



KANSAS CITY
SYMPHONY



**RAVEL'S BOLÉRO,
WITH FOLEY'S
SOUL *BASS***

APRIL 5-7, 2024

HELZBERG HALL, KAUFFMAN CENTER
FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

MICHAEL STERN, MUSIC DIRECTOR
AND CONDUCTOR

XAVIER FOLEY, COMPOSER AND DOUBLE BASS

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was commissioned by the League of American Orchestras
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PROGRAM

RAVEL'S BOLÉRO, WITH FOLEY'S SOUL BASS

Friday and Saturday, April 5-6, 2024 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, April 7, 2024 at 2 p.m.

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

MICHAEL STERN, CONDUCTOR

XAVIER FOLEY, COMPOSER AND DOUBLE BASS

MAURICE RAVEL

Le tombeau de Couperin

- I. Prélude
- II. Forlane
- III. Menuet
- IV. Rigaudon

XAVIER FOLEY

Soul Bass

- I. Prelude
- II. Chorus
- III. Fugue

Xavier Foley, *double bass*

INTERMISSION

ANGEL LAM

Please let there be a paradise...
(world premiere)

ALBERTO GINASTERA

Variaciones concertantes, op. 23

MAURICE RAVEL

Boléro

ABOUT MICHAEL STERN



MICHAEL STERN, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Michael Stern's celebrated 19-year tenure as music director of the Kansas City Symphony is remarkable for the orchestra's artistic ascent, organizational development and stability, and the extraordinary growth of its varied audiences. With a determined focus on impeccable musicianship and creative programming, Stern and the orchestra have partnered with Grammy® Award-winning Reference Recordings for an ongoing series of highly praised CDs.

Stern is also music director of the National Repertory Orchestra, a summer music festival in Breckenridge, Colorado, as well as the newly rebranded Orchestra Lumos, formerly the Stamford (CT) Symphony. He was recently named artistic advisor of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, one of Canada's foremost orchestral ensembles, and following a 22-year tenure as founding artistic director of Iris Orchestra in Germantown, Tennessee, he now serves the newly reimagined Iris Collective as artistic advisor.

Stern has led orchestras throughout Europe and Asia, including the Budapest and Vienna radio symphonies, the Helsinki, Israel, London, Moscow and Royal Stockholm philharmonics, London Symphony, National Symphony of Taiwan, Orchestre de Paris and Tokyo's NHK Symphony, among many others.

In North America, Stern has conducted the Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Cincinnati, Houston, Indianapolis, National (Washington, D.C.), Montreal, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Seattle and Toronto symphonies, the Cleveland and Philadelphia orchestras and the New York Philharmonic. He has been a regular guest at the Aspen Music Festival and School, where he also worked with students in the American Academy of Conducting at Aspen.

Stern has also held conducting positions with Germany's Saarbrücken Radio Symphony Orchestra as well as France's Orchestre National de Lyon and Orchestre National de Lille.

Stern received his music degree from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where his major teacher was the noted conductor and scholar Max Rudolf. Stern co-edited the third edition of Rudolf's famous textbook, "The Grammar of Conducting," and also edited a new volume of Rudolf's collected writings and correspondence. He is a 1981 graduate of Harvard University, where he earned a degree in American history.

ABOUT XAVIER FOLEY

XAVIER FOLEY, DOUBLE BASS

Xavier Foley is known for communicating his virtuosity and passion for music on the double bass, which is rarely presented as a solo instrument.

Foley is a first prize winner of the 2016 YCA Susan Wadsworth International Auditions, winner of the 2014 Sphinx Competition, and 2018 recipient of the Avery Fisher Career Grant. He has performed recitals at Shriver Hall, Rockport Music, La Jolla Chamber Music Society, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and National Gallery of Art, as well as on the Harriman-Jewell Series. An avid chamber musician, he has appeared with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festival and Skaneateles Festival.



As a composer, Foley's *For Justice and Peace* was premiered by the Sphinx Organization at Carnegie Hall in October 2019 and co-commissioned by both organizations. It has since been performed by such orchestras as the Atlanta Symphony, New West Symphony, Oregon Symphony and Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. Foley's bass concerto, *Soul Bass*, was commissioned and premiered by the Atlanta Symphony, with subsequent performances with the Baltimore Symphony under Jonathon Heyward and the Kansas City Symphony led by Michael Stern.

