

# Fall Program

2025/26 Season



Houston Youth Symphony

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Matthew Porter  
Sinfonia Conductor

Angela Peugnet  
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Conductor

Jackson Guillén  
Debut String Orchestra  
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## History

With nearly 80 years of history, Houston Youth Symphony (HYS) is the recipient of national acclaim, including the 2024 American Prize Honored Artist for sustained excellence and the 2025 Mark of Excellence award. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Dr. Michael Webster, this season 425 musicians between the ages of 7 and 19 come from across the greater Houston area to perform in one of five HYS orchestras. In addition to the core orchestra program, HYS offers musicians an opportunity to participate in a chamber music training program and an annual concerto competition.

In the community, HYS reaches 275 musicians through two programs: the Melody Program and the Coda Music Program. The Melody Program provides free private music lessons for talented youth. In January 2015, HYS launched the Coda Music Program, an after-school program that brings graduated, intensive string instruction to four elementary schools in Houston's Near Northside neighborhood and four elementary schools in Fort Bend. The program uses classical music and group instruction to build community and social transformation.

To learn more about HYS programs, concerts, and opportunities to support the work of Houston Youth Symphony, please visit [HoustonYouthSymphony.org](http://HoustonYouthSymphony.org).

## Table of Contents

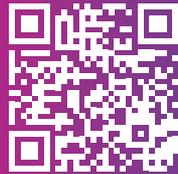
6	Supporters
9	Concert I Program
10	Concert I Program Notes
16	Concert I Musicians
21	Concert II Program
22	Concert II Program Notes
28	Concert II Musicians
33	Conductor Biographies
40	Teaching Artists and Parent Volunteers



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## A Note from the Artistic Director

As our 2025–26 season kicks into gear, HYS has much to celebrate. We have just been awarded the Mark of Excellence Award from the Foundation for Music Education for the 15th time! The adjudicator was none other than Larry Livingston, one of the most respected music educators in the country, and his comments on our performance of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* included: "This piece is considered to be undoable, and this youth orchestra just owns it. Wonderful ethos, wonderful affectation. Your players just play the pants off it!" The Symphony's continued success in winning this prize is built on the foundation of the great leadership of our conducting team in guiding young musicians through the HYS orchestras.

In addition to our conducting team, I would be remiss not to include the vertebrae in the backbone of HYS: the fantastic administrative team, the outstanding HYS teaching artists, the dedicated band and orchestra directors, the inspired private teachers, the tireless parent volunteers, the supportive families, and the talented musicians themselves who choose to devote hours and hours to the difficult art of making music.

As we celebrate this start of the season, we were saddened to learn of the passing of renowned Houston artist and sculptor David Adickes on July 14, at the age of 98. Some may not know that he was also a composer. In the spring of 1998, during my first year as Artistic Director, the HYS Symphony performed his work, *Winds of Change*, with two of his gigantic presidential busts in attendance! More recently, Brad Smith led HYS Sinfonia in the world premiere of his work, *Ibiza*, at our 75th anniversary concert with Mr. Adickes in attendance. His generosity was also evident at that event, when he donated two dozen of his portraits of famous composers for HYS to sell. I am the proud owner of Ravel, whom my father knew in Paris in the 1920s, and whose work is featured on our first two concerts this season. We dedicate these performances to David Adickes's memory.

With gratitude,



Michael Webster

*We wish to thank our  
generous supporters.*

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Guanfa (Felix) Shen  
Ridley Smith  
*(in memory of Margaret P. Smith)*  
Josephine Smith

Sandra S. Stettler  
Georgia Struthers and Tom Warmath  
The St. Trio: Nicholas Warwick, August Schwob, and Greyson Geisness  
Linda and Brian Talbot  
Erin Tsai and Daniel Allison  
*(in honor of Amy Chung)*  
Sebastian Tume  
*(in honor of Stefan Matyja)*  
Kristine G. Wallace  
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Leone Buyse and Michael Webster  
*(in memory of Peter Dempsey)*  
Bo Wen's Family  
*(in honor of Bo Wen)*  
Lynda Wertheim  
*(in honor of Linda Katz)*  
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*(in memory of Carl Lindahl)*  
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## 2025/26 Season Fall Concert I

October 26, 2025, 2:30 p.m.  
Stude Concert Hall  
Rice University  
Shepherd School of Music

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### Debut String Orchestra

Jackson Guillén, Conductor

*Wood Splitter Fanfare* (2009)

Brian Balmages (b. 1975)

*The Flow of the Tide* (2024)

Yukiko Nishimura (b. 1967)

*October* (2008)

Eric Whitacre (b. 1970)  
arr. Paul Lavender

Themes from *The Moldau* (1874)

Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884)  
arr. Robert Frost

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Pause

---

### String Orchestra

Angela Peugnet, Conductor

*Lion City* (2009)

Soon Hee Newbold (b. 1974)

*Rhythmic Variations on  
Two Ancient Hymns* (1976)

Howard Hanson (1896–1981)

*Symphony No. 2* (1847)  
IV. Finale. Allegro vivace

Emilie Mayer (1812–1883)  
arr. Lauren Taylor

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Pause

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### Sinfonia

Matthew Porter, Conductor

Overture to *Rienzi* (1842)

Richard Wagner (1813–1883)  
arr. Sarah Dackow

*Joyride* (2005/2016)

Michael Markowski (b. 1986)

*The Iliad* (2025)

Soon Hee Newbold (b. 1974)

Waltz from *Eugene Onegin* (1878)

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

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*Photography and video recording strictly prohibited.  
Please silence all phones and electronic devices  
A ten-minute pause takes place between each orchestra.*

## **Fall Concert I**

### **Program Notes**

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#### **Debut String Orchestra**

##### **Wood Splitter Fanfare**

Brian Balmages (b. 1975)

As is characteristic of Brian Balmages's work, *Wood Splitter Fanfare* was inspired by a unique incident during a concert with the Deer Path Middle School Orchestra in Illinois. During the performance, a violist's instrument slipped from her shoulder due to a faulty chin rest, fell to the ground, and cracked. Balmages was particularly struck by the calmness and poise the young musician displayed under such pressure. Fortunately, a replacement instrument was found, and she was able to continue performing.

*Wood Splitter Fanfare* celebrates the courage, dedication, boldness, and focus that musicians develop when faced with unexpected challenges. Though brief, the fanfare is packed with energetic moments, driven by rhythmic intensity, engaging melodies, and vibrant counterpoint.

##### **The Flow of the Tide**

Yukiko Nishimura (b. 1967)

As the name suggests, *The Flow of the Tide* is intended to musically express the natural motion and shimmering beauty of the ocean's tides as they rise and fall. The piece begins with a mood of calmness and serenity, featuring gentle, flowing melodic lines supported by warm harmonies. In the middle section, Nishimura introduces a sense of radiance and motion by changing the time signature to 6/8, evoking a feeling of dance. This marks a shift in mood from the previous section, with more expansive and energetic melodic lines. The piece then transitions back to the delicacy of the opening, ending with the same sense of peaceful stillness.

##### **October**

Eric Whitacre (b. 1970)  
arr. Paul Lavender

*"Something about the crisp autumn air and the subtle change in light always makes me a little sentimental..."* These are the composer's own words, as he shares that October is his favorite month of the year. This sentiment is clearly reflected in *October*, one of Eric Whitacre's most treasured compositions. Commissioned by a group of thirty Nebraska high school bands,

the piece is a blend of lyricism, atmospheric moments, emotional depth, alternating thin and dense harmonic textures, and soaring melodic lines.

