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the duration of the performance.*

Program

*Please silence your device and dim your screen for the duration
of the performance to minimize distraction for those around
you.*

Classics Series

OPENING NIGHT: LA MER

September 11, 2025 | 7:30 PM

Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Auditorium

Ilya Ram | *conductor*

Ying Li | *piano*

**Flash photography and video/audio recording of this
concert are strictly prohibited.**

***Star Spangled Banner* (1")**

John Stafford Smith

(1750 - 1836)

William Grant Still *Festive Overture* (10")?

(1895 - 1978)



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George Gershwin
(1898 - 1937)

Piano Concerto in F Major (31")

I. Allegro

II. Adagio - Andante con moto

III. Allegro agitato

Ying Li | piano

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Lili Boulanger
(1893 - 1918)

D'un matin de printemps (5')

Claude Debussy
(1862 - 1918)

La mer (23")

*I. De l'aube à midi sur la mer (From
Dawn to Noon on the Sea)*

II. Jeux de vagues (Play of the Waves)

*III. Dialogue du vent et de la mer
(Dialogue of the Wind and Sea)*

**This concert is made possible by Captain Larry
and Toni Taylor**

Special thanks to Elite Moving.



Special thanks to the UTC Music Division.



This performance is funded in part by:



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Artist Biographies



Ilya Ram

Kayoko Dan Fund Music Director

"Although Ram [...] presents himself as deliberately casual in his shiny silver sneakers, his conducting is the opposite: energetic, spontaneous, yet clear, precise, and attentive to detail."(Leipziger Volkszeitung)

Israeli-American conductor Ilya Ram, praised for his charismatic and energetic performance by Crescendo-

Magazine and his “expressive spontaneity” (Diapason), is internationally sought-after for his creative new approach to classical music.

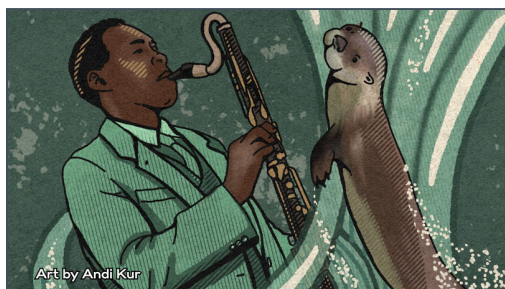
Prize winner of the 5th Evgeny Svetlanov Competition in Montecarlo, Ram has recently been named the next Music Director of the Chattanooga Symphony & Opera, the fourth artistic leader in the organization's 91-year history. He has also served as Music Director of the Akademische Philharmonie Heidelberg since the 23/24 season.

Recent and upcoming highlights include performances with the Szczecin Filharmonia, Orquestra do Algarve, Orchestra Indiana, Deutsche Philharmonie Merck, Magdeburg Philharmoniker, Ensemble Tempus Konnex, Elbland Philharmonie Sachsen, Israel Chamber Orchestra, Ra'anana Sinfonietta, Robert-Schumann Philharmonic, as well as being spotlighted by the IMPULS Festival for contemporary music to which he will return in 24/25. He had the pleasure of working with soloists such as Pekka Kuusisto, Kristine Balanas, Amandine Savary, Ilian Garnetz, Ildikó Szabó and Charlotte Thiele, to name a few.

Equally comfortable in the pit as on stage, Ram made his Semperoper Dresden debut and return premiering Zad Moulata's “Drei Miese, fiese Kerle”. He was Guest Resident Conductor at the Theater Chemnitz for the 19/20 season where he led the revival of Udo Zimmermann's Weiße Rose and Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake. As scholarship holder of the Akademie-Musiktheater-Heute supported by the Deutsche Bank Stiftung, he will premiere three new operas with Ensemble Modern in 24/25.

As a strong believer that anyone can achieve the highest musical result through joy, passion, and creative rehearsal strategies, Ram has worked with the German National Youth Ballet and the Youth North-German Philharmonic, the Dresden Special Music Highschool (Spezialschule), and as music director of the Leipzig University Orchestra between 2019-2024.

