



WESTMORELAND
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

2025/2026
57th Season

Daniel Meyer
Artistic Director





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Symphony Orchestra*



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FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Welcome to our concert and the Westmoreland Symphony Orchestra's 57th Season!

I am so thrilled to present to you our season of musical delights. Each and every time we take the stage at the Palace Theatre, we feel the special atmosphere and the excitement that you bring to our performances. After weeks of dedicated practice and honing the concert music, we consider it an honor to play for you, your friends, and your family. From our beloved traditions during the holidays, to our outdoor concerts in St. Clair Park and our signature classical concerts, we are proud to be Greensburg's orchestra and serve all of Southwestern Pennsylvania.



I hope you will love this season filled with great music and wonderful guest artists. We welcome sensational young violinist Timothy Chooi as he plays Korngold's romantic and cinematic *Violin Concerto*. We also welcome back rising star pianist Janice Carissa as she performs Gershwin's iconic jazz-flavored *Rhapsody in Blue*, and virtuoso accordionist Radu Ratoi makes his debut with the music of Bach. Audience favorite Chee-Yun returns in March to play Mendelssohn's delightful *Violin Concerto*.

We are also excited to introduce two new Pops concert experiences to our season, including a tribute to the great film composer John Williams and an evening of Rodgers and Hammerstein's Broadway favorites.

December sparkles with the talented dancers of Texture Ballet, who have brought us a delightful and beautiful live production of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* over the past several years. A true community collaboration, this holiday classic continues to delight families in our region, and I consider it one of my favorite events of the season.

For those of you considering making the WSO a regular part of your schedule, we invite you to join us for the entire season. Become a subscriber today to enjoy the entire experience.

Enjoy the music!

Daniel Meyer, Artistic Director

FROM THE PRESIDENT

I want to warmly welcome you to the WSO's 57th Season! This is my first year as board president, and I'm thrilled to help bring such exceptional music to our community.

I grew up listening to my parents' classical music records, which sparked a lifelong appreciation, and what a gift it is to now enjoy world-class performances live, right here in Greensburg.

We are so happy to present the 2025-26 season, our biggest yet, with seven concerts.



We've added two new pops concerts, *The Music of John Williams* and the *Best of Broadway*, plus our traditional *Home for the Holidays*, a favorite Greensburg tradition. Don't wait to reserve your *Nutcracker* tickets. Our productions with Texture Ballet were so popular, we've added a third performance.

The classical season begins with a program celebrating cinematic sound featuring the brilliant young violinist Timothy Chooi performing Korngold. In February, our Valentine's weekend concert brings you *Rhapsody in Blue* with pianist Janice Carissa. She wowed us all with her performance of Rachmaninoff in October 2023, so we had to invite her back to the Palace. Beloved violinist Chee-Yun returns for her third appearance in March, performing Mendelssohn. We conclude the classical season with Holst's *The Planets*, plus Radu Ratoi performs an incredible version of Bach's *Concerto in D minor* on the accordion.

Be sure to stay connected with us. Sign up for our emails and follow us on social media for upcoming events, behind-the-scenes photos, and videos. All the links are at westmorelandsymphony.org.

On behalf of the WSO Board of Directors, I thank all of you who support us by attending our concerts, giving monetary gifts, or participating in our educational programs. Please join us in celebrating our 57th Anniversary season. You make it all possible!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Beverly Hritz".

Beverly Hritz
WSO Board President

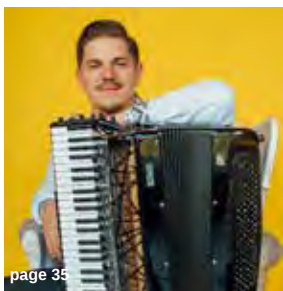
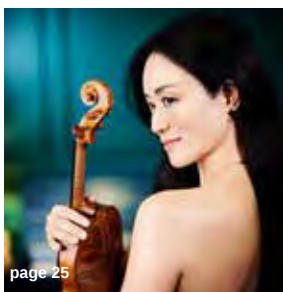


Photo credits:
Ratoi: YCA, Chooi: Den Sweeney
Chee-Yun: MJ Kim, Carissa, Opus 3

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of the WSO,

It is with tremendous excitement that I welcome you to the Westmoreland Symphony Orchestra's 57th season, our most exciting and dynamic season yet! Whether you're a longtime supporter or joining us for the first time, we are thrilled to have you with us.



This year, we are proud to present a lineup that truly offers something for everyone. With the addition of new pops concerts and expanded subscription packages, we are reaching more music lovers than ever before. We are especially thrilled to present "The Unlikely Union: A Storytelling Symphony of America" on January 17, 2026. The evening, led by Professor Greg Jackson from the chart-topping podcast *History that Doesn't Suck*, will be a fascinating mix of history and music. We're presenting this concert as part of the nationwide A250 celebrations, honoring America's 250th anniversary. See page 32 for all the details.

At the heart of the WSO is our extraordinary ensemble of musicians, whose artistry continues to inspire and uplift. Under the leadership of our esteemed Artistic Director, Daniel Meyer, their passion, talent, and dedication bring each performance to life with precision and emotional depth. Maestro Meyer's unparalleled vision and commitment to excellence sets the tone for everything we do.

Our mission is simple, yet powerful: To promote musical enrichment through quality performances and education to a broad-based audience in the Westmoreland region. With your support, we are able to fulfill this mission year after year, bringing the joy of music to audiences of all ages, both in the concert hall and throughout our region.

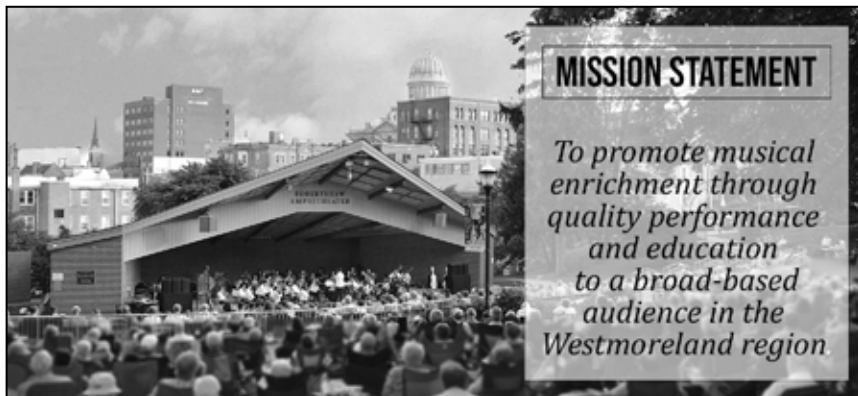
Thank you for being part of the WSO family. Your presence, enthusiasm, and generosity help keep music alive and thriving in our community. We are deeply grateful for your continued support, and we look forward to sharing this unforgettable season with you.