Recent commissions include Santa Fe Pro Musica, the Cabrillo Festival in conjunction with the Mahler Foundation, the Sphinx Organization with Carnegie Hall and the New World Symphony, Chicago Symphony's MusicNOW (curated by Jessie Montgomery) and the Oregon Symphony, where he has been named Artist-in-Residence for the next three seasons.

During the 2023/24 season Foley will tour extensively with the Sphinx Virtuosi playing his new concerto, "*Galaxy*" Concertante for two double basses, commissioned by Sphinx Virtuosi, New World Symphony and Carnegie Hall, and will also make concerto appearances with the Chicago Sinfonietta, Kansas City Symphony, Northwest Sinfonietta and Oregon Symphony. He will also tour with the Ying Quartet performing a new bass quintet and will appear in recital with the Castleton Festival, Schubert Club and Calgary Pro Musica.

A native of Marietta, Georgia, Foley is an alumnus of the Perlman Music Program, and earned his bachelor's degree from the Curtis Institute of Music working with Edgar Meyer and Hal Robinson. His double bass was crafted by Rumano Solano.

ABOUT ANGEL LAM



ANGEL LAM

Angel Lam is a Grammy® Award-nominated composer who uses the beauty of sounds, songs, instrumentation and written language to express detailed emotions and her passion for life. She tells intimate stories about life and death, growing up, inspirations and relationships. She has a background in both classical and folk music, learning zheng and qin (ancient Chinese zithers) as a child. Her work combines evocative songs, deeply felt hidden memories, an exploration of human experiences and her immersed sensitivity to spirituality. She writes short stories for her compositions, which are an inseparable component of her creative process.

Lam was honored to receive three Carnegie Hall commissions before the age of 29, including a cello

concerto dedicated to Yo-Yo Ma and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Robert Spano. She also wrote a classical crossover piece for Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble. Recently she has been composer-in-residence at Yale University's Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, where she was commissioned by the Musical Bridge Project to write a new work for pipa virtuoso Wu Man and artistic director Melvin Chen. Most recently, she produced, curated and composed a concert program at Merkin Hall in New York's Kaufman Music Center titled "Hong Kong Journeys."

One of America's foremost young female composers, Lam was selected by the League of American Orchestras and the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation to write a new work to be performed by five American orchestras: Utah Symphony and Opera, Quad City Symphony, Jacksonville Symphony and Orchestra Lumos, with the premiere given by the Kansas City Symphony conducted by Michael Stern. Most recently, she received Opera America's Discovery Grant Award to write and develop her new musical-opera in New York. This past year she was the composer-in-residence at Concert on the Slope, a chamber music series at Saint John's Episcopal Church in Park Slope, New York City.

Lam received her doctorate from the Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins University, her bachelor's degree from the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, and an Artist Diploma from Yale University. As a child, she attended Hong Kong Pui Ching Primary School.

Lam lives in New York City with her husband and two children. She is a teaching artist at Steinway and Sons where she has a studio of music composition, theory and piano performance students. When not composing, she is also a staff critic writing reviews for Theatsy.com.

PROGRAM NOTES

MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)

Le tombeau de Couperin (1914-17)

16 minutes

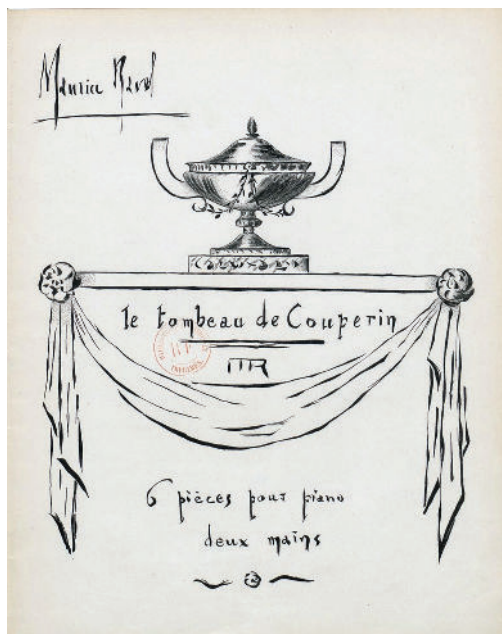
Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, trumpet, harp and strings.

