



Meet our Guests



DAVID ELLIS, GUEST CONDUCTOR

A conductor, cellist, and viola da gambist, David B. Ellis has performed repertoire ranging from Renaissance to Contemporary. He received a Bachelor's of Music degree in Cello performance, a Master's of Music degree in Historical Performance, and a Master's of Music degree in Orchestra Conducting, all from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. While at Oberlin, David studied with professors Raphael Jimenez, Tim Weiss, and Catharina Meints, and assembled and directed the Oberlin Baroque Orchestra.

As a viola da gambist and baroque cellist, David has performed in many ensembles in Ohio and throughout the United States, including The Newberry Consort, Catacoustic, Les Délices, Three Notch'd Road, Apollo's Fire, Burning River Baroque, and the Atlanta Baroque Orchestra.

As a modern cellist, David has played in ensembles featuring a wide range of genres, including but not limited to the Akron Symphony and Cleveland Chamber Symphony.

As a conductor, David has served as director of the CWRU Case Camerata Chamber Orchestra and Executive and Artistic Director for Earth and Air: String Orchestra. David is a passionate teacher, and in addition to maintaining a small private studio of cellists and viola da gambists, he has taught classes on numerous topics and served as a faculty member at the Viola da Gamba Society of America's annual Conclave. David is a native of Solon, Ohio, and currently resides in Cleveland.



JOSHUA LAURETIG, OBOE

Joshua Lauretig, hailed for his "considerable musicianship" and "beautiful rich sound" by coolcleveland.com and "apparent virtuosity and lyricism" by the Talbot Spy, is the second oboist of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. He also serves as the second oboist of the Colorado Music Festival Orchestra and is a teaching mentor at the Lake George Music Festival. He has been invited to perform with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Sarasota Orchestra and the Chautauqua Symphony Orchestras.





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Joshua is a laureate of numerous international music competitions: he was awarded first prize in the International Double Reed Society's 2014 Young Artist Competition; received Honorable Mention in the 2019 Gillet-Fox Oboe Competition; received third prize in the 2020 Busan Maru International Music Festival Concerto Competition, of which he was the only American finalist; and received second prize in the 2020 Elizabeth Loker Concerto Competition. He has been invited to perform at the music festivals of Sarasota, Colorado, and Aspen, as well as the Moritzburg Festival Academy. He has been featured on recitals

sponsored by the Interlochen Center for the Arts, the Montante Cultural Center's "Informally Formal" recital series, the Ventfort Hall Summer Chamber Music Concert Series, and has performed on WHYY-TV Philadelphia's "On Stage at Curtis." He has given solo performances with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, the Ars Nova Chamber Orchestra, the Lakeland Civic Orchestra, the Mid-Atlantic Symphony, the Young Artist Debut Orchestra of Erie, PA, and the United States Navy Band.

An advocate for expanding the musical possibilities of the oboe, he frequently works with contemporary composers and performers of all genres. In 2023 he made the world premiere recording of Nicolas Bacri's Four Nocturnes with violinist Isabel Ong, available to listen on YouTube. In 2022 Joshua gave the world premiere of Tony Manfredonia's new Transformation Concerto for oboe and orchestra. In 2021 he was featured on Daniel Ross's track Reimagination Station, available to listen on all music streaming platforms. He has performed with numerous artists beyond the classical music genre: Project Trio, Time for Three, Gladys Knight, Jefferson Starship, Blame Sally, Kenny G, Loren Allred, Kristin Chenoweth, Jon Anderson from Yes, and more.

A student of Richard Woodhams (former principal oboe, Philadelphia Orchestra), Joshua earned a Bachelor's Degree at the Curtis Institute of Music, where he was awarded the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation Fellowship. Other teachers include Danna Sundet, Olav van Hezewijk, and Keisuke Wakao.



SSO MUSIC AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Domenico Boyagian

Celebrated for his expressive artistry, clarity of vision, and dynamic leadership, Maestro Domenico Boyagian has been hailed by The Cleveland Plain Dealer as “a born conductor” and “a conductor for whom the music is the sole point of standing before musicians.” Milwaukee’s Shepherd Express praised his “insightful grasp of style” and his ability to lead “with sensitivity in tempo and phrase.”

