



KANSAS CITY
SYMPHONY

Classical Series

Sunday, January 17, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.
Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts
Michael Stern, *conductor*

Samuel Barber

Serenade for String Orchestra, op. 1

- I. Un poco adagio — Allegro con spirito
- II. Andante con moto
- III. Dance. Allegro giocoso

Carlos Oliver Simon

An Elegy: A Cry from the Grave

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Serenade in C Major for Strings, op. 48

- I. Pezzo in forma di sonatina: Andante non troppo — Allegro moderato
- II. Walzer: Moderato - Tempo di valse
- III. Elégie: Larghetto elegiaco
- IV. Finale (Tema Russo): Andante — Allegro con spirito

The 2020/21 Season is generously sponsored by

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Orchestra Roster

Michael Stern, *Music Director*
Jason Seber, *Associate Conductor*,
David T. Beals III Chair

FIRST VIOLINS

Sunho Kim, *Acting Concertmaster*
Miller Nichols Chair

Stirling Trent,
Acting Associate Concertmaster

Chiafei Lin,
Acting Assistant Concertmaster

Gregory Sandomirsky ‡
Associate Concertmaster Emeritus

Anne-Marie Brown
Betty Chen

Anthony DeMarco
Susan Goldenberg*

Tomoko Iguchi
Dorris Dai Janssen

Vladimir Rykov
Alex Shum*

SECOND VIOLINS

Tamamo Someya Gibbs, *Principal*
Kristin Velicer, *Acting Associate Principal*
Minhye Helena Choi,
Acting Assistant Principal

Nancy Beckmann
Mary Garcia Grant

Kevin Hao ‡
Kazato Inouye

Rena Ishii
Stephanie Larsen
Francesca Manheim

VIOLAS

Matthew Sinno, *Acting Principal*
Jessica Nance, *Acting Associate Principal*
Duke Lee, *Acting Assistant Principal*

Kent Brauningner
Sean Brumble
Marvin Gruenbaum
Jenifer Houck
Jesse Yukimura

CELLOS

Mark Gibbs, *Principal*
Robert A. Kipp Chair
Susie Yang, *Associate Principal*
Richard Hill Chair
Alexander East, *Assistant Principal*

Maria Crosby
John Eadie
Lawrence Figg
Rung Lee*
Meredith McCook
Allen Probus

DOUBLE BASSES

Jeffrey Kail, *Principal*
Evan Hallowin, *Associate Principal*
Brandon Mason ‡
Caleb Quillen
Richard Ryan
Nash Tomey

FLUTES

Michael Gordon, *Principal*
Marylou and John Dodds Turner Chair
Shannon Finney, *Associate Principal*
Kayla Burggraf

PICCOLO

Kayla Burggraf

OBOES

Kristina Fulton, *Principal*
Shirley Bush Helzberg Chair
Alison Chung, *Associate Principal*

CLARINETS

Raymond Santos, *Principal*
Bill and Peggy Lyons Chair
Silvio Guitian, *Associate Principal*
John Klinghammer

E-FLAT CLARINET

Silvio Guitian

BASS CLARINET

John Klinghammer

BASSOONS

Ann Bilderback, *Principal*
Barton P. and Mary D. Cohen Chair
Thomas DeWitt, *Associate Principal*
Maxwell Pipinich

CONTRABASSOON

Thomas DeWitt

HORNS

Alberto Suarez, *Principal*
Landon and Sarah Rowland Chair
David Sullivan, *Associate Principal*
Elizabeth Gray
David Gamble
Stephen Multer,
Associate Principal Emeritus

TRUMPETS

Julian Kaplan, *Principal*
James B. and Annabel Nutter Chair
Steven Franklin, *Associate Principal*
Brian Rood ‡

TROMBONES

Roger Oyster, *Principal*
Porter Wyatt Henderson,
Associate Principal
Adam Rainey

BASS TROMBONE

Adam Rainey

TUBA

Joe LeFevre, *Principal*
Frank Byrne Chair

TIMPANI

Timothy Jepson, *Principal*
Michael and Susan Newburger Chair

PERCUSSION

Josh Jones^, *Principal*
David Yoon, *Associate Principal*

HARP

Katherine Siochi, *Principal*

LIBRARIANS

Elena Lence Talley, *Principal*
Fabrice Curtis

* Non-Rotating Musician

^ New Member

‡ On Leave of Absence



SAMUEL BARBER

Serenade for String Quartet (or String Orchestra), op. 1 (1928)

