

Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8

MATTHIAS PINTSCHER, MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR
LEILA JOSEFOWICZ, VIOLIN

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts



KANSAS CITY
SYMPHONY

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Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony

Friday, February 6, 2026 at 8 p.m.
 Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 8 p.m.
 Sunday, February 8, 2026 at 2 p.m.

MATTHIAS PINTSCHER, MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR
LEILA JOSEFOWICZ, VIOLIN

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

MAURICE RAVEL

Ma mère l'Oye (Mother Goose)

- I. Prélude
- II. Danse du rouet et scène
(Spinning wheel dance and scene)
- III. Pavane de la belle au bois dormant
(Sleeping Beauty pavane)
- IV. Les entretiens de la belle et de la bête
(Dialogues of the Beauty and the Beast)
- V. Petit Poucet (Hop-o'-My-Thumb)
- VI. Laideronnette, impératrice des pagodes
(Laideronnette, Empress of the Pagodas)
- VII. Le jardin féerique (The Fairy Garden)

KAROL SZYMANOWSKI Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 2, op. 61

- I. Moderato — Molto tranquillo
- II. Andantino sostenuto
- III. Allegramente — Molto energico
- IV. Andantino — Molto tranquillo
Leila Josefowicz, violin

Intermission

SERGEI PROKOFIEV

Symphony No. 5 in B-flat Major, op. 100

- I. Andante
- II. Allegro marcato
- III. Adagio
- IV. Allegro giocoso

Matthias Pintscher

MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR

Matthias Pintscher is the newly appointed music director of the Kansas City Symphony as of the 2024/25 season. He launched his tenure with a highly successful tour with the orchestra to Europe just before opening the season in Kansas City, with concerts at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Berlin Philharmonie and Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie.



Highlights of the 2025/26 season include the world premiere of Pintscher's new opera *Das kalte Herz* by the Berlin State Opera, which he composed and will conduct and which will reprise in a French version titled *Nuit sans aube* at the Opéra-Comique in Paris in the same season. He returns to the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Philadelphia Orchestra and will be in his sixth year as creative partner at the Cincinnati Symphony.

Pintscher was formerly the music director of the Ensemble Intercontemporain, and has held several titled positions, including nine seasons as BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra's artist-in-association, principal conductor of the Lucerne Festival Academy Orchestra, music director for the 2020 Ojai Festival and season creative chair with the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich.

Pintscher's music is championed by some of today's finest performing artists, orchestras and conductors, and has been performed by the Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and Orchestre de Paris, among many others. He has been on the composition faculty at the Juilliard School since 2014.

Matthias Pintscher is published by Bärenreiter and recordings of his works can be found on Kairos, EMI, Teldec, Wergo and Winter & Winter.

Leila Josefowicz

VIOLIN

Leila Josefowicz's passionate advocacy of contemporary music for the violin is reflected in her diverse programs and enthusiasm for performing new works. A favorite of living composers, Josefowicz has premiered many concertos, including those by Colin Matthews, Luca Francesconi, Matthias Pintscher, John Adams and Esa-Pekka Salonen, all written for her.

This season, Josefowicz presents the world premiere of Jüri Reinvere's Concerto for Violin, Harp, and Orchestra with the Cleveland Orchestra, under the baton of their music director Franz Welser-Möst. Further engagements include the Philadelphia Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, Warsaw Philharmonic and Minnesota Orchestra.



Josefowicz performs an array of concerti this season, including Karol Szymanowski's Concerto for Violin No. 2 with the New York Philharmonic and Marta Gardolinska, and a highly anticipated reunion with John Adams for a performance of his dramatic symphony for solo violin and orchestra, *Scheherazade.2*, with the Hallé — a work she premiered with Adams and the New York Philharmonic in 2015.

Josefowicz enjoyed a close working relationship with the late Oliver Knussen, performing various concerti, including his violin concerto, together over 30 times. Other premieres have included Matthias Pintscher's *Assonanza* with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Luca Francesconi's *Duende* — *The Dark Notes* with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and Steven Mackey's *Beautiful Passing* with the BBC Philharmonic.

Josefowicz has released several recordings, notably for Deutsche Grammophon, Philips/Universal and Warner Classics and was featured on Touch Press' acclaimed iPad app, *The Orchestra*. She has previously received nominations for Grammy® Awards for her recordings of *Scheherazade.2* with the St. Louis Symphony conducted by David Robertson, and Esa-Pekka Salonen's Violin Concerto with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by the composer.

