



Stravinsky's Firebird

February 20-21, 2026 | 7:30 p.m.

Holland Performing Arts Center

Christopher Allen, conductor | Francisco Fullana, violin

JOHANN STRAUSS II

Overture to *Die Fledermaus*

SAMUEL BARBER

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, Op.14

I. Allegro

II. Andante

III. Presto in moto perpetuo

Francisco Fullana, Violin

INTERMISSION

JESSIE MONTGOMERY

Starburst

IGOR STRAVINSKY

The Firebird Suite (1919)

1. Introduction

2. The Firebird; Firebird Dance and Variations

3. Princesses Round Dance

4. The Infernal Dance of King Kastcheï

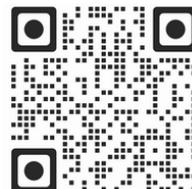
5. Berceuse

6. Final

This printed program is a condensed version.

For more info about the orchestra, guest artists, and the full program notes, download the Omaha Symphony app or scan this QR code with your mobile device. *Para leer la información en español, utilice nuestro programa digital.*

*program subject to change



Featured Artists



Recipient of The Sir Georg Solti Conducting Award, **Christopher Allen** is featured in Opera News as “one of the fastest-rising podium stars in North America.” He has led acclaimed operatic and symphonic performances with the Atlanta Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, National Symphony, Kansas City Symphony, Oregon Symphony, Virginia Symphony, North Carolina Symphony, Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo, George Enescu Philharmonic, West Los Angeles Symphony, Cincinnati Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Opera Philadelphia, Opera Omaha, Opéra de Montréal, English National Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Washington National Opera, Detroit Opera, North Carolina Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Atlanta Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Daegu Opera House in South Korea, Korean Symphony Orchestra, and China National Opera Orchestra and Chorus.

Allen’s career was launched by the Bruno Walter Conducting Award and Memorial Career Grant and has been fostered by Plácido Domingo and James Conlon, who brought him to Los Angeles Opera as Associate Conductor. At LA Opera, Allen led the musical preparation for the acclaimed *The Ghosts of Versailles*, which won a Grammy Award for Best Opera. Recognized as a Musical America Artist of the Month and one of their “25 Stars Still Rising,” Allen is also an International Opera Awards nominee, and recent recipient of the Young Alumni Award from the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.

Allen demonstrates his commitment to education through his work with young artists at Los Angeles Opera, Ryan Opera Center at Lyric Opera of Chicago, Aspen Music Festival and School, New England Conservatory, Mannes School of Music, A.J. Fletcher Institute at University of North Carolina School of the Arts, and University of Missouri- Kansas City. He has been heard on NPR speaking about the importance of the arts in American society. As an award-winning pianist, he has performed at Carnegie Hall, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, on film in *La voix humaine*, starring Patricia Racette and directed by James Darrah, and in *Emily*, a production he created for Opéra de Montréal and performed at *Wolf Trap*.

Allen’s artistic pursuits extend beyond his role as conductor. He is the Creative and Artistic Director of Fourth Wall Ensemble, an innovative new vocal ensemble, which he founded in 2023 and whose recent and upcoming highlights include performances at Carnegie Hall and Merkin Hall at The Kaufman Music Center, a collaboration with *Death of Classical* featuring works by Monteverdi and Caroline Shaw’s *Partita for 8 Voices*, a series at Power Station at Berklee NYC, and a residency at Avaloch Farm Music Institute. In 2024, Fourth Wall released two albums: *Ad Manus*, and *Awake*, and was featured in Jeff Beal’s *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*.

Allen is a Recording Academy voting member, and serves on the Board of The Solti Foundation US.



A native of Mallorca in the Balearic Islands of Spain, violinist **Francisco Fullana** has been hailed as “frighteningly awesome.” (*Buffalo News*). His solo album *Bach’s Long Shadow* was named BBC Music Magazine’s Instrumental Choice of the Month.

Fullana has built an international reputation as a soloist, leader, and educational innovator. His versatility has brought him to perform with such disparate ensembles as the City of Birmingham, SWR Deutsche Philharmonie, Pacific and Buffalo Symphony Orchestras, the chamber orchestras of Saint Paul and Philadelphia, the baroque ensemble Apollo’s Fire, and the new music driven Metropolis Ensemble. Francisco has worked under the batons of Hans Graf, José Luis Gómez, Alondra de la Parra, and Joshua Weilerstein,

among many others.

Fullana fully embraces the Baroque language of performance and works as Artist-in-Residence with Apollo’s Fire. He fulfills the same position with the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, beginning with the 2024/25 Season, and works as the Artistic Advisor and Curator of The Orchestra of San Antonio. He has also assumed the position of Artistic Director of San Antonio’s 210 Festival.

Fullana’s other great passion is youth education. His work with the Fortissimo Youth Initiative was on full display in 2022 at Carnegie Hall’s Stern Perelman Hall, where he performed Lalo’s *Symphonie Espagnole* with the GRAMMY®-award winning New York Youth Symphony. He recently completed his latest Fortissimo residency with the JONDE Spanish National Symphony under the Spanish conductor Pablo González.

A graduate of the Royal Conservatory of Madrid, the Juilliard School, and the USC Thornton School of Music, Fullana has been honored to study with Manuel Guillén, Donald Weilerstein, Masao Kawasaki, and the renowned violinist Midori. He performs on the 1735 “Mary Portman” ex-Kreisler Guarneri del Gesù violin, on loan from Clement and Karen Arrison through the Stradivari Society of Chicago.