THE STORY

The first inkling that Maurice Ravel was writing *Le tombeau de Couperin* came in a letter he sent to French composer Roland Manuel (his one-time pupil and future biographer) on October 1, 1914.



... I'm beginning two series of piano pieces: first, a French Suite — no, it's not what you think — the Marseillaise doesn't come into it at all, but there'll be a forlane and a jig; not a tango, though ...



Ravel drew the cover for the first edition of *Le tombeau de Couperin*.

The music would have to wait; France had entered World War I in August and the world was in turmoil. The 39-year-old composer sought to join the military as a pilot but was rejected due to his age, diminutive stature and fragile health. In March 1915, he succeeded in joining the French army's Thirteenth Artillery Regiment as a driver, naming his vehicle Adelaide and signing letters as "Chauffeur Ravel." Finally assigned to the front in March 1916, he carried munitions and fuel, often under bombardment during the months-long Battle of Verdun, a particularly intense and devastating offensive.

The privations of war took a toll on Ravel and he contracted a case of dysentery. While convalescing, his mother died in January 1917, sending him into a deep depression. He returned to his military duties briefly before suffering another health crisis leading to his discharge from the army in June 1917. While recovering in a village in Normandy, Ravel returned to *Le tombeau de Couperin*, completing the work that November. French pianist

PROGRAM NOTES

MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)

THE STORY *continued*

Marguerite Long gave the premiere in 1919 at the Société Musicale Indépendante in Paris. As was his common practice with solo piano pieces, Ravel orchestrated the work, omitting two of its six movements. This version was premiered by the Pasedeloup Orchestra of Paris under Rhené-Baton on February 28, 1920.

Le tombeau de Couperin looks to the past on several levels. Its overall structure is a nod to the suites of the Baroque era — collections of stylized dances. Even the name of the piece embodies historical practice. In the 16th century, a tombeau — derived from the French word for tomb — was a literary homage to the deceased; musicians later adopted the title for commemorative compositions. Among the revered French composers of that era was François Couperin, royal musician to kings Louis XIV and Louis XV. Ravel had transcribed one of Couperin's forlanes (a dance from northern Italy popular in the French aristocratic court around 1700) for piano and appreciated its elegant economy. Ravel later wrote concerning *Le tombeau de Couperin*, “The homage is directed less in fact to Couperin himself than to French music of the 18th century.”

The more direct and personal memorials embodied by *Le tombeau de Couperin* are the dedications Ravel made for each movement, to friends killed in the war.

Prélude — dedicated to Jacques Charlot, Ravel's friend and a cousin of his publisher, Jacques Durand.

Forlane — dedicated to Gabriel Deluc, a Basque painter whom Ravel met in a small town in the Pyrenees.

Menuet — dedicated to Jean Dreyfus, the stepson of Madame Fernand Dreyfus, with whom Ravel corresponded about his war experiences while on the front. Ravel recovered at the Dreyfus family home in Normandy after he was discharged from the army, composing much of *Le tombeau* there.

Rigaudon — dedicated to brothers Pierre and Pascal Gaudin, family friends both killed by the same shell on their first day at the front, November 12, 1914.

THE MUSIC

Despite its connection to the tremendous losses that Ravel felt so deeply, *Le tombeau* is far from somber music. He responded to criticism about its buoyant demeanor, commenting, “The dead are sad enough, in their eternal silence.” Ravel's deft touch and choice of relatively modest orchestral forces results in a texture that is transparent even at its loudest.

Like many Baroque suites, *Le tombeau* begins with a prelude but uses the somewhat unconventional meter of 12/16. The oboe nimbly weaves an intricate melodic tapestry taken up by the violins and eventually the entire orchestra in an iridescent swirl of notes, ending with a delightful shimmer.

The forlane is a marvelous synthesis of old and new. Ravel used the characteristic elements of the traditional dance — rondo form with its repeated refrain, 6/8 meter, dotted rhythm and symmetrical

PROGRAM NOTES

phrases — but fused them with 20th-century harmonies and dissonances in a most elegant blend. The oboe again takes the lead in the menuet, a dance that ranked among Louis XIV's favorites, reinforcing *Le tombeau's* connection to François Couperin. Ravel's version is gently lyrical and faintly tinged with melancholy. Aside from two brief swells, the overall dynamic is soft, providing a sense of gentle calm.