In recognition of her outstanding achievement and excellence in music, she won the 2018 Avery Fisher Prize and was awarded a prestigious MacArthur Fellowship in 2008, joining prominent scientists, writers and musicians who have made unique contributions to contemporary life.

Ma mère l'Oye (Mother Goose) (1911)



MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)

29 MINUTES

Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 2 horns, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, glockenspiel, snare drum, tam-tam, triangle, xylophone, harp, celesta and strings.

THE STORY

Maurice Ravel's *Mother Goose* was originally written as a piano duet. He was friends with the sculptor Cyprian Godebski, and had dedicated an earlier piano work, *Sonatine*, to Cyprian and his wife. The piano duet version of the suite was dedicated to their children, Mimi and Jean, who were 6 and 7 years old when it was written. (Mimi would later grow up to be an influential pianist who hosted an artistic salon in Paris.) Though a bachelor and childless himself, Ravel loved children and their imaginative worlds of fantasy, and the music displays an innocence and sense of wonder befitting its dedicatees.

The premiere of the piano duet version took place at the inaugural concert of the Société Musicale Indépendante, an organization Ravel founded, in 1910. Jacques Roché and the Théâtre des Arts commissioned a ballet in 1911, and Ravel orchestrated the original five movements and expanded the work into a full-length ballet with a different order, a prelude, a new scene, lengthened versions of each movement and four new interludes between the tales.

Despite the title, only the *Sleeping Beauty* and *Hop-o'-My-Thumb* tales are from Charles Perrault (the original author of "Mother Goose"). The "Spinning Wheel Dance and Scene" imagines Mother Goose herself spinning the tales on her spinning wheel. The *Laidronette* movement comes from Perrault's "rival" storyteller Madame d'Aulnoy, who coined the term "contes de fées" (fairy tales) for the genre. "Beauty and the Beast" is based on the version by Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont. The *Fairy Garden* movement does not have a definitive origin, but the ballet version interprets it as *Sleeping Beauty* being awakened in the garden by her prince.

Ravel was one of the greatest orchestrators in the history of music, and the understated but radiant colors of this work are a testament to his superlative skill.

THE MUSIC

Ravel was one of the greatest orchestrators in the history of music, and the understated but radiant colors of this work are a testament to his superlative skill. The Prelude opens with hushed winds and a solo horn, leading in a crescendo to the Spinning Wheel movement. The spinning wheel is portrayed with a perpetual-motion pedal that passes between instruments, with the tambourine representing the click of the wheel's foot pedal. The Pavane is quiet but glitters with harmonics in the harp and pizzicato (plucked) strings accompanying the flutes and clarinets playing the simple melody. Hop-o'-My-Thumb's trail of breadcrumbs to help him find his way home is eaten by songbirds, represented by twittering flutes and a solo violin. Pentatonic melodies and evocations of a gamelan ensemble paint a picture of the land of the pagodas, where living porcelain figurines take a princess cursed with ugliness as their queen. A contrabassoon plays the role of the Beast in the fourth movement, while the Beauty is represented by a waltz; a magical harp glissando signals the transformation of the Beast into a handsome prince, personified by a solo violin. The final movement begins with a simple (and gorgeous) chorale in the strings, but as Sleeping Beauty is awakened the ballet reaches its celebratory ending with glissandos, fanfares and wedding bells.

— *AJ Harbison*

Concerto No. 2 for Violin and Orchestra, op. 61 (1933)

**KAROL SZYMANOWSKI
(1882-1937)**

23 MINUTES

Solo violin, piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, E-flat clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, triangle, piano and strings.

THE STORY

Like many composers' styles do, the Polish composer Karol Szymanowski's style evolved several times over the course of his career, and his music can be roughly divided into three periods, influenced respectively by late German Romantic music, impressionism and atonality, and finally Polish Górale (highlander) folk music. The Second Violin Concerto belongs to this last period and consequently takes a more traditional harmonic approach, with extensive use of modal scales as well as folk music influences.

