

Brahms' Fourth Symphony



FRIDAY, JANUARY 9
SATURDAY, JANUARY 10
SUNDAY, JANUARY 11

RODERICK COX, GUEST CONDUCTOR
AVERY GAGLIANO, PIANO



**KANSAS CITY
SYMPHONY**

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

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Brahms' Fourth Symphony



Friday, January 9, 2026 at 8 p.m.
 Saturday, January 10, 2026 at 8 p.m.
 Sunday, January 11, 2026 at 2 p.m.

RODERICK COX, GUEST CONDUCTOR
AVERY GAGLIANO, PIANO

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

SAMUEL BARBER

Essay No. 2 for Orchestra, op. 17

CLARA WIECK SCHUMANN

Concerto in A Minor for Piano and Orchestra, op. 7

I. Allegro maestoso

II. Romanze: Andante non troppo con grazia

III Finale: Allegro non troppo

Avery Gagliano, piano

Intermission

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Symphony No. 4 in E Minor, op. 98

I. Allegro non troppo

II. Andante moderato

III. Allegro giocoso

IV. Allegro energico e passionato

Roderick Cox

GUEST CONDUCTOR

Praised as “a conductor of the first artistic league ... leading with clarity, emotional charge, and an unshakable sense of purpose” (Klassik Begeistert), Roderick Cox has built a reputation for thoughtful artistry and a diverse repertoire that encompasses symphonic, operatic and contemporary works.



Cox serves as music director of the Opéra Orchestre National de Montpellier Occitanie, the youngest in the orchestra’s history.

Cox has made guest appearances with many of the world’s leading ensembles across North America, Europe and beyond. In the United States, he has conducted the Philadelphia Orchestra, Boston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra and the Atlanta, Detroit, Seattle and Montreal symphonies. In Europe, he has collaborated with the Staatskapelle Dresden, Rotterdam Philharmonic, WDR Symphony, BBC Symphony, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic and Hallé Orchestra. His international profile also includes debuts in Asia and Australia with the Sydney Symphony and Seoul Philharmonic.

Highlights of the 2025/26 season include his debuts with the Frankfurt Radio Symphony, MDR Leipzig, L’Orchestre national de Belgique and Kansas City Symphony as well as return engagements with the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin and the Cincinnati Symphony. He will also conduct the Chineke! Orchestra on a major European tour, including performances in London, Paris, Dublin, Dortmund and Antwerp — underscoring his commitment to presenting music with a spirit of inclusivity and fresh perspectives.

In 2019, Cox founded the Roderick Cox Music Initiative, a program dedicated to nurturing young musicians of color and expanding access to classical music education. A native of Georgia, Cox studied at the Schwob School of Music and Northwestern University before undertaking early career fellowships at Aspen, Chautauqua and the Chicago Sinfonietta. He served as associate conductor of the Minnesota Orchestra under Osmo Vänskä from 2016 to 2019 and is a recipient of the 2018 Sir Georg Solti Conducting Award.

Avery Gagliano

PIANO

Celebrated as “a distinctive young talent” (International Piano), pianist Avery Gagliano is recognized for interpretations with great emotional depth and a “distinctly narrative approach” (Miami International Piano Festival). Having first risen to international acclaim as the winner of the first prize and best concerto prize at the 2020 National Chopin Piano Competition, she has established herself as an artist to watch and has performed in prominent venues including Carnegie Hall, Warsaw Philharmonic Hall, the Louis Vuitton Foundation, Salle Cortot in Paris, Luxembourg Philharmonie, Konzerthaus Berlin, Ehrbar Saal in Vienna and La Grange au Lac in Évian.



Avery’s 2025/26 season includes performances with the Kansas City, Kalamazoo and Galveston symphony orchestras and recitals at Wigmore Hall, Warsaw University, Kronberg Academy’s Casals Forum, Washington Performing Arts and California State University, Sacramento. Recent orchestral highlights include the Buffalo Philharmonic, Louisville Orchestra, Maryland Symphony and i Pomeriggi Musicali in Milan, as well as the

Indianapolis Symphony and the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra as a finalist in the 2025 American Piano Awards. She has appeared at leading festivals including Verbier, Gilmore, Aspen, Bravo! Vail, Sanibel, Duszynski and Miami International Piano.