In this arrangement for strings by Paul Lavender, the piece opens with a viola solo, gradually adding layers of melodic and harmonic texture that unfold into a beautifully expressive opening theme. The music flows through shifting meters and tempos, yet maintains a steady, lyrical motion that evokes the quiet essence of autumn—crisp winds and warm colors. The final climax arrives near the end, followed by a gentle descent into a calm and nostalgic conclusion.

### **Themes from *The Moldau***

Bedřich Smetana (1824 - 1884)  
arr. Robert Frost

Between 1874 and 1882, Bohemian composer Bedřich Smetana devoted himself to composing a series of symphonic poems that would later become movements of a suite he titled *My Homeland* (*Má vlast*). *The Moldau*, the second movement of the suite, evokes the flowing waters of the Vltava River (“Moldau” in German) as it winds through the countryside.

Today, you will hear only a few excerpts from *The Moldau*, selected by Robert Frost for their memorable melodic lines. In these passages, the audience can enjoy the folk-inspired character that defines much of Smetana’s music.

*Notes by Jackson Guillén*

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## String Orchestra

### *Lion City*

Soon Hee Newbold (b. 1974)

There was a Prince named Sang Nila Utama, emperor of the Srivijayan Empire. On a hunting trip he caught sight of a white beached island, the island of Temasek (Javanese for “Sea Town”). The hunting party visited the island where, while hunting, the prince saw a strange animal with an orange body, black head, and a white breast. The animal moved quickly and disappeared into the jungle. Believing it to be a lion (a symbol of good fortune) the prince took it as a good omen and decided to build a new city in Temasek. He named the city *Singapura* (*Singa* – Malay for Lion and *Pura*—for city). Studies indicate that lions have never lived in Singapore and Prince Sang Nila Utama likely saw a Malayan Tiger, but Singapore is still called “The Lion City.” Singapore’s population is a dense mix of Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Eurasian communities. The piece *Lion City* is a melting pot of sonorities imitating instruments from the cultures on this island (specifically the erhu, pipa, and gamelan). To do this, the piece calls for many special techniques and sound effects that strings do not often get to experience.

Combined with sonorous melodies the rhythmic intensity drives this energetic piece forward.

### *Rhythmic Variations on Two Ancient Hymns*

Howard Hanson (1896–1981)

Howard Hanson, composer, conductor, musical statesman, and educator, was a great promoter of contemporary American music and composers. A strong representative of the neo-Romantic tradition, Hanson’s music is full of complex, sonorous harmonies, strong varied rhythms, and effective orchestration. This piece was written for the American String Teachers Association and first performed in 1976 at the Music Educators National Conference. It uses two tunes from Hanson’s Swedish/Scandinavian heritage and is a masterful study in textures and rhythms.

### *Symphony No. 2, Finale*

Emilie Mayer (1812–1883)

arr. Lauren Taylor

Continuing our Romantic theme, Emilie Mayer is considered by some to be the most prolific female composer of the Romantic period. Her impressive body of work includes fifteen concert overtures, eight symphonies, eight violin sonatas, twelve cello sonatas, six piano

trios, seven string quartets, seven orchestral overtures, and numerous works for piano and voice. Her work was highly acclaimed in Germany by the musical establishment, and royalty frequently attended Mayer's concerts. She was even appointed co-director of the Opera Academy in Berlin. Mayer toured frequently performing her music, an unheard-of practice for a single woman at the time. Most of her work remained unpublished at the time of her death. This string arrangement of Mayer's Symphony No. 2 was drawn from her handwritten score.

*Notes by Angela Peugnet*

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## Sinfonia

### **Overture to *Rienzi***

Richard Wagner (1813–1883)

arr. Sandra Dackow

Richard Wagner was a German composer, conductor, and revolutionary in the world of opera. He is best known for creating a “complete” approach to musical drama, combining orchestral music, vocal writing, poetry, and stage design into a complete artistic experience he called *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or “complete artwork.” While many

of his later operas are famous for their complexity and depth, his early opera *Rienzi, the Last of the Tribunes* remains a colorful, dramatic tale of heroism and political struggle.

The opera tells the story of Cola di Rienzi, a 14th-century Roman elected official who rises from humble beginnings to lead the people of Rome against their corrupt rulers. The Overture to *Rienzi* captures the essence of this epic narrative. It opens with a noble and majestic theme representing Rienzi's idealism and courage, moves through stormy, turbulent passages that evoke conflict and personal struggle, and culminates in a triumphant, energetic theme that celebrates heroism, hope, and the prosperity of Rome. Even when performed on its own, the overture conveys the drama, excitement, and sweep of Wagner's epic storytelling.

This arrangement of the famous overture was written by Sandra Dackow, a highly respected composer, arranger, and educator. Dackow's adaptation brings Wagner's rich orchestral textures to a modern ensemble, preserving the energy, excitement, and emotional intensity of the original score while making it accessible for winds, strings, and percussion.

**Joyride**

Michael Markowski (b. 1986)

Michael Markowski's music has been performed worldwide, from the Musikverein in Vienna to the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. A graduate of Arizona State University with a degree in Film Practices, he began composing in seventh grade and has studied under notable mentors including Jon Gomez, Dr. Karl Schindler, and Michael Shapiro. His works have been featured by the Houston Symphony, the Phoenix Symphony, and the United States Army and Air Force Bands, and he has served as composer-in-residence for organizations like Music for All and the Mid Europe International Wind Band Festival in Austria.

*Joyride* was originally composed in 2005 while Markowski was a student at Dobson High School in Mesa. The piece was created to celebrate his symphony band's invitation to perform at Carnegie Hall in New York City. Inspired by his band director's idea to blend something joyful and traditional, like Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" with something contemporary, in the style of John Adams' *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*, Markowski completed the first draft in just ten days. The result is a lively, three-minute

musical mash-up that dresses Beethoven's famous melody in a playful, modern texture. Originally written for high school symphony band, this version has been reimagined for full symphony orchestra and specially transcribed for the Arizona Musicfest 2016 Young Composer's Fanfare Competition.

**The Iliad**

Soon Hee Newbold (b. 1974)

Composed by 2024 Women Songwriters Hall of Fame inductee Soon Hee Newbold, *The Iliad* is an orchestral tone poem that brings the events of Homer's epic to life. It was recently commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association for the Youth Orchestra Los Angeles, where Gustavo Dudamel serves as Music and Artistic Director.

The story specifically focuses on the last two weeks of the Trojan war where Achilles, the strongest Greek warrior, becomes so angry at his commander Agamemnon that he refuses to fight. This argument changes the whole war and leads to heroic battles, dramatic twists, and even the gods stepping in to help or hurt the fighters. But the poem isn't just about fighting. It is also about friendship, honor, and the cost of anger. Instead of showing the fall of

Troy, the story ends with a powerful moment of forgiveness when Achilles returns the body of the Trojan prince Hector to his father.

Newbold's depiction of the events that unfold within the story takes us on an epic musical journey that utilizes many writing techniques the listener will recognize from modern movie music. The brass fanfare that opens the work acts as a gateway to the sounds of adventure and intrigue. This fanfare is used again towards the end of the work to signal the conclusion of our story, and leads to a brief *grave* (slow, solemn musical passage) section that symbolizes the people's lament for the death of Troy's champion, Hector.