Always looking to deepen his understanding of current developments in art, Ram is one of the few candidates to have completed the Music.Multimedia.Management Project led by the Szczecin Philharmonic in collaboration with Fjord Cadenza Festival and TRAFO Center for Contemporary Art. Ram has participated in several international masterclasses and festivals, including the first-ever masterclass at the Bayreuther Festspiele for conductors. He has studied with Christian Thielemann, Klaus Mäkelä, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Sakari Oramo, Neeme Järvi, Marek Janowski, Hartmut Haenchen,



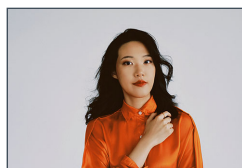
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Robert Treviño, Steven Sloane, Miguel Harth-Bedoya, Timothy Redmond, Nicolás Pasquet, Johannes Schlaefli, and Jorma Panula.

In 2015 Ram graduated Cum Laude from the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music in Tel-Aviv with a B.A. in Orchestral Conducting and Musicology. He completed his Master's degree in Orchestral Conducting at the Hochschule für Musik "Carl Maria von Weber" in Dresden, in the class of Prof. Ekkehard Klemm and has completed the Advanced Professional Training for Conductors Program at the UdK Berlin, studying with Maestros Steven Sloane and Harry Curtis. Throughout his studies he has been supported by generous scholarships from the "Yotzrim" foundation for independent artists, AICF "Sharet", and the DAAD Scholarship.

A firm believer in education and social causes, Ram spent a year before beginning his formal studies volunteering in underprivileged communities in Israel, working with children both in and outside the education system. During his studies in Tel-Aviv, he continued volunteering at the Israeli branch of Physicians for Human Rights.



Ying Li

piano

Chinese pianist Ying Li is the First Prize Winner of the 2021 YCA Susan Wadsworth International Auditions, as well as recipient of The Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festival Prize and the Tri-I Noon Recitals Prize. She has received top awards in numerous national and international competitions including the inaugural Antonio Mormone International Prize, Sarasota Artist Series Piano Competition, Brevard Music Festival, International Liszt Piano Competition for Young Pianists, and was a finalist at Concours musical international de Montréal.

Ying has performed with many leading orchestras such as The Philadelphia Orchestra, New Jersey Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, Brevard Music Festival Orchestra, L'Accademia Orchestra del La Scala, NWD-Philharmoniker, and the Stuttgart Philharmonic with conductors such as Lina Gonzalez-Granados, Xian Zhang, Dan Ettinger, Eric Jacobsen, and Jonathon Heyward. During the 24-25 season, Ying will made

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Art by Andi Kur



appearances with the Minnesota Orchestra, Kansas City Symphony, Orlando Philharmonic, Eugene Symphony, Aiken Symphony, and the Salisbury Symphony, among others.

Ying made her New York City recital debut at Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall in the Peter Marino Concert and her Washington, D.C. debut at The Kennedy Center's Terrace Theater, with additional US recitals at Pepperdine University in Malibu, Evergreen Museum & Library in Baltimore, Sunday Musicale in New Jersey, Southeastern Piano Festival, and the Honest Brook Music Festival.

Recent recitals engagements include Sala Verdi in Milan, Hammerklavier International Piano Festival in Barcelona, Musica Insieme Bologna, Teatro Alighieri in Ravenna, Fazioli Pianoforti in Sacile, and the C. Bechstein Series at the Konzerthaus in Berlin. Ying was also featured on WQXR's "Eine-kleine Birthday-musik," a free, all-Mozart live streamed concert from The Greene Space in New York City, to celebrate Mozart's 266th birthday.

As an avid chamber musician, Ying has appeared at prestigious festivals around the world including the Verbier Festival Academy, ClassicheFORME International Chamber Music festival in Lecce, Ravinia's Steans Institute, La Jolla Music Society, Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, the Artists Series Concerts in Sarasota, and the Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festival.

Ying began piano lessons at age five in China, and was a student at the Elementary School division of the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, then she moved to Philadelphia in 2012, at age fourteen, to study at the Curtis Institute of Music with Jonathan Biss and Seymour Lipkin. After receiving the Bachelor of Music at Curtis Institute in 2019, she received her Master of Music at The Juilliard School in New York with Robert McDonald, and continues her studies with McDonald at The Juilliard School's Artist Diploma Program.