Avery’s debut album, “Reflections” (Steinway & Sons, 2021), features repertoire at the heart of her music-making, including works by Chopin, Haydn, Robert Schumann and Adès. Her interpretations of works by Chopin have been hailed as “revelatory” (New York Classical Review), while recent programs have featured her passion for Schubert’s late piano sonatas and have highlighted lesser-known works.

Avery is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, where she studied with Robert McDonald, Gary Graffman and Jonathan Biss. She currently resides in Germany and studies with Sir András Schiff at Kronberg Academy.

Essay No. 2 for Orchestra, op. 17 (1942)

SAMUEL BARBER
(1910-1981)

11 MINUTES

Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, field drum, tam-tam and strings.

THE STORY

For many people, the title “Essay” might conjure up nightmares of academic writing on a dull and uninteresting topic. But Samuel Barber chose that title for this piece for its connotations of being concise and tightly argued — and it is anything but dull or uninteresting. The distinguished conductor Bruno Walter had a warm relationship with the New York Philharmonic and asked the popular young composer, fresh from the success of his *Adagio for Strings*, to write a piece celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the Philharmonic. Barber agreed and completed the score on March 15, 1942. Walter conducted the premiere just a month later, on April 16, with the Philharmonic (then called the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra) at Carnegie Hall.



THE MUSIC

A literary essay is typically structured in three parts — introduction, body and conclusion — and Barber used the same approach for this essay. The first section contains two themes. The first is introduced at the very beginning by the flute, accompanied only by a rumbling bass drum; it has wide, Copland-esque intervals and is somewhat ambiguous. The second is introduced by the violas with only flutes and clarinets accompanying; it also has wide intervals but firmly establishes a minor key. (The melodic shape and harmonic shifts are vaguely reminiscent of Darth Vader’s theme from the “Star Wars” movies.) The horns nobly reprise the opening theme, followed by quiet, sad restatements of the second theme.

A sharp, unexpected chord launches the middle section, a zippy fugue in the woodwinds with constantly shifting harmony on a subject based

on both original themes. It grows to encompass the full orchestra, when suddenly the strings bring back the second theme and the brass lead a powerful resurgence of the first. A brief transition for timpani and field drum set the stage for a lush string chant, taken up by the entire orchestra. At the climax, the bottom drops out, leaving only piercing high strings and woodwinds that swell to the final chords in a blaze of light.

Alternating between bold and tender, Barber shapes the music's dramatic arc with a sure hand. His superb craftsmanship shines through in his seamless development of melodic material over complex rhythms and continuously changing meters. This compact essay is very persuasive.

— *AJ Harbison and Eric T. Williams*

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

CHRIS THILE WITH THE KANSAS CITY SYMPHONY



Thursday, February 12 at 7 p.m.

Eric Jacobsen, guest conductor
Chris Thile, mandolin and vocals

Experience musical genius like never before as Grammy® Award-winning mandolinist and singer/songwriter Chris Thile joins the Kansas City Symphony for one unforgettable evening. His virtuosity, storytelling and ability to blend genres will captivate you, making this a performance you won't want to miss.



Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in A Minor, op. 7 (1835)



CLARA WIECK SCHUMANN (1819-1896)

21 MINUTES

*Solo piano, 2 flutes, 2 oboes,
2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns,
2 trumpets, trombone, timpani
and strings.*

THE STORY

In the annals of Western music history, there are plenty of stories about boys who were child prodigies (think Mozart, Mendelssohn, Saint-Saëns, etc.) but very few about girls. Clara Wieck is one who should be better known. She was trained as a pianist by her father, Friedrich Wieck,

who developed his own teaching methods and was a noted teacher for piano and voice. By the time she was 11 years old, Clara was already touring internationally and composing pieces for herself to play. When she was 13, she wrote a movement for piano and orchestra that she titled simply “Konzertsatz” (concert piece). Robert Schumann, whom she was later to marry and who was living in the Wieck home at the time to study piano with Friedrich, revised the orchestration. Over the next two years, Clara completed the concerto, composing two more movements and making the Konzertsatz the third movement. (She also undid the orchestration changes Robert had made.) The piece was completed on September 1, 1835, twelve days before her 16th birthday. She performed the premiere on November 9 with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra conducted by Felix Mendelssohn; it was a great success, and she played it many more times over the course of a solo performing career that lasted until she was 72.