Now in his eighth season as Music Director of the Suburban Symphony Orchestra, Boyagian has guided the ensemble through a vibrant period of growth, highlighted by a complete Beethoven Cycle that culminated in a sold-out Ninth Symphony at Severance Hall to celebrate the orchestra’s 70th anniversary. The 2025–26 season features works by Holst, Grieg, Prokofiev, Saint-Saens, Tchaikovsky, Sibelius, as well as the annual Young Soloist Concerto Competition. A dedicated advocate for education, Boyagian collaborated with pianist Lang Lang on the “101 Pianists” program to inspire young performers.



As Music Director of Cleveland Opera Theater, Boyagian has elevated the company to a leading regional force, conducting productions across the U.S. with companies such as Florentine Opera, Opera Southwest, Florida Grand Opera, Opera North, Opera Delaware, Opera Baltimore, and the Manhattan School of Music. Guest engagements have included the Milwaukee Symphony, Delaware Symphony, Palm Beach Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra of Costa Rica, and the Bulgarian Festival Orchestra.

Born in Bologna, Italy, Boyagian studied at the Bologna Conservatory, Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena, and the Cleveland Institute of Music. He has recorded Grieg works with Antonio Pompa-Baldi and the Ohio Philharmonic for Centaur Records, as well as Margaret Brouwer’s Voice of the Lake with Blue Streak Ensemble. His honors include a “Most Distinguished Artist” grant from Cleveland’s Community Partnership for Arts and Culture and recognition as one of the “Top 10 Most Successful Italians Under 40 in the U.S.” by the Italy-America Chamber of Commerce of New York.



Notes on the Program

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Welcome to our Halloween spectacular! We will trade treats for terror in a concert of ghoulish delights. Get ready to meet the fiends and specters of the past, from the infernal pacts of Don Giovanni to the wild, demonic flight over Bald Mountain. The music of Saint-Saëns will invite you to the midnight dance of the dead, all leading to the hallucinatory drama of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*. Don't worry—the beautiful, brief calm of Mozart's Oboe Concerto will keep your heart rate in check... for a moment. Let the dark adventure begin!

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Overture to Don Giovanni, K.527

Don Giovanni is one of the three brilliant operas Mozart wrote in collaboration with librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte. (The others are *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Così fan tutte*.) Legend holds that the Overture for this masterpiece was composed literally at the last minute for its premiere in Prague on October 29, 1787, with the score arriving at the copyists just hours before the curtain rose. The opera tells the infamous tale of the Spanish rake, Don Giovanni (the Italian form of Don Juan), who lives a dissolute life until he is finally condemned to Hell. Mozart deliberately inscribed *dramma giocoso* (jocular drama) on the title page, breaking from the strict Italian tradition that separate the musical theater into *opera seria* (serious opera) and *opera buffa* (comic opera). In *Don Giovanni*, Mozart created a tense, innovative mix, juxtaposing the profound themes of fate, death, and morality with moments of riotous buffoonery. This dramatic innovation is perfectly foreshadowed in the Overture, which is divided into two distinct sections, establishing it not just as an opener, but as a genuine part of the narrative.

The Overture opens with six thundering chords in D minor, a key often associated with death and prominently used in Mozart's *Requiem*. After a brief, suspenseful passage, the orchestra plunges back into the D minor chord, reharmonized with the diabolic diminished sevenths. These dark, weighty chords would reappear in the final scene before the Commendatore's aria as he pronounces judgment, establishing the opening as a powerful proclamation of death and fate. A series of minor-key scales in the woodwinds and strings gradually modulates the harmony, and after a thunderous tremolo, the ominous music breaks off into a sparkling, energetic D major *Allegro* that embodies Don Giovanni himself. Written in sonata form, this section captures the whirlwind, hedonistic pace of the rake's life. Its lively themes suggest his endless pursuits and superficial sparkle, while an undercurrent of intensity hints at the dangerous game he plays.

