FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

NOVEMBER 15, 2026

ORPHEUS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

ISATA KANNEH-MASON PIANO

The Board of FCM dedicates this concert to Aaron J. Szalaj

Tonight's performance is generously sponsored by Patsy and Jim Aronstein

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL
(1685-1759)

Selections from *Water Music*
HWV 348: I. Overture. Largo – Allegro
HWV 348: III. [Allegro]
HWV 350: I. Sarabande
HWV 348: IX: Hornpipe
HWV 350: VI. Gigue 1 - VII. Gigue 2
HWV 348: IV. Andante – Allegro da capo

W.A. MOZART
(1756-1791)

Piano Concerto No. 27 in B-flat Major, K.595
Allegro
Larghetto
Allegro

INTERMISSION

KATIE JENKINS
(b. 1999)

Elixir of Life*

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN
(1732-1809)

Symphony No. 91 in E-flat, Hob. I:91
Largo - Allegro
Andante
Minuet - Trio
Finale. Vivace

**Rocky Mountain premiere*
Co-commissioned by Friends of Chamber Music and the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra

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ORPHEUS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Orpheus Chamber Orchestra is a radical experiment in musical democracy, proving for over fifty years what happens when exceptional artists gather with total trust in each other and faith in the creative process. Orpheus began in 1972 when cellist Julian Fifer assembled a group of New York freelancers in their early twenties to play orchestral repertoire as if it were chamber music. In that age of co-ops and communes, the idealistic Orpheans snubbed the "corporate" path of symphony orchestras and learned how to play, plan, and promote concerts as a true collective, with leadership roles rotating from the very first performance.

It's one thing for the four players of a string quartet to lean into the group sound and react spontaneously, but with 20 to 30 musicians together, the complexities and payoffs are magnified exponentially. Within its first decade, Orpheus made Carnegie Hall their home and became a global sensation through tours of Europe and Asia. Their catalog of recordings for Deutsche Grammophon, Nonesuch, and other labels grew to include more than 70 albums that still stand as benchmarks of the chamber orchestra repertoire, including Haydn symphonies, Mozart concertos, and 20th-century gems by Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Ravel, and Bartók.

The sound of Orpheus is defined by relationships, and guest artists have always been crucial partners in the process. Orpheus brings out the best in their collaborators, with bonds that deepen over time, as seen with artists and composers alike. Having proven the power of direct communication and open-mindedness within the ensemble, the only relationship Orpheus has never had any use for is one with a conductor.

At home in New York and in the many concert halls it visits in the U.S. and beyond, Orpheus celebrates over fifty years with a renewed commitment to enriching and reflecting the surrounding community. Orpheus Reflections™ brings the healing power of music to those living with dementia and their caregivers. Celebrating more than twenty years, Access Orpheus shares the orchestra's collaborative process with 1,500 New York City Public School students annually through coaching, school visits, and unparalleled access to Orpheus rehearsals and performances at Carnegie Hall. And through the Orpheus Leadership Institute, the musicians impart positive lessons of leadership and democracy to global organizations and businesses. Always evolving as artists and leaders, the Orpheus musicians carry their legacy forward, counting on their shared artistry and mutual respect to make music and effect change.



Photo: Chris Lee

ORPHEUS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

VIOLIN
Ruggero Allifranchini
Ronnie Bauch
Isabelle Durrenberger
Laura Frautschi
Njioma Grevious
Liang-Ping How
Renée Jolles
Maureen Nelson
Miho Saegusa

VIOLA
Maurycy Banaszek
Nardo Poy
Dov Scheindlin

CELLO
Madeline Fayette
Melissa Meell
James Wilson

DOUBLE BASS
Jordan Frazier

FLUTE
Sooyun Kim

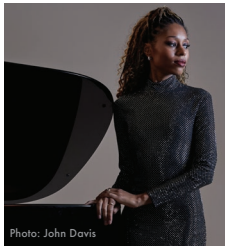
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Kemp Jernigan
James Austin Smith

BASSOON
Gina Cuffari
Adrian Morejon

HORN
Wilden Dannenberg
Nicolee Kuester

HARPSICHORD
Adrian Morejon

This concert is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts. Orpheus has recorded for Deutsche Grammophon, Sony Classical, EMI Classics, BMG/RCA Red Seal, Decca, Nonesuch, Verve, Avex Classics, and its own label, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra Records.


Photo: John Davis

ISATA KANNEH-MASON
piano

ISATA KANNEH-MASON

Isata Kanneh-Mason is first and foremost a pianist, but also a composer and arranger who is passionate about chamber music and romantic repertoire, and loves to bring a range of styles and composers to her performances. She offers eclectic and stimulating recital programs with repertoire encompassing Fanny Mendelssohn and Clara Schumann, Chopin and Brahms, Gershwin, Dobrinka Tabakova, and Coleridge Taylor. In concerto, she is equally at home with works by Felix Mendelssohn and Beethoven as with those by Prokofiev and Rachmaninoff.