A folk dance that gained popularity at Louis XIV's court, the rigaudon was typically in duple meter with an intricate series of steps often involving hops and flourishes. With its repeated phrases and graceful symmetry, Ravel's rigaudon is perhaps the most traditional of the suite. The exuberant opening gives way to a more reflective section, yet again featuring oboe and English horn with delicate accompaniment in the strings. The woodwinds conjure a vision of refinement before the opening material returns, drawing the work to a vigorous close.

— *Eric T. Williams*

FREE HAPPY HOUR CHAMBER CONCERTS

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PROGRAM NOTES



XAVIER FOLEY (b. 1995)

Soul Bass (2022)
19 minutes

Solo double bass, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, bass trombone, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, glockenspiel, maracas, snare drum, triangle, harp and strings.

THE STORY

Xavier Foley harkens back to earlier generations of virtuosi who composed and performed their own solo works

— think Tartini, Paganini, Chopin, Beethoven and Liszt among others. Foley's choice was also pragmatic as there are only a relative handful of concerti for his instrument, the double bass. Having blazed through works by Dragonetti, Bottesini, and Koussevitzky as well as transcriptions of pieces for other instruments, Foley started writing his own music, emboldened by the realization that people were not concerned about the origin of the work, but rather about how the music made them feel. His familiarity with the instrument's capabilities as well as his own formidable technique inform his compositions but his creative impulse is a unique blend of styles encompassing soul, jazz, Latin, folk, metal and classical.

**"Every note is important. It's like a mathematical equation ... if one note is out, it's not balanced."
— Xavier Foley**

Soul Bass was commissioned by the Atlanta Symphony and Foley premiered the concerto with the ensemble in March 2022.

THE MUSIC

After a brief introduction, the solo bass settles into a groove, swooping and leaning into the line with cool energy. The orchestra accompanies lightly, adding flashes of color to the rich bass texture. A solo cadenza provides space for a meditative soliloquy with a suggestion of call and response. Accelerating scales return the piece to its opening groove.

The second movement starts with a gentle introduction to the bass' tender melody. The music builds and riffs on fragments of the theme, always maintaining a singing quality, whether soft or full-throated.

Flat out fun and virtuosic, the fugue pays homage to the classic form while exulting in the athleticism of the solo. Dispelling all notions of a slow lumbering instrument, the bass shreds like a rock star. A portion of the concerto's opening melody is embedded in the fugue subject and it resurfaces in an up-tempo guise, tying the work together thematically. After a final statement of the fugue subject, the bass has the last very satisfying note.

— *Eric T. Williams*

PROGRAM NOTES

ANGEL LAM (b. 1978)

Please let there be a paradise... (2024)

9 minutes

*2 flutes, alto flute, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns,
2 trumpets, 2 trombones, tuba, anvils, bass drum, crotales, crystal
singing bowls, cymbals, low drum, mark tree, tam-tam, tubular bells,
tuned gongs, vibraphone, harp, piano and strings.*



Back in 2021, during the height of the pandemic and a prolonged travel lockdown and quarantine in Asia, my father passed away alone in Hong Kong. I haven't seen him in years. The summer before the pandemic started, a multi-month-long protest in Hong Kong had made travel difficult.

My father was my muse. He grew up in a city where children were encouraged to pursue careers in finance, medicine and law — careers that ensure status and wealth, yet he encouraged me to pursue something different. He told me not to be afraid to walk a path that no one travels.

That January of 2021, my father left the world unexpectedly. For a long while, I had suspected he had depression. But I could never confirm. He always presented his best self to me because he wanted to be my hero. In the months following his death, I had vivid dreams of myself searching for him in another world ... there were dark valleys and waters, broken roads ... And once, he popped up in front of me in his younger self, like how I remembered him in his prime during my teenage years. We hailed a red taxi and caught a ride together. During the ride, he talked excitedly about history, the arts, and astronomies ... all those fun things he had loved in his lifetime. And then, he disappeared again ... without saying goodbye.

Where is he? Where did he go? Is he happy?

This piece is a spiritual journey of mine in search of my father in the underworld. Please let there be a paradise ... I hope there is where he is now.

— *Angel Lam*

PROGRAM NOTES



ALBERTO GINASTERA (1916-1983)

Variaciones concertantes, op. 23 (1953)
24 minutes

Piccolo, 2 flutes, oboe, 2 clarinets, bassoon, 2 horns, trumpet, trombone, timpani, harp and strings.