The Overture stands as a perfect microcosm of the opera itself: the D minor opening represents the shadow of tragic judgment that hangs over the story, while the D Major section represents the thrilling, effervescent world of the legendary libertine. Together, they create the profound musical thesis statement for one of the greatest works in the operatic repertoire.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Oboe Concerto in C major, K. 314 (271K)

Mozart's Concerto in C Major, K. 314 (271K), has a fascinating history rooted in both serendipity and necessity. It was composed in the spring or summer of 1777 while Mozart was still working for the Archbishop in Salzburg, written for the newly hired court oboist, Giuseppe Ferlendis. A year later, during his journey to Mannheim and Paris, Mozart received a commission from a wealthy Dutch amateur flutist, Ferdinand De Jean, for several works featuring the flute. Finding himself pressed for time and confessing a personal dislike for the instrument, Mozart took the expedient measure of transposing and slightly modifying his Oboe Concerto for the flute, changing the key from C Major to D Major. For nearly a century and a half, the work was known only as the Flute Concerto in D Major, K. 314. The original Oboe



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Concerto was widely believed to be lost until a handwritten set of orchestral parts was discovered in the Salzburg Mozarteum archives in 1920. Scholars conclusively identified it as the original composition, returning this brilliant work to the oboe repertoire.

Composed when Mozart was twenty-one, the Oboe Concerto is a buoyant and expertly crafted showpiece of the galant style. Mozart wrote a number of concertos during this period as exercises for opera, leading him to purposely infuse this work with operatic elements. Like his stage works, the concerto excels in its ability to pit the individual voice against the mass, demonstrating his exquisite melodic gifts and skill in exploiting the oboe's distinctive character.

The first movement, *Allegro aperto* (open allegro), signals a broad and energetic character. This marking—used in only three of his concertos—underscores the movement's operatic flair. Structurally, it is a quintessential example of Concerto Sonata Form, seamlessly blending the older ritornello structure with the newly born sonata form. The movement features a double exposition: The orchestra's Ritornello 1 introduces the main themes entirely in the tonic (C major). The solo oboe enters and re-presents the theme, this time modulating to the dominant (G major). Notably, the soloist's entrance—a rapid ascending scale ending on a long-held high C—is a vocal trick borrowed directly from opera to impress the audience. The development section follows, when the orchestra enters Ritornello 2 in G major, and the thematic material is varied and moves through various keys, highlighting the soloist's agility with wide leaps and rapid scale passages. The recapitulation then brings both themes back, fully resolving the harmonic tension in C major. Finally, the orchestra pauses on a dominant chord for the oboist's virtuosic cadenza before the movement concludes in a vigorous tutti on the tonic.

Marked *Adagio non troppo*, the second movement is a soulful, expressive aria, reminiscent of Mozart's finest operatic vocal lines. It is written in a compact Abridged Sonata Form in the key of F major. The exposition opens with the orchestra stating the first theme, which is then passed to the solo oboe. The oboe introduces the second theme, gradually modulating to the dominant key (C major) where the section ends. A very short development serves merely as a bridge to the recapitulation, which restates both opening themes but ensures the second theme ends on the tonic (F major). After a lyrical cadenza, a brief coda brings the movement to a serene end.

The final movement is cast in Sonata-Rondo form, a combination of the sectional repetitions of a Rondo (A B A C A...) and the thematic and harmonic development of Sonata Form (exposition, development, recapitulation). The sparkling, lighthearted main theme proved so irresistible that Mozart reused it four years later for the aria "Welche Wonne, welche Lust" (What bliss, what pleasure) in his opera *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (The Abduction from the Seraglio). After a virtuosic cadenza that explores the very high and low registers of the oboe, the main theme returns, and the movement concludes full of effervescent energy.

Camille Saint-Saëns: Danse Macabre, Op.40

The tradition of *Danse Macabre* (Dance of Death), can be traced back to late medieval Europe. This period was characterized by devastating plagues and warfare, which caused millions of deaths across the continent within a few years. Since then, the Dance of Death has become a popular allegorical theme, frequently appearing in art forms such as tomb engravings, paintings, sculptures, book illustrations, musical compositions, and theater. It serves as a potent reminder that death is the ultimate ruler, inescapable regardless of one's wealth or social standing. Visually, the Dance of Death typically depicts a skeleton or a group of skeletons



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emerging from graves, dancing, playing music, holding hands with living figures, and guiding them toward the grave.