Isata is in high demand worldwide. In July 2024 she was invited to perform at the First Night of the BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall with the BBC Symphony and conductor Elim Chan, a performance that resulted in stellar reviews in the mainstream press. Isata went on to appear as concerto soloist with the European Union Youth Orchestra and Iván Fischer in 2024, performing Dohnányi's *Variations on a Nursery Tune* at New York's Carnegie Hall.

The 2026/27 season sees Isata give a much-anticipated recital tour in Australia and New Zealand, which also includes performances with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. She makes debuts with the Athens (Greece) State Symphony, the Cincinnati Symphony, Malmö Symphony, and the Minnesota Orchestra, and returns to the Toronto Symphony and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. She has solo recitals at the Heidelberger Frühling Festival and Tivoli Copenhagen and has chamber music engagements with the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields and the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra.

Isata is a Decca Classics artist and has recorded five solo albums for the label: *Romance* (2019), *Summertime* (2021), *Childhood Tales* (2023), *Mendelssohn* (2024), and *Prokofiev* (2026). Isata has received many awards, including the coveted Leonard Bernstein Award from the Schleswig-Holstein Festival and an Opus Klassik award for best young artist. She released two albums of her favorite works for intermediate and advanced piano students through ABRSM Publishing in 2023. www.isatakannehmason.com

NOTES

HANDEL: SELECTIONS FROM *WATER MUSIC*

When England's Queen Anne died in 1714, she was succeeded by her German cousin, the Elector of Hanover. By coincidence, England's new King George I had been Handel's previous employer. Handel found himself in a sticky diplomatic situation, for he was four years into an extended leave of absence from responsibilities to the Elector in Germany, now King George I. For practical purposes, he had been playing hooky from work, and now his boss was moving to his new city. A good deal of myth and legend has sprung up around the history of the three *Water Music* suites that Handel composed, ostensibly to placate King George and regain royal approval, but we do know certain facts.

One of the monarch's nobles, Baron Kielmansegge, arranged for an evening party on the Thames to take place on July 17, 1717. Handel was commissioned to write music for the occasion. The royal barge was to proceed from Whitehall to Chelsea, where the King and his companions would enjoy a late supper. During the early hours of the morning, they would travel back to the palace.

Several contemporary accounts confirm that the musicians—numbering fifty players—accompanied the royal party on an adjacent barge. Of the three suites that comprise the *Water Music*, the first is believed to have been intended for the initial evening journey on the King's barge. The other two were planned to entertain the monarch and his guests during dinner and the return journey. According to Friedrich Bonet, the Prussian Resident in London:

> His Majesty approved of it so greatly that he caused it to be repeated three times in all, although each performance lasted an hour—namely twice before and once after supper. The [weather] was all that could be desired for the festivity, the number of barges and above all of boats filled with people desirous of hearing was beyond counting.

Since royal blessing immediately conferred favor and, by extension, popularity, Handel's *Water Music* promptly became the rage of London. Eager to capitalize on this success, the composer and his publishers compiled three suites of movements grouped in like keys.

Subsequently, movements from each suite have been transposed to different keys to accommodate the instruments available for

IN BRIEF

BORN:
March 5, 1685, Halle (Saale), Germany

DIED:
April 14, 1759, London, England

FIRST PERFORMANCE:
July 17, 1717 in London, River Thames

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC PERFORMANCE:
This afternoon marks the first performance of this work on our series.

DURATION:
15 minutes

a given performance. Orpheus has drawn from all three suites, opening with the Overture from Suite I and including both dances (Sarabande, Hornpipe, and Gigue) and two movements identified solely by their tempo markings (Allegro and Andante).

Handel's emphasis on the winds, particularly horns and oboes, reflects the royal orchestra's strength in those instruments. Also, for outdoor performance it was essential to use instruments whose sound would carry well. How wonderful this joyous music must have sounded in the open air on the water!

MOZART: PIANO CONCERTO NO. 27 IN B-FLAT MAJOR, K.595

Mozart had not completed a piano concerto in nearly three years when he turned to this B-flat work. It proved to be the last of his incomparable series of keyboard concerti. In spirit and approach, this concerto, K.595 is the opposite of the brilliant D major, K.537 ("Coronation"), its distant but still immediate predecessor. Ironically, recent research in watermarks and paper indicates that Mozart began work on K.595, as early as 1788, the same year as the "Coronation" concerto and of the great final trilogy of symphonies. But he set the concerto aside, perhaps recognizing that it could not survive in an unfinished state on glitter alone, as the "Coronation" was destined to do.

IN BRIEF

BORN:
January 27, 1756, Salzburg, Austria

DIED:
December 5, 1791, Vienna, Austria

FIRST PERFORMANCE:
March 4, 1791, Jahn's Hall, Vienna. W.A. Mozart, fortepiano.