### **Waltz from *Eugene Onegin***

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

In 1878, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky completed what would become one of his most popular operas, *Eugene Onegin*. The story is based on the classic Russian novel by Alexander Pushkin and is full of romance, friendship, and choices that change the course of people's lives. The Waltz kicks off a grand party scene at the start of Act II. The music depicts the party guests dressed in their finest clothes as they dance, socialize, and gossip in a sparkling

and energetic atmosphere.

Although the music sounds light and elegant, it actually signals a turning point in the story. During this party scene, Onegin flirts with his friend's fiancée, Olga, which sets off a chain of events that ends tragically. Tchaikovsky's waltz music captures both the excitement of the party and the tension building underneath.

The complete opera *Eugene Onegin* is still staged regularly. However, the Waltz's charm and vivid energy make it a favorite stand-alone piece for modern orchestras. The sweeping melodic line combined with rich harmonies, and delightful orchestration show why Tchaikovsky is one of the greatest composers of dance-inspired music. It's hard not to picture twirling gowns, glittering chandeliers, and lively soirées of a bygone era.

*Notes by Matthew Porter*

## Debut String Orchestra Musicians

### Violin I

Julie Cao  
*concertmaster*

Sophia Xu  
*assistant  
concertmaster*

Joanna Wu

Annabelle Li

Nana Barning

Ciara Park

Lorenzo Rubio

Isabella Sáenz

Yaping Wang

Shreya Sendos

Terry Lam

Joyce Cao

Catalina Bonnet

Mariam Sheikh

Ryan Yu

Joseph Samm

### Violin II

Myra Yasin  
*principal*

Brighu Tejas Gautam  
*assistant principal*

Angela I. Salazar  
Gonzalez

Sabrina Judd

Kenza Wang-Sol

Ramanathan Palaniappan

Lily Zhao

Olivia Zhang

Allison Yang

Amina Adamu

Eva Brionez

Iris Yan

Alex Xu

Katherine Ren

Vrishni Krishnan

Luis Valencia

### Viola

Maiya Jackson  
*principal*

Chloe Barrientes  
*assistant principal*

Nidhi Keshav

Chloe Lam

Zoha Sanwarwala

Lillian G. Diaz

John Paul Snow

Autumn Welch

Caleb Chen

Lena Sophie Beddar

### Cello

Jihwan Kim  
*principal*

Tallis Peugnet  
*assistant principal*

Ava Zhou

Naomi Berth

Harvey Lurette

Daniel Hajoon Vuu

Julian Fernandez

Oliver Briggie

Elias Mollett

Elle Shi

Nuree Han

Coraline Zhang

### Bass

Lai'Loni Mays  
*principal*

Isak Franklin  
*assistant principal*

### Orchestra Liaison

Tatiana Judd

**String  
Orchestra  
Musicians****Violin I**

Noele Chung  
*concertmaster*  
Celeste Molina  
*assistant  
concertmaster*  
Julia Biral  
David Haoze Zuo  
Julia Hayoon Vuu  
Rianna Shezbie  
Jeremy Nguyen  
Jiale Lu  
Roy Wang  
Ava D'Souza  
Carolina Laronga  
Olivia Jang  
Daniel Q. Lu  
Eason Wang  
Lonny Sui  
Vishakha Rao

**Violin II**

Jonathan Yang  
*principal*  
Katherine Wei  
*assistant principal*  
Yuxuan Li  
Alice Song  
Mercedes Lundberg  
Angelina Chen  
Mason Duan  
Emma Koo  
Emma Dang  
Aadi Dhagat  
Gavin Yu  
Enya Zhao  
Jasmine Zhang  
Anish Senthil  
Elena Liu  
Henry McLeod

**Viola**

Neil Shaw  
*principal*  
Muhammad Asmir Khan  
*assistant principal*  
Daniel Ramirez  
Celeste Peugnet \*  
Georgia Parzen  
Norah Lin  
Haile Huffman  
Derek Wong  
Zhi-Yuan "Ian" Tan  
Ariana Correa

**Cello**

Michael Liang  
*principal*  
Andrew Chen  
*assistant principal*  
Kyle Hechanova  
Samuel de Llano  
Cedric Wijatno  
Aurian Rahimi  
Keziah Kim  
Kayla Heng  
Mia Li  
Parker Keele  
Evalynn Lu  
Clint Lou  
Clara Hong

**Bass**

Kwaku Barning  
*principal*  
Eduardo Caleb Arriaga  
*assistant principal*  
Annika Reddy Pasham

**Orchestra Liaison**

Melanie McLeod

\* *Rainstick on Newbold*

## Sinfonia Musicians

### Violin I

Benjamin Suljic  
*concertmaster*

Edison Barton  
*assistant  
concertmaster*

Theia Doescher

Christina Zhou

Ava Jean Achivida

Enora Trahan

Rosabella Chu

Grace Hao

Clarie Shim

John Jiahao Li

Kaitlyn Nguyen

Kelly Su

Vyvyanna Salazar

Yu-Shan Sun

Ethan Wu

Arnav Muralidhar

### Violin II

Andrew Huang  
*principal*

Gregory Zheng  
*assistant principal*

Maia Danielle Hernandez

Emma Lee

Eden Chung

Andres Sanchez

Lotus MacGloin

Taeyul Kim

Alice Zhang

Cian-Rong "Jenna" Peng

Eden Rotberg

Rice Areepitak

Luna Choe

Laya P. Keshav

Bennett McLeod

Oliver Mateusz Tume

### Viola

Juan Esteban Ramos

Alzate  
*principal*

Sofia Sanchez  
*assistant principal*

Connor Chen

Maria Lopez

Armahn Virani

Gabriela Capetillo

Ore Akinyemiju

Grace Chen

Ria Abraham

Elaine Aiko Ayala

Lillian Sissons

### Cello

Tanush Vatnani  
*principal*

Zoe Gates  
*assistant principal*

Jonah Holliday

Neev Vanam

Tiffany Chen

Joon Choi

Brayden Li

Olivia González

Gavin Liu

Benjamin Le

Kathleen Zhang

Matthew Chen

Danna Sun +

### Bass

Priya Chandrasekhar  
*principal*

Kristine Yi  
*assistant principal*

Samuela Alejandra Ashu

Aiden Wang

Kyle Sanchez

### Flute

Abesira Daniel ‡ \*

Alex Sun ^ °

Sagan Yechuri

Hannah Zhang

### Piccolo

Sagan Yechuri

### Oboe

Daniel Bell

Lucas Bonnin ‡ ^ \* °

Samuel Frederick

Daniel Pate

### Clarinet

Hagan Frey

Yusei Kawabata

Alexander Qiu ‡ \*

Yichen Wang ^ °

### Bassoon

Shyameli Maia Pannala

Holly Swart ‡ ^ \* °

Rachel Varghese

Easton Woodcock

## Horn

Zakary Dooly  
Norah Dufilho ‡ ^ \* °  
Emmeline James  
Sahithi Kommuri  
Shiven Patel  
Rubina Rahman

## Trumpet

Christian Bollmann ^ °  
Maksym Jakubas  
Beth Lee ‡ \*  
Jacob Rodriguez

## Trombone

Jason Garcia  
Jesus Mayen Zapata  
Samuel Stegall ‡ ^ \* °

## Bass Trombone

Jeremiah Rodriguez

## Tuba

Charlotte Lawson  
Dhyane Moorthy

## Piano

Lydia Smith

## Timpani

Austin Billasch \*  
Diego Esparza ‡  
Zach Smith ^ °

## Percussion

Austin Billasch  
Joshua Colomine  
Puentes  
Diego Esparza

George Hamilton

Tyler Law

Ivan Shen

Zach Smith

Kevin Wang

## Orchestra Liaison

Nikki Achivida

*String musicians are listed in chair order.*

*Wind and Percussion musicians are listed alphabetically.*

‡ *Principal Wagner*

^ *Principal Markowski*

\* *Principal Newbold*

° *Principal Tchaikovsky*

+ *Not playing this concert*

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## 2025/26 Season Fall Concert II

