

Pines of Rome and Bruch's Second Violin Concerto



FRIDAY, JANUARY 16
SATURDAY, JANUARY 17
SUNDAY, JANUARY 18

KEVIN JOHN EDUSEI, GUEST CONDUCTOR
JUN IWASAKI, VIOLIN



**KANSAS CITY
SYMPHONY**

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

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Pines of Rome and Bruch's Second Violin Concerto

Friday, January 16, 2026 at 8 p.m. (SYMPHONIC PIAZZA)

Max Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 2 and Ottorino Respighi's *Pines of Rome* will be performed without intermission for the Symphonic Piazza concert.

Saturday, January 17, 2026 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, January 18, 2026 at 2 p.m.

KEVIN JOHN EDUSEI, GUEST CONDUCTOR

JUN IWASAKI, VIOLIN

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

SAMY MOUSSA

Elysium

MAX BRUCH

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 2
in D Minor, op. 44

I. Adagio ma non troppo

II. Recitative: Allegro moderato

III. Finale: Allegro molto

Jun Iwasaki, violin

Intermission

OTTORINO RESPIGHI

Fontane di Roma (Fountains of Rome),
P. 106

I. The Fountain of Valle Giulia at Dawn

II. The Triton Fountain in the Morning

III. The Trevi Fountain at Noon

IV. The Villa Medici Fountain at Sunset

OTTORINO RESPIGHI

Pini di Roma (Pines of Rome), P. 141

I. The Pines of the Villa Borghese

II. Pines Near a Catacomb

III. The Pines of the Janiculum

IV. The Pines of the Appian Way

Kevin John Edusei

GUEST CONDUCTOR

German conductor Kevin John Edusei is sought-after the world over. He is praised repeatedly for the drama and tension in his music-making and the sense of architecture, warmth and stylistic insight that he brings to his performances. He is deeply committed to the creative elements of performance, cultivating audiences and conducting an eclectic range of repertoire.

In the 2025/26 season, Edusei will be Conductor-in-Residence with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, which will include three specially curated programmes at London's iconic Cadogan Hall. He continues to be in high demand in North America where he debuts with the Atlanta and St. Louis symphony orchestras and returns to the Kansas City, Colorado, Indianapolis and Seattle symphony orchestras. Other engagements this season include returns to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra as well as his debut with the Prague Symphony Orchestra and Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León.

Highlights of Edusei's guest conducting in recent years have included his critically acclaimed debut with the New York Philharmonic and concerts with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic and Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra at the Musikverein.

Edusei studied orchestral conducting at the University of the Arts Berlin and the Royal Conservatory of The Hague. In 2004 he was awarded a conducting fellowship at the Aspen Music Festival by David Zinman and in 2007 he was a prize-winner at the Lucerne Festival conducting competition under the artistic direction of Pierre Boulez. In 2008 he won the first prize of the Dimitri Mitropoulos Competition in Athens. Edusei is an alumnus of the Deutsche Bank Akademie Musiktheater heute and the Dirigentenforum of the German Music Council. He is the former Chief Conductor of the Munich Symphony Orchestra and the Bern Opera House. He resides with his family in Munich.



Jun Iwasaki

CONCERTMASTER, MILLER NICHOLS CHAIR

Jun Iwasaki was appointed concertmaster of the Kansas City Symphony by Music Director Michael Stern and began his tenure with the 2022/23 season. A graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Music's prestigious Concertmaster Academy, he has been hailed for his combination of dazzling technique and lyrical musicianship. In a review of Iwasaki's performance at the Mimir Chamber Music Festival, the Fort Worth Star Telegram called him "the magician of the evening. He could reach into his violin and pull out bouquets of sound, then reach behind your ear and touch your soul."



Prior to joining the Kansas City Symphony, Iwasaki served as concertmaster of the Nashville Symphony from 2011 to 2022 and the Oregon Symphony from 2007 to 2011. Throughout his career, he has appeared with numerous other orchestras, including the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, Oregon Symphony, Columbia Symphony Orchestra, Blossom Festival Orchestra, Rome (Georgia) Philharmonic, New Bedford Symphony, Canton Symphony, Richardson Symphony, Cleveland Pops Orchestra, Plano Symphony Orchestra and Huntsville Symphony. In addition, he has served as guest concertmaster of the Pittsburgh Symphony, Gulbenkian Orchestra (Portugal), São Paulo Symphony Orchestra (Brazil), Santa Barbara Symphony, National Arts Center Orchestra (Ottawa) and Canton (Ohio) Symphony Orchestra.

As a chamber musician, Jun has been a part of the Seattle Chamber Music Festival, La Jolla Summerfest, Chamber Music Northwest, Mainly Mozart, Chamber Music International and Mimir Chamber Music Festival, among others.

In addition to teaching at Vanderbilt University's Blair School of Music, Iwasaki also served as the artistic director of Portland Summer Ensembles in Portland, Oregon, a workshop for young musicians focusing on chamber music.