Enjoy the concert and welcome to Season 57!

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right. It appears to read "Michael W. Rozell".

Michael W. Rozell, Executive Director

WESTMORELAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



MISSION STATEMENT

To promote musical enrichment through quality performance and education to a broad-based audience in the Westmoreland region.

ADMINISTRATION

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CONTACT

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CINEMATIC SPLENDOR

OCTOBER 18, 2025 • 7:30 PM
KHACHATURIAN
Masquerade Suite

KORNGOLD
Violin Concerto
Timothy Choo, violin

BORODIN
Symphony No. 2



THE MUSIC OF
JOHN WILLIAMS

NOVEMBER 8, 2025 • 7:30 PM

From the magic of Harry Potter to the epic sounds of Star Wars, this concert of iconic film scores is a blockbuster experience for the whole family.



Nutcracker Ballet

DECEMBER 12, 2025
7:30 p.m.

DECEMBER 13, 2025
11 a.m. & 3 p.m.

FEATURING
TEXTURE CONTEMPORARY BALLET

*Tickets sold separately through
The Palace Theatre Box Office*



HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

DECEMBER 20, 2025 • 7:30 PM

Be the most joyful concert of the season. Celebrate the holidays with the All-Star Choir of Westmoreland County, guest conducted by Andrei Franco.

Fun for the whole family, this festive performance is sure to warm your heart and lift your spirits!



RHAPSODY IN BLUE

FEBRUARY 14, 2026 • 7:30 PM

COPLAND
Rodeo

GERSHWIN
Rhapsody in Blue
Janice Carissa, piano

RANDALL THOMPSON
Symphony No. 2 in A major



SPRING SYMPHONY

MARCH 14, 2026 • 7:30 PM

BRAHMS
Hungarian Dances

MEYERHOFER
Violin Concerto in E minor
Chee-Yun, violin

SCHUMANN
Symphony No. 1 "Spring"



THE PLANETS

APRIL 18, 2026 • 7:30 PM

J.S. BACH
Concerto in D minor
Radu Ratol, accordion

HOLST
The Planets
WSO Chamber Singers



BEST OF BROADWAY

MAY 30, 2026 • 7:30 PM

It's a showstopping finale with the WSO Chamber Singers and soloists! Hear the timeless tunes of Rodgers & Hammerstein from *Carnegie Sound of Music*, *King and I*, *South Pacific*, *Oklahoma* and more. It's a high-energy celebration you won't want to miss.

DANIEL MEYER ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



As Artistic Director of the Westmoreland Symphony, Daniel Meyer is known for his innovative programs, engaging presence and keen musical intellect. Maestro Meyer is also Music Director of

the Erie Philharmonic, Artistic Director of the BlueWater Chamber Orchestra, and Music Director of the Lakeside Symphony Orchestra at historic Lakeside Chautauqua.

In addition to collaborating with world-renowned soloists such as Emanuel Ax, Midori, Marc-André Hamelin, Sharon Isbin, Gil Shaham, Jeremy Denk, and Daniil Trifonov, Meyer has commissioned new works by Michael Torke, Vivian Fung, Richard Danielpour, and Zhou Tian. With a deep passion for connecting with audiences, Meyer continues to develop strong ties with the community through frequent radio and television appearances, newspaper interviews, music talks, appearances in local schools, and speaking from the concert stage. His award-winning series on WQLN-TV is called 'Fascinating Spaces,' featuring televised concerts performed in iconic Erie locations. He co-hosts a weekly program on Erie's PBS radio station with commentary about the Philharmonic, artists, and the classical music world.

Meyer recorded the music of Hanson, Diamond, and Daugherty for the Bavarian Radio with the Bamberger Symphoniker, and his recent guest appearances include the Detroit Symphony, Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, Portland Symphony, Württembergische Philharmonie, Staatsorchester Darmstadt, and the Nuremberg Symphony in Germany. In his role as Director of Orchestral Activities at Duquesne University, Meyer embarked on a recording project of the concertos of American composer Lynn Purse.

As Music Director of the Asheville Symphony, Meyer created the Asheville Amadeus Festival, a biennial festival featuring sold-out weeks of film, lectures, community events, and concerts centered around the music of Mozart with pianist Emanuel Ax in 2015 and violinist Midori in 2017. In recent seasons, he has frequently conducted the Rochester Philharmonic and the Pittsburgh Symphony, as well as guest engagements with the Indianapolis, Columbus, Phoenix, Eugene, Alabama, and Knoxville Symphonies.

His critically-acclaimed European debut took place with the Staatstheater Stuttgart Orchestra and violinist Thomas Zehetmaier, and he returned to Germany soon after for concerts with the Neue Philharmonie Westfalen, and to Austria with the Tonkünstler Orchestra in Vienna and the Wiener Jeunesse Orchestra. Meyer's summer festival appearances have included the Cleveland Orchestra at Blossom, the Aspen and Grand Teton Music Festivals, the Chautauqua Festival, Brevard Music Center, and Lakeside Chautauqua.

Upon the invitation of Mariss Jansons, Meyer was named Resident Conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony and Music Director of the Pittsburgh Youth Symphony. A native of Cleveland, Meyer studied conducting at the Hochschule für Musik in Vienna as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar, and is a graduate of Denison University and the University of Cincinnati College—Conservatory of Music. He composed and conducted works for ensembles at both schools, including a Stabat Mater for soprano, chorus and orchestra. At Boston University, Meyer received the Orchestral Conducting Honors Award and was awarded the prestigious Aspen Conducting Prize from David Zinman. He was awarded an honorary doctorate from Edinboro University in 2016.

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MUSICIANS OF THE WSO

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Violin I

Jason Neukom, *acting
concertmaster*

Dena Miller, *assistant
concertmaster*

Mariya Krastanova

Hector Marchant

Anne Victoria Nasevich

Samantha Nelson*

Violin II

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Richard Palermo,
assistant principal

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Doug Bevan

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Tyler Bruggmann

Cello

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Alicia Storin, *assistant
principal*

Cecilia Caughman

Christina Chen

Sarah Ferrell

Dennis Persin

Bass

Jacob McAleavy, *principal*
Emily Tarantino, *assistant*

principal

Jesi Sharp

Riley Zimmerman

Flute

Tom Godfrey, *principal*

Sarah Steranka

Tara Yaney, *Piccolo*

Oboe

Renate Sakins, *principal*

Risé Kostilnik

Clarinet

Ryan Leonard, *principal*

Kira Bokalders

Bass Clarinet

Lisa Thackrah

Bassoon

Linda Morton Fisher,
principal

Amy Baker

Horn

Mark Addleman,
principal

Andrew Symington

Alex Daiker

Liz Thompson

Trumpet

Justin Kohan, *principal*

Dave Wygonik

Trombone

Gonzalo Fernandez,
principal

Adam Janssen

Robert Tupper, *Bass
Trombone*

Tuba

Kenneth Heinlein,
principal

Timpani

Ronald Horner, *principal*

Percussion

Michael Matteo,
principal

Robert Beatty

Harp

Vacant

*sabbatical



The WSO received funding from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the National Endowment for the Arts.