Camille Saint-Saëns was initially drawn to the macabre poetry of Henri Cazalis, whose verse depicts Death as a fiddler calling the skeletons from their tombs on Halloween night. Saint-Saëns first set the poem as a song for voice and piano in 1872. Two years later, partly inspired by the tone poems of Franz Liszt, he expanded the work into the dazzling symphonic poem for orchestra we know today, premiering it in 1875. In this orchestral version, the solo violin takes on the role of Death's fiddle.

The piece opens with a harp plucking the note D twelve times, symbolizing the twelve strokes of midnight and the moment the dead rise from their tombs. The solo violin enters, playing a tritone, an interval historically known as the *diabolus in musica* (devil in music). The dance begins as a waltz. A solo flute introduces the first theme, which is then repeated by the violins. This is followed by the second theme, played by the solo violin accompanied by pizzicato of the string sections. The entire orchestra then joins the dance, alternating between the first and second themes. When the solo violin reappears on the first theme, it is accompanied by the xylophone, an innovative touch used to depict the rattling of skeleton bones. (Years later, the composer reused this "rattling skeleton" theme in the "Fossils" movement in *The Carnival of the Animals*). The dance grows more energetic as different sections begin to echo each other in a fugal manner. Amidst this, the woodwinds begin to quote the notes from *Dies Irae* (The Day of Wrath), a Gregorian plainchant theme from the Requiem mass that summons death and judgment, albeit set to the waltz rhythm. This quotation is then passed to other instruments, becoming increasingly distorted. One might speculate that this could be another influence from Liszt, whose own composition, *Totentanz* (German for Dance of Death), completed in 1849, quoted the exact same *Dies Irae*. Following this, the solo violin brings back the second theme, which is echoed by the woodwinds and strings. After some ascending and descending chromatic scales resembling strong gusts of wind, the orchestra returns to interwoven variations of the first and second themes. Just as the dance reaches a frenzied peak, it suddenly stops. A cockerel's crow, played by the oboe, announces the break of dawn. String tremolos sweep across the scene, sending the skeletons back to their graves. The solo violin plays a final, plaintive, almost nostalgic theme as the night's revelry ends and silence returns.

Modest Mussorgsky: Night on Bald Mountain (1886 arrangement by Rimsky-Korsakov)

Modest Petrovich Mussorgsky belonged to "The Five," a group of 19th-century Russian composers who sought to forge a distinct Russian musical identity, intentionally breaking away from the established Western European canon. To do this, they often drew inspiration from Russian history and folklore.

Night on Bald Mountain was one of the first Russian orchestral tone poems, composed by the twenty-eight-year-old Mussorgsky in 1867. The work depicts the mythological scene of the Witches' Sabbath, a gathering believed to take place every year on St. John's Eve on Bald Mountain—the legendary epicenter for witchcraft in Slavic folk mythology. (Some sources identify this location as the Lysa Hora near Kiev.) In a letter to his friend Vladimir Nikolsky, Mussorgsky vividly described the piece's scenario:

"Witches gather on this mountain, talk scandal, and wait for their chief, Satan. After his arrival, they form a circle around the throne on which the chief, in the form of a giant goat, has seated himself, and they glorify him. When Satan has reached enough of a rage thanks to the witches' glorification, he gives the sign for the sabbath to begin and then picks himself out the witches who have taken his fancy."



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Mussorgsky's nationalist passion continued as he declared the work an "original Russian work, a work not steeped in German profundity of thought and routine, but instead... a work that flowed forth in our native fields and was fed on Russian bread." He completed the composition in only twelve days, finishing it exactly on the eve of St. John's Day, June 23, 1867.

Despite its dramatic genius, *Night on Bald Mountain* was never performed during the composer's lifetime. Having never received formal composition training, Mussorgsky was often criticized for his lack of technical polish. Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov, a fellow member of "The Five" but a more skillful composer and master of orchestration, once dismissed Mussorgsky's raw scores as having "absurd, disconnected harmony, ugly part-writing, sometimes strikingly illogical modulation, sometimes a depressing lack of it, unsuccessful scoring of orchestral things... what was needed at the moment was an edition for performance..." Such an edition was provided by Rimsky-Korsakov himself in 1886, five years after Mussorgsky's death. While Mussorgsky's raw musical ideas were preserved, Rimsky-Korsakov completely re-composed, re-orchestrated, and re-structured the piece, resulting in a version that is technically smoother and brilliantly virtuosic. It is Rimsky-Korsakov's version that achieved lasting fame and is the one being performed today.

