

Metropolitan Youth Symphony Redefines Classical Concerts with its 2023-24 Season

PORTLAND, ORE., SEPTEMBER 8, 2023 – Today, Metropolitan Youth Symphony announces its 2023-24 Symphony Orchestra Downtown Series, with notable works from composers such as Mussorgsky, Beethoven, Copland, and Paul Dukas. Season highlights include a commission from Nancy Ives, a look at the intersection of music and animation with soundtracks from animated classics such as *Sleeping Beauty*, and a premiere of orchestral arrangements of original music by Jimmie Herrod, with Herrod himself performing as a guest artist. In addition, MYS continues to premiere student works from its unique commissioning series, The Authentic Voice.

MYS music director and conductor Raúl Gómez-Rojas, known for his forward-thinking approach to programming, speaks on the driving force behind this season's repertoire: "At MYS, we believe in leading the charge to perform works of distinction that redefine what belongs in a traditional "classical" concert, while also keeping classical pieces relevant and accessible. Whether it is a piece by a local young composer, animated film soundtracks, music by singer-songwriters, or musical theatre showstoppers; excellent music by diverse composers belongs side-by-side with Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, and Ravel."

The season will span four Symphony Orchestra performances on November 12, January 9, March 3, and June 16. In July 2024, MYS students will take a curated selection of the season's repertoire, built around the theme "Landscapes and their Stories," to a variety of festivals across Spain and Portugal as part of MYS' 2024 International Tour. These selections include a large percentage of music by Oregon composers.

The program lineup for the season is as follows:

Music in Motion

November 12, 2023, 7:30pm at Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall.

In November, Metropolitan Youth Symphony's Symphony Orchestra will kick off its 2023-2024 Downtown Concert Series with "Music in Motion." This dynamic concert will explore the intersection of music and animation, presenting music that has inspired animation and vice versa, through the works of Modest Mussorgsky, Paul Dukas, Joe Hisaishi, Alan Menken, and local young composers.

The concert will open with Russian composer Modest Mussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain*. This challenging piece was inspired by the nocturnal revels of Russian lore that took place on Lysa Hora, one of the mystical "bald mountains" of Ukraine. While Mussorgsky composed various versions of this piece, it was not until his friend Rimsky-Korsakov arranged the piece for orchestra that it became the *Night on Bald Mountain* well-known today. It gained even more widespread recognition when featured in Disney's iconic animation *Fantasia*.

Symphony Orchestra will also embark on French romantic era composer Paul Dukas' *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, which was featured alongside *Night on Bald Mountain* in *Fantasia*. As part of the 19th century confluence of music and literature, this composition gained inspiration from a ballad written by German author and poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. A highly self-critical musician, Dukas destroyed much of his work prior to his death, but this magical orchestral scherzo lives on in high esteem.

Further delving into the ways in which music and animation inspire each other, The Authentic Voice commissioning series will feature the world premiere of *Music for an Imaginary Cartoon*. This original piece will be composed collaboratively by local student composers Elishiya Crain-Keddi, Manu Isaacs, Max Evans-McGlothen, A'Sharia Pendergrass, and Malia Baker, all from Fear No Music's Young Composers Project. Their piece will in turn inspire a short animation that will be released later in the season.

Building on the concert's theme, Symphony Orchestra will present Joe Hisaishi's enchanting *My Neighbor Totoro*, as well as three pieces from Alan Menken's illustrious body of work: *The Little Mermaid Orchestral Suite*, *Beauty and The Beast Orchestral Suite*, and *Poor Unfortunate Souls*. MYS is excited to welcome Zach Galatis in the performance of *Poor Unfortunate Souls* as the voice of Ursula. In addition to serving as solo piccolo of the Oregon Symphony since 2012, Galatis frequently works with Third Angle New Music and 45th Parallel and is locally known for his vocal performances of Broadway repertoire.

MYS' Interlude Orchestra will also perform in this concert.

Just Jimmie

January 9, 2024, 7:30pm at Newmark Theater.

Symphony Orchestra's January concert welcomes guest artist Jimmie Herrod. This concert will premiere orchestral arrangements of original songs by Mr. Herrod, including *Are You Lonely*, *Beautiful*, *I Love You*, *I Want To Run*, *Mouche*, and *Willow Bed*. While these pieces were originally written for piano and voice, student composers from The Authentic Voice student commissioning series will work with Jimmie Herrod to create orchestral arrangements. MYS Symphony Orchestra and Music Director Raúl Gómez-Rojas will accompany Jimmie as he sings his songs, now expanded to a full orchestral palette.

Rounding out the repertoire, Symphony Orchestra will perform *En la Alhambra* by Spanish composer Tomás Bretón, *Alentejana: Suite no.2* by Portuguese composer Luís de Freitas Branco, and *she flies with her own wings* by acclaimed Oregon composer and MYS artistic team member Kenji Bunch. Symphony Orchestra will perform these three pieces on their tour to Spain and Portugal in July 2024 as well.

Rooted: nature and human connection

March 3, 2024, 7:30pm at Newmark Theater.

For its Winter Downtown Concert, MYS is proud to present a piece commissioned from Nancy Ives, composer and principal cello for the Oregon Symphony. This piece draws inspiration from Pando, the world's largest tree. In a high mountain basin in central Utah, Pando is comprised of 40,000 aspen stems that appear as individual trees, but all belong to a genetically identical tree connected by a massive interwoven root system across 106 acres.

"The idea of something that looks like many but is truly one organism is a powerful metaphor for an orchestra," says Dr. Gómez-Rojas.

Symphony Orchestra will premiere Ives' Pando in Spain and Portugal as part of its July 2024 International Tour.