TIMOTHY CHOOI VIOLIN



Internationally acclaimed violinist Timothy Chooi, (pronounced “Chewy”), continues to mesmerize global audiences with his electrifying performances and profound musical interpretations. Renowned for his passionate renditions and extensive repertoire, Chooi has cultivated a vast following, with millions of viewers captivated by his artistry both on stage and across digital platforms.

Chooi first burst onto the international scene by securing First Prize at the Joseph Joachim International Violin Competition in Hanover, Germany, and later earned Second Prize at the prestigious Queen Elisabeth International Competition. His accolades include the highly coveted Yves Paternot Prize from the Verbier Festival in Switzerland.

Chooi’s music is broadcasted globally on prestigious stations, and in 2023, he recorded with Anne-Sophie Mutter and Mutter’s Virtuosi for Deutsche Grammophone. His performance with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra was featured on Medici TV, and his work has been aired on NPO Radio Klassiek Amsterdam, WQXR New York, RTBF Belgium, Swiss Public Radio, CBC Radio Canada, Deutschlandfunk Kultur, and Danish Public Radio.

Born in Canada, Chooi’s multicultural heritage includes Chinese, Indonesian and Malaysian roots. His journey began at the age of sixteen, with a debut performance with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra (Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal) that launched his career on the global stage. Inspired by his older brother, Nikki Chooi, Timothy has since established himself as one of the leading violinists of his generation.

In addition to his performance career, Chooi is deeply committed to the art of teaching. As the Professor of Violin at the University of Ottawa, he is recognized not only for his virtuosic playing but also for his dedication to nurturing the next generation of musicians. Chooi is celebrated for his innovative teaching methods, which combine traditional techniques with contemporary approaches to violin performance. Chooi’s contributions to the academic community have made him a respected figure in the field of music education, where he continues to influence and inspire through masterclasses, workshops, and personalized instruction.

Timothy Chooi performs on a distinguished collection of violins, including the 1741 “Titan” Guarneri del Gesù, on loan from Canimex of Drummondville, Québec since 2023; the 1709 “Engleman” Stradivarius, provided by the Nippon Music Foundation in Japan; and the 1761 Landolfi violin, which is endowed to him as the Professor of Violin at the University of Ottawa.

Timothy Chooi is represented by Colbert Artists Management, Inc.
www.colbertartists.com

artist photo: Den Sweeney

CINEMATIC SPLENDOR



Saturday, October 18, 2025
7:30 p.m.

Daniel Meyer, Artistic Director and Conductor
Timothy Chooi, violin

PROGRAM

Arr. Damrosch Star-Spangled Banner

Khachaturian Masquerade Suite

- I. Waltz
- II. Nocturne
- III. Mazurka
- IV. Romance
- V. Galop

Korngold Violin Concerto

- I. Moderato nobile
- II. Romance: Andante
- III. Finale: Allegro assai vivace

Timothy Chooi, violin

—Intermission—

Borodin Symphony No. 2

- I. Allegro
- II. Scherzo: Prestissimo
- III. Andante
- IV. Finale: Allegro

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OPENING NIGHT PROGRAM NOTES

Aram Khachaturian (1903-1978)

Masquerade Suite

Composed in 1944



Written in 1941, *Masquerade Suite* began as incidental (background) music for the play *Masquerade*.

Written by Mikhail Lermontov, the play revolves around a

false accusation of infidelity. When a married woman loses a distinctive bracelet at a ball, a Baroness finds the bracelet and offers it as a token of her affection to the Prince, whom she secretly loves. This gift sets in motion a tale of jealousy and murder.

The play debuted at the Vakhtangov Theater in Moscow on June 21, 1941, one day before the Germans invaded the Soviet Union. Needless to say, the production had a short run. On July 23, 1941, German bombs destroyed the Vakhtangov Theater. In addition to the destruction of stage decorations, many actors and theater personnel were killed in the bombing. Director Andrei Tutyshkin was able to continue the production after evacuating to Siberia.

In 1944, Khachaturian turned the music into a suite with five movements – *Waltz*, *Nocturne*, *Mazurka*, *Romance* and *Galop*.

The suite differs from Khachaturian's usual Armenian flavored music. Since the music was composed specifically for a play, it is filled with romance and emotion, rather than his usual folk rhythms.

According to Billboard in 1948 the *Masquerade Suite* was composed by "Khachaturian, the Russian, brooding, colorful, nationalistically melodic" and not "[Khachaturian], the Armenian,

swirling, rattling and temperamentally heady."

The St. Petersburg Times (March 25, 1948) noted that in writing the suite Khachaturian was "influenced by Russian composers" and called it "swirling [and] flamboyant." It noted that the five pieces are "so different from each other as to mark them as individual entr'actes rather than as an entire suite. The graceful melting rhythm predominant in both the 'Waltz' and 'Romance' gives way to wistfulness in the brooding sentiment shadowing the 'Nocturne' and 'Romance.' The final part of *Masquerade* called 'Galop,' runs rampant with irresistible joyousness."

"The Waltz" quickly became popular and was often heard on the radio during the war and continues to be played every New Year's Eve on Russian television. The piece has also been featured in ballets, rock music, commercials and movies. It was most recently used in the 2019 biopic "Halston."

Known as one of Khachaturian's most famous works, "The Waltz" was performed by the Russian State Symphony Orchestra at his funeral service in May 1978.

Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957)

Violin Concerto

Composed in 1945



Erich Korngold, a child prodigy, matured into a successful opera composer and teacher in Vienna. Starting in 1934, he began to shuttle between Vienna and Hollywood, and the

techniques he brought from opera

PROGRAM NOTES CONTINUED

(especially the Wagnerian device of the leitmotif, wherein a memorable snippet of music accompanies a particular character or idea) reshaped the art of film scoring, earning him several Oscars in the process.

Korngold was in California when the Nazis annexed Austria in 1938. From then on he made Hollywood his home, taking American citizenship in 1943. He ceased composing “serious” music for the duration of the war, until he finally agreed in 1945 to begin a violin concerto for his friend Bronislaw Hubermann. The work stalled after a young violinist gave a disastrous reading of a draft, leaving Korngold to wonder if the violin part was too difficult; meanwhile, Hubermann balked on scheduling a premiere, hedging until he could see a finished score. The impasse was broken by another European émigré, Jascha Heifetz, who actually encouraged Korngold to ratchet up the virtuosity, and who became the concerto’s greatest champion.

