

NORTH CAROLINA **SYMPHONY**

# THE FIREBIRD

**FRIDAY & SATURDAY, NOV 5-6, 2021 | 8PM**

Meymandi Concert Hall

Woolner Stage

**Duke Energy Center**  
for the Performing Arts

Raleigh



The North Carolina Symphony, in grateful acknowledgment of its generous grant-in-aid, performs under the auspices of the State of North Carolina, the Honorable Roy Cooper, Governor.



The North Carolina Symphony gratefully acknowledges financial support from Wake County and the City of Raleigh.



# NORTH CAROLINA SYMPHONY

## The Firebird

Raleigh Classical

Fri/Sat, Nov 5-6, 2021 | 8pm

MEYMANDI CONCERT HALL, WOOLNER STAGE

DUKE ENERGY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, RALEIGH

### North Carolina Symphony

**Joshua Gersen**, *conductor*

**Aaron Diehl**, *piano*

**Paul Sikivie**, *double bass*

**Aaron Kimmel**, *drums*

### Program

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**Samuel Barber** (1910-1981)

**Overture to *The School for Scandal***

**Mary Lou Williams** (1910-1981)

Selections from ***Zodiac Suite***

Aaron Diehl, *piano*

Paul Sikivie, *double bass*

Aaron Kimmel, *drums*

1. Aries
  2. Taurus
  3. Gemini
  5. Leo
  6. Virgo
  7. Libra
  8. Scorpio
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### Intermission

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**Maurice Ravel** (1875-1937)

**Five Pieces from *Ma mère l'Oye* (Mother Goose)**

- I. Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty
- II. Tom Thumb
- III. Laideronette, Empress of the Pagodas
- IV. Conversations of Beauty and the Beast
- V. The Enchanted Garden

**Igor Stravinsky** (1882-1971)

***The Firebird***

- I. Introduction and Dance of the Firebird
  - II. Dance of the Princesses
  - III. Infernal Dance of King Kastchei
  - IV. Lullaby
  - V. Finale
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For the complete program, text the word **program** to 919.364.6864 or scan this QR code with your phone:



## About the Artists

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### Joshua Gersen

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conductor

*Joshua Gersen most recently appeared with the North Carolina Symphony in May, 2021, conducting Beethoven's Symphony No. 1 and Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 19, which was performed by Orion Weiss. Previously he had led the orchestra both in Meymandi Concert Hall and at Summerfest in 2019, with music including Vivaldi's Four Seasons and Piazzolla's The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires, with violinist Jennifer Frautschi. His debut with the Symphony was in 2018, when he conducted John Williams' score for Star Wars, accompanied by a screening of the 1977 film.*

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A native of the New York area, Joshua Gersen recently concluded his tenure as Assistant Conductor of the New York Philharmonic. Previously he was Music Director of the New York Youth Symphony, where he led the orchestra on their first international tour in more than 50 seasons and conducted several world premieres.

Gersen served as John S. and James L. Knight Foundation conducting fellow with the New World Symphony. He made his debut with the San Francisco Symphony in 2013 and has been invited back numerous times.

Also a composer, Gersen holds degrees from the New England Conservatory of Music and the Curtis Institute of Music. His awards include a 2015 and 2016 Solti Foundation U.S. Career Assistance award.

## About the Music

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### **Overture to *The School for Scandal*** **Samuel Barber (1910-1981)**

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#### **THE STORY**

In 1933, 23-year-old Samuel Barber, a student at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, composed a short orchestral work, *Overture to The School for Scandal*, and pitched it to the conductor of the conservatory's orchestra. The conductor, Fritz Reiner, declined—but Barber was vindicated two years later when the overture was programmed by The Philadelphia Orchestra.

*The School for Scandal* (1777) is a comedy by playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan, but Barber didn't compose his overture for a particular staging. Instead, he explained that it was intended simply to reflect the spirit of the play. The brilliance of the orchestration put Barber on the map, establishing his reputation as a great American composer.

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#### **LISTEN FOR**

- The opening two pitches, a half-step apart, that sound just like a musical “sneer”—perhaps suggesting the play's villain, Lady Sneerwell; these same two notes also conclude the work
- The noble oboe solo that introduces the second theme, likely portraying the moral young heiress
- Insistent repeated chords that thrust us into the recapitulation of the first theme
- Numerous changes in tempo and dynamics (at one point, seven tempo changes within just 30 measures!)

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#### **INSTRUMENTATION**

*Piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, celesta, strings*



## **Selections from *Zodiac Suite*** **Mary Lou Williams (1910-1981)**

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### **THE STORY**

Atlanta-born Mary Lou Williams was a musical prodigy from childhood: she became a professional musician at age 15; gave lessons to musicians such as Thelonious Monk and Miles Davis; arranged music for Louis Armstrong, Benny Goodman, and Duke Ellington; and performed all over the U.S. and in Europe—yet, her story is far less known than those of her male counterparts.