Elysium (2021)



SAMY MOUSSA (b. 1984)

12 MINUTES

Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, crotales, cymbals, glockenspiel, snare drum, suspended China cymbal, tam-tam, tambourine, triangle, tubular bells, vibraphone, wind gong and strings.

The title “Elysium” reflects Moussa’s fascination with ancient Greek and Classical sources. Also known by the epithet “the Elysian Fields,” Elysium refers to a paradisiacal realm, distinct from the Underworld in Greek mythology, that

offered a blissful afterlife to heroes and those favored by the gods. Its idyllic promise is described by Homer and Hesiod and echoes through the epics of Virgil and Dante down to the present — even occurring in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony (in his setting of Schiller’s description of Joy as “daughter of Elysium”).

Moussa, however, insists on steering clear of any Romantic idealization of the Hellenic world. He particularly admires the work of the pre-Socratic philosophers (most of which survives only in fragmentary form), and singles out a text on the afterlife by Empedocles, a remarkable fifth-century BCE pioneer of natural philosophy who lived in what today is Sicily. Moussa notes that he interprets Empedocles’ image of Elysium “as the ultimate reward for an ethical life” — a reward no longer limited to an elite of god-favored heroes — as “a metaphor for a beautiful life, for a life well-lived on this planet.”

From Empedocles' large-scale poem known as "Purifications," which treats religious and ethical topics, Moussa cites this fragment, in which Elysium is envisioned as a final escape from the cycle of reincarnation:

*εἰς δὲ τέλος μάντεις τε καὶ ύμνοπόλοι καὶ ἴητροι
καὶ πρόμοι ἀνθρώποισιν ἐπιχθονίοισι πέλονται,
ἔνθεν ἀναβλαστοῦσι θεοὶ τιμῆσι φέριστοι.
ἀθανάτοις ἄλλοισιν ὄμέστοι, αὐτοτράπεζοι,
έόντες, ἀνδρείων ἀχέων ἀπόκληροι, ἀτειρεῖς.*

But, at the last, they appear among mortal men as prophets, songwriters, physicians, and princes; and thence they rise up as gods exalted in honor, sharing the hearth of the other gods and the same table, free from human woes, safe from destiny, and incapable of hurt.

— Thomas May

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 No. 2 for Violin and Orchestra in D Minor, op. 44 (1877)

MAX BRUCH (1838-1920)

26 MINUTES

Solo violin, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani and strings.

THE STORY

In 1866, German composer Max Bruch composed and premiered his First Violin Concerto. It was an immediate hit (and has remained popular with audiences and performers ever since). It was so popular, in fact, that Bruch came to hate it himself. He complained: "Every fortnight another [violinist] comes to me wanting to play the first concerto. I have now become rude; and have told them: 'I cannot listen to this concerto anymore — did I perhaps write just this one? Go away and once and for all play the other concertos, which are just as good, if not better ... They can all go to the devil!"

The second of his three concertos for the violin was written 11 years later, in 1877. Bruch was on a concert tour with the Spanish violinist Pablo de Sarasate and was so taken by Sarasate's playing that he immediately began work on a new concerto. Unlike the first concerto, which gestated over the course of four years, this concerto took only a matter of months to complete. It was premiered in London in November, with Sarasate playing the solo part and Bruch conducting.

THE MUSIC

The concerto is unusual in that it starts with a slow movement rather than a fast one. (The composer Johannes Brahms, a contemporary of Bruch's, complained about this, saying that a concerto that opens with an adagio "is not to be borne by normal mortals," though he later changed his opinion about this concerto at least.) The soloist enters after just a few chords from the orchestra with a plaintive melody



in D minor that leads to some virtuosic arpeggios and double-stops (playing two notes at once). The movement develops two other themes — one in major introduced by the soloist and another in minor introduced first in the low strings. The movement ends in D major.

The short second movement, titled “Recitativo,” consists mainly of soliloquies by the violin with short orchestral interludes and a few passages with both playing together. It leads directly into the third movement, which starts with the same melody as the second but faster and with more pep. The movement is upbeat but not too fast, though the soloist has plenty of virtuosic runs, arpeggios and double- and triple-stops. The quick dance is broken up by several sections of relative calm. The final few minutes are continuous fast playing by the violin, accompanied only lightly, before the quick, brusque ending.

— AJ Harbison

Fun Fact:

Max Bruch taught composition at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik for 20 years. One of his students was Italian composer Ottorino Respighi, whose *Fountains of Rome* and *Pines of Rome* are also on this weekend’s programs!

Fountains of Rome

(1916)

OTTORINO RESPIGHI (1879-1936)

16 MINUTES

Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, chimes, cymbals, orchestra bells, suspended cymbals, triangle, 2 harps, celesta, piano, organ and strings.



THE STORY

In a turning point for Respighi's career, which up to this point had been more in the lines of performing and arranging than composing, he moved to Rome in 1913 in order to take a professorship in composition at the city's conservatory, Liceo Musicale di Santa Cecilia. But being in the cultural and musical capital of Italy also led to a burst of inspiration for composing, and within three years of the move he had completed *Fountains of Rome*, a symphonic poem depicting four of Rome's famous fountains.