Program Notes

Festive Overture

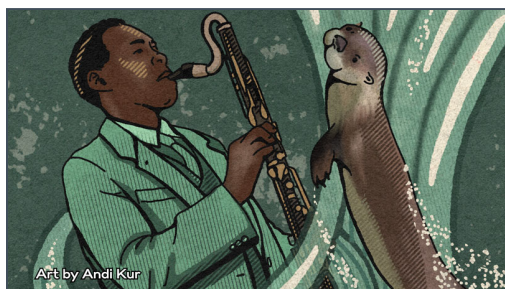
William Grant Still

Festive Overture

William Grant Still

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(b. May 11, 1895 in Woodville, MS; d. December 3, 1978 in Los Angeles, CA)

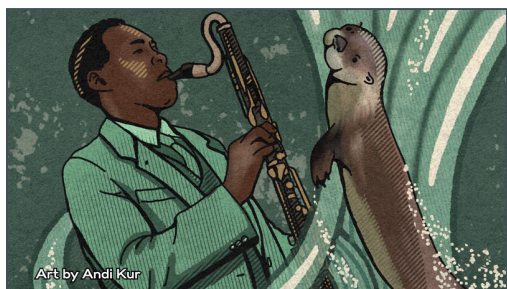
“The dean of Afro-American composers” is the appellation still regularly given to William Grant Still and rightly so, provided that it is understood that he also claimed a leading position among all American composers of his generation. The story of tonight’s piece affirms it. For its 50th anniversary the Cincinnati Symphony and its director Eugene Goossens created a Jubilee competition seeking an overture to mark the occasion. The judges combed through more than 39 entries, evaluating them without any clue as to the actual composers, and chose Still’s *Festive Overture* unanimously.

The year was 1944 and the world was war weary. Goossens wanted something upbeat, something that could lift people’s spirits as the prospects for final victory seemed bright but just over the horizon. Still delivered a joyous and optimistic view of the future, offering hope during one of the 20th century’s darkest moments. Goossens conducted the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra’s first performance on January 19, 1945.

Festive Overture has three distinct sections that flow without stop. A brassy fanfare sets in motion what seems like an Irish jig. The meter is 12/8, four beats in each measure being subdivided into triplets. The rhythmic drive with its celebratory energy continues until four equal notes, markedly slowed, herald the middle section. The jig is retired and a gentle and lyrical theme replaces it in more traditional 4/4 time.

The final section brings back the dominant jig rhythm. The initial fanfare and energetic themes return, building in intensity and excitement to a rousing, triumphant finale. The exuberant conclusion delivers the promise of the “festive” title.

The casual listener may hear the masterful orchestration and merely feel pleasantly entertained, but it’s worth noting some of what is happening under the hood. The brilliant sound of *Festive Overture* is no accident. William Grant Still pays meticulous attention to detail extending to every family of the orchestra. In the brass, he calls for specific mutes to alter the instruments’ tones—the trumpets and trombones make use of the metallic, buzzy Harmon (or “wah-wah”) mutes, a color borrowed from jazz. The trombones also use “soft hats over the bell” for a softer, more covered sound. In the string section, Still creates an exceptionally rich and lush sound by dividing the first violins into three separate parts (*divisi*), weaving a more complex and beautiful texture than if they all played the same line. He holds back his secret weapon—the bright, sparkling xylophone—until the final section, injecting a fresh wave of festive energy at just the right moment.



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William Grant Still was a man of firsts. The first African American to –

- have a symphony (*Afro-American Symphony*) performed by a leading orchestra (Rochester Philharmonic, 1931).
- conduct a major American symphony orchestra (the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 1936).
- have an opera (*Troubled Island*) performed by a major company (New York City Opera, 1949).
- have an opera nationally televised (*Highway 1, USA*, 1962).

A final tidbit to reward those who read through to the end: in a chain of connections worthy of James Burke or Six Degrees of Separation, one of Still's prestigious composition teachers was George Whitefield Chadwick. Chadwick wrote a burlesque opera *Tabasco* (yes, referring to the McIlhenny salsa) that was performed many times in the late 1890s. One of the places it was performed was Chattanooga. In 2015 your Chattanooga Symphony participated in a revival performance at the Volkswagen Conference Center on Sunday, September 27.