Although Williams didn't become a household name, her fellow jazz greats had the utmost respect for her. And when Dizzy Gillespie invited her up on stage at a jazz festival, the music she chose to share was from her *Zodiac Suite*—a work first conceived for jazz trio and later arranged for chamber orchestra, with three movements even adapted for full orchestra.

Composed between 1944 and 1945, the suite was revealed slowly: The 12 movements debuted over the course of 12 weeks on Williams' weekly radio show. Corresponding to the 12 astrological signs, each movement is also dedicated to a musician (or musicians) born under that sign—including Duke Ellington (Taurus), Billie Holiday (Aries), Benny Goodman (Gemini), Dizzy Gillespie (Libra), and Thelonious Monk (Libra), among others. At our performances this weekend, we will hear eight movements.

Williams' musical palette is as wide-ranging as the characteristics of the zodiac signs—sometimes impressionistic and reminiscent of Debussy; sometimes using bold, impassioned chords in the piano that recall the concertos of Rachmaninoff or Tchaikovsky; and sometimes with the warmth and lyricism of Ellington.

Ellington, for his part, praised the work as being "perpetually contemporary." With its depth, complexity, and diversity, it was ahead of its time—and still feels fresh today, as pianist Aaron Diehl champions the chamber version and brings it to orchestras around the country, including the New York Philharmonic in March 2021.

This performance is the first in North Carolina, a state with special significance to Williams: She was named Artist-in-Residence at Duke University in 1977 and lived in Durham until her death in 1981.

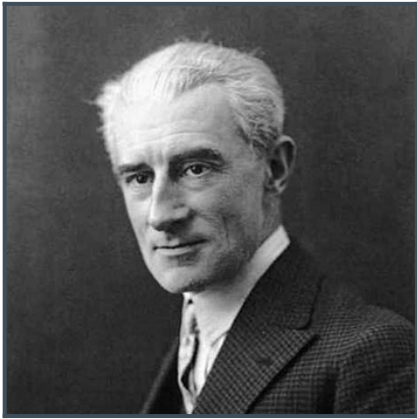
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### **LISTEN FOR**

- The up-tempo ballad of "Aries"
  - The "jungle boogie" of "Taurus," in tribute to Duke Ellington
  - Two separate musical ideas continuously working along side one another in "Gemini"—the zodiac sign known as "the twins"
  - The regal march in "Leo," the king of the zodiac
  - Echos of the Kansas City jazz tradition in "Virgo"
  - The delicate impressionism of "Libra"
  - Constantly shifting moods, from gloomy to joyful, in "Scorpio"—the zodiac's most mysterious sign
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### **INSTRUMENTATION**

*Piano trio (piano, double bass, and drums), piccolo, flute, oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone, percussion, strings*



## **Five Pieces from *Ma mère l'Oye* (Mother Goose) Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)**

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### **THE STORY**

Maurice Ravel never married and remained childless, but he adored other people's children—and in 1908 he wrote a piano duet for the six- and seven-year-old son and daughter of his close friends. He greatly enjoyed the project, saying that writing for children challenged him to “simplify my style and clarify my writing.”

The suite was inspired by fairy tales and stories from Mother Goose, including *Sleeping Beauty*, *Tom Thumb*, *The Green Serpent*, and *Beauty and the Beast*. The music is elegant and full of wonder and imagination, but a hint of sadness is also present throughout—perhaps revealing nostalgia for his own childhood. (Ravel had an idyllic upbringing and continued to collect toys as an adult).

Ravel followed a suggestion that he expand the work and create a ballet, and then extracted five selections for an orchestral suite. The orchestral version begins and ends with *Sleeping Beauty*—opening with the princess pricking her finger and falling into a deep sleep, and concluding when she is awakened by her prince. The tales of the middle three movements seem to work themselves in by way of *Sleeping Beauty*'s dreams.

Ravel was a master orchestrator and his work here is exquisite. An especially charming touch is the theme that reappears before each movement—as if a narrator is saying, “What story would you like to hear next?”