THE STORY

The Argentinian composer Alberto Ginastera founded the Conservatorio de Música y Arte Escénico (Conservatory of Music and Scenic Art) in La Plata, Argentina in 1949. Three years later, in

1952, Ginastera was pressured by dictatorial president Juan Perón to rename the conservatory after Perón's wife Eva (the "Evita" of Andrew Lloyd Webber musical fame). The composer refused, and as a result was promptly removed from his post as director.

Ginastera had always used Argentine folk music in his compositions, but by the mid-1950s he had transitioned from a style he called "objective nationalism," with typically straightforward uses of folk materials, to what he called "subjective nationalism," with those materials adapted to his own idiomatic style. The most important work in this period was *Variaciones concertantes*, commissioned by the Asociación Amigos de la Música in Buenos Aires in 1953 despite the official censure. One of the folk materials can be heard in the very first measure of the piece: The harp plays the notes E-A-D-G-B-E, the same notes as the open strings of a guitar. These notes provide the harmonic basis for much of the piece, and reappear in the reprise of the theme before the final variation.

THE MUSIC

The music, written for reduced forces, is in the style of a concerto for orchestra, with each variation featuring one or two instruments in a solo capacity. The piece is in 12 parts:

1. Tema (Theme, for cello and harp)
2. Interludio (Interlude, for strings)
3. Variazione giocosa (Jocose variation, for flute)
4. Variazione in modo di scherzo (Variation in the style of a scherzo, for clarinet)
5. Variazione drammatica (Dramatic variation, for viola)
6. Variazione canonica (Canonic variation, for oboe and bassoon)
7. Variazione ritmica (Rhythmic variation, for trumpet and trombone)
8. Variazione in modi di moto perpetuo (Variation in the style of perpetual motion, for violin)
9. Variazione pastorale (Pastoral variation, for horn)
10. Interludio (Interlude, for winds)
11. Ripresa dal tema (Reprise of the theme, for double bass)
12. Variazione finale in modo di rondo (Final variation in the style of a rondo, for full orchestra)

— *AJ Harbison*

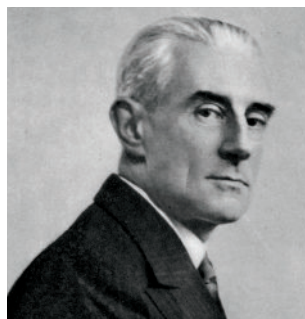
PROGRAM NOTES

MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)

Boléro (1928)

15 minutes

2 piccolos, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, oboe d'amore, English horn, 2 clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 4 trumpets, piccolo trumpet, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, 2 snare drums, tam-tam, celesta, harp and strings.



THE STORY

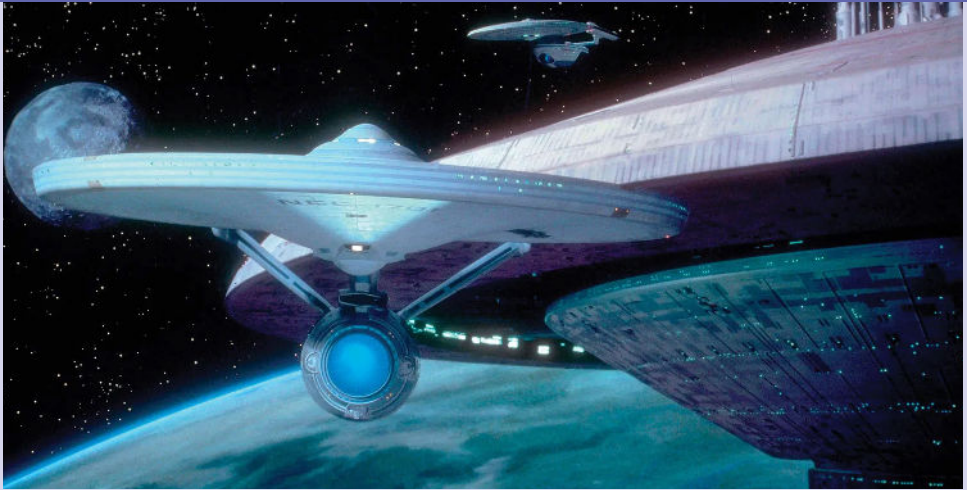
Beloved by audiences (and figure skaters) the world over, the Boléro written by French composer Maurice Ravel is undoubtedly his most famous piece. It was commissioned by the dancer Ida Rubenstein, who originally requested an orchestration of six piano pieces by Spanish composer Isaac Albéniz. Ravel found partway through the process that an arrangement of the pieces had already been completed by a Spanish conductor, Enrique Fernández Arbós, and due to newly enacted copyright laws, no other arrangements could be made. Arbós offered to waive his rights to allow Ravel, a master orchestrator, to finish his version, but Ravel declined and decided to orchestrate one of his own pieces. Later he changed his mind and decided to compose an original piece based on the bolero, a Spanish dance form. (The accent on the E in Ravel's title comes from the French spelling.)

