow and serious

Scherzando: lightheartedly

Grazioso: graceful

Sostenuto: in a sustained manner

Largo: broad or large, usually taken in a slow and dignified style

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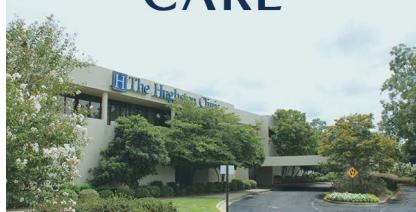
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