



Falletta Conducts Tchaikovsky's Fifth

September 26-27, 2025 | 7:30 p.m.

Holland Center

JoAnn Falletta, conductor | George Li, piano

JOHN STAFFORD SMITH

The Star-Spangled Banner

JOHN ADAMS

Short Ride in a Fast Machine

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

Concerto No. 3 in D Minor for Piano & Orchestra,
Op. 30

I. Allegro ma non tanto

II. Intermezzo

III. Finale

George Li, piano

INTERMISSION

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Symphony No. 5 in E Minor, Op. 64, TH 29

I. Andante – Allegro con anima

II. Andante cantabile con alcuna licenza

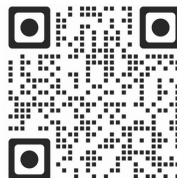
III. Valse: Allegro moderato

IV. Andante maestoso – Allegro vivace

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.

*program subject to change



Featured Artists



Multiple Grammy Award-winning conductor **JoAnn Falletta** serves as Music Director of the Buffalo Philharmonic, Music Director Laureate of the Virginia Symphony, Principal Guest Conductor of the Brevard Music Center, and Conductor Laureate of the Hawaii Symphony. She was named one of the 50 great conductors of all time by Gramophone Magazine and ASCAP has honored her as “a leading force for music of our time.” As Music Director of the Buffalo Philharmonic, Falletta became the first woman to lead a major American orchestra. She has guest-conducted over a hundred orchestras in North America, and many of the most prominent orchestras in Europe, Asia, and South America. She is a leading recording artist for Naxos, and has won two individual Grammy Awards, for Richard Danielpour’s “The Passion of Yeshua” with the BPO and Spiritualist by Kenneth Fuchs with the London Symphony. Her Naxos recording of John Corigliano’s Mr. Tambourine Man with the BPO received two Grammys. Her Scriabin recording with the BPO is nominated for a 2024 Grammy for Best Orchestral Performance.

Falletta is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and has served by Presidential appointment as a Member of the National Council on the Arts. She has conducted over 1,600 orchestral works by more than 600 composers, including over 135 works by women composers, and over 150 premieres. After earning her bachelor’s degree at Mannes, Falletta received master’s and doctoral degrees from The Juilliard School.



Praised by the Washington Post for combining “staggering technical prowess, a sense of command and depth of expression,” pianist **George Li** possesses an effortless grace, poised authority, and brilliant virtuosity far beyond his years. Since winning the Silver Medal at the 2015 International Tchaikovsky Competition, Li has rapidly established a major international reputation and performs regularly with some of the world’s leading orchestras and conductors, such as Dudamel, Gaffigan, Gergiev, Gimeno, Honeck, Orozco-Estrada, Petrenko, Robertson, Pintscher, Slatkin, Temirkanov, Tilson Thomas, Long Yu, and Xian Zhang.

Recent concerto highlights include performances with the Los Angeles, New York, London, Rotterdam, Oslo and St. Petersburg Philharmonics; the San Francisco, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Minnesota, Cincinnati, Dallas, Tokyo, Frankfurt Radio, Sydney, Nashville, New Jersey, New World, North Carolina, Pacific, Valencia and Montreal Symphonies; as well as DSO Berlin, Orchestra National de Lyon, Orchestre Philharmonique Royal de Liège in Belgium and Nordic Chamber Orchestra in Sweden to play-lead Mozart’s 23rd Piano Concerto and Beethoven’s 5th Piano Concerto. His eight-concert tour of Germany with the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra included performances at the Berlin Philharmonie, Philharmonie am Gasteig Munich, and the Stuttgart Liederhalle. Collaboration with the Mariinsky Orchestra included performances at the Paris Philharmonie, Luxembourg Philharmonie, New York’s Brooklyn Academy of Music, Graffenegg Festival, and in various venues throughout Russia.

Short Ride in a Fast Machine

John Adams

Born: February 15, 1947 - Worcester, Massachusetts

Piece Length: Approximately 4 minutes.

When asked to describe the inspiration for his energetic concert overture *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*, John Adams replied, “You know how it is when someone asks you to ride in a terrific sports car, and then you wish you hadn’t?” He later elaborated, “The image that I had while composing this piece was a ride that I once took in a sports car. A relative of mine had bought a Ferrari, and he asked me late one night to take a ride in it and we went out onto the highway... it was an absolutely terrifying experience to be in a car driven by somebody who wasn’t really a skilled driver.”