10 minutes

Overshadowed by the famous *Adagio for Strings* drawn from his String Quartet, op. 11, Barber's earlier Serenade for String Quartet, op. 1, still reveals a level of refinement and confidence befitting a composer of more mature years. Written in 1928 while Barber was studying composition with Rosario Scalero at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music, the three-movement Serenade is well-grounded in traditional harmonies but readily displays the composer's fondness for metrical juxtaposition and expressive shifts between major and minor.

Barber's student colleagues in the Curtis Quartet premiered the work in May 1930 on a program of compositions by Scalero's students. At that time, there appears to have been a fourth movement in the piece but no manuscript survives and all published versions are three movements. The Serenade was published in 1942; Barber added sixteen measures and a bass part to create a string orchestra version.

All three movements of the Serenade are compact. Passages of lyrical introspection are interspersed with moments of melancholy as Barber adroitly weaves the lines into a rich tapestry. The concluding Dance is lively and playful, with irrepressible youthful optimism and wry humor at the fore. *ETW*

SAMUEL BARBER (1910-1981)

One of America's most eminent composers, Samuel Osborne Barber II knew his destiny at an early age. The 9-year-old Barber wrote his mother a letter saying, "I was not meant to be an athlete [*sic*]. I was meant to be a composer, and will be I'm sure." A year later, he wrote a brief opera called *The Rose Tree*, launching his life's work.

Barber grew up surrounded by music. His pianist mother encouraged his musical endeavors. His aunt Louise Beatty Homer, who sang at the Metropolitan Opera, and his uncle Sidney Homer, a composer, offered crucial mentorship. Early piano studies enabled young Samuel to serve as organist at a Presbyterian church in his hometown of West Chester, Pennsylvania.



At 14, Barber became one of the first students at a new conservatory — the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia — studying piano, voice and composition. His teachers included renowned conductor Fritz Reiner and composer Rosario Scalero. At Curtis, he met fellow student Gian Carlo Menotti, who would become his lifelong companion.



Early successes included prizes from Columbia University, winning the American Prix de Rome, and receiving a Pulitzer scholarship. His Overture to *The School for Scandal* was premiered by the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1933 and helped establish Barber's reputation as a talented young composer. His String Quartet followed in 1936 and he arranged its second movement for string orchestra at the behest of NBC Symphony conductor Arturo Toscanini. The *Adagio for Strings* rapidly became his most famous work and secured his status as a composer of lyrical music.

The 1940s and 50s marked the height of Barber's fame when he received three Guggenheim Fellowships, a Pulitzer Prize and an honorary doctorate from Harvard University. While many composers embraced the experimental approaches favored by academics in the 1960s, Barber stayed true to his own expressive style, resulting in waning popularity. As he remarked in a 1971 interview, "When I write an abstract piano sonata or concerto, I write what I feel. I believe this takes a certain courage."

The shifting winds of artistic taste contributed to Barber's sense of isolation and rejection toward the end of his life. He struggled with depression and alcoholism, composing virtually nothing for several years. A solo piano work and his Third Essay for Orchestra finally emerged in the late 1970s. He succumbed to cancer in 1981, leaving a catalog of more than 40 published works and over 100 still unpublished. *ETW*



CARLOS OLIVER SIMON

An Elegy: A Cry From the Grave (2015)

5 minutes

Classical music gives me so much freedom to experiment. You don't have to follow the rules in the same way as in other mediums like jazz. I can play with almost an endless number of sound combinations that don't exist anywhere else, and this allows me to say what I want to say in music. In order for me to write something worth listening to, I need to feel connected to the project I am joining. The projects I have been drawn to have always been about telling the stories of people who aren't often heard or are misrepresented or marginalized. It's important for me to understand as much as I can about the subjects I am working on to give them the dignity and justice they deserve.

This piece is an artistic reflection dedicated to those who have been murdered wrongfully by an oppressive power — namely Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner and Michael Brown. The stimulus for composing this piece came as a result of prosecuting attorney Robert McCulloch announcing that a selected jury had decided not to indict police officer Darren Wilson after he fatally shot an unarmed teenager, Michael Brown, in Ferguson, Missouri.