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Piano Concerto in F Major

George Gershwin

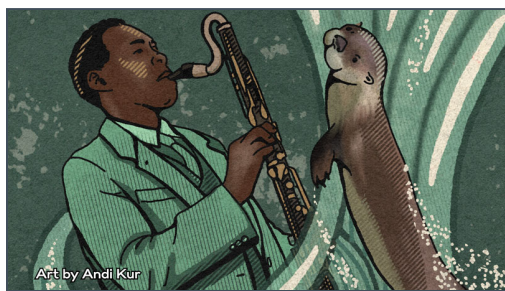
Piano Concerto in F Major

George Gershwin

(b. September 26, 1898 in Brooklyn, New York; d. July 11, 1937 in Hollywood, California)

A syncopated Charleston rhythm erupts from the percussion, a bluesy trumpet wails, and the piano enters with all the swagger of a Broadway star taking the stage at Carnegie Hall. This is George Gershwin's **Concerto in F**, his ambitious answer to the question of whether a Tin Pan Alley genius could conquer the classical concert hall. More than just a successor to *Rhapsody in Blue*, the *Concerto* is a powerful, authentically American work that proved his genius needed no translation.

Gershwin had a serendipitous rise to fame. The piano he learned to play on was bought for his older brother Ira who was comparatively uninterested in it, so George got to use it the most. His younger sister Frankie was the first in the family to bring home money from performing. George, however, was paying strict attention. He was the one whose ambition was unquenchable and whose genius was unmistakable.



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On his birth certificate George Gershwin is Jacob Gershwine. His father came to America as Moishe Gershowitz but received typical Ellis Island treatment immediately becoming Morris Gershwine. Rumors that -win was taken from comedian Ed Wynn are false. Jacob started to go by George as a young boy and dropped the e from Gershwine when he was about 15 and began working as a song plugger (a pianist who could promote sheet music sales) on Tin Pan Alley. His Tin Pan Alley connection was all the opportunity he needed.

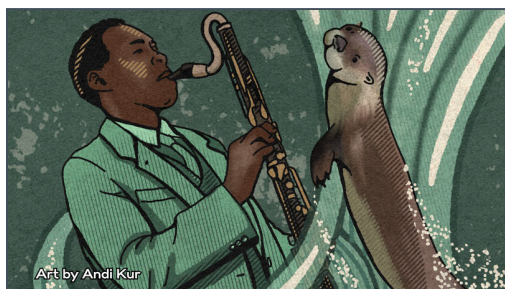
Conductor Walter Damrosch was at Rhapsody in Blue's premiere in 1924 and was so impressed that the next day he commissioned Gershwin to write another work for piano and orchestra—what would become Concerto in F. Damrosch conducted the premiere with the New York Symphony Orchestra, the composer at the piano, December 3rd, 1925.

Three percussionists much in evidence from the opening bars, the timpani start a noisy fragment that reappears throughout the work. The whole first section is expectant: It is the soloist we are waiting for, brooding and jazzy, with an important new melody. Moments of broad grandeur and playfulness unfold with much virtuoso piano playing. The full orchestra brings back the piano's opening melody with great passion and intensity, a brief lull, the timpani again, and a race to the finish.

The second movement is very bluesy, the trumpet leading off. The piano picks up the pace and the movement slowly builds until the opening blues theme returns, this time with muted trumpet and piano commentary. A climactic ending seems to be developing when the music stops; the soloist gently reenters with sparse accompaniment and the movement ends intimately.

The finale is filled with relentless energy. Far shorter than either other movement, its moments of repose are correspondingly brief. A reappearance of the second movement blues, a direct quotation of the grand moment near the end of the first movement, and—this last time—the timpani cue an incandescent finish.

Starting in 1916 Gershwin wrote many songs that made it to Broadway. His breakout hit was "Swanee" in 1919, made nationally famous by Al Jolson and he was off and running. Soaring financial success on Broadway was so easy for him, he felt he wasn't being the "serious" composer he was meant to be. He worked hard to address what he saw as his shortcomings. Despite the success of Rhapsody in Blue he sought instruction from many icons of the era. All declined. The extraordinary Nadia Boulanger (sister of Lili, second on tonight's program), refused him fearing she could only damage his natural understanding of jazz. Maurice Ravel summed it up



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best by asking, “Why be a second-rate Ravel, when you are a first-rate Gershwin?”

Gershwin, still seeing himself an undergraduate student of classical music, approached the commission like a final thesis, diving into books on theory and orchestration, finishing the three movements in July-September 1925 and the orchestration in November. Because Gershwin did not orchestrate *Rhapsody in Blue* (Ferde Grofé did), the premiere of *Concerto in F* was his graduation day.