The *Violin Concerto* borrows most of its main themes from the movies. In the first movement, the alluring opening melody—with the soloist entering right away, as in Mendelssohn’s *Violin Concerto*—comes from the film *Another Dawn* (1937). A poignant secondary theme originated in the *Juaréz* (1939). The middle movement, a *Romanze*, takes its main theme from Korngold’s Oscar-winning score to *Anthony Adverse*. The finale’s musical material, extracted from *The Prince and the Pauper* (1937), provides ample opportunities for the violin to show off its sprightly filigree. - Aaron Grad

Alexander Borodin (1833-1887)
Symphony No. 2
Composed in 1876



Alexander Borodin defies the notion of a typical composer. The illegitimate son of an Armenian Prince and young Russian woman, he chose chemistry over music. In 1850, he enrolled at the Medico-Surgical Academy in St. Petersburg. He became famous for his career in chemical research, especially his work on organic synthesis.

Despite his success, Borodin’s love of music never diminished. With the help of his mentor, composer Mily Balakirev, Borodin wrote his first symphony. The positive reviews led him to quickly begin another symphony. However, this endeavor would take seven years to complete.

Composing began in 1869, but Borodin was often distracted by his work as an adjunct professor of chemistry in the Medico-Surgical Academy. After Tsar Alexander II’s government allowed women to take advanced medical courses in the fall of 1872, Borodin, who was influential in that movement, became the founder and professor of a School of Medicine for women.

He was also asked to work on the operas *Prince Igor* and *Ilada*. While the operas were not completed to his satisfaction, the motifs of *Prince Igor* can be found in *Symphony No. 2*. Borodin’s symphonic vision encompassed an assembly of Russian warriors preparing for war, a mythical Slavic bard and a feast for heroes in a grand finale.

continued

PROGRAM NOTES CONTINUED

The Russian Musical Society was interested in performing the symphony in the fall of 1876. However, Borodin had misplaced the full score. He found the middle movements, but had to redo the other movements while sick in bed. The work finally premiered on March 10, 1877, under the baton of Eduard Napravnik. The symphony was well received, although some claimed the brass parts were too thick.

In 1879, Borodin revised the work and thinned out the brass parts. This version premiered March 4, 1879,

with Rimsky-Korsakov as conductor. Borodin revised the score one more time in 1886, adapting suggestions made by Rimsky-Korsakov.

All his hard work paid off as *Symphony No. 2* is considered Borodin's greatest composition. Borodin completed a couple of string quartets, but another symphony never materialized. He worked himself into an early grave. After dancing at a ball, he had a fatal heart attack on February 27, 1887, at the age of 53.

A promotional poster for the Nutcracker Ballet. On the left is a large, detailed image of the Nutcracker prince, wearing a blue and gold uniform with a red and gold crown, holding a golden mace. The background is a light blue with white snowflakes. At the top center is the logo for the Westmoreland Symphony Orchestra (WSO). The title 'Nutcracker Ballet' is written in a large, elegant, blue cursive font. Below the title is a red, torn-edge banner with the word 'TEXTURE' in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. Underneath this banner, in smaller red capital letters, is 'CONTEMPORARY BALLET & TEXTURE BALLET SCHOOL'. To the right of the Nutcracker image, the performance dates and times are listed: 'Fri., Dec. 12 • 7:30PM' and 'Sat. Dec. 13 • 11AM & 3PM'. Below this, a paragraph in a black cursive font reads: 'The magic returns for the region's only live-orchestra version of the beloved traditional ballet!'. At the bottom right, a dark blue rectangular box with a white dotted border contains the website 'thepalacetheatre.org' and the phone number 'or 724-836-8000' in white sans-serif font.

WSO WESTMORELAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Nutcracker Ballet

TEXTURE
CONTEMPORARY BALLET
& TEXTURE BALLET SCHOOL

Fri., Dec. 12 • 7:30PM
Sat. Dec. 13 • 11AM & 3PM

*The magic returns for the
region's only live-orchestra
version of the
beloved traditional ballet!*

**thepalacetheatre.org
or 724-836-8000**

THE MUSIC OF JOHN WILLIAMS



Saturday, November 8, 2025
7:30 p.m.

Daniel Meyer, Conductor

PROGRAM

John Williams Superman: Superman March
Far and Away: Suite
Harry Potter & the Sorcerer's Stone
III. Nimbus 2000
E.T. (The Extra-Terrestrial): Adventures on Earth
Memoirs of a Geisha: Sayuri's Theme
Raiders of the Lost Ark: Raiders March

-INTERMISSION-

Olympic Fanfare and Theme
J.F.K.: Theme from J.F.K
Jurassic Park Selections
Schindler's List: Suite
I. Theme from Schindler's List
Star Wars Saga
IV. Here They Come
V. Luke and Leia
Star Wars: Suite
I. Main Title

Guest Artist Sponsor

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ANDRÉS FRANCO CONDUCTOR



Colombian-born Andrés Franco continues to delight audiences with his imaginative programming and energetic style. A frequent guest conductor in the United States, Europe, and South America, Franco has appeared with the Colorado, Columbus, Dallas, Detroit, Eugene, Fort Worth, Houston, Indianapolis, Omaha, and St. Louis symphonies; the philharmonic orchestras of Boise and Oklahoma City; the Kansas City Chamber Sinfonietta and the Chicago Sinfonietta. Worldwide, he has conducted the Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León, Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de Perú, Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de Colombia, Orquesta Filarmónica de Bogotá, Orquesta Filarmónica de Medellín, Orquesta Sinfónica de EAFIT, and the Camerata Mazatlán. He has also appeared at the Cabrillo, Grant Park, OK Mozart, Oregon Bach, Round Top, and Texas Music festivals.

Franco served five seasons as Music Director of Tulsa's Signature Symphony and Resident Conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony. He also served as Resident Conductor of the Fort Worth Symphony and Music Director of the Philharmonia of Kansas City.

Franco is the inaugural Executive Director of DNAWORKS, an organization dedicated to dialogue and healing through the arts. From 2020 to 2023, he served as Executive Director of City of Asylum. He currently serves on the Exposure Advisory Committee of The Pittsburgh Foundation, the WQED Community Advisory Board, and the Programming Advisory Committee of the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust.

Born into a musical family, Franco began piano studies with his father, Jorge Franco. He studied with Van Cliburn Gold Medalist Jose Feghali and attended piano workshops with Rudolph Buchbinder and Lev Naumov. Franco studied conducting with Marin Alsop, Miguel Harth-Bedoya, Helmut Rilling, Gerard Schwarz, Leonard Slatkin, Gustav Meier, and Kurt Masur.

Franco holds a bachelor's degree in piano performance from the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Bogotá, Colombia, and Master of Music degrees in piano performance and conducting from Texas Christian University.