October 26, 2025, 7:00 p.m.  
Stude Concert Hall  
Rice University  
Shepherd School of Music

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### Philharmonia

Brad Smith, Conductor

*The Planets* (1914–1916)

Gustav Holst (1874–1934)

I. Mars

II. Venus

III. Jupiter

Pause

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### Symphony

Michael Webster, Conductor

*La Tarara* (traditional)

Federico García Lorca (1898–1936)  
arr. Steven Verhelst/M. Webster

Will Cranston, James Santos, Matthew Frederick,

Lizamarie Lagaac Anino, tenor trombones;

Kevin Aguilar, bass trombone; Alan Zhang, Austin Falck, tubas

*El Sombrero de tres picos* (1919)  
(*The Three-Cornered Hat*)

Manuel de Falla (1876–1946)

Three Dances from Part II

I. The Neighbor's Dance (Seguidilla)

II. The Miller's Dance (Farruca)

III. Final Dance (Jota)

*Rapsodie espagnole* (1908)

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

I. Prélude à la nuit

II. Malagueña

III. Habanera

IV. Feria

*Danzas del Ballet "Estancia"* (1943)

Alberto Ginastera (1916–1983)

I. Los trabajadores agrícolas (The Farm Workers)

II. Danza del trigo (Dance of the Wheat)

III. Los peones de hacienda (The Ranch Hands)

IV. Danza final (Malambo)

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*Photography and video recording strictly prohibited. Please silence all phones and electronic devices. A ten-minute pause takes place between each orchestra.*

*Estancia: Four Dances*, written by Alberto Ginastera, used by permission of Boosey & Hawkes Inc.

## Fall Concert II

### Program Notes

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## Philharmonia

### *The Planets*

Gustav Holst (1874–1934)

Composed between 1914 and 1916, Gustav Holst's *The Planets* is not entirely what it may seem given the title alone. Rather than the study of planets from the expected viewpoint of astronomy, he instead looked at the astrological character of each. There are seven movements (Pluto was yet to be discovered). Tonight, you will hear three of those that highlight Holst's imagination and mastery of orchestration on a large scale with great impact.

*Mars, the Bringer of War* opens with one of the most striking rhythmic motifs in the orchestral repertoire. Introduced right away by the strings using a technique known as *col legno* (striking the strings with the wood of the bow) and coupled with harp and timpani, this figure is notable for its relentlessly repetitive nature, and for its rhythmic identity, completely void of any melodic motion up or down the scale. Holst then introduces a distant and foreboding series

of long notes which first rise by a perfect fifth but then fall a half step to arrive at a tritone, the most dissonant interval in music. As the movement progresses, we hear aggressive and sudden brass figures which rise out of the initial motif and then disappear just as suddenly. The piece includes a tenor tuba solo (played on euphonium) in conversation with a sprightly trumpet fanfare. The juxtaposition of dissonance and syncopation, and sudden dynamic bursts of sound produces an overall menacing and powerful impression befitting its namesake. An interesting trivial fact about Holst's *Mars*: It is widely believed to have been the inspiration for John Williams' "Imperial March" from *Star Wars*.

After the overwhelming power of *Mars*, *Venus, the Bringer of Peace* offers a stark and beautiful contrast. Opening with a simple four note scale played by solo horn, the music immediately takes on a sense of distance and calm. Lightly scored woodwinds answer the horn call, and two harps, celesta, and glockenspiel create a shimmering, undulating backdrop. A sense of solitude is introduced again with exposed passages for solo violin and cello. Holst's phrases elide into one another; seemingly endless and floating in a transparent sound

world. The movement concludes with only violins holding a simple major triad.

The program concludes with *Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity*, a movement of joyful and exuberant music that is bursting with rhythmic vitality. Whereas *Mars* brought a constant, tension-filled repeated rhythm, Holst now opens the movement with rapid repeating 16th notes that set the tone for a completely different feeling. Triple-meter dance rhythms propel the movement through a wide variety of orchestral colors, from the woodwind chatter of fast articulated passages, to the majestic brass fanfares. At its center we hear a noble hymn tune that came to be known as a British patriotic song, "I Vow to Thee, my Country." This unfolds in a very grandiose manner before giving way to the rollicking energy of the opening bars. Holst layers melodic lines and syncopated accents with precision, the initial energetic enthusiasm never falters.

Taken together, these three movements highlight Gustav Holst's capacity to translate abstract astrological ideas—war, peace, and joy—into music full of vibrant texture, color, and rhythm.

*Notes by Brad Smith*

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## Symphony

There are many interwoven threads in the fabric of this season's HYS programming, starting with this evening's concert. HYS Symphony opens with a low brass arrangement of *La Tarara*, a Spanish folk song that was used by Isaac Albéniz in his magnum opus, *Iberia* (1908), for piano solo. It was popularized when the poet Federico García Lorca supplied it with his poetry about a brightly dressed crazy woman. You'll hear each of our four tenor trombonists play a thoughtful phrase of the song, followed by a jazzy arrangement by Steven Verhelst, adapted for our four tenor trombones, bass trombone, and two tubas.

• **Thread No. 1: García Lorca** studied piano seriously as a teenager and dreamed of a career in music before becoming a poet. In 1922, he became a close friend and collaborator of **Manuel de Falla** at *El Concurso de Cante Jondo* (*Contest of the Deep Song*), promoting flamenco arts, music, song, and dance at the Alhambra in Granada. The following year they collaborated on a play for children, *La niña que riega la albahaca y el príncipe preguntón* (*The Girl that Waters*

*the Basil and the Inquisitive Prince*), adapted by García Lorca from an Andalusian story.

• **Thread No. 2:** In 1933, **García Lorca** and **de Falla** collaborated again in Buenos Aires in a program that included de Falla's ballet, *El sombrero de tres picos* (**The Three-Cornered Hat**) and **Alberto Ginastera's** opus 1, the ballet *Panambí*. The young Argentine composer met and was inspired by de Falla.

• **Thread No. 3:** **García Lorca** was assassinated in 1936 under shadowy circumstances, most likely by the heavily armed *Guarda Civil* at the dawn of the Franco era. Their distinctive uniform included colorful **tricornes (three-cornered hats)**, known in Spain as symbols of authority.

• **Thread No. 4:** The Russian impresario **Sergei Diaghilev** founded the **Ballets Russes** in Paris in 1909, and astutely commissioned superb composers, starting with Stravinsky's *L'oiseau de feu* (*Firebird*), *Petrushka*, and *Le sacre du printemps* (*The Rite of Spring*) in 1910, 1911, and 1913, interspersed with **Ravel's Daphnis et Chloé** (1912). HYS Symphony performed

*The Rite of Spring* in February 2025, and this season we'll follow up with **Ravel's Suite No. 2 from Daphnis et Chloe**.