The music follows a clear thematic structure. It opens with short, screeching string figures that represent the underground noises of inhuman voices. Wind instruments sweep up and down the scales like violent gales. The brass section announces the terrifying appearance of the Spirits of Darkness, followed by that of Chernobog, the Black God of Slavic mythology. This chaotic opening soon gives way to a savage, grotesque "Witches' Sabbath" dance. Swirling folk-tune themes are sometimes traded between different instrument sections and sometimes played in unison, suggesting both individual tribute and the collective worship of Chernobog during the Black Mass. At the height of the sabbath, the distant, gentle ringing of a village church bell is heard. This sound disperses the spirits of darkness, and a lyrical, tranquil tune on the solo clarinet and flute brings the morning light. The music ends in serenity.

Hector Berlioz: *Symphonie Fantastique*, Op.14

In 1827, while still a student at the Paris Conservatory, Berlioz attended a production of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and became instantly and obsessively infatuated with the actress playing Ophelia, the Irish star Harriet Smithson. Over the next few years, his numerous fervent love letters went unanswered; Smithson even refused to meet him. Driven by this intense, unrequited love and despair, Berlioz composed a work that would revolutionize music: the *Symphonie fantastique* (*Fantastic Symphony*), subtitled *Episode in the Life of an Artist*, in Five Sections.

This semi-autobiographical work became the first great example of programmatic symphony, where the music explicitly tells a dramatic story. The plot follows a gifted but despairing Artist who, in his hopelessness over his beloved, poisons himself with opium. The symphony then traces his drug-fueled hallucinations, beginning with romantic daydreams and a glamorous ball, moving through a pastoral field, and spiraling into a terrifying nightmare of execution and a satanic orgy. The entire work is unified by the *idée fixe* (fixed idea)—an elusive, recurring theme that represents the artist's passionate, obsessive preoccupation with his beloved.

A truly revolutionary creation, the *Symphonie fantastique* (1830) established a new aesthetic defined by vivid orchestral colors, unconventional timbres, and surreal structures. This music prioritized intense emotional and psychological expression, deliberately breaking from classical



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forms. The work's sheer audacity—manifested in sudden shifts in mood and dynamics, rhythmic displacement, and a striking emphasis on pure sound—served as a crucial precursor to modernism. It also established a new tradition of macabre, "psychological" music that would later influence composers such as Liszt, Mussorgsky, and Saint-Saëns.

The symphony itself was a stunning success in a dramatic seduction strategy. Harriet Smithson finally attended the second premiere in 1832. When the audience erupted in applause, she at last understood that the spectacular work was about her. Berlioz successfully married Smithson the following year. In a grim twist of fate, the marriage dissolved into acrimony and alcohol, lending a deeply ironic appropriateness to the symphony's own dark conclusion.

The composer himself supplied the narrative for the symphony. Below, you'll find the English translation of Berlioz's original program notes for the fourth and fifth movements.

IV: March to the scaffold

He dreams that he has killed his beloved, that he is condemned to death and led to execution. The procession advances to the sound of a march that is sometimes somber and wild, and sometimes brilliant and solemn, in which a dull sound of heavy footsteps follows without transition the loudest outbursts. At the end, the *idée fixe* reappears for a moment like a final thought of love interrupted by the fatal blow.

V: Dream of a witches' sabbath

He sees himself at a witches' sabbath, in the midst of a hideous gathering of shades, sorcerers and monsters of every kind who have come together for his funeral. Strange sounds, groans, outbursts of laughter; distant shouts which seem to be answered by more shouts. The beloved melody appears once more, but has now lost its noble and shy character; it is now no more than a vulgar dance-tune, trivial and grotesque: it is she who is coming to the sabbath... Roars of delight at her arrival... She joins the diabolical orgy... The funeral knell tolls, burlesque parody of the *Dies Irae*. The dance of the witches. The dance of the witches combined with the *Dies Irae*.