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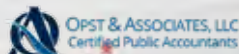
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RHAPSODY IN BLUE



Saturday, February 14, 2026
7:30 p.m.

Daniel Meyer, Conductor
Janice Carissa, piano

PROGRAM

Copland Rodeo
 Buckaroo Holiday
 Corral Nocturne
 Saturday Night Waltz
 Hoe-Down

Gershwin Rhapsody in Blue
 Janice Carissa, piano

—Intermission—

R. Thompson Symphony No. 2
 I. Allegro
 II. Largo
 III. Vivace
 IV. Andante moderato - Allegro con spirito

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JANICE CARISSA PIANO



A Gilmore Young Artist and winner of Salon de Virtuosi, Janice Carissa has “the multicolored highlights of a mature pianist” (Philadelphia Inquirer) and “strong, sure hands” (Voice of America) that “convey a vivid story rather than a mere showpiece” (Chicago Classical Review). Her artistry has been showcased at an array of renowned stages, including the Sydney Opera House, Carnegie Hall, the United Nations, the Kennedy Center, Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park, and the Saratoga Performing Arts Center.

Following her Philadelphia Orchestra debut at age 16, Carissa has since performed with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and the Pittsburgh, San Diego, Nashville, Kansas City, Delaware, Amarillo, Des Moines, Knoxville and Jakarta symphonies, among others. Highlights of the 2025-2026 season include concerto

appearances with the Minnesota Orchestra, Houston Symphony, ProMusica Chamber Orchestra of Columbus, Jackson (MI) Symphony, and Florida Orchestra, as well as a solo recital at Pepperdine University and a duo with cellist Sterling Elliott for Capital Region Classical.

Janice Carissa's passion for chamber music has led her to performances with Bravo! Vail where she was a piano fellow, the Brooklyn Chamber Music Society and Jupiter Chamber Concert Series; collaborations with Vadim Gluzman, Miriam Fried, Paul Neubauer, Lucy Shelton, Marcy Rosen, David Shifrin, Jennifer Cano, Peter Wiley, among other distinguished musicians; and appearances at Marlboro, North Shore, Ravinia, Caramoor, and Kneisel Hall festivals.

Born on July 26, 1998, in Indonesia, Carissa left Indonesia in 2013 to enter the Curtis Institute of Music with a full scholarship from Gerry and Marguerite Lenfest, where she was a pupil of Gary Graffman. She went on to earn a Master of Music at The Juilliard School where she studied with Robert McDonald. When away from the piano, Carissa is an avid foodie and loves going on strolls with her camera. This is Janice's second appearance with the WSO.

<https://www.janicecarissa.com/>



RHAPSODY IN BLUE Program Notes

Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

Rodeo

Composed in 1942



Born in Brooklyn, N.Y. to immigrant parents, Aaron Copland became one of America's most famous 20th-century composers, creating a uniquely American sound.

After Copland's success in composing the ballet *Billy the Kid*, he was hesitant to write yet another "cowboy" ballet. However, Agnes de Mille of the Ballet Russe de Monte convinced him to write *Rodeo*. She said, "I dug in my heels and said I wanted the best American composer for the music, Aaron Copland."

Rodeo is set in the Old West, telling the tale of a cowgirl trying to find love at Burnt Ranch. The love story unfolds through four movements, including *Buckaroo Holiday* when we meet all the characters, *Corral Nocturne*, *Saturday Night Waltz* and the foot-tapping *Hoe-Down*. Copland wove traditional songs through the ballet including "Bonaparte's Retreat," "McLeod's Reel" and "Gilderoy."

The ballet premiered at the Metropolitan Opera House on October 16, 1942. It was an overwhelming success. De Mille said, "I gave the performance of my life and got twenty-two curtain calls."

The next year, Copland made a symphonic arrangement from the ballet, the *Four Dance Episodes*. He removed *Ranch House Party* and made other subtle changes to the final two movements.

The premiere of the concert suite took place in 1943 with the Boston Pops.

George Gershwin (1898-1937)

Rhapsody in Blue

Composed in 1924

The iconic solo clarinet opening of *Rhapsody in Blue* is now a beloved part of American culture, but when it first premiered, it came as a complete shock to listeners.

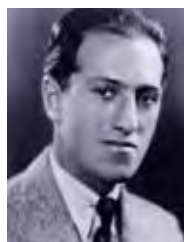
It debuted during a concert titled "An Experiment in Modern Music" on February 12, 1924, in Aeolian Hall, New York. Bandleader Paul Whiteman commissioned the piece.

Gershwin said later, "it was on the train, with its steely rhythms, its rattle-tty bang, that is so often so stimulating to a composer ... I frequently hear music in the very heart of the noise. And there I suddenly heard—and even saw on paper—the complete construction of the rhapsody, from beginning to end."

After composing *Rhapsody in Blue*, Gershwin gave the work to Ferde Grofé, Whiteman's arranger. Grofé finished orchestrating the piece within a week of the premiere.

Born in New York City, the young Gershwin dropped out of school at 15 to work as a song plugger in Tin Pan Alley. But he soon had ambitions to compose larger works. *Rhapsody in Blue* made him famous.

Gershwin described the piece as "a sort of musical kaleidoscope of America—of our vast melting pot, of our unduplicated national pep, of our metropolitan madness."



continued on the next page

PROGRAM NOTES CONTINUED

Rhapsody in Blue serves as a musical biography for Gershwin. In this piece, you hear the combination of his Tin Pan Alley experiences, musical theater, and jazz influences.

George Gershwin died at age 38, leaving a musical legacy of more than 500 songs, an opera, and works for orchestra and piano. He is considered one of America's greatest composers and was posthumously awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his musical contributions.

Today, the Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song is the nation's highest award for achievement in the field of popular song. Recipients have included Elton John, Billy Joel, Stevie Wonder, Joni Mitchell and Paul McCartney.

Randall Thompson (1889-1984)

Symphony No. 2

Composed in 1931

In the 1920s and 1930s, as composers like Gershwin and Copland were crystallizing what it meant to create truly American works within the European traditions of art



music in theaters and concert halls, their contemporary Randall Thompson led the way in crafting a new American canon of choral music. His emphasis on singable melodies and forthright emotions placed him out of step with the musical avant-garde, but ordinary folks in amateur choirs and glee clubs around the country never stopped singing his scores, and his concert works have always had their ardent champions, including Thompson's

former student Leonard Bernstein, who conducted the benchmark recording of Thompson's *Symphony No. 2*.