• **Thread No. 5:** **Diaghilev** toured with *Ballets Russes* in Spain during WW I, where he heard de Falla's *Noches en los jardines de España* (*Nights in the Garden of Spain*) and asked him to adapt it for ballet in 1917. Instead, **de Falla** offered to rework his ballet *El corregidor y la molinera* (*The Magistrate and the Miller's Wife*), to become **El sombrero de tres picos**, based on the 1874 novella by Pedro Antonio de Alarcón. There could not have been a more distinguished creative team: choreography by Leonid Massine, set design and costumes by Pablo Picasso, conducted by Ernst Ansermet.

• **Thread No. 6:** **Manuel de Falla** was no stranger to Paris or French music. Around 1903, a group of musicians took the name *Les Apaches*, two of its most prominent members being French composer **Maurice Ravel** and Spanish pianist Ricardo Viñes. Membership was fluid, including such composers as Igor Stravinsky and Manuel de Falla from time to time.

***El Sombrero de tres picos (The Three-Cornered Hat): Three Dances from Part II (1919)***

Manuel de Falla (1876–1946)

Unlike the Diaghilev/Stravinsky/Ravel ballets, *The Three-Cornered Hat* (1919) is a comedy, starting with the Miller unsuccessfully trying to teach his pet blackbird to tell time until the Miller's wife bribes the bird with a grape. The Corregidor (Magistrate) is a comic character who tries to seduce the Miller's wife, thinking of himself as being young and handsome. A convoluted plot ends up with the clumsy Corregidor falling in a stream and putting on the Miller's clothing to stay warm. Meanwhile, the Miller ends up wearing the Corregidor's clothing, including his three-cornered hat, a symbol of his political power. The Miller's wife remains true, the Corregidor's plot is exposed, and his lenient punishment is having the neighbors toss him up and down in a blanket during the Final Dance.

The three movements of Suite No. 2 comprise the second act of the ballet. What are some prominent characteristics of Spanish music? Use of folk dances, lowering the second scale step, use of castanets, juxtaposing triplets and duplets, and especially alternating measures of six 8th notes divided in 2×3 (6/8)

and 3×2 (3/4). Think of Leonard Bernstein's "America" from *West Side Story*.

The Neighbors' Dance is a *seguidilla*, a quick triple-meter dance popularized by Bizet's *Carmen*. De Falla's opening theme works perfectly in 3/4 at the beginning and in 6/8 moments later in the flute.

The Miller' Dance is a flamenco dance called *farruca*, traditionally for men, in four beats with noisy foot-stomping. What better way to introduce it than with a strong French horn solo!

The Final Dance is a *jota*, an energetic dance that has regional variations all over Spain, characterized by alternating 3/4 and 6/8 meters with prominent use of castanets.

- **Thread No. 7:** On our February 2026 program, Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloe* Suite No. 2 will be paired with one of the most popular pieces of Spanish music written by a Frenchman: *España* by Emmanuel Chabrier.

- **Thread No. 8:** Many French composers wrote excellent Spanish music, including Bizet, Lalo, Chabrier, Saint Saëns, Debussy, and Ravel. The most prolific was

**Maurice Ravel** (1875–1937), who wrote seven Spanish works, the most significant of which is the opera, *L'heure espagnole* (1911) and the most popular, *Bolero* (1928). His mother was Basque (an area in northwestern Spain and southwestern France) and grew up in Madrid. Ravel was born in the Basque town of Ciboure, France, 11 miles from the Spanish border. Although the family moved to Paris when Maurice was three months old, his mother sang Basque/Spanish folk songs to him and the influence remained always.

### ***Rapsodie espagnole***

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

The intent of the *Prélude à la nuit* is to create atmosphere rather than tonality. Imagine a summer evening with mist rising from a pond. The impressionists, led by Debussy and Ravel, used symmetrical scales to create tonal ambiguity, the most famous of which is the whole tone scale. A lesser-known symmetrical scale alternates whole tones and half tones to create an eight-note scale called octatonic because the ear can choose any of the eight tones to be the tonal center (tonic). The four-note motto that opens the prelude—F,E,D,C#—comprises half of an octatonic scale, but tonality is avoided with colorful hints of several

different keys. The exotic cadenzas for pairs of clarinets and bassoons complete the octatonic scale.

*Malagueña* clearly starts in A minor and ends in A major, but the same four notes infiltrate the middle section, expand into a complete octatonic scale and serve as a transition back to the first theme, passed from English horn to clarinet, flute, and piccolo over three octaves.

*Habanera* is an orchestration of a piano piece Ravel had written in 1895, thus the only movement not to have the octatonic scale as part of its organization.

*Feria (Festival)* is by far the longest movement— a large three-part form (A–B–A). Often leading the Top Ten List of great orchestrators, Ravel utilizes fancy string techniques, wind passages that test the limit of speed, and a large battery of percussion, including such Spanish staples as castanets and tambourine. After soulful solos from English horn and clarinet in the B section, the octatonic scale reappears, ushering in a return to the A section, which has all of its previous elements, but never identical.

## ***Danzas del Ballet “Estancia”***

Alberto Ginastera (1916–1983)

Ginastera’s *Estancia* (1941) was commissioned by Lincoln Kirstein for the American Ballet Caravan, which unfortunately folded in 1942 before *Estancia* could be produced. As a result, it appeared first in the form of this suite, a similar fate to Prokofiev’s *Romeo and Juliet*. A full decade elapsed before the ballet was finally produced in 1952. *Estancia* tells the story of a city boy who falls in love with a country girl and is mocked by the gauchos as being weak and unmanly. In the final scene, he outdances them in a malambo competition and wins her over.

Los trabajadores agrícolas depicts the farm workers’ heavy steps as they dance to the typical alternation of 2×3 and 3×2.

Danza del trigo depicts, in Ginastera’s words, the “profound tranquility and limitless immensity” of the pampas.

Los peones de hacienda (The Ranch Hands) entertain themselves with music and dancing after a hard day’s work.

Danza final (Malambo) is a competition among the gauchos to see who is the best dancer. The malambo has evolved to be the most characteristic of all Argentine dances: athletic and energetic,

with high leg kicks, stomping of the heel, toe, and side of the boots, drumming and waving boleadoras (weighted balls attached to cords for capturing animals).

Competing on “America’s Got Talent” has led to world-wide fame for two malambo groups: “Malevo” in 2016 and in 2024, “Legion,” receiving a “Golden Buzzer” for dancing with their boots on fire! Stoke up your inner fire as HYS concludes our program of Hispanic music with the wild ride of Ginastera’s “Malambo.”

• The final thread: In his highly dramatic String Quartet No. 3 (1973), **Ginastera** adds a soprano voice, including a text by **García Lorca** in the third movement. Upon the death of García Lorca, the Mexican composer **Silvestre Revueltas** (whose *Sensemaya* HYS Symphony performed for the League of American Orchestra’s convention in June 2024) wrote *Homenaje a Federico García Lorca*, considered by some to be his finest work. In 2012, I had the great pleasure of conducting this astonishing piece for the Orchestra of the Americas in Chile, with **Jackson Guillén** playing violin!