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D'un Matin de printemps

Lili Boulanger

D'un matin de printemps

Lili Boulanger

(b. August 21, 1893 in Paris, France; d. March 15, 1918 in Paris, France)

Lili Boulanger's *D'un matin de printemps* is a short but dazzling tone poem, full of impressionistic color and vibrant energy. What makes its sunny disposition so remarkable is the context of its creation: Boulanger composed it in her final year of life while battling a severe, lifelong illness. The piece is a profound testament to a creative spirit that refused to be extinguished by physical suffering, offering a glimpse of the brilliant career that might have been.

Boulanger was a true prodigy from a famed musical family; her father, Ernest, had won the prestigious Prix de Rome in 1835 at the young age of 19. In 1913, Lili made history by becoming the first woman to win the prize, also at the age of 19. She nearly won the prize a year earlier, but for her health. She was forced to withdraw after collapsing during the competition.

Despite her failing health, Boulanger's will to create never faltered. She composed *D'un matin de printemps* first for violin and piano in 1917 and, in her final months, found the energy to arrange it for both piano trio and full orchestra. Her perseverance reveals how important the bright, hopeful world of her music was to her. Just before her death at 24, she dictated her final work, *Pie Jesu*, to her sister Nadia, cementing a legacy that remains as powerful as it is tragically brief.



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That sister, Nadia, would forge her own monumental legacy—not as a composer, but as arguably the most influential music teacher of the 20th century. Her list of students reads like a who's who of modern music, from Aaron Copland to Philip Glass. Perhaps her most famous piece of advice was to a young Ástor Piazzolla, whom she admonished to stop imitating European composers and return to his authentic voice: the bandoneón and the tango.

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Contact: steve@trecorde.net

La mer

Claude Debussy

La mer (The Sea)

Three Symphonic Sketches for Orchestra

Claude Debussy

(b. August 22, 1862 in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France; d. March 25, 1918 in Paris, France)

What Debussy sketched was not pictures but instead the sea itself translated into color, texture, and light. *La mer* is one of the great orchestral works of the 20th century, inviting the listener to feel, rather than simply hear, the ever-changing face of the sea.

Debussy began the composition of *La mer* in 1903 but did not finish it until March 1905 because his private life intruded into his career. He scandalized Paris by leaving his wife for singer Emma Bardac in 1904. After his wife attempted a very public suicide, the uproar was so great that he and Bardac avoided Paris for some time. Indeed, when the work premiered in Paris October 15th, 1905, Parisians, still in a vengeful mood, did not receive it well.

Two years later, still in Paris, Debussy conducted his own work for the first time and all was forgiven; *La mer* has been a popular favorite ever since. Not just listenable, it also survives detailed scrutiny as its magical details seem nearly limitless. In some ways it has the arc of a symphony with hefty outer movements and a lighter middle movement rather like a scherzo.

Debussy was a prodigy—confirmed by his admission to the prestigious Paris Conservatory at age ten. There he associated with many of the most significant musical figures of his day, but chafed at formal instruction as he wrestled with ideas inside him that were unwelcome to his teachers. He finally began to



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feel comfortable with his own unique approach around 1890 and his career soared soon after

The approach he took, although he himself was uncomfortable with the term, became known as impressionism. It was first seen full-fledged in *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* in 1894. Using the whole-tone and modal scales and abandoning the ideas of thematic development as it had been known for centuries, he had forged a distinct new musical language.

“From dawn to midday on the sea” begins with a calm sea at first light, barely a shimmer from the timpani and basses. Sun, wave, and wind freshening together, we hear musical fragments, rising and falling figures and dotted rhythms, that we will hear again in the final movement. Yet what brings the sea to the mind’s eye is not any cliché pattern but the texture of all the instruments contributing in their turns. Early on the impression is like the play of the water that a yachtsman picks up, looking for clues to the wind. The climax at the end is brilliant sunshine and great swells to ride before we again find smooth seas.

“Waves at play” is orchestral atmospherics. Listen for the sparkle of sunlight off the waves that the glockenspiel provides. It chimes a last time while a muted trumpet, harps, then muted strings fade into nothing.

Aggressive gestures almost from the beginning of “Dialog of the wind and the sea” soon show us what we did not know we were missing but which consummates everything gone before. Our attention riveted, Debussy slows the action—this will finish in its own time and on its own terms. The buildup is slow but inexorable. The brass take the gloves off and rough us up. We hear the falling dotted rhythm, once, and again. A mighty crash and it’s over.