THE MUSIC

The form of Clara’s concerto was innovative in several ways (which all influenced composers who followed her). All three movements flow together seamlessly without a break, the traditional spots for an

The second movement features only two instruments: the solo piano and a solo cello.

improvised cadenza by the soloist are missing, the whole concerto is unified by themes all based around the opening one, and the second movement features only two instruments: the solo piano and a solo cello. The concerto opens boldly, with a fortissimo (very loud) statement of the opening theme by the orchestra, consisting of a rising melody in a dotted (long-short) rhythm. The piano enters dramatically in octaves before playing its own rendition of the theme. The writing is virtuosic throughout and is often reminiscent of Chopin, one of her favorite composers to play at her recitals. A languid piano line reaching from the bottom of the keyboard to the top serves as a transition to the second movement, in the remote and unexpected key of A-flat major. After the piano's soliloquy, the cello takes up the melody and the piano provides a rippling accompaniment. Timpani rolls and a brief trumpet fanfare set the stage for the finale, the original Konzertsatz and the longest movement of the concerto. The piano and the orchestra dance elegantly in triple meter, with rhythms suggestive of Chopin's polonaises. The piano's fireworks always serve the music, rather than the other way around, and the final moments feature some fiendishly virtuosic passages that lead to a decisive and exciting finish.

— *AJ Harbison*

Symphony No. 4 in E Minor, op. 98 (1885)

JOHANNES BRAHMS
(1833-1897)

39 MINUTES

*Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes,
2 clarinets, 2 bassoons,
contrabassoon, 4 horns,
2 trumpets, 3 trombones,
timpani, triangle and strings.*

THE STORY

On the ceiling of the Troy Savings Bank Music Hall in Troy, New York, built in 1875, six composers' names are emblazoned: Mozart, Beethoven, Handel, Haydn, J.S. Bach and Chopin. A notable name missing from the pantheon (even being as exclusive as it is) is that of Johannes Brahms. The reason? Brahms' First Symphony was not completed until 1876, the year after the hall's construction. He stood in the long shadow of Beethoven, and felt suffocated by the expectations of his friends and the musical public that he would carry on the great German symphonic legacy. He did not complete his first symphony until he was 43 years old (although he had started sketching it 21 years earlier). It was a success, lauded by influential Vienna music critic Eduard Hanslick and dubbed by conductor Hans von Bülow "Beethoven's Tenth."



Following that first symphony that Brahms waited until his 40s to write, the remaining three in his output came in relatively quick succession, within the next ten years. His final symphony, the Fourth, was completed in 1885. Brahms' critics were scathing, deriding it as a relic of the past at a time when composers like Wagner and Liszt were leading the way toward the future. His supporters, however, hailed it as his masterpiece. Multiple composers of the younger generation praised it as well. Gustav Mahler considered it a high point of conservative music; Richard Strauss was more effusive, calling it "a giant work, great in concept and invention."

Brahms was a consummate craftsman, and the Fourth Symphony is a masterpiece of economy and skill.

THE MUSIC

Brahms was a consummate craftsman, and the Fourth Symphony is a masterpiece of economy and skill. The opening theme of the symphony is a fragmented, lilting melody in E minor consisting of falling thirds (some of which are flipped into rising sixths); the first movement and ultimately the whole symphony are built on this sequence. The theme is subjected to contrapuntal variations, which are also a key feature throughout the rest of the symphony. The end of the movement is a climactic restatement of the opening theme with a feeling of tragedy, perhaps even touching on despair.