*Notes by Michael Webster*

## Philharmonia Musicians

### Violin I

Ana Cristina Franco  
*concertmaster*

Maya Ikegami  
*assistant  
concertmaster*

Michelle Li

Vedanth Hariharan

Charlie Rogan

Claira Yang

Maple MacGloin

Hephzibah Hernandez

Jennessy Morones

Arthur Sasha Tan

S. Emily Liu

Sophia Franco

Max Bosen Xiao

David Cui

Julia Xu

Emily Choi

### Violin II

Robin Gao  
*principal*

David McGrew  
*assistant principal*

Kelly Kim

Celeste L. Smith

Zoey Houlton

Reinaldo Morales

Maggie Searfoorce

Ailin Feng

Nathan Zhenzun Wang

Yejin Lee

Ela Tataker

Mayu Fujiwara

Dylan Chan

Devon Chan

Nathan Min

Joseph Mani

### Viola

Arya Prasad  
*principal*

Carson Kirkley  
*assistant principal*

Henry Zhao

Evan Lee

Jade Nicole Phan

Tishe Odejide

Raymond Ortiz Rivera

Alex Starnes

Joana Kong

Fernando Ramos

Ethan Helms

Madeleine Ulanday

### Cello

Evangeline Yang  
*principal*

Brianna Orloske  
*assistant principal*

Joshua Wang

Claire Ahn

Varsha R. Chandupatla

Borhan Mostafizi

Joanne Bach

Evan Ung

Joshua Smith

Keen Zhou

Marcus Lee

Andhra Krishna

Yalamanchili

### Bass

Lincoln Kennedy  
*principal*

Rayan Rahimi  
*assistant principal*

Bria Soleil Linehan

Joel Mathew

Adrian “Clare” Curry

### Flute

Daniela Guzman

Jun Han

Elise Hui

Matthew Riggan †

### Piccolo

Jun Han †

Elise Hui

### Oboe

Vivian Gibson

Eda Gürmen

Rushil Makker

Hannah Stevens †

### Clarinet

Daniel Duan †

Eric Gibson

Hariharan Jayant

Haobo Shi

### Bass Clarinet

Hariharan Jayant

**Bassoon**

Lucas D. Colca  
Shyam Jayant  
Liam MacDonald  
Ella Stevens ‡

**Horn**

JMichael Aguilar  
Martin Cetto ‡  
Lily Edwards  
Niyah Johnson  
Joseph McCreight  
Zachary Pair  
Kishan A. Patel  
Liam Powers

**Trumpet**

Jacob Cook ‡  
Danny Ly  
Rudy Peak  
Nolan Vaughn

**Trombone**

Jinoo Kim  
John Okonji  
Luna Vazquez  
Dylan Wagner ‡

**Bass Trombone**

Shlomo Koremblum

**Euphonium**

Zoie Glosson

**Tuba**

Corbin O'Bannion  
Aidan Sadai ‡

**Celeste**

Lydia Smith

**Harp**

Titus Lu  
Wally Snow

**Timpani**

Tyler Law  
Brekken Ler

**Percussion**

Joshua Colomine  
Puentes  
George Hamilton  
Ivan Shen  
Edwin Wang

**Orchestra Liaison**

Carissa Helms

*String musicians are listed in chair order. Wind and Percussion musicians are listed alphabetically.*

‡ Principal Holst



## Symphony Musicians

### Violin I

Arjun R. Chandupatla  
*concertmaster*

Benjamin Zhou  
*assistant  
concertmaster*

Efran Zhao

Amanda Li

Maureen Min

Kalea Schunk

Ava Zhang

Henry Xu

Claire Loggenberg

Arna Green

McKenna Petersen

Kevin Hu

Vanae Schunk

Nelly Gonzalez Marin

Daniel Rewa

Sadie McLeod

### Violin II

Samuel Castro  
*principal*

Ethan Suh  
*assistant principal*

Piet Hein Athmer

Renee Qiu

Khanh Le

Evelyn Kao

Olivia Koo

Michelle Li

Josie Pink

Eric Liu

Theodore Vu

Saanvi Doddaballapur

Sheryl Sun

Vivian Stone

Yuchan Chung

### Viola

Tanav Raghavan  
*principal*

Tobias Wheatley  
*assistant principal*

Aden Loo

Drayden Johnson

Anthony To

Julian Lee

Aaron Daniel Bradberry

Christian Angelo

Consuelo

Aaron Nguyen

Aidan Huynh

Ella Ngu

Han La

### Cello

Joshua Segraves  
*principal*

Lucy Ebben  
*assistant principal*

Seungheon Sunny Seok

Shaopan Gao

Abraham Kim

Saril Gupta

Kendall Porter

Jinlin Li

Andy Wu

Samantha Cui

Jacob Chin

Connor Torres

### Bass

Abraham Melesio Zepeta  
*principal*

Oliver Tran  
*assistant principal*

Ryder J. McBride

Zoey Hernandez

César Garibay II

Gavin LaPointe

Rudra Singh

Madeleine Ray

### Flute

Harmony Chao ^

Yixuan "Vanessa" Chen \*

Caroline A. Chow

Misato Koiwa

Isaac Serrano ‡

### Piccolo

Harmony Chao

Yixuan (Vanessa) Chen

Caroline A. Chow

Misato Koiwa ‡ ^ \*

Isaac Serrano

### Oboe

Caden Cromer ^

Mason Hsingyu Kuo

Devin Saljuud ‡

Yiming Zhu \*

### English Horn

Yiming Zhu

### Clarinet

Daniel Bain ^

Alex Duran

Yicheng He ‡  
Rexford Pan  
Ares Zhou \*

**Bass Clarinet**

Ares Zhou

**Bassoon**

Yash Ayar ^  
Michael W. Ng \*  
Evan Schlorholtz  
Krish Varun ‡

**Contrabassoon**

Michael W. Ng

**Horn**

Cash Bussey ^  
Jonathan Castillo  
Ben Dixon \*  
Joshua Grush  
Connor Powers ‡  
Eton Rosales  
George Stevens  
Nathan Zavala

**Trumpet**

Cade Brown  
Shloak Mehta  
Diego Palacios \*  
Evan Salas ‡  
Trevor A. Seeley ^

**Trombone**

Lizamarie Lagaac Anino  
Will Cranston ^  
Matthew Frederick  
James Santos ‡

**Bass Trombone**

Kevin Aguilar

**Tuba**

Austin Falck ^  
Alan Zhang ‡

**Piano & Celesta**

Steven Harris

**Harp**

Eva Laxmi Das Rami  
Shannon Yang

**Timpani**

Brendan Floco ‡  
Tysei Noro ^  
Ty Williams \*

**Percussion**

Josh Manuel Lagaac Anino  
Noah Baskin  
Brendan Floco  
Annie Newton  
Tysei Noro  
Michael Sanders  
Eric Wang  
Ty Williams

**Orchestra Liaison**

Chi Nguyen

*String musicians are listed in chair order.  
Wind and Percussion musicians are listed alphabetically.*

‡ *Principal de Falla*

^ *Principal Ravel*

\* *Principal Ginastera*



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# Conductor Biographies

**Michael Webster,**  
*Artistic Director and Symphony  
Conductor*



As the 2025–26 season begins, Michael Webster and the Houston Youth Symphony have a lot to be thankful for, most recently having been announced as the national winner of the Mark of Excellence from the Foundation for Music Education for the 15th time! Our performance of Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* received glowing comments from the prestigious adjudicator, Larry Livingston.

The other competition for youth orchestras, The American Prize, awarded HYS special recognition on July 4, 2024, as Honored Artists of The American Prize, “a category of recognition limited to a very few who have proved to be individuals (or organizations) of ‘sustained excellence’ in their chosen area of artistic endeavor.”

2024 also brought national recognition as HYS performed for an enthusiastic audience of 1,000 at the League of American Orchestras Conference at Jones Hall in Houston. As a clarinetist, Michael Webster received an Honorary Membership for “Lifetime Achievement in Performing, Teaching, and Professional Service” from the International Clarinet Association at ClarinetFest 2024 in Dublin, Ireland.