Szymanowski wrote the concerto for the Polish virtuoso violinist Paweł Kochański. They had been friends since young adulthood, when Kochański premiered the composer's Violin Sonata, and they had collaborated on Szymanowski's first violin concerto in 1916. Kochański lived in New York for many years, leading the violin faculty at The Juilliard School. When the friends reunited in Poland in the early 1930s, it was under grim circumstances; both men were dying, Kochański of liver cancer and Szymanowski of advanced tuberculosis. Despite this, Kochański urged the composer to write another violin concerto, and Szymanowski drafted the score in just a few weeks. The violinist collaborated again on the solo part and wrote the cadenza. Kochański premiered the work on October 6, 1933. It was his last public performance before he died on January 12, 1934. When the



Szymanowski composed the concerto in one continuous movement with four distinct sections; the cadenza serves as the transition between the second and third.

concerto was published, Szymanowski added the dedication, “To the memory of the great musician, my dear and unforgettable friend, Paweł Kochański.” The concerto was Szymanowski’s last large-scale composition; he died on March 29, 1937.

THE MUSIC

Szymanowski composed the concerto in one continuous movement with four distinct sections; the cadenza serves as the transition between the second and third. The piece opens with a murmuring, mysterious texture and the soloist enters with a modal melody. The first section builds to several climaxes, with violin pyrotechnics including fast passages, high lines up in the stratosphere and playing in different rhythms on two or three strings at the same time. A passage for the orchestra alone leads to the slow second section, in which the solo’s lyrical line sounds almost improvisatory. A quick burst of energy leads to another passage for the orchestra alone, interrupted suddenly by the cadenza. Kochański’s contribution to the concerto is an extensive tour-de-force for the soloist. The third section is a lively dance for the solo violin in the spirit of a scherzo, with two tranquil interludes providing respite. A long double trill on the violin ushers in the final section, which includes a reprise of the melody from the beginning of the concerto and a spirited rush by the ensemble to the exuberant ending.

— *AJ Harbison*

Symphony No. 5 in B-flat Major, op. 100 (1944)

SERGEI PROKOFIEV (1891-1953)

45 MINUTES

Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, E-flat clarinet, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, tam-tam, tambourine, triangle, wood block, piano, harp and strings.

THE STORY

Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony, his first symphony in 14 years, was composed in the summer of 1944. World War II was still raging in Europe, but Prokofiev enjoyed peace and quiet, as he had been put up by the Soviet government at a retreat for composers 150 miles northeast of Moscow. Prokofiev wrote, "I conceived of it as glorifying the grandeur of the human spirit ... praising the free and happy man — his strength, his generosity, and the purity of his soul ... I cannot say that I deliberately chose this theme. It was born in me and clamored for expression. The music matured within me. It filled my soul." The premiere took place on January



13, 1945 in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, conducted by the composer. Soviet forces were readying their march toward Nazi Germany, and artillery were standing by to announce the start of the advance to the citizens of the city. Sviatoslav Richter, an eminent Russian pianist, attended the premiere and described it this way:

The Great Hall was illuminated, no doubt, the same way it always was, but when Prokofiev stood up, the light seemed to pour straight down on him from somewhere up above. He stood like a monument on a pedestal. And then, when Prokofiev had taken his place on the podium and silence reigned in the hall, artillery salvos suddenly thundered forth. His baton was raised. He waited, and began only after the cannons had stopped. There was something very significant in this, something symbolic. It was as if all of us — including Prokofiev — had reached some kind of shared turning point.

“I conceived of [the Fifth Symphony] as glorifying the grandeur of the human spirit ... praising the free and happy man — his strength, his generosity, and the purity of his soul.”

— Sergei Prokofiev

The work’s uplifting character, combined with the hope that the war was nearing its end, made it an immediate success, and it has remained one of Prokofiev’s most popular works.

THE MUSIC

The Symphony’s first movement, while slower than a typical symphonic opening movement, nevertheless follows sonata form, with two themes introduced at the beginning (both by the flute), developed in the middle and brought back at the end. The second movement is a scherzo, playful and satirical but with a motoric drive. The slow third movement is the expressive, lyrical heart of the symphony, though not without tragic undertones. A tortured climax precedes the return of the movement’s opening theme. The finale begins with an introspective look back at the first movement’s melody, then leaps into an energetic rondo that brings back multiple melodies and fragments from earlier movements. The music reaches a frenzy of chromatic glissandos before finishing triumphantly on an orchestral unison.

— AJ Harbison



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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.

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