The piece had a tumultuous first few years. It was almost premiered by the eminent conductor Arturo Toscanini in late 1916; but, the performance occurring during World War I, an audience riot over German music in the first half of the concert caused the second half (including *Fountains*) to be canceled. When the piece was finally premiered by a different conductor in March 1917, it met with a lukewarm response, much to Respighi's disappointment. Later, Toscanini asked the composer for a work he could perform at a concert in February 1918; Respighi reluctantly gave him the score for *Fountains* as he had nothing else ready. This performance in Milan was hugely successful and catapulted Respighi to international fame.

— AJ Harbison

THE MUSIC

In this symphonic poem the composer has endeavored to give expression to the sentiments and visions suggested to him by four of Rome's fountains, contemplated at the hour when their characters are most in harmony with the surrounding landscape, or at which their beauty is most impressive to the observer.

The first part of the poem, inspired by the fountain of Valle Giulia, depicts a pastoral landscape: droves of cattle pass and disappear in the fresh, damp mists of the Roman dawn.

A sudden loud and insistent blast of horns above the trills of the whole orchestra introduces the second part, "The Triton Fountain." It is like a joyous call, summoning troops of naiads and tritons, who come running up, pursuing each other and mingling in a frenzied dance between the jets of water.

Next there appears a solemn theme borne on the undulations of the orchestra. It is the fountain of Trevi at mid-day. The solemn theme, passing from the woodwind to the brass instruments, assumes a triumphal character. Trumpets peal: Across the radiant surface of the water there passes Neptune's chariot drawn by seahorses and followed by a train of sirens and tritons. The procession vanishes while faint trumpet blasts resound in the distance.

The fourth part, the Fountain at the Villa Medici, is announced by a sad theme which rises above the subdued warbling. It is the nostalgic hour of sunset. The air is full of the sound of tolling bells, the twittering of birds, the rustling of leaves. Then all dies peacefully into the silence of the night.

— *Ottorino Respighi*

Pines of Rome

(1924)

OTTORINO RESPIGHI
(1879-1936)

23 MINUTES

Piccolo, 3 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 7 trumpets (4 offstage), 5 trombones (2 offstage), tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, glockenspiel, ratchet, snare drum, tam-tam, tambourine, triangle, celesta, piano, organ and strings.

THE STORY

The story of the *Pines of Rome* premiere is very different than the story of the *Fountains of Rome* premiere. *Fountains* was premiered by a little-known composer to a mostly indifferent audience at the Teatro Augsteo (a venue built over the tomb of Augustus, the first Roman emperor). Eight years later, the internationally famous composer offered the premiere of *Pines* at the same venue with a different conductor. This time, the response was so enthusiastic that the final measures of the piece were drowned out by frenetic applause. A second performance was scheduled two weeks later and the theatre sold out. The American premiere, two weeks after that, featuring the New York Philharmonic conducted by Arturo Toscanini (in his first concert as conductor of that orchestra), was also a resounding success.

Fun fact: Respighi gets credit for being the first composer to call for electronics to be used along with the orchestra. In the third movement of *Pines*, he instructs a phonograph recording of a nightingale to be played during the ending of the movement. He even specified a particular recording, Concert Record Gramophone Company R. 6105. To this day the publisher provides the same recording with the score (though now it is supplied via CD or digital file instead of on a 78-RPM record).

— AJ Harbison

THE MUSIC

While in his preceding work, *Fountains of Rome*, the composer sought to reproduce by means of tone an impression of Nature, in *Pines of Rome* he uses Nature as a point of departure, in order to recall memories and vision. The centuries-old trees which so characteristically dominate the Roman landscape become witnesses to the principal events in Roman life.

The Pines of the Villa Borghese (Allegretto vivace) — Children are at play in the pine groves of the Villa Borghese, dancing the Italian equivalent of "Ring Around the Rosie." They mimic marching soldiers and battles. They twitter and shriek like swallows at evening, coming and going in swarms. Suddenly the scene changes.

The Pines Near a Catacomb (Lento) — We see the shadows of the pines, which overhang the entrance of a catacomb. From the depths rises a chant, which echoes solemnly, like a hymn, and is then mysteriously silenced.

The Pines of the Janiculum (Lento) — There is a thrill in the air. The full moon reveals the profile of the pines of Giancolo's Hill. A nightingale sings.

The Pines of the Appian Way (Tempo di Marcia) — Misty dawn on the Appian Way. The tragic country is guarded by solitary pines. Indistinctly, incessantly, the rhythm of unending steps. The poet has a fantastic vision of past glories. Trumpets blare, and the army of the Consul bursts forth in the grandeur of a newly risen sun toward the Sacred Way, mounting in triumph the Capitoline Hill.

— Ottorino Respighi

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

**ON STAGE:
LEILA JOSEFOWICZ**

Thursday, February 5 at 8 p.m.

Matthias Pintscher, music director and conductor
Leila Josefowicz, violin



INDIANA JONES

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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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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.

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Tamara Stefanovich

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