A multifaceted musician, Dr. Webster is known as a clarinetist, conductor, composer, arranger, and educator. As Artistic Director of HYS since 1997, he led the Symphony at the inauguration of Houston Mayor Lee Brown, at Carnegie Hall, and at the 2002 National Youth Orchestra Festival in Sarasota, Florida, as one of six orchestras selected from applicants nationwide. Rarely featuring an orchestra, NPR’s national radio show “From the Top” invited HYS to perform live on the radio in 2012.

For fifteen of the last seventeen years (2008–2025), HYS was the national winner of the Foundation for Music Education’s Mark of Excellence. HYS is also the only youth orchestra to be in the top two of The American Prize for eleven years in a row, having garnered eight first and three second prizes, including first place in 2023. Dr. Webster has won first or second place in The Ameri-

can Prize for conducting eight times.

Formerly principal clarinetist with the Rochester Philharmonic and acting principal of the San Francisco Symphony, Dr. Webster has appeared as soloist with many orchestras including the Philadelphia Orchestra with Aaron Copland and the Boston Pops with John Williams. Since winning Young Concert Artists international auditions in 1968, his performances have included: the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center; the 92nd Street Y; the Tokyo, Cleveland, Muir, Ying, Enso, Dover, Leontóvych, Artaria and Chester String Quartets; Da Camera, Context, and Musiq in Houston; and the festivals of Marlboro, Santa Fe, Chamber Music West and Northwest, Norfolk, Victoria, Domaine Forget, Sitka, Maui, Steamboat Springs, Park City, Angel Fire, Orcas Island, Bowdoin, and La Musica di Asolo. He has performed and taught all over the United States and in Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, Europe, Japan, China, New Zealand, and Australia. He has collaborated with musicians including Yo-Yo Ma, Lynn Harrell, Joshua Bell, Rudolf Serkin, and many others.

Dr. Webster served as Assistant Conductor of the Asian Youth Orchestra under Yehudi Menuhin, Music Director of the Wellesley Symphony Orchestra, and director

of the Michigan Youth Symphony Orchestra. Recently retired from his professorship at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music, he previously held faculty positions in clarinet and conducting at the University of Michigan, the New England Conservatory, Boston University, and the Eastman School of Music, where he had earned three degrees as a student of Stanley Hasty.

For many summers he has been clarinet and woodwind coach for the Texas Music Festival at the University of Houston and Orchestra of the Americas, which met in a different country every year until the 2020 pandemic. Countries represented included Mexico, Panama, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Belgium, Estonia, Poland, China, Canada and the U.S. Since 2020, the Orchestra of the Americas has established a strong online presence with OAcademy, where Dr. Webster is the lead clarinet teacher. He has also been a faculty member at the Atlantic Music Festival in Waterville, ME since 2021.

Michael Webster directed chamber music societies in Rochester and Ann Arbor and founded the Webster Trio with his wife, flutist Leone Buyse, in 1988. Webster Trio CDs released by Crystal Records in the U.S. and by the Nami and Camerata labels

in Japan feature Webster's trio arrangements, which, along with his original compositions, are published by Theodore Presser, International Music Company, Schott, and G. Schirmer. Webster also appears on the Arabesque, Beauport, Bridge, Centaur, CRI, and New World labels. Highly regarded as a teacher, he has contributed 85 articles entitled "Teaching Clarinet" to ICA's The Clarinet magazine. Michael Webster is a Buffet artist-clinician, playing Buffet clarinets exclusively.

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## **Brad Smith**

*Philharmonia Conductor*



Brad Smith joined the Houston Youth Symphony artistic staff as conductor of the Sinfonia Orchestra in 2015. He is the Director of Orchestral Activities at Kinder High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in downtown Houston, where he oversees the String program, Symphony, and String Orchestras, coaches chamber ensembles, and teaches conducting courses. Smith has conducted the all-school

musical on multiple occasions and worked with the Dance, Theatre, and Visual Arts departments on collaborative projects. Dr. Smith's students consistently achieve recognition in national concerto and chamber music competitions and earn seats in the TMEA All-State Orchestras. Each year, HSPVA graduates gain admission to top conservatories and music schools across the country.

Before joining the Kinder HSPVA faculty in 2014, Smith taught for eleven years at the University of Pennsylvania, where he was the Music Director of the Penn Symphony Orchestra, Audio Nexus contemporary ensemble, Penn Sinfonia Chamber Orchestra, and Penn Wind Ensemble. He taught music theory, graduate ear training, and conducting courses, as well as seminars on multiple topics. While teaching at Penn, Dr. Smith also conducted the Delaware County Youth Orchestra (DCYO), a group based along the Mainline area of Greater Philadelphia.

Brad Smith has been teaching instrumental music and conducting ensembles of all ages since 1995. He holds degrees in Music Education and Conducting from Stephen F. Austin State University and The University of Texas at Austin.

**Matthew Porter**  
*Sinfonia Conductor*



Matthew Porter is a highly accomplished and passionate music educator, currently serving as Director of Orchestras at Tompkins High School in Katy, Texas. With a deep commitment to nurturing talent and fostering a love for orchestral music, Mr. Porter has made a lasting impact on his students and the broader music education community.

A native of Abilene, Texas, Mr. Porter studied bass and cello under the mentorship of Madelyn Mitchell, Carolyn Rhoads, and Wanda Cooper. He earned his cum laude degree in Music Education from Texas Tech University, with a focus on orchestral conducting. Mr. Porter began his career in Katy ISD, first at Beck Junior High and Memorial Parkway Junior High, before moving to Beckendorff Junior High in 2007. Under his leadership, the orchestra program was transformed from 58 to over 250 students, earning finalist positions in

the Texas Honor Orchestra competition for eight consecutive years, and garnering invitations to perform at the Midwest Clinic (2011) and the TMEA Convention (2012).

In 2013, Mr. Porter was appointed to open Tompkins High School, where he has built one of the district's most successful orchestra programs. The Tompkins orchestras have earned multiple TMEA Honor Orchestra titles, a testament to Mr. Porter's dedication to excellence, collaborative teamwork and artistic growth.

Mr. Porter is a founding director of the Katy Youth Orchestra and the Katy ISD Junior High Summer Orchestra Camp, which he co-founded with his wife, Bryanna. A respected clinician, adjudicator, and guest conductor, he also regularly shares his expertise at music festivals and events.

Among numerous accolades, Mr. Porter received the Houston Symphony's 2014 Spec's Award for Excellence in Music Education. Through his unwavering commitment to musical excellence, he continues to inspire, mentor, and empower young musicians, shaping their artistic journeys and fostering a lifelong appreciation for the beauty and power of orchestral music.

**Angela Peugnet,**  
*String Orchestra Conductor*



Mrs. Angela Peugnet has served as the head orchestra director at Fort Settlement MS since the fall of 2006. Under her direction, the Fort Settlement Orchestras have been an invited Midwest Clinic Ensemble, honored many times as Commended and National Winners with the Foundation for Music Education, and have been multi-year finalists in the Texas Honor Orchestra Competition.

Mrs. Peugnet holds a Bachelor of Music with Teacher's Certification from the University of Houston with Membership in the Honors College and holds a Master of Music with a conducting specialization from Colorado State University. Previously, she taught in the Spring Branch Independent School District and was on staff with the University of Houston Moores School of Music's Preparatory and Continuing Studies Department as the Suzuki Strings Program Coordinator. Mrs. Peugnet

has worked with some of the profession's most notable teachers including Dr. Laurie Scott, Mr. William Dick, Mr. Andrzej Grabiec, and Maestros Franz Krager, and Wes Kenney.