In many ways, this charming symphony from 1931 foreshadows the homespun, optimistic sound that Copland reached a few years later in the period of *Rodeo* and *Appalachian Spring*. The first movement brings the symphony's weightiest music, which works through jagged rhythms and heavy, minor-key harmonies with neoclassical efficiency and clarity. The *Largo* takes on a more overtly American tone with a crooning melody fit for a Broadway show and a smattering of "blue" notes borrowed from jazz. In the *scherzo*, syncopated rhythms draw from the language of cakewalk and ragtime—those hybrids of European theater music and Black dance styles that coalesced in the late 1800s and served as the wellspring of all the popular American music that followed. After a serene chorale over walking bass that serves as an introduction to the finale, the body of the movement uses the neoclassical playbook to manipulate material steeped in the twang of American folk tunes. - Aaron Grad

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CHEE-YUN VIOLIN



Violinist Chee-Yun's flawless technique, dazzling tone, and compelling artistry have enraptured audiences on five continents. Charming, charismatic, and deeply passionate about her art, Chee-Yun continues to carve a unique place for herself in the ever-evolving world of classical music.

A winner of the Young Concert Artists International Auditions and a recipient of the Avery Fisher Career Grant, Chee-Yun has performed with many of the world's foremost orchestras and conductors. She has appeared with the San Francisco, Toronto, Pittsburgh, Dallas, Atlanta, and National symphony orchestras, as well as with the Saint Paul and Los Angeles Chamber Orchestras.

As a recitalist, Chee-Yun has performed in many major U.S. cities, including New York, Chicago, Washington, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Atlanta. In 2016, Chee-Yun performed as a guest artist for the Secretary General at the United Nations in celebration of Korea's National Foundation Day and the 25th anniversary of South Korea joining the UN.

In 1993, Chee-Yun performed at the White House for President Bill Clinton

and guests at an event honoring recipients of the National Medal of the Arts. Recent highlights include her appearance with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, as well as her collaboration with acclaimed guitarist Mak Grgić.

Her most recent recording, *Serenata Notturmo*, released by Decca/Korea, is an album of light classics that went platinum within six months of its release. In addition to her active performance and recording schedule, Chee-Yun is a dedicated and enthusiastic educator. Her past faculty positions have included serving as the resident Starling Soloist and Adjunct Professor of Violin at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and as Visiting Professor of Music (Violin) at the Indiana University School of Music. From 2007 to 2017, she served as Artist-in-Residence and Professor of Violin at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

Chee-Yun plays a violin made by Francesco Ruggieri in 1669. It is rumored to have been buried with a previous owner for 200 years and has been profiled by the Washington Post.

For additional information and to sign up for her e-newsletter, please visit www.chee-yun.net.

This is Chee-Yun's third appearance with the WSO.

Full bio: chee-yun.net

photo MJ Kim

SPRING SYMPHONY



Saturday, March 14, 2026
7:30 p.m.

Daniel Meyer, Conductor
Chee-Yun, violin

PROGRAM

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| Brahms | Hungarian Dances
No. 1 Allegro molto
No. 4 Poco sostenuto – Vivace
No. 5 Allegro – Vivace |
| Mendelssohn | Violin Concerto in E minor
I. Allegro molto appassionato
II. Andante
III. Allegretto non troppo - Allegro molto vivace
Chee-Yun, violin |
| | —Intermission— |
| Schumann | Symphony No. 1 'Spring'
I. Andante un poco maestoso;
Allegro molto vivace
II. Larghetto
III. Scherzo: Molto vivace
IV. Allegro animato e grazioso |

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SPRING SYMPHONY Program Notes

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Hungarian Dances

Composed in 1879

An early friendship with exiled violinist virtuoso Eduard Reményi inspired one of Brahms' most popular works, his *Hungarian Dances*.



Banished from Austro-Hungary for his role in the Hungarian Revolution, Reményi toured Germany, where he encountered a then-unknown teenage accompanist named Johannes Brahms. Soon after, Brahms met another Hungarian violinist, Joseph Joachim, who became a great friend and mentor.

Through these friendships, Brahms was introduced to a wide range of folk music that greatly influenced his compositions. He soon tried his hand at composing a set of Hungarian-style pieces.

Brahms' *Hungarian Dances* were originally composed for piano duet. The 21 lively dances captured the spirit of Hungarian folk music and became a favorite of the era. Brahms orchestrated several of them himself, while others were orchestrated by other composers, including Antonin Dvořák.

The success of *Hungarian Dances* reflects the 19th-century popularity of dance music and music that embraced the rich diversity of European cultures.

You will hear dances 1, 4, and 5 tonight.

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Violin Concerto in E minor

Composed in 1844

Comparable only to the young Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Felix Mendelssohn was considered by many to be a prodigy. Besides being a brilliant pianist, his compositions advanced the development of classical music. At the age of 11, he had written a trio for strings, a violin and piano sonata, two piano sonatas, and the beginning of a third, three more for four hands, four for organ, three songs (lieder), and a cantata. Between the ages of 12 and 14, he composed 12 string symphonies.



Mendelssohn was appointed as principal conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in 1835 and named his lifelong friend Ferdinand David as concertmaster. Out of this friendship, the idea of the concerto was born.

Mendelssohn wrote to David in 1838, "I should like to write a violin concerto for you next winter. One in E minor runs through my head, the beginning of which gives me no peace."

Throughout the six years it took to complete the concerto, Mendelssohn and David wrote back and forth, collaborating on the development.

The concerto was first performed in Leipzig in March of 1845 with David as soloist.

continued on page 33

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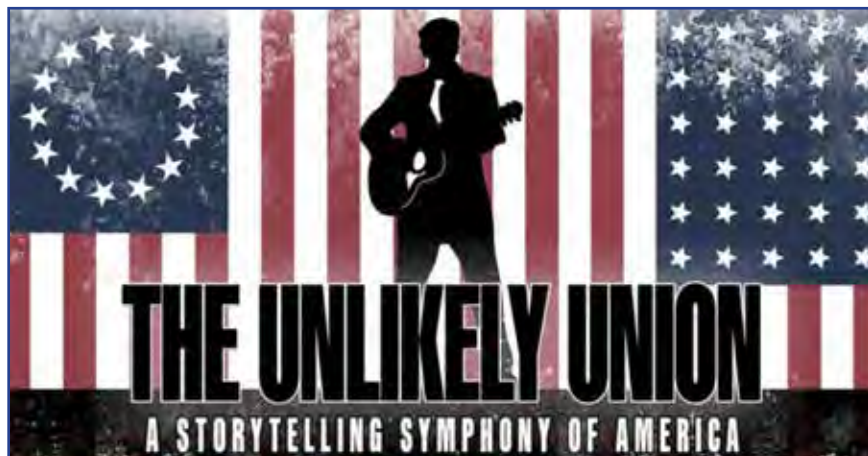
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PROGRAM NOTES CONTINUED

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)
Symphony No. 1 "Spring"
Composed in 1841

The last name Schumann and the piano are forever intertwined.

Robert and Clara Schumann's piano works are undoubtedly their most popular and frequently played.

