



KANSAS CITY
SYMPHONY

Romeo and Juliet

GEMMA NEW, GUEST CONDUCTOR

KRISTINA FULTON, OBOE Shirley Bush Helzberg Chair

March 14-16, 2025

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

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Romeo and Juliet

Friday, March 14, 2025 at 8 p.m. (Symphonic Piazza)

The works by Martinů and Prokofiev will be performed without intermission for the Symphonic Piazza concert.

Saturday, March 15, 2025 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, March 16, 2025 at 2 p.m.

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

GEMMA NEW, GUEST CONDUCTOR

KRISTINA FULTON, OBOE Shirley Bush Helzberg Chair

ALISSA FIRSOVA

Die Windsbraut, op. 38

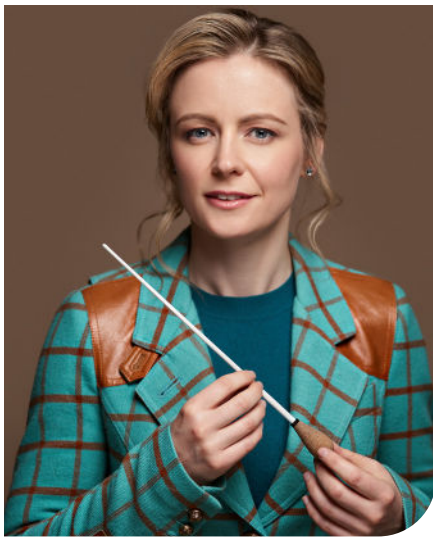
BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ

Concerto for Oboe and Small Orchestra
Kristina Fulton, oboe

Intermission

SERGEI PROKOFIEV

Selections from *Romeo and Juliet*,
op. 64bis and op. 64ter
Montagues and Capulets
The Young Girl Juliet
Madrigal
Minuet
Masks
Romeo and Juliet
The Death of Tybalt
Romeo with Juliet Before Parting
Romeo at the Tomb of Juliet



Gemma New

GUEST CONDUCTOR

Juilliard Orchestra. Equally in-demand in the U.K. and Europe, she returns to the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Mendelssohn Academy Orchestra Leipzig, Kristiansand Symfoniorkester, Malmö Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra della Toscana, Orquesta Sinfonica de Barcelona, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Bergen Philharmonic.

Known for her “unique sensitivity and a heightened attention to detail and texture” (the Washington Post) and “programming prowess” (Vancouver Sun), New Zealand-born Gemma New (Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit) is artistic advisor and principal conductor of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and a highly sought-after guest conductor worldwide. She is the recipient of the prestigious 2021 Sir Georg Solti Conducting Award and was appointed an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2024.

Highlights of New’s 2024/25 season include her debut with the Münchner Rundfunkorchester, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa, Canada, BBC National Orchestra and Chorus of Wales, Brussels Philharmonic, Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra, Prague Philharmonia and Musikkollegium Winterthur. In the United States, she returns to lead the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and

Among her recent season highlights, New made subscription debuts with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra and Orchestre National de France. In May 2024 she led two acclaimed programs after stepping in on short notice with the San Francisco Symphony, where she made her subscription debut, and with the Seattle Symphony. Her 2024 summer highlights included an engagement with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, where she led the world-premiere performances of Huang Ruo’s *City of Floating Sounds*, and a return to the BBC Proms for a second consecutive year with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra at London’s Royal Albert Hall.

A former Dudamel Conducting Fellow with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Conducting Fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center, New was awarded the Solti Foundation U.S. Career Assistance Awards in 2017, 2019 and 2020 before receiving the 2021 Sir Georg Solti Conducting Award.

Kristina Fulton

OBOE



Arts. She also has performed as guest principal oboe with various orchestras including the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the San Diego Symphony. As a soloist, Fulton has performed with the Kansas City Symphony, the San Diego Symphony, the New World Symphony and the National Repertory Orchestra, among others. An avid lover of chamber music, she also performs frequently on the Kansas City Symphony's free Happy Hour chamber music series. Fulton holds a bachelor's degree from the Oberlin Conservatory, where she studied with James Caldwell, and a master's degree from the New England Conservatory of Music as a student of John Ferrillo. In her spare time, Fulton enjoys photography, traveling and spending time with her husband and three dogs.