She is a member of the Texas Music Educators Association, Texas Orchestra Directors Association, American String Teachers Association, Texas Music Adjudicators Association, Suzuki Association of the Americas, Sigma Alpha Iota, and has served as an orchestra committee member for the state UIL String Orchestra Texas Prescribed Music List. She is honored to be a member of Mu Omicron, a peer-nominated honors society of orchestra directors. She has been an invited conductor and clinician with several Houston Area Region Orchestras. In 2019 she was honored with the Music Educator Award by the Houston Symphony and the Spec's Charitable Foundation.

She and her husband, Forrest Peugnet, are proud parents to three girls. When she is not teaching, she performs with the Houston Civic Orchestra, enjoys playing music with her children, backpacking, hiking, camping, reading, archery, and playing board/video games with family and friends.

**Jackson Guillén***Debut String Orchestra  
Conductor*

Honduran violinist and violist Jackson Guillén is the Director of the El Sistema-inspired Houston Youth Symphony Coda Music Program and Conductor of the HYS Debut String Orchestra. Additionally, Dr. Guillén serves as Professor of Violin and Viola, and orchestra conductor at Lone Star College-Tomball.

Dr. Guillén has performed in venues in the United States, Mexico, Honduras, Colombia, and Chile, and toured several countries of Latin America with the Orchestra of the Americas. He has served as Principal Second Violin of the Gulf Coast Symphony Orchestra, Lubbock Symphony, and the Symphony of Southeast Texas, and for the past three seasons, he has been invited as guest concertmaster of the Shreveport Symphony Orchestra. An avid chamber musician, Jackson completed a two-year Young

Artist Fellowship with Da Camera of Houston. He also performs regularly with professional chamber ensembles in the city. In 2016 he co-founded the Terra Nostra Ensemble, recently appointed Ensemble-in-Residence at Houston Baptist University. This ensemble focuses on promoting and performing music by Latin American and Iberian composers. As an arts entrepreneur, Dr. Guillén plays an important role in the yearly organization of the Encuentro Anual de Cuerdas, a string-focused festival that takes place in Honduras. In 2012, he was accepted as a member of the first generation of the Youth Orchestra of the Americas (now Orchestra of the Americas) Global Leaders Program, participating in missions in Honduras, El Salvador, and Chicago.

Dr. Guillén has performed as a guest artist at the International Music Festival in Medellin, Colombia; the International Music Festival in Naolinco, Mexico; the Victoria-Bach Festival; the Quartz Mountain Music Festival; the Texas Music Festival; and the Masterworks Festival Orchestra, among others. Most recently, he was selected for the Cleveland Institute of Music's Future of Music Faculty Fellowship which addresses underrepresentation in Music School Faculty.



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## Teaching Artists

### Fall Concert

#### Sectional Coaches

Marcos Altamirano  
*bass*

Nicholas Leh Baker  
*strings*

Stephen Bond  
*brass*

Carmen Borregales  
*woodwinds*

Whitney Bullock  
*viola*

Laura Callon  
*violin*

Clint Capshaw  
*strings*

Matthew Daily\*  
*bass*

Yevgeny Dokshansky  
*clarinet*  
*woodwinds*

Andrés Gonzalez  
*violin*

Zelda Gray  
*violin*

Benjamin Grube  
*violin*

Russell Haehl\*  
*trumpet*

Deborah Harvey  
*horn*

Craig Hauschildt  
*percussion*

Naomi Hoffmeyer  
*harp*

David Irish  
*brass*

Mann-Wen Lo  
*violin*

Stephen Miahky  
*violin*

Emily Moscoso\*  
*oboe*

Danny Nguyen\*  
*bassoon*

Hunter O'Brien  
*flute*  
*woodwinds*

Ryan Rongone  
*low brass*

Adam Sadberry\*  
*flute*  
*woodwinds*

Elizabeth Spencer  
*cello*

Elton Tai\*  
*viola*

Mayara Velasquez  
*cello*

Karissa Williams  
*violin*

Molly Wise  
*viola*

Joy Yanai  
*cello*

Sergein Yap  
*viola*

### Chamber Music

#### Program Coaches

Whitney Bullock

Zelda Gray

Ruth (Natali) Linares

#### Melody Program

##### Teachers

Matthew Daily\*

Mairéad Flory

Luis Gutiérrez Fonseca

Tony Luong\*

Luis Ramirez

Ryan Rongone

Jacob Speakman

**Coda Music Program**

Jackson Guillén  
*Director*

**Coda Program****Assistant Directors**

Omar Escobedo  
Nora Henschen

**Lead Teachers**

Samantha Arizpe  
Luis Gutiérrez Fonseca  
Ruth Garcia

**Assistant Teachers**

Jonathan Andino  
Larysa Horichenko  
Christian Ibañez  
Vu Pham  
Ariya Tai  
Angelica Velasquez  
Natalie Zaldivar  
Mario Zelaya

**Interns**

Alejandro Castillo\*  
Ivy Kubin  
Tony Luong\*  
Julian Montez

**Coda Program Mentor**

Ava D'Souza^

**Coda Program Volunteer**

Abby Romero

\*Houston Youth  
Symphony alum

^ *Current HYS musician*

**Parent Volunteers**

Nikki Achivida  
Olayinka Akinyemiju  
Amy Billasch  
Yang Bo  
Aba Coleman  
Amber Danley  
Kristen Huang Diaz  
Jenny Gao  
Carissa Helms  
Kimberly Jones  
Tatiana Judd  
Elaine Loggenberg  
Jaye Mao

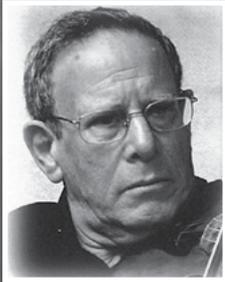
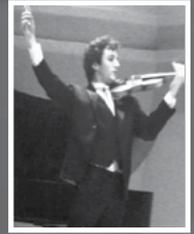
Melanie McLeod  
Martha Mollett  
Lucy Ngu  
Chi Nguyen  
Danette Quaicoe  
Rolando Rodriguez  
Yolanda Rodriguez  
Mindy Snow  
Ying Song  
Becky Stegall  
Lydia Tam  
Joan Wijatno  
Sue Wu

Tao Xu  
Xiao Yang  
Wei Zuo



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**First Prize: \$10,000**  
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All instruments may apply, violin, viola, cello, double bass, percussion, wind, brass, and piano.

Age: Under 29 by December 31, 2025

Winners Concert:

Sunday, 5:00 pm, March 22, 2026

Duncan Hall, Rice University

Apply online at:

[www.mikahaslercompetition.org](http://www.mikahaslercompetition.org)



# Houston Youth Symphony Audience Survey

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To assist HYS in reporting requirements for various federal, state and city grants, please take a few minutes to complete this brief survey.



**Step 1** Scan this QR code with your phone's camera

**Step 2** Fill out the survey

**Step 3** Press submit

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*Thank you for your time!*

Houston Youth Symphony

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**Alumni and Chamber  
Music Concert  
Friday,  
December 19, 2025**

7:30 p.m.

Strake Jesuit College  
Preparatory, Parsley Center  
8900 Bellaire Blvd.

Suggested ticket price  
contribution: \$10

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For updates on concert details,  
check [houstonyouthsymphony.org](http://houstonyouthsymphony.org)

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Houston Youth Symphony

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713-785-2422

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