The evocative nature of the piece draws on strong lyricism and a lush harmonic charter. A melodic idea is played in all the voices of the ensemble at some point of the piece, either whole or fragmented. The recurring ominous motif represents the cry of those struck down unjustly in this country. While the predominant essence of the piece is sorrowful and contemplative, there are moments of extreme hope represented by bright consonant harmonies.

— Carlos Oliver Simon

CARLOS OLIVER SIMON
(b. 1986)

Carlos Simon is a native of Atlanta, Georgia, where he started to play the organ at the age of 12 in his father's church. Influenced by jazz, gospel, and neo-romanticism, his compositions range from solos to full orchestra works as well as symphonic band and vocal pieces.

Simon was a recipient of the 2021 Sphinx Medal of Excellence, the highest honor bestowed by the Sphinx Organization. The award recognizes extraordinary classical Black and Latinx musicians who demonstrate artistic excellence, outstanding work ethic, a spirit of determination, and an ongoing commitment to leadership in their communities. Other recent accolades include being named a Composer Fellow at the Cabrillo Festival for Contemporary Music, winning the Underwood Emerging Composer Commission from the American Composers Orchestra, and receiving the prestigious Marvin Hamlisch Film Scoring Award.

Simon's latest album, "My Ancestor's Gift", was released on the Navona Records label in 2018. Featured on Apple Music's Albums to Watch, "My Ancestor's Gift" incorporates spoken word and historic recordings to craft a multifaceted program of musical works that are inspired as much by the past as they are the present.

Serving as music director and keyboardist for GRAMMY® Award winner Jennifer Holliday, Simon has performed with the Boston Pops Symphony, Jackson Symphony and St. Louis Symphony. He has toured internationally with GRAMMY-nominated artist Angie Stone, performing throughout Europe, Africa and Asia.

Simon earned his doctorate at the University of Michigan, where he studied with Michael Daugherty and Evan Chambers. He also has received degrees from Georgia State University and Morehouse College. He has served as a member of the music faculty at Spelman College and Morehouse College, both in Atlanta, Georgia, and is now an assistant professor at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.



PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)**Serenade for String Orchestra, op. 48****30 minutes**

The origin of musical thought is largely a mystery, even to those fervent practitioners known as composers. In the fall of 1880, Tchaikovsky was working simultaneously on two pieces and they represent a dichotomy of inspiration. The Serenade for Strings sprang from a few days of relaxation. Tchaikovsky wrote to his patron and confidante, Nadezhda von Meck, in September 1880:

No sooner had I begun to spend a number of days relaxing, than I began to feel somewhat restless and rather unwell ... Today I could not bear it, and endure it no longer, and I busied myself a little with designs for a future symphony — perhaps? I immediately began to feel cheerful, well and relaxed ... This effect proved not to diminish itself with time, and I satisfied my intrinsic need to work — especially composition. Now here I am already with designs for a symphony or string quartet; I do not yet know which.

The other piece was a commission for the celebration of a Pushkin memorial in Moscow and Tchaikovsky found the project tedious at best.

What can you write on the occasion of the opening of an exhibition except banalities and generally noisy passages?

The overture will be very loud and noisy ... but I wrote it with no warm feeling of love, and therefore there will probably be no artistic merits in it.

Nonetheless, both the *1812 Overture* and Serenade for Strings have found great popularity with audiences. The Serenade was composed over the course of six weeks and Tchaikovsky acknowledged the rapidity of its advent with no slight degree of favoritism.

My muse has been so kind that in a short time I have got through two long works: a big festival overture for the Exhibition, and a serenade for string orchestra in four movements. I am busy orchestrating them both.

...

The Serenade ... I composed from an innate impulse; that is something which arises from having freedom to think, and is not devoid of true worth.

...

I love this Serenade terribly, and fervently hope that it might soon see the light of day.

The Serenade was performed for the first time just a month after its completion, taking place at a private concert at the Moscow Conservatory as a surprise for Tchaikovsky. The public premiere came almost a year later in St. Petersburg at a concert of the Russian Musical Society.