Kristina Fulton joined the Kansas City Symphony as principal oboe in September 2011, and she holds the Shirley Bush Helzberg Chair. Prior to her appointment, she spent two seasons as a member of the New World Symphony and served on the faculty at the New World School of the

SPECIAL PERFORMANCE

Ben Folds with the Kansas City Symphony

Tuesday, March 18 at 7 p.m.

Wednesday, March 19 at 7 p.m.



Ben Folds joins your KC Symphony for two incredible nights! Widely regarded as one of the major musical influences of our generation, the Emmy-nominated artist has created an enormous body of genre-bending music that includes pop albums with Ben Folds Five, multiple solo albums and numerous collaborations. His last album was a blend of pop songs and his Concerto for Piano and Orchestra that soared to #1 on both the Billboard classical and classical crossover charts.

Buy your tickets at kcsymphony.org or call 816.471.0400.



Alissa Firsova (b. 1986)

Die Windsbraut (The Bride of the Wind), op. 38

(2017)

11 minutes

Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, glockenspiel, snare drum, suspended cymbal, tam-tam, tubular bells, vibraphone, windchimes, harp, celesta and strings.

Composer Alissa Firsova is the daughter of two other composers, Elena Firsova and Dmitri Smirnov. She was born in Russia but grew up in England, and came to international attention in 2001 when she won the BBC/Guardian/Proms Young Composer Competition with her piano piece *Les pavots*. Since then, she has won acclaim as a triple threat — composer, pianist and conductor.

“Bride of the Wind,”
oil on canvas painting
by Oskar Kokoschka.
A self-portrait expressing
his love for Alma Mahler
(widow of composer
Gustav Mahler).



This is her description of *Die Windsbraut*:

Though she was a gifted composer and pianist in her own right, Alma Mahler-Werfel (née Schindler) is remembered as a muse for many great figures of her time, including her husbands Gustav Mahler, Walter Gropius and Franz Werfel ... Another heart conquered was that of Oskar Kokoschka, an Austrian artist with whom Alma had a brief, turbulent relationship and a love-letter exchange which lasted right up until her death. Among the hundreds of his artworks inspired by Alma was “Die Windsbraut” (The Bride of the Wind). Kokoschka considered this painting to be the ultimate proof of his love. My orchestral work *Die Windsbraut* is a depiction of this painting and the tempestuous and passionate love that Alma and Kokoschka shared ... In one of his last letters, Kokoschka expressed his wish for their love to be depicted by a poet “with a sixth sense for language, its structure, its rhythm and its intonation — one that knows the whole range of our emotions from tenderness to the most lascivious sensuality ... so that we can tell the world what we two did with each other and against each other, and can pass on the living meaning of our love to those that come after us.”

I found it fascinating to take up this challenge through music. At

the opening of my *Die Windsbraut*, I tried to imitate the rustle of the wind, howling up into a tumultuous storm, at which point the violins begin the passionate main theme ... then played by the violas and cellos, before crashing into a “crazed,” trill-filled orchestral tutti representing a triumphant union of Kokoschka’s and Alma’s love, with tremolos in the strings and the horns fanfaring the main theme in unison.

Then we enter the eye of the storm where, in the painting, Alma and Oskar are peacefully lying together. The trombone solo, supported by a brass chorale, opens Oskar’s “love” theme (the second subject), answered by Alma in the strings ... Duets in the trumpets, horns, and clarinets, the return of the main theme in the first violins, mystical, bell-like sounds, and a duet between the solo first violin and harp bring us back to the opening material. Then eerie trills build up back into another stormy outburst, only this time the “love” theme is played by the strings and brass, while the winds play the main theme, reaching the culmination of the piece before settling down into a reminiscent coda, as the two lovers look back at all they had lived through.



Bohuslav Martinů

(1890–1959)

Concerto for Oboe and Small Orchestra, H. 353

(1955)

17 minutes

Solo oboe, 2 flutes, 2 clarinets, bassoon, 2 horns, trumpet, piano and strings.