Overture to *Die Fledermaus*

Johann Strauss II

Born: October 25, 1825 – Vienna, Austria

Died: June 3, 1899 – Vienna, Austria

Piece Length: Approximately 9 minutes.

Known today as “The Waltz King” for the incredible number and high quality of waltzes he composed in his lifetime, Johann Strauss Jr. also composed hundreds of polkas, marches, and a number of ballets and operettas. *Die Fledermaus (The Bat)* is Strauss’ best-known operetta, and had its successful premiere in 1874. It’s been regularly performed ever since, beloved for its wild and humorous story that contains practical jokes, mixed up identities, a test of love, and an inevitable happy ending. The overture sets up the amusing tale perfectly with its joyous, rambunctious character.

Any overture by the “Waltz King” cannot be written without at least one waltz, and Strauss does not disappoint. While waltzes proliferate the overture, the most striking version is the slower, mournful waltz that features hints of music by Johannes Brahms. The two composers had such a mutual respect for one another that when Strauss’ wife asked Brahms for an autograph for her husband, he inscribed a few measures of Strauss’ *Blue Danube Waltz* and wrote beneath it “Unfortunately, NOT by Johannes Brahms.”

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 14

Samuel Barber

Born: March 9, 1910 – West Chester, PA

Died: January 23, 1981 – New York, NY

Piece Length: Approximately 25 minutes.

Samuel Barber’s only violin concerto was commissioned in May 1939 by the Philadelphia businessman and philanthropist Samuel S. Fels for the young violinist Iso Briselli. Briselli, a fellow classmate of Barber’s at the Curtis Institute of Music, was meant to perform the premiere with the Philadelphia Orchestra in January 1940. By October of 1939, the first two movements were completed, and both Fels and Briselli were pleased with the work. When he received the third and final movement a month later, however, the apple cart overturned. Briselli suggested that the movement be rewritten. The popular myth is that the request stemmed from the difficulty; Briselli thought it was nearly impossible to play. Recent research by Marc Mostovoy, however, reveals that Briselli thought the final movement was perfectly playable but, with a length of less than four minutes, not substantial enough in comparison with the larger previous movements. Barber declined the request to rewrite the movement, and the project was abandoned amicably on both sides. The eventual premiere was made by Albert Spalding with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy on February 7, 1941.

Despite its delay, the concerto has earned its place as one of the greatest ever written, a masterpiece of lyricism, melody, and brilliant solo execution that both inspires universal emotion, and sounds uniquely American.

Starburst

Jessie Montgomery

Born: December 8, 1981 – New York, NY

Piece Length: Approximately 3 minutes.

Program Notes by the composer:

This brief one-movement work for string orchestra is a play on imagery of rapidly changing musical colors. Exploding gestures are juxtaposed with gentle fleeting melodies in an attempt to create a multidimensional soundscape. A common definition of a starburst: “the rapid formation of large numbers of new stars in a galaxy at a rate high enough to alter the structure of the galaxy significantly,” lends itself almost literally to the nature of the performing ensemble who premieres the work, the Sphinx Virtuosi, and I wrote the piece with their dynamic in mind.

The Firebird Suite (1919 version)

Igor Stravinsky

Born: June 17, 1882 – Oranienbaum, Russia

Died: April 6, 1971 – New York, NY

Piece Length: Approximately 22 minutes.

Founded in 1909, Sergei Diaghilev’s Ballet Russes would have a profound influence on the artistic scene in Paris for the next 20 years. The productions often caused huge sensations as a result of the ground-breaking artists Diaghilev would bring together to create new works. Visual artists such as Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Vasily Kandinsky; costume designers such as Léon Bakst and Coco Chanel; and composers like Claude Debussy, Sergei Prokofiev, and Maurice Ravel would all collaborate on new projects. Perhaps the most profound impact would be the collaboration between the Ballet Russes and the young Russian composer Igor Stravinsky. Over the span of four years, Stravinsky would compose three ballet scores that would be among the most influential in classical music history: *The Firebird*, *Petroushka*, and *Le Sacre du Printemps (The Rite of Spring)*.

At the time of the ballet’s commission, Stravinsky was relatively unknown. A student of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, his early works showcased vivid orchestration and influence from the Russian nationalist composers known as The Five (including Rimsky-Korsakov, Modest Mussorgsky, and Alexander Borodin). In 1909, Diaghilev heard some of Stravinsky’s works during a concert in St. Petersburg and was intrigued. Shortly after the concert, Diaghilev commissioned Stravinsky to orchestrate music by Chopin for the ballet *Les Sylphides*. Later that year, Stravinsky received the commission to compose original music for *The Firebird*. The ballet, with a scenario based on Russian fairy tales by Alexander Benois and choreography by Michel Fokine, was premiered at the Palais Garnier on June 25, 1910. The work was an extraordinary success, making Stravinsky world famous almost overnight.

Many critics at the time praised the nationalistic flavor of the music with some reviewers calling Stravinsky the heir to The Five. One reviewer from the premiere stated that “[Stravinsky is] the only one who has achieved more than mere attempts to promote Russia’s true musical spirit and style.” The composer Nikolai Myaskovsky wrote, “What a wealth of invention, how much intelligence, temperament, talent... what a rare piece of work this is.” Sergei Rachmaninoff apparently exclaimed, “Great God! What a work of genius this is! This is true Russia!” Over one hundred and fifteen years later, *The Firebird* continues to blind us all with its brilliance.