Tchaikovsky admired Mozart and the first movement of the Serenade is his homage to Mozart's prolific writing in the genre. Opening with a richly voiced chorale theme, the music is pure Tchaikovsky though, filled with delicious melodies and cleverly scored to enhance the luxurious string sound. The Waltz that follows is one of the most elegant and graceful that Tchaikovsky ever wrote. The Elegy is contemplative with only a tinge of wistfulness. The Finale begins as if in the distance, with muted strings, but quickly launches into an energetic romp based on a Russian folksong. The chorale that opened the Serenade briefly returns before a whirlwind finish to the piece. *ETW*

PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky was born in Votkinsk, Russia, about 700 miles east of Moscow and 1,200 miles east of St. Petersburg. His father was an engineer and manager of an ironworks; his mother was the descendant of French emigres. Both were trained in the arts and they encouraged this education for their children through the efforts of a French governess. An adept pupil, Tchaikovsky began piano lessons at age 5 and was fluent in French and German by age 6. Regardless of talent, for reasons of practicality Tchaikovsky's parents decided to prepare him for a civil service career. At age 10 he was sent 800 miles away to boarding school and two years later was admitted to the Imperial School of Jurisprudence in St. Petersburg. All told, he would spend nine years studying law, economics, philosophy, and finance.



Tchaikovsky's mother died of cholera in 1854 and he was devastated at the loss. Shortly thereafter he wrote a waltz in her memory, one of his earliest efforts at composition. In 1855, Tchaikovsky's father arranged for Piotr to have piano lessons with Rudolph Kunding, who did not encourage a musical career for the youth.

Upon graduation at age 19, Tchaikovsky entered civil service and rapidly advanced. The siren call of music could not be ignored, however, and he began taking music classes in 1861. He committed to a life of music when he resigned from his clerkship at the Ministry of Justice and entered the new St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1862. Following his graduation in 1865, Tchaikovsky embarked on a teaching career at the Moscow Conservatory. While he found teaching difficult, it did allow some time for composition and he began finding his musical voice. Some of Russia's leading composers espoused writing in an overtly nationalist manner but Tchaikovsky struck a balance between that and the Germanic tradition of his conservatory training.

Dealing with societal rejection of his sexual orientation, Tchaikovsky sought a modicum of acceptance by marrying 28-year-old Antonina Miliukova, one of his former conservatory students. It was completely disastrous and a nervous breakdown ensued. Weeks later, he fled the marriage and went abroad, writing his brother Anatoly, "Only now, especially after the tale of



my marriage, have I finally begun to understand that there is nothing more fruitless than not wanting to be that which I am by nature.” He and Antonina never lived together again.

It was during this same timeframe that Tchaikovsky entered a most unusual relationship with Nadezhda von Meck, the wealthy widow of a railway tycoon. Through the intercession of a mutual friend, von Meck became interested in Tchaikovsky’s music and eventually agreed to provide him an annual stipend of 6,000 rubles. This support allowed Tchaikovsky to quit teaching at the Moscow Conservatory and devote all of his time to composition. The two agreed never to meet but corresponded extensively, exchanging more than 1,000 letters over the course of 14 years, constituting a rich historical record.

Tchaikovsky composed steadily and began receiving recognition, both at home and abroad. He was voted a member of France’s Académie des Beaux-Arts and Cambridge University awarded him an honorary doctorate. While some critics and musical colleagues were hostile, audiences reacted with ever-greater enthusiasm. He began conducting more frequently and even made a triumphant appearance conducting his *Coronation March* at the dedication of New York’s Carnegie Hall in 1891.

Facing financial ruin, von Meck ended her support of Tchaikovsky late in 1890. He was extremely angry over the rejection and anguished over the cessation of their correspondence. Yet he continued to compose and produced some of his most memorable works, including *The Nutcracker* ballet.

In October 1893, Tchaikovsky conducted the premiere of his Sixth Symphony, “Pathétique”, to a lukewarm response. He fell ill a few days later and died, aged 53, never knowing the eventual brilliant success of the work. His death has been attributed to cholera contracted from drinking contaminated water but persistent rumor over the years has insinuated suicide. The question is unlikely ever to be answered definitively. Regardless, he lives on through a tremendous body of work marked by superb craftsmanship and overflowing with memorable melodies. *ETW*

Program notes written by AJ Harbison (AJH) and Eric T. Williams (ETW).