The result is a perfect capture of Adams’ building adrenaline – and regret – via an orchestral tour-de-force. The music is relentless, drives forward, and packs an extraordinary punch despite the short duration, in addition to showcasing the minimalist traits common in Adams’ earlier works: short, repeated musical ideas, and a steady beat. What separates Adams from other early minimalist composers like Philip Glass and Steve Reich is his adoption of polymeter: multiple sounding meters played at the same time, redolent of music by Stravinsky. This creates a sense of instability, excitement, and tension, resolving at the end of the work with a long, lyrical melody played by the trumpets – Adams’ nod to more Romantic-era approaches - and concluding with a thrilling cadence. We’ll leave it to you to decide whether or not to stay in the car!

Piano Concerto No. 3 in D Minor, Op. 30

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Born: April 1, 1873 – Semyonovo, Russia

Died: March 28, 1943 – Beverly Hills, California

Piece Length: Approximately 40 minutes.

For Sergei Rachmaninoff, the piano functioned as a muse, an anchor, and at some points, a leash. He could turn to it for stability in times of pain and hardship, compose and improvise through it to express extraordinary emotion, and would be occasionally stymied by it. Teachers wanted him to focus on performance rather than composition. Critics panned his early works; he would teach lessons to feed himself. Tours and recitals became work rather than joy. Rachmaninoff’s family – especially his aunt – soon realized that music, like an anchor in too-deep waters, could also pull Rachmaninoff under. Having tied his self-worth to his instrument from his earliest days, perceived failure often sent him into tailspins of depression and inactivity. Therapy, travel, and the success of his Symphony No. 2 ultimately bolstered Rachmaninoff enough to consider touring in America as a composer, performer, and conductor... and led to his stunning Piano Concerto No. 3.

Program Notes

Considered one of the most difficult concertos of the 20th century, Rachmaninoff's Third still contains some of the most fiendish writing for piano more than one hundred and fifteen years after its debut. The concerto is more akin to a symphony for piano and orchestra, a truly symbiotic relationship that feeds and enhances blistering runs, thundering chords, passages that would knot amateur fingers, and melodies that wrap themselves, unmovable, around your heart. It is, all at once, gorgeous, devastating, thrilling, and completely astonishing – a Romantic triumph for a man who put so much of himself into every single note played or penned.

(Rachmaninoff notes written by Dani Meier.)

Symphony No. 5 in E Minor, Op. 54

Peter Tchaikovsky

Born: May 7, 1840 – Votkinsk, Russia

Died: November 6, 1893 – Saint Petersburg, Russia

Piece Length: Approximately 45 minutes.

There are some strong similarities between perhaps the most famous Fifth Symphony ever written: Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 in C minor – and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5 in E minor. Setting aside that Beethoven's may be the most famous symphony of all time, period, both feature a unifying motif used throughout the work. Beethoven's short-short-short-long motif is omnipresent in all four movements. Tchaikovsky, in turn, gives a motto to the clarinet, present from the very beginning. The Beethoven rhythm is seen as "fate knocking at the door," as dubbed by his student and early biographer Anton Schindler. Right on the nose, Tchaikovsky's clarinet melody has been called "the Fate theme." While there's no extramusical program for either Beethoven or Tchaikovsky, the latter's notes contained a sketch of the first movement with this statement: "...a complete resignation before fate, which is the same as the inscrutable predestination of fate..." Finally, both symphonies seem to musically depict triumph over fate as both start in a minor key in the opening movement giving the works a dramatic and dark character that eventually evolves to an exultant finale in a major key.

The Fifth is resplendent not just for its transformational journey, but for the iconic melodies and solos given throughout the orchestra – clarinet and French horn especially - and Tchaikovsky's ability to meld the music of his home with the aspirations of his Austrian and German contemporaries. Tchaikovsky struggled in his role as Russia's most famous composer. He rejected an all-or-nothing approach to composition, insisting instead that there was space to explore bringing Russia and the West together. The shadow of Beethoven is therefore evident, but think of Ludwig as more kindly in this moment, lending Tchaikovsky support to create something that resonates wherever performed, and yet is deeply tied to the composer's heart and home.