Additionally, the show will feature Ludwig van Beethoven's *Symphony No. 6 in F major, Op. 68* (also known as the *Pastoral Symphony*), the world premiere of a piece by student composer Charlie Martin as part of The Authentic Voice student commissioning series, and showcase one of the winners of MYS' annual Concerto Competition. MYS' Concert Orchestra will also perform in this concert.

Landscapes: our lands and stories

June 16, 2024, 7:30pm at Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall.

Rounding out the year, Symphony Orchestra will perform *Portland Beauty*, by award-winning composer and MYS conductor Giancarlo Castro D'Addona. The piece was inspired by Giancarlo's first hike to Mirror Lake, a trek marked by sunshine, rain, and snow. *Portland Beauty* was originally commissioned by Portland State University professor, Dr. Óscar Fernández and funded by grantor Bringing Theory to Practice to further "Race and Social Justice Dialogues focusing on immigration, art, and activism." MYS' Symphony Orchestra performed the World Premiere of *Portland Beauty* in 2021.

Alongside *Portland Beauty*, Symphony Orchestra will perform *Smoulder* by Andrea Reinkemeyer, which evokes the devastation of forest fires and other ominous signs of climate change. MYS commissioned Reinkemeyer to transcribe her piece from wind ensemble to orchestra in 2022. *Smoulder* employs unique instrumentation including crinkled paper meant to sound like kindling and brush smoldering in the forest. The tacit, haunting percussion throughout the largo piece is bold, heavy, and virtuosic.

Symphony Orchestra will also present Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring: Suite*. Originating as a ballet, Copland collaborated with choreographer Martha Graham to premiere this piece at the Library of Congress in 1944. Shortly after, conductor Artur Rodziński commissioned Copland to create an orchestral suite from the original ballet score. *Appalachian Spring* tells the story of a young pioneer couple in the early 19th century beginning a life together in Pennsylvania hill country. Divided into eight sections with the Shaker tune *Simple Gifts* woven throughout, this piece is known for representing the quintessential "American sound."

Next, Symphony Orchestra will play *Intermezzo* from *La Boda De Luis Alonso* by Spanish composer Gerónimo Giménez. Throughout his career, Giménez wrote many Zarzuelas, which are Spanish operas that incorporate spoken and sung scenes. *La Boda De Luis Alonso* is one of the most acclaimed Zarzuelas in his body of work.

Concluding the repertoire, Symphony Orchestra will play the world premiere of a piece by student composer Amir Avsker, inspired by the evergreens of the Pacific Northwest, as part of The Authentic Voice commissioning series. Additionally, one of the winners of the MYS Concerto Competition will perform their winning piece. MYS' Sinfonietta Orchestra will also perform in this concert.

Symphony Orchestra will perform the entire "Landscapes: our lands and stories" lineup in Spain and Portugal as part of its July 2024 International Tour.

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Tickets will be available for purchase at www.playmys.org in early September.

About Music Director Raúl Gómez-Rojas

Member of the 2018 class of the prestigious Bruno Walter National Conductor Preview (League of American Orchestras), Raúl Gómez-Rojas inspires audiences and artists of all ages and backgrounds to use music as a vehicle to connect, pursue excellence, and spread joy. Lauded as a “visionary conductor” (Oregon ArtsWatch), Raúl has built a reputation as an insightful leader that “captivates both performing musicians and audiences alike,” and whose “positive attitude and enthusiasm make him a joy to be with” (C. Mumm, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, NY).

In high demand as a guest conductor, Raúl is equally at home on stage and in the pit, leading professional orchestras in the USA and Latin America, new music ensembles, youth, and community groups, and collaborating with a vast array of guest artists across many genres and disciplines. Highlights include performances with the Oregon Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, Oregon Ballet Theatre, 45th Parallel Universe, Fear No Music, Third Angle New Music, Tilikum Chamber Orchestra, Beaverton Symphony, the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, the Oregon International Ballet Academy, jazz violinist Regina Carter, Steward Copeland, Boyz 2 Men, Lyle Lovett, The Tenors, Kermit Ruffins, Rick Springfield and more. Raúl is on his eighth season as Music Director of the Metropolitan Youth Symphony.

About Metropolitan Youth Symphony

With a foundational commitment to make music education accessible to all, the Metropolitan Youth Symphony educates, develops, and promotes young musicians of all ages and levels of experience each year, with an enrollment of over 500 ensemble students in a typical season. MYS is one of the nation’s largest youth orchestra programs, with students from 130 schools participating in fourteen ensembles including orchestral, band, flute, percussion, and jazz. Together with theory classes, instrumental coaching in small groups, and opportunities to collaborate with performers across artistic disciplines, MYS ensemble programs develop the whole musician.

MYS also provides free beginning string lessons for 70 students, as well as tuition assistance, loaner instruments, and in-school concerts at Title 1 schools. MYS ensembles emphasize development of music and leadership skills, reflect a broad diversity of cultures and life experiences, and foster a tight-knit community through collaboration and peer support.

About The Authentic Voice

In partnership with Fear No Music’s *Young Composers Project*, MYS continues its sixth year of **The Authentic Voice** commissioning series. This first-of-its-kind partnership gives young composers the opportunity to write fully orchestrated pieces that are performed at each Symphony Orchestra concert, while MYS musicians gain the opportunity to play never-performed music written by their peers. Each student composer hears their piece played by MYS students at multiple rehearsals, allowing opportunities for questions, feedback, revisions, and collaboration. While student compositions were initially only performed by Symphony Orchestra, this program has expanded to include MYS Concert Orchestra, Portland Camerata and MYSfits string ensembles, and MYSticks percussion ensemble.