In 1840, Robert wanted to try his hand at composing a symphony, but it wasn't until the urging of his wife in 1841 that he dedicated his time to composition. She has been noted for saying, "it would be best if he composed for orchestra; his imagination cannot find sufficient scope on the piano... His compositions are all orchestral in feeling...My highest wish is that he should compose for orchestra...May I succeed in bringing him to it!"

Once inspired, Schumann mapped out his symphony in only four days and completed the orchestration (filling out the voices of the orchestra) in roughly one month. The title is attributed to Adolf Böttger's poem *Frühlingsgedicht* citing the famous line "Spring blooms forth!" When speaking with composer colleague Louis Spohr, Schumann said: "I wrote the symphony in that rush of spring which carries a man away even in his old age and comes over him anew every year."

Schumann opens his symphony with a trumpet call, heralding the arrival of Spring and the joyful end to the winter doldrums. The symphony

is spirited without pause from the second into a third movement, containing lovely melodic lines. He is credited with significantly expanding the use of timpani with this symphony, which adds to the richness of the many harmonies.

He was the first to incorporate the big sound of three kettle drums, ultimately becoming the traditional four or five of today. This elevated the tuned drums above the traditional "boom-boom" role they played at the end of many pre-romantic compositions.



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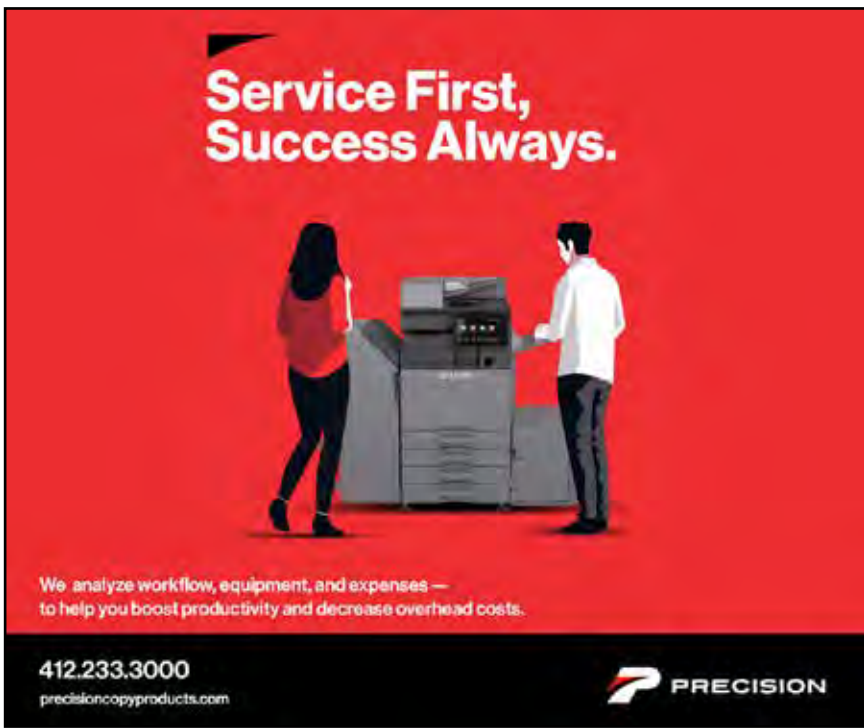
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PRECISION

THE PLANETS



Saturday, April 18, 2026
7:30 p.m.

Daniel Meyer, Conductor
Radu Ratoi, accordion
Treble Voices of the WSO Chamber Singers

PROGRAM

J.S. Bach Concerto in D minor
 I. Allegro
 II. Adagio
 III. Allegro
 Radu Ratoi, accordion

—Intermission—

Holst The Planets
 I. Mars, the Bringer of War
 II. Venus, the Bringer of Peace
 III. Mercury, the Winged Messenger
 IV. Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity
 V. Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age
 VI. Uranus, the Magician
 VII. Neptune, the Mystic
 Treble Voices

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RADU RATOI ACCORDION



Winner of the 2024 YCA Susan Wadsworth International Auditions, accordionist Radu Ratoi began playing the accordion at the age of six in his hometown in the Republic of Moldova. A prodigious talent, Radu excelled early on, winning numerous international competitions in the junior category. He has since gone on to achieve an extraordinary record, claiming victory in six of the most prestigious accordion competitions in the world: Coupe Mondiale, Klingenthal Accordion Competition, Trophy Mondiale, Arrasate Accordion Competition, PIF Castelfidardo, and the Moscow Accordion Competition. In total, he has received more than 60 national and international awards.

Praised for his originality, versatility, and virtuosity in both classical and contemporary repertoire, Ratoi has earned several prestigious honors in his homeland. In 2018, he was awarded the “Excellence Diploma,” and in 2022, the esteemed Moldovan National Distinction “Master in Arts,” both presented by the President of the Republic of Moldova.

Ratoi studied at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen, where he was awarded the Sonning Music Prize, one of Denmark’s most prestigious honors. His artistry is

defined by the unique way he blends two major musical traditions—the Russian school and the Western European school—into a deeply personal and distinctive style.

In 2022, Ratoi released his debut album, *Greatest Organ Works Arranged for Accordion*, featuring works by J.S. Bach and F. Liszt. Through his transcriptions of pieces by J.S. Bach, D. Scarlatti, J.P. Rameau, F. Liszt, and others, Ratoi has expanded and redefined the accordion repertoire.

As both a soloist and chamber musician, Ratoi has captivated audiences worldwide with his musicality, technical brilliance, and charisma. He has performed in some of the world’s most renowned concert halls, including the Berlin Philharmonic, Radio Concert House Copenhagen, Victoria Concert Hall, Tivoli Hall Copenhagen, Aram Khachaturian Concert Hall in Yerevan, and Harbin Concert Hall, among others. In 2024, he was appointed as a soloist with the National Chamber Orchestra of Moldova.

Ratoi’s ground breaking contributions to the accordion repertoire and his unforgettable performances continue to set him apart as one of the foremost accordionists of his generation.

Full bio: <https://yca.org/artist/ratoi-radu/>

THE PLANETS PROGRAM NOTES

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
Concerto in D minor
Composed 1738



Baroque composer Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Eisenach, Thuringia, Germany. His father, Johann Ambrosius Bach, came from a long line of musicians and taught his son

how to play the violin at a very young age.

Bach is now regarded as one of the greatest and most influential Western composers of all time, creating more than 1,000 pieces of music throughout his lifetime, including music for organ, orchestras, choirs, concertos, and suites. In 1726, he began publishing organ and other keyboard music.

The earliest manuscript *Concerto in D minor, BWV 1052*, is from 1734 made by Bach's son Carl Philipp Emanuel. The concerto was written for harpsichord and Baroque string orchestra including three movements: *Allegro, Adagio and Allegro*. This is arguably Bach's best known harpsichord concerto.