The piece caused a sensation when it was first performed, with dancers, and was an instant success. Ravel was surprised by this, having expected that most orchestras would refuse to play it. The story goes that at the premiere, a woman shouted that Ravel was mad; when a friend shared this with him, Ravel replied, "That lady ... she understood." Later he said the piece had "no form, properly speaking, no development, no or almost no modulation" and that it consisted "wholly of 'orchestral tissue without music' — of one very long, gradual crescendo ... [with] no contrasts, and practically no invention except the plan and the manner of execution." To a composer friend, he quipped, "I've written only one masterpiece — Boléro. Unfortunately, there's no music in it."

THE MUSIC

Happily, most disagree with the composer's assessment of the piece. He was right, though, that it consists of one very long, gradual crescendo, with the two-measure snare drum rhythm repeating over and over again, a total of 169 times, as the orchestration gets bigger and bigger. There are two main melodies, one very straightforward in C major, and one with jazz-influenced altered notes and syncopations. Each theme is played twice before switching and both are played by different instruments each time. At the end of the piece, Ravel shortens the statements of the themes to once each and then suddenly changes to E major, a key that has little in common with C. But after only eight measures, C major returns for the final six measures, as the trombones play boisterous glissandi (slides), the bass drum, cymbals and tam-tam enter for the first time, and the whole orchestra plays the snare drum rhythm. In the second-to-last bar, a dissonant chord (B-flat minor over F minor) derived from the "jazzy" notes in the second theme maximizes the tension before the final C major chord is played.

OUT-OF-THIS-WORLD CONCERT



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Sunday, May 19 at 2 p.m.

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Your Symphony includes 80 full-time musicians from around the world who call Kansas City home. Frequently joining them onstage is the 160-voice Symphony Chorus led by Charles Bruffy. Every season, dozens of soloists perform with us — instrumentalists, singer/songwriters, tribute rock bands, even aerial artists. We also accompany your favorite films, playing the soundtrack live as the movie is projected on Helzberg Hall's giant screen.

Between our concerts at the Kauffman Center, performances on the Mobile Music Box, and community events like Celebration at the Station, the Symphony aspires to serve all Kansas City through music. We belong to you, and to your neighbors, and all the people you see throughout the community.

Music connects us: it has the unique ability to draw us closer to our inner selves and also closer to one another, transcending our differences. Every Symphony concert will take you on an emotional journey — a journey that's deeply personal but also a journey that we all experience together as one.

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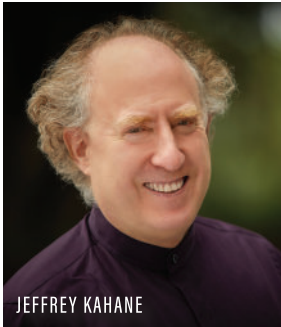


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SIMPLY THE BEST: THE MUSIC OF TINA TURNER

Thursday, April 25, 2024 at 8 p.m.

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

JASON SEBER, GUEST CONDUCTOR

TAMIKA LAWRENCE, VOCALIST

SHALEAH ADKISSON, VOCALIST

SCOTT COULTER, VOCALIST

JOHN BOSWELL, PIANIST



Sponsored by



All hail the "Queen of Rock 'n' Roll." Tina Turner's singular voice and decades-spanning career gave us songs that became part of the soundtrack of our lives. Join us for a celebration of Turner's iconic musical legacy, featuring hits like "Proud Mary," "What's Love Got to Do With It," "Disco Inferno," "Private Dancer" and "Simply the Best." Together with your Kansas City Symphony, we'll take you "River Deep, Mountain High." Tickets from \$49.



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