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Contact: steve@trecorde.net

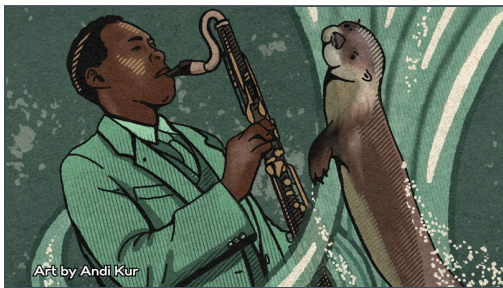
Orchestra Musicians

Tonight's Orchestra Musicians

Violin 1

*Joshua Holritz, Concertmaster

*Nicholas Naegele, Assistant Concertmaster



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*David Katz
*Jeanne Johnson
*Nathan Banks
Bram Margoles
Jeff Brannen
JP Brien Slack
Annie Thurstone
Chris Thurstone
Jason Economides
Anna Gibbons

Violin 2

*Sheri Peck, Principal
*Rachael McFarlane
*Jennifer Whittle
*Emily Drexler
*Rebecca James
*Lee Smith
Mary Margaret Neel
Yuri Cho
Joanna Pepple
*Mary Benno

Viola

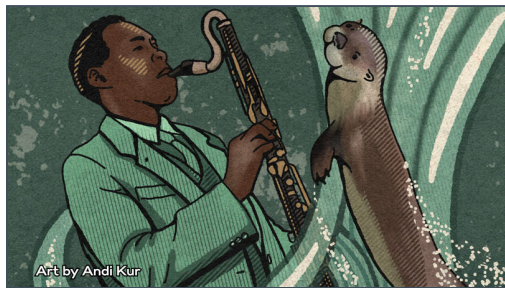
*Metiney Suwanawongse, Principal
*Katelyn Hoag
*Cristina Micci-Barreca
*Casie Runkle
Rene Reder
Lacie Bowlware
*Susan Saliny
Teri Abler

Cello

*Paul Vest
*Annie Camp
*Micah Donar
Ben Van Winkle
Kaitlyn Vest
Jenny Hibbard
Matthew Wilkenson
David Lloyd

Double Bass

*Taylor Brown, Principal
*Jonathan McWilliams
*Dexter Bell
Given Graber
Ben Sposet



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Flute

*Amelia Dicks, Principal

John L. and Norma B. Anderson Principal Flute Chair

Gözde Cakir-Ramsey

Aaron Rib

Oboe

*Jessica Smithorn, Principal

Norma and Olan Mills II Principal Oboe Chair

Susan Miranda

*Carey Shinbaum

Clarinet

*Joseph Miller

Amy Humberd

Nick Hartline

Bassoon

*Eric Anderson, Principal

Marissa Takaki

Staci Spring

*G. Eddie McCrary

French Horn

*Gordon James, Principal

*Angela DeBoer

Eric Hawkins

*Joseph Demko

Kevin Kozak (Asst)

Trumpet

*Christian Pagnard, Principal

*Michael Brown

Aaron Jensen

Adam Hayes

Gilbert Villagrana

Trombone

*Prentiss Hobbs, Principal

Sam Chen

*Evan Clifton

Tuba

Bernard Flythe

Timpani

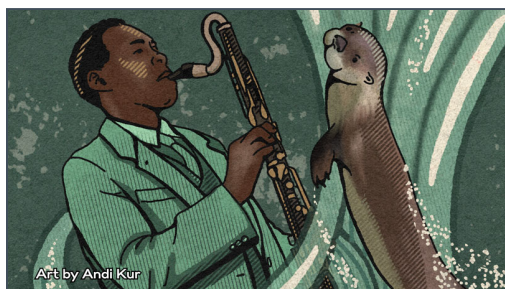
Bill Shaltis

Percussion

Andy Harnsberger

Caitlin Jones

L. Keith Lloyd



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Nathan Shew

Harp

*Caroline Brown Hudson, Principal
Kate Rogers

Keyboard

Jason Duroy

CSO Contract Musicians

Violin 1

Joshua Holritz, Concertmaster
Nicholas Naegele, Assistant Concertmaster
Nathan Banks
Caroline Drexler
Jeanne Johnson
David Katz
Calvin Lewis
Jasper Sewell

Violin 2

Sheri Peck, Principal Second Violin
Mary Benno
Emily Drexler
Nick Hoy
Rebecca James
Rachael McFarlane
Lee Smith
Jennifer Whittle