Its opening *Allegro* bursts with stormy energy and virtuosic solo passages, while the *Adagio* offers a simple repeating bass line beneath its melodies. The final *Allegro* drives forward with rhythmic intensity.

Heard on the accordion, the concerto takes on a fresh character, underscoring the timeless nature of Bach's music.

Gustav Holst (1874-1934)
The Planets
Composed 1917



Holst was an English composer, arranger, and teacher. Best known for his orchestral suite, *The Planets*, he composed many works across a range of genres, although none

achieved comparable success. His distinctive compositional style was the product of many influences, including the revival of English folk songs of the early 20th century.

The piece opens with the contrasting styles of Mars and ***Venus-Mars, the Bringer of War*** features lots of brass and percussion in a driving, unsettling 5/4 rhythmic meter, followed by *Venus, the Bringer of Peace*, whose more gentle antipathies are better expressed with sounds from the woodwinds and strings, along with a solo violin.

Mercury, the Winged Messenger, in triple meter, may have served as the scherzo movement of a symphony. It is light and capricious, featuring woodwinds, strings and celeste, whose themes dart from instrument to instrument in a whirl of restless activity.

Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity, sounds the most English in its thematic material. The music is grand, energizing and heroic, using the full orchestra of brass, woodwinds and percussion. A familiar theme is heard in the middle of the movement, introduced by the low strings-hymn-like, pompous, and very English in its

PROGRAM NOTES

character. This theme is one of the memorable highlights of the entire piece.

Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age, suggests the ceaseless progression of time. Listen for a sturdy rhythmic base, as well as a tolling bell in the harp. A walking bass pattern is heard, joined by brass, then by the strings. The music swells dramatically, then becomes calm, accompanied by the tolling bell. Towards the end of the movement, the tolling bell ceases, and the movement becomes serene and unexpectedly beautiful.

Uranus, the Magician, opens with brass, followed by bassoons and other woodwinds. Playful, yet purposeful, the movement dances, prances, and

sometimes rocks, casting a spell on all that it meets on its journey.

The final movement, ***Neptune, the Mystic,*** features a women's chorus, which uses only vowel sounds, adding to the mystery of the piece. The movement is more atmospheric than musical in subject. In so choosing, Holst concludes his epic work with the suggestion of timelessness beyond our solar system, of space fading into eternity.



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BEST OF BROADWAY



Saturday, May 30, 2026
7:30 p.m.

Daniel Meyer, Conductor
WSO Chamber Singers, Chris Bartley, director

Featuring vocalists Rebecca Kaufman Taylor, Anthony Massetto,
Deana Muro, Daniel Nuttall, Becki Toth, Katy Williams
and Rich Williams

PROGRAM

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—Intermission—

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The WSO was founded in 1969 by several area musicians and community leaders who wished to have a good local orchestra perform under the direction of an outstanding conductor. Dr. Richard Karp, a noted conductor and later General and Music Director of the Pittsburgh Opera, was selected.

Amateur musicians were initially used for the four-concert season at Greensburg Salem High School, but under Dr. Karp's direction, the orchestra grew each year both in size and professionalism. In 1974, the orchestra presented the first of its annual outdoor summer concerts. In 1975, Mr. Thomas Michalak, then Assistant Conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony, took over, remaining through the 1977-78 season.

The 1978-79 season was marked by a conductor search, with the job going to Mr. Kypros Markou, then Associate Conductor of the Canton (Ohio) Symphony. In his first season (1979-80), the orchestra moved to a new hall

(the newly renovated Palace Theatre) and presented five subscription concerts. During his 31-year tenure, the quality of performance steadily improved, reaching critical acclaim.

During the 2011-12 season, after a search was held for a new conductor, Maestro Daniel Meyer, Music Director of the Erie Philharmonic, was appointed Artistic Director.

Each December for the past several decades, the orchestra has presented Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* at the Palace Theatre. Every Summer, the WSO offers a free *Summer Sparklers* concert at St. Clair Park in downtown Greensburg.

Maestro Markou founded the Westmoreland Youth Symphony Orchestra in 1981 and conducted the orchestra in its first years. The WSO Academy of Music was founded by Morrie Brand in 2005, creating more than 12 additional music educational programs for youth and adults.

In 2025-2026 the WSO presents its 57th anniversary season. The WSO continues to provide classical performances and quality education for the region because of the loyal support of our amazing community. We look forward to a bright future full of incredible music.

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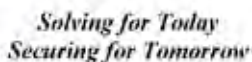
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WSO ACADEMY OF MUSIC



Adam Gillespie
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Since its founding in 1969, the WSO has been a steadfast advocate for music education. In 1975, the orchestra launched the Young People's Concerts to inspire a lifelong love of classical music in younger generations. Just two years later, the Visiting Artists Program (now called the Masterclass in Session program) began bringing WSO ensembles into local elementary schools, introducing students to live music in their own classrooms.

In 1981, the WSO established the Westmoreland Youth Symphony Orchestra (WYSO) – a youth orchestra for high school students eager to perform orchestral repertoire.

The Academy of Music, founded in 2005, became a home for the WSO's educational programs and expanded to include the Young Artists Competition and Private Lessons for string instruments. Growth continued in 2013 with the formation of the Summer Philharmonic, a 65-member civic orchestra of local music teachers, alumni, and community musicians, followed shortly by the expansion of WYSO into three distinct orchestras serving a range of ages and skill levels.

Today, the Academy of Music remains a cornerstone of the region's cultural life, sharing the gift of music-making and fostering strong educational ties including collaboration with the Seton Hill University Music Department, where students and faculty often join in performances, masterclasses, and educational programming.

Philharmonic – An auditioned orchestra primarily for high school students, offering weekly rehearsals led by WSO members and Academy faculty. Musicians may audition for the Annual Concerto Competition, with winners performing solo with the orchestra at the spring concert. Conducted by Academy Director, Adam Gillespie.

Philharmonia – An intermediate-level ensemble and an ideal next step for developing musicians. This group often represents a young player's first opportunity to perform in a full orchestra including woodwinds, brass, and strings. Conducted by WSO Principal Second Violin, Jorie Butler-Geyer.

String Ensemble – Focused on the fundamentals of ensemble playing for violins, violas, cellos, and basses. Conducted by WSO Cellist, Sarah Ferrell.

Wind Symphony – For intermediate to advanced woodwind, brass, and percussion students eager to develop their skills in a collaborative setting. Directed by Ryan Czekaj.

Private Lessons – Violin, viola, and cello instruction is available for students of all ages, including adults. Lessons with an experienced teacher strengthen technique, musicianship, and the joy of making music.

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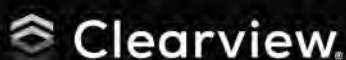
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