The second movement is in E major, but this change in mode is tinged by an introduction which is tonally ambiguous. The music sounds archaic and ceremonial, with the insistent pizzicato (plucked) accompaniment in the strings giving it the feel of a march. The movement's beauty is colored with mournfulness, as its major key is colored with notes borrowed from the minor. Following the gorgeous, pianissimo (very quiet) ending, Brahms jolts the listener awake with a scherzo-like movement that seems to mock its own pomposity. The piccolo and triangle appear only in this movement.

The finale is one of Brahms' greatest achievements, both technically and emotionally (and in the fusion of the two). Technically, it is a passacaglia: The whole movement is built on one bass line (adapted from a Bach cantata), stated at the outset and repeated over and over again with changes to harmony, instrumentation and what happens above it. It is also a theme and variations, with precisely 30 variations on the passacaglia theme. And at the same time it also bears a striking resemblance to sonata form, with an exposition featuring two themes

Symphony No. 4 in E Minor, op. 98 (cont.)

(first theme and variations 1-11, then variations 12-15, prominently featuring a flute solo), a sort of development section (variations 16-23), a recapitulation of the first three variations (variations 24-26) and a coda (variations 27-30). Amidst all this technical mastery, however, is a deep and profound emotional intensity, called by one reviewer “a sense of relentless, mounting tragedy.” After Brahms’ death, the conductor Felix Weingartner wrote of it, “I cannot rid myself of the impression of an implacable fate, that a great phenomenon, whether it be an individual, or a whole people, is drifting inexorably toward destruction.” Where many symphonies (before and after Brahms) brought a triumphant major-key ending out of a minor-key finale, Brahms stays resolutely in minor, bringing his greatest, and last, symphony to a tragic end.

— *AJ Harbison*

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

ON STAGE: LEILA JOSEFOWICZ

Thursday, February 5 at 8 p.m.



KANSAS CITY
SYMPHONY

Matthias Pintscher, music director and conductor
Leila Josefowicz, violin



Enjoy a reception when you arrive, an intimate concert on the Helzberg Hall stage and a time of mingling with musicians afterward at On Stage! This concert features violinist Leila Josefowicz along with Music Director Matthias Pintscher and musicians from the Kansas City Symphony.

INDIANA JONES

and the
**RAIDERS
OF THE LOST ARK**



LIVE IN CONCERT

Thursday-Saturday, January 22-24, 2026 at 7 p.m.
Sunday, January 25, 2026 at 2 p.m.

Nicholas Buc, guest conductor

Follow along with the heart-pounding escapades of Indiana Jones as he travels across the globe to find the Ark of the Covenant before it falls into the wrong hands. Your Kansas City Symphony performs John Williams' legendary score live and in sync with Steven Spielberg's unforgettable film.

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Cars fly, trees fight back and monsters are on the loose in Harry's second year at Hogwarts™ School of Witchcraft and Wizardry! This concert features the film on a giant screen while your Kansas City Symphony performs John Williams' unforgettable score.

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Kansas City Symphony

In only its 43rd season, the Kansas City Symphony has already become one of America's most vibrant major orchestras and has gained national and international recognition. With the 2024/25 season, the Symphony welcomed conductor and composer Matthias Pintscher as its new music director. Pintscher regularly conducts many of the world's best orchestras and opera companies and ranks as one of the world's foremost composers of orchestral music.

Continually creating live music experiences in Helzberg Hall, located in the prestigious Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, the Symphony serves Kansas City's metro population of more than 2.2 million people as well as welcoming visitors from around the globe. The Symphony's 80 full-time musicians from around the world bring a diverse and dynamic range of musical experiences to our audiences in both orchestral and chamber music formats each season. In addition to concerts in Helzberg Hall, Symphony musicians perform throughout the region on our portable stage, the Mobile Music Box. The Symphony also serves as the orchestra for the Kansas City Ballet and the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, adding to the rich cultural experiences that these organizations offer to the community.

Top international soloists perform with the Kansas City Symphony every season, including brilliant classical musicians, popular singer/songwriters, rock bands and other creative performers. The Symphony also performs live soundtracks for a variety of fan-favorite films, with the movie projected on a giant screen above the stage.

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 Kansas City 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.

We're happy you are here. We are *your* Kansas City Symphony.

FOR MORE INFORMATION,
please visit kcsymphony.org.

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