Viola

Metiney Suwanawongse, Principal
Katelyn Hoag
Cristina Micci-Barreca
Casie Runkle
Susan Saliny
Gabriel Schlaffer

Cello

Eric Reed, Principal
Spencer Brewer
Annie Camp
Micah Donar
Suzanne Sims
Paul Vest

Double Bass

Taylor Brown, Principal
Dexter Bell
Kaleb Collins



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Jonathan McWilliams

Flute

Amelia Dicks, Principal

John L. and Norma B. Anderson Principal Flute Chair
Lisa Meyerhofer (Leave of Absence)

Oboe

Jessica Smithorn, Principal

Norma and Olan Mills II Principal Oboe Chair
Teresa Spilko
Carey Shinbaum, English Horn

Clarinet

Emily Bowland
Joseph Miller, Bass Clarinet

Bassoon

Eric Anderson, Principal
Shelby Jones
G. Eddie McCrary, Contrabassoon

Horn

Gordon James, Principal
Angela DeBoer
Matthew Meadows
Joseph Demko
Mackenzie Newell

Trumpet

Christian Pagnard, Principal
Michael Brown

Trombone

Prentiss Hobbs, Principal
Kevin Dombrowski
Christopher Brown (Leave of Absence)
Evan Clifton

Tuba

Neil Konouchi, Principal

Timpani

Alex Wadner, Principal

Percussion

Matthew West, Principal

Harp

Caroline Brown Hudson, Principal

Keyboard

Alan Nichols, Principal

Captain Larry and Toni Taylor



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Captain Larry and Toni Taylor

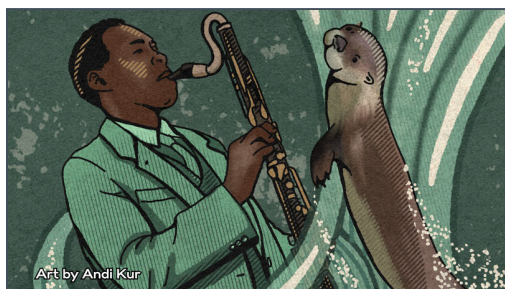
Concert Sponsors

The Chattanooga Symphony & Opera's 2025–26 season opens with a powerful performance—one made possible in part by the extraordinary generosity of Captain Larry and Toni Taylor. As we gather to celebrate the music that unites us, we also celebrate the lives of two individuals whose love, courage, and unwavering support have left an indelible mark on our community.

Toni B. Taylor, who passed away in April 2025, was a remarkable woman whose life spanned continents and generations. Born in Stuttgart, Germany, and raised in the small town of Crailsheim during the turbulent years of World War II, Toni developed an early resilience and grace that would define her life. She was a gifted linguist, fluent in four languages, and pursued a career in hospitality before joining Lufthansa as a ground stewardess—a role that fueled her lifelong passion for travel and human connection.

It was at the Nürnberg Airport that Toni met her future husband, Captain Larry L. Taylor, an American helicopter pilot and Vietnam War veteran who would later be awarded the Medal of Honor for an act of extraordinary bravery. Their love story began at first sight and led to a marriage that lasted more than 50 years, rooted in shared adventure, mutual respect, and a deep commitment to one another.

Toni's life in Chattanooga was one of purpose and passion. She built a successful career in the travel industry, forming lifelong friendships with her clients, and found great joy in sharing the world with others. But above all, Toni found beauty and solace in classical music. She held a special reverence for the works of Beethoven, whose music echoed her own strength, complexity, and compassion. Whether attending live



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performances or playing recordings at home, music was the constant thread that brought her comfort, reflection, and joy.

Her husband, Larry, a true American hero, matched her generosity with his own. From flying over 2,000 combat missions to rescuing fellow soldiers under enemy fire, his life is a testament to bravery and service. Yet it was the quiet acts—the steadfast support of local nonprofits, the love he showed Toni, and their shared commitment to community—that speak just as loudly of his character.

As we raise the curtain on a new season, we do so with profound gratitude to Toni and Larry Taylor. Their support helps make this night possible, and their story reminds us that music, like love, endures beyond time.

This performance is dedicated to Toni's memory—a woman of intelligence, wit, and warmth, whose life was as vibrant as the music she cherished.

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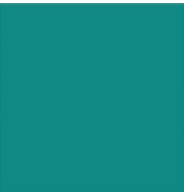
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