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### **LISTEN FOR**

- The pastel hues of “Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty,” opening with a poignant melody on the flute
  - A constantly shifting meter signaling unease as *Tom Thumb* meanders through the forest, birds chirping happily as they eat the crumbs he had scattered to help find his way out
  - The pentatonic melodies Ravel used to represent *Laideronette*, a cursed Chinese princess whose only companion is a serpent
  - In “Beauty and the Beast,” the clarinet’s portrayal of Belle and the contrabassoon’s portrayal of the Beast; the Beast’s transformation back to his princely form is cued by the harp and breathy violin harmonics, and he is then portrayed by the cellos
  - The sound of wedding bells after the prince awakens *Sleeping Beauty* with a kiss in “The Enchanted Garden, concluding with a sweeping, triumphant melody in the strings
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### **INSTRUMENTATION**

*Piccolo, two flutes, two oboes (second doubling English horn), two clarinets, two bassoons, contrabassoon, two horns, timpani, percussion, harp, celesta, strings*



***The Firebird*** (1919 revision)  
**Igor Stravinsky** (1882-1971)

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## THE STORY

Early 20th-century Paris was obsessed with all things Russian—and for the 1910 Ballet Russes season in Paris, the impresario Sergei Diaghilev planned to give his audience a quintessentially Russian ballet. As with Ravel's *Mother Goose*, inspiration came from fairy tales.

The scenario was concocted from a mixture of several traditional Russian stories, pulling in well-known characters: An evil magician has been keeping 13 princesses captive, but with the help of the majestic Firebird, Prince Ivan kills the magician and breaks the spell.

27-year-old Stravinsky was offered the commission for the music only after other prominent Russian composers had declined. In addition to his relative inexperience, he was also up against the challenge of working with a choreographer who had very strong opinions about the music—and who insisted that the score be composed to fit the dancing, rather than vice versa.

Although the role of the Firebird had to be recast at the last minute (the principal ballerina proclaimed that she detested the music and would not dance), the premiere was a great success in Paris and was Stravinsky's big break to international fame. Debussy, however, reportedly commented dismissively, "What do you expect? One has to start somewhere."

The dazzling and evocative score for *The Firebird* was, indeed, a start—it was the start of a partnership with Diaghilev that would produce four more ballets, including *The Rite of Spring* just three years later.

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## LISTEN FOR

- In "Introduction and Dance of the Firebird," the solo horn representing Prince Ivan as he chases the Firebird; the horn continues to portray the Prince throughout the work
- In "Dance of the Princesses," a trumpet that interrupts a kiss between Prince Ivan and the most beautiful princess (with whom he has fallen in love), signaling that the princesses must return to the castle where they are kept captive
- Syncopated, wild rhythms and sudden, jarring chords in "Infernal Dance of King Kastchei," as the magician and his minions dance themselves to exhaustion under the Firebird's spell
- The hauntingly beautiful bassoon melody in "Lullaby"
- The glorious triumph of the finale, and the final chromatic chords that outline the Firebird's theme

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## INSTRUMENTATION

*Piccolo, two flutes, two oboes (one doubles English horn), two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, piano, celesta, strings*

## About Our Musicians

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### Violin I

**Brian Reagin**

Concertmaster

*The Annabelle Lundy Fetterman Chair*

**Dovid Friedlander\*\***

Associate Concertmaster

*The Assad Meymandi and Family Chair*

**Karen Strittmatter Galvin\***

Associate Concertmaster

**Emily Rist Glover\***

Assistant Concertmaster

*The Anne Heartt Gregory Chair*

**Erin Zehngut\***

Assistant Concertmaster

**Carol Chung\***

*The James C. Byrd and Family Chair*

**Paul Goldsberry**

*The Richard and Joy Cook Chair*

**So Yun Kim**

*The Governor James B. Hunt, Jr. Chair*

**Marilyn Kouba**

*The Phyllis ("Pat") Conrad Wells Chair*

**Maria Meyer\*\***

*The Tom and Mary Mac Bradshaw Chair*

**Lin-Ti Wang\***

*The Jessie Wyatt Ethridge Chair*

**Eileen Wynne**

*The Harvey At-Large Chair*

**To Be Filled**

*The J. Felix Arnold Chair*

### Violin II

**Jacqueline Saed Wolborsky**

Principal

*The Nancy Finch Wallace Chair*

**David Kilbride\***

Associate Principal

*The Blanche Martin Shaw Chair*

**Anton Shelepov\***

Assistant Principal

**Qi Cao**

**Janet Gayer Hall**

**Oskar Ozolinch**

**Jeanine Wynton**

### Viola

**Samuel Gold**

Principal

*The Florence Spinks and Charles Jacob Cate and Alma*

*Yondorf and Sylvan Hirschberg Chair*

**Kurt Tseng**

Associate Principal

*The Betty Ellen Madry Chair*

**To Be Filled**

*Assistant Principal*

**Petra Berényi**

**Paul Malcolm**

**Amy Mason**

*The J. Sidney Kirk Chair*

**Sandra Schwarcz**

*The Samuel H. and Anne Latham Johnson Viola Chair*

The North Carolina Symphony Foundation gratefully acknowledges the generous gift of the Lupot violin from Arnold and Zenat Lerman.