THE STORY

The story of Bohuslav Martinů's oboe concerto revolves around two Czech men living outside their native country in very different parts of the world. In the early 1950s, the composer was living in Nice, France, when he received a letter from the oboist Jiří Tancibudek. Tancibudek, having escaped from communists in Czechoslovakia, made his way through the generosity of friends to Sydney, Australia (where he and his wife gave the first oboe and piano recital ever played on that continent). Tancibudek had been asked to play more music by Czech composers, so he wrote to Martinů asking if he would be interested in writing an oboe concerto. Martinů initially declined, but changed his mind and wrote back in 1954 saying he would in fact write the piece.

Tancibudek arranged for the Sydney Daily Telegraph newspaper to sponsor the commission to celebrate the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne, and he gave the world premiere of the piece in August 1956 with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. He also

performed the piece in Hamburg, Vienna and Vancouver. The British premiere was given by a friend of his on August 24, 1959, four days after Martinů's death.

Tancibudek said of the piece, "The sparkling rhythmical vitality with lots of syncopations, the simple but most original and kaleidoscopic harmonic textures with touches of bitonality and polytonality always resolved, and the fresh, highly personal and colorful instrumentation were the characteristic elements of Martinů's music which I always found so appealing."

THE MUSIC

The concerto begins with an adventurous, almost swashbuckling prelude by the orchestra, including a prominent part for orchestral piano. The solo oboe makes its entrance with a melody by turns sinuously chromatic and sweet. The kaleidoscopic, ever-shifting harmonic textures mentioned by Tancibudek are in evidence throughout the movement, which ends quietly.

The second movement alternates between sections for the orchestra alone and sections for the oboe, lightly accompanied. The oboe's sections are unmetered, not following a specific time signature but played freely, and its lines are sometimes meandering and sometimes virtuosic. In the final section, the orchestra and oboe come together, with a beautiful long-breathed melodic line that briefly recalls the earlier music before fading to another quiet conclusion. The oboe holds the last note several beats after the orchestra falls silent. The third

movement shifts moods rapidly, between a toccata-like figure (with fast repeated notes), a courtly dance and a sprightly dance led by the oboe. The soloist has two cadenzas in this movement, showy sections without accompaniment, separated by a short toccata section. The second cadenza is followed by a reprise of the opening material. A series of oboe trills kicks off a brief coda and leads to a spirited ending.

— *AJ Harbison*

POPS CONCERT



Ultimate John Williams

Friday, March 21 at 8 p.m.

Saturday, March 22 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, March 23 at 2 p.m.

Jack Everly, guest conductor
Kansas City Symphony Chorus,
Charles Bruffy, chorus director

The music of John Williams has transported us beyond our imagination to new worlds. Journey with us on a heart-pounding adventure through space and time as your Kansas City Symphony performs all of your John Williams favorites — from “Indiana Jones” and “Superman” to “Star Wars” and “Jaws!

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Sergei Prokofiev

(1891-1953)

Selections from *Romeo and Juliet*, op. 64bis and op. 64ter

(1936)

36 minutes

Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, tenor saxophone, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, cornet, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, glockenspiel, snare drum, xylophone, harp, celesta, piano and strings.

In 1934, Sergei Prokofiev was not a novice with respect to ballet — he had composed six ballets and he enjoyed composing for the dramatic framework. His growing fame drew attention from the Kirov Ballet (now the Mariinsky Ballet) and he entertained their inquiry about a ballet commission. Shakespeare's tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* offered ample dramatic opportunities and despite previous works based on the story by Bellini, Gounoud, Berlioz and Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev was inspired by its potential.

Aware of the political benefits of enticing the composer to return to his native country, the Soviet authorities made promises about special treatment were he to return permanently. Collaborating with the Kirov's director Sergei Radlov and dramaturg Adrian Piotrovsky, Prokofiev worked on the ballet at an artist's retreat near Moscow during the summer of 1935. The initial version had a happy ending in which the young couple lives; his rationale was that "living people can dance, the dying cannot." It also included a

Victory Day parade, a Soviet plot twist Shakespeare never conceived.