†deceased



## **Cello**

### **Bonnie Thron**

Principal

*The June and Tom Roberg Chair*

### **Elizabeth Beilman**

Associate Principal

*The Sarah Carlyle Herbert Dorroh Chair*

### **Peng Li**

Assistant Principal

*Anonymously Endowed*

### **Yewon Ahn**

*Anonymously Endowed*

### **Sunrise Kim**

*The William Charles Rankin Chair*

### **David Meyer**

*The Nell Hirschberg Chair*

### **Lisa Howard Shaughnessy**

*The Sara Wilson Hodgkins Chair*

### **Nathaniel Yaffe**

*The Secretary of Cultural Resources Betty Ray McCain Chair*

## **Double Bass**

### **Leonid Finkelshteyn**

Principal

*The Martha and Peyton Woodson Chair*

### **Robert K. Anderson**

Associate Principal

*The Dr. and Mrs. Preston H. Gada Chair*

### **Craig Brown**

*The Mark W. McClure Foundation Chair*

### **Erik Dyke**

*The Harlee H. and Pauline G. Jobe Chair*

### **Bruce Ridge**

*The John C. and Margaret P. Parker Chair*

## **Flute**

### **Anne Whaley Laney**

Principal

*The Mr. and Mrs. George M. Stephens Chair*

### **Mary E. Boone**

Assistant Principal

*The Dr. and Mrs. Shaler Stidham, Jr. Chair*

### **Elizabeth Anderton Lunsford**

*The Jack and Sing Boddie Chair*

## **Piccolo**

### **Elizabeth Anderton Lunsford**

*The Jean Dunn Williams Chair*

## **Oboe**

### **Melanie Wilsden**

Principal

*The Hardison and Stoltze Chair*

### **Joseph Peters**

Associate Principal

*The Lizette T. Dunham Chair*

### **Sandra Posch**

*The Clarence and Alice Aycock Poe Chair*

## **English Horn**

### **Joseph Peters**

*The Bruce and Margaret King Chair*

## **Clarinet**

### **Samuel Almaguer**

Principal

*The Mr. and Mrs. J. Christopher Walker, II Chair*

### **Matthew Griffith\***

Assistant Principal

*The Kathryn Powell and Green Flavie Cooper Chair*

## **Bassoon**

### **Aaron Apaza**

Principal

*The Mr. and Mrs. Fitzgerald S. Hudson Chair*

### **Wenmin Zhang**

Assistant Principal

*The Beethoven Chair*

## **French Horn**

### **Rebekah Daley**

Principal

*The Mary T. McCurdy Chair*

### **Kimberly Van Pelt**

Associate Principal

*The Paul R. Villard and Gabriel Wolf Chair*

### **Corbin Castro\***

*The Roger Colson and Bobbi Lyon Hackett Chair*

### **Christopher Caudill\*\***

### **Rachel Niketopoulos\*\***

### **Tanner West\***

*The James Marion Poyner Chair*

### **To Be Filled**

*The Mary Susan Kirk Fulghum Chair*

## **Trumpet**

### **Paul Randall**

Principal

*The George Smedes Poyner Chair*

### **David Dash\***

Associate Principal

*The Henry and Martha Zaytoun and Family Chair*

## **Trombone**

### **John Ilika**

Principal

*The Thomas Warwick Steed, Jr. Family Chair*

### **Jonathan Randazzo**

Assistant Principal

*The Frances Armour Bryant Chair*

## **Bass Trombone**

### **Matthew Neff**

*Anonymously Endowed*

## **Tuba**

### **Seth Horner**

Principal

*The Governor and Mrs. James G. Martin, Jr. Chair*

## **Harp**

### **Anita Burroughs-Price**

### **Vonda Darr**

## **Timpani**

### **Colin Hartnett**

Principal

*The Patricia R., Steven T. and George F. Hackney III Chair*

## **Percussion**

### **Richard Motylinski**

Principal

*The Margery and Earl Johnson, Jr. Chair*

### **Rajesh Prasad**

Assistant Principal

*The Abram and Frances Pascher Kanof Chair*

## **Library**

### **Stephanie Wilson**

Principal Orchestra Librarian

*The Mary Colvert and Banks C. Talley Chair*

*\*Acting position*

*\*\*Leave of absence*

Named musician chairs are made possible through very meaningful gifts to the Symphony's endowment. As such, these donor families are also members of the Lamar Stringfield Society.

All string players rotate stands on a periodic basis in each section with the exception of titled players: Principals, Associate Principals, and Assistant Principals.

The North Carolina Symphony is a member of the League of American Orchestras and the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians.

The North Carolina Master Chorale is the Resident Chorus of the North Carolina Symphony.

***Thank you*** to the generous individuals, businesses, foundations, and community partners who support the North Carolina Symphony through contributions each season. The Symphony's performances and extensive music education and community service programs are made possible by your support.