Unhappily for Prokofiev, the Kirov backed out of the deal. He then made an agreement with the Bolshoi Ballet but they also reneged, declaring the music “undanceable.” Another agreement with the Leningrad School of Choreography also fell through. To contend with these difficulties, Prokofiev excerpted two orchestral suites from the ballet as well as writing piano versions of several pieces; all were well received. (He later published a third orchestral suite in 1946.) He recorded a portion of the music with the Moscow Philharmonic in 1938, the year the ballet finally received its premiere at a provincial company in Brno, Czechoslovakia. Prokofiev did not attend the premiere, having been denied permission to leave the Soviet Union. With numerous revisions to the score, the Kirov finally presented the Soviet premiere of the ballet in January 1940 and it quickly entered the repertoire.

Prokofiev composed a great deal of music for *Romeo and Juliet*, and the

three orchestral suites excerpted from the ballet beautifully encapsulate its essence. That said, a significant number of conductors have opted to create their own dramatic arc by selecting various works from the suites. Today’s conductor, Gemma New, has done the same, opting for movements from Suites 1 and 2.

Prokofiev deftly tells Shakespeare’s tale of woe musically and, despite the Bolshoi’s protestations otherwise, provided a score well-suited for expression through movement. He carefully mapped each scene’s atmosphere, taking care to communicate plot developments as directly as possible in the absence of dialog. His orchestration is characteristic and requires substantial virtuosity from the ensemble. The performers and the audience alike are richly rewarded by the beauty of this masterful score.

— Eric T. Williams

Decades: Back to the 80s

Friday, April 25 at 8 p.m.

Luke Poeppel, David T. Beals III Assistant Conductor

Colin Smith, vocalist

Katrina Rose, vocalist

Aaron LaVigne, vocalist

Featuring the music of iconic 80s stars like Madonna, Debbie Gibson, Huey Lewis & The News, Phil Collins, Queen, Joe Cocker and others, “Back to the 80s” contains all-new arrangements by Grammy-winner Jeff Tyzik and features three incredible vocalists.

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KANSAS CITY SYMPHONY

In only its 42nd 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 welcomes conductor and composer Matthias Pintscher as its new music director. Pintscher regularly conducts many of the world's best orchestras and opera companies and ranks as one of the world's foremost composers of orchestral music.

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

orchestra for the Kansas City Ballet and the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, adding to the rich cultural experiences that these organizations offer to the community.

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

Music connects us; it has the unique ability to draw us closer to our inner selves and also closer to one another, transcending our differences. Every Kansas City Symphony concert will take you on an emotional journey — a journey that's deeply personal but also a journey that we all experience together as one.

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

Visit kcsymphony.org for more information.

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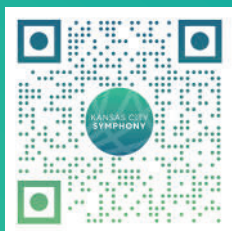
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Tchaikovsky's "Pathétique"

Friday, April 4 at 8 p.m. (Symphonic Piazza)

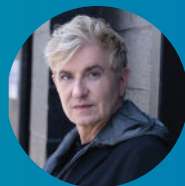
The works by Saint-Saëns and Tchaikovsky will be performed without intermission for the Symphonic Piazza concert.

Saturday, April 5 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, April 6 at 2 p.m.

Matthias Pintscher, music director and conductor

Jean-Yves Thibaudet, piano



Jean-Yves Thibaudet

JOAN MAGRANÉ FIGUERA *Fortuny-Venise*, tableau pour orchestre
(KCS commission, world premiere)

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS Concerto No. 5 in F Major for Piano and
Orchestra, "Egyptian"

PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, "Pathétique"

Mozart, Britten and Haydn

Friday, April 11 at 8 p.m.

Saturday, April 12 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, April 13 at 2 p.m.

Jane Glover, guest conductor

Ying Li, piano



Ying Li

BENJAMIN BRITTEN Suite on English Folk Tunes, "A time there was..."

W.A. MOZART Concerto No. 23 in A Major for Piano and Orchestra

BENJAMIN BRITTEN *Young Apollo* for Piano, String Quartet and String Orchestra

F.J. HAYDN Symphony No. 104 in D Major, "London"

Debussy's Nocturnes

Friday, May 9 at 8 p.m.

Saturday, May 10 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, May 11 at 2 p.m.

Matthias Pintscher, music director and conductor

Sophia Burgos, soprano

Kansas City Symphony Chorus, **Charles Bruffy**, chorus director



Sophia Burgos

GABRIEL FAURÉ *Masques et bergamasques*

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