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC PERFORMANCE:
This afternoon marks the first performance of this work on our series.

DURATION:
30 minutes

What sets it so far apart spiritually from the D major concerto? To begin with, it is scored without trumpets or timpani. Every vestige of ceremonial pomp is avoided. That omission underscores the music's understated, wistful qualities. Even though Mozart's three movements are nominally all in major keys—the outer two in B-flat, the slow movement in E-flat major—he veers strongly toward the minor mode. Ambiguous chromaticism throughout the concerto emphasizes the shadowy implications of each tonality. This sense is heightened in the outer movements by the extraordinary journeys Mozart takes through many key centers.

The concerto opens with a measure of gentle accompaniment from the strings: no foreground here, at least to begin with. Mozart eases us into the theme, and a gentle theme it is. Virtually devoid of drama, it holds interest because of its use of three major musical sentences, punctuated by dotted-rhythm interruptions from the wind instruments. How different these woodwind remarks are from the other "military" concertos in B-flat (K.450, K.456), with their pronounced march-like character! Rather than drama,

we have intimacy. Strength is bypassed in favor of poignancy. Recognizing the expressive quality of the woodwinds, Mozart continues to endow them with the important role he favored in the concertos of the mid-1780s.

The first movement development section travels far afield, launching its journey through the circle of fifths in the remote key of B minor. This development section is quite spectacular, not for technical reasons or even for drama, but for psychological depth and for musical mastery. Canonic imitation figures prominently. All Mozart's contrapuntal ideas unfold with a sense of miraculous inevitability that somehow always sounds fresh.

Curiously, K.595 is less virtuosic than most of the other mature concertos. That is not to say it is less difficult for the soloist. Such a transparent texture demands evenness of touch, elegant phrasing, and beautiful tone. The lack of surface virtuosity may perhaps yield greater reward than any other Mozart keyboard concerto. The cadenzas for K.595 in both outer movements are Mozart's own.

Because the piano is fully integrated into the orchestral fabric, there is less sense of dramatic confrontation. In this respect, the work, particularly in the first movement, anticipates Brahms, where the symphonic concept prevails over the concerto. The piano becomes an equal partner, waging the same battle as its orchestral ally.

JENKINS: *ELIXIR OF LIFE*

Katie Jenkins was born in Pontypridd, about 12 miles northwest of the Welsh capital of Cardiff. Now based in New York, she holds two degrees in composition from the Juilliard School and serves on the faculty of Juilliard's pre-college division. Her music often draws on her Welsh heritage, fused with the frenetic and stimulating energy of America's largest city. She has worked extensively with dance companies and in film scoring, as well as with orchestras and choral societies on both sides of the Atlantic. Jenkins's honors include the American Prize in Composition for her musical *This Land of Ours* (2024). She has graciously provided the following introduction to her new piece, which is a Friends of Chamber Music Co-Commission with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra.

> *Elixir of Life* traces the idea of transformation—from fragility to strength, darkness to light, and the mortal towards the eternal. The music begins in a place of instability with a solitary viola line moving restlessly between 6/8 and 7/8. Gradually, fragments begin to connect, melodies intertwine, and the

IN BRIEF

BORN:
1999, Pontypridd, South Wales

FIRST PERFORMANCE:
This afternoon marks the Rocky Mountain premiere of this work.

DURATION:
10 minutes

> music gathers momentum. What is initially unstable becomes increasingly grounded, radiant, and expansive, ultimately becoming an embodiment of hope and a celebration of our capacity to raise up, transform, and uplift others. The work is deeply informed by my Welsh heritage. Lilting folk melodies, modal harmonies, fiddle-like gestures, and the rhythmic vitality of South Wales weave through the music, gradually opening into expansive, pastoral landscapes reminiscent of the Welsh landscape. Against these textures, soaring solo violin lines emerge—at times lyrical and weightless, at others virtuosic and fiercely energetic.
>
> [The] musical language also reflects the contrast between my Welsh roots and my life in New York City. The warmth and ancient resonance of Welsh folk music meet the groove, theatricality, harmonic color, and restless energy of the city. These seemingly distant worlds become intertwined, creating a sound that is both intimate and cinematic, rooted and contemporary. Throughout the piece, musical ideas are repeatedly broken apart and rebuilt, as if undergoing their own process of alchemy. Time stretches and contracts, melodies glide freely through moments of rubato, and moments of darkness continually give way to renewed brightness.
>
> At its heart, *Elixir of Life* is a celebration of transformation, identity, and belonging. It asks where home resides—not simply in a place, but within the musical and emotional landscapes we carry with us. In bringing the sounds of Wales and New York together, [I celebrate] the meeting of cultures and the ways in which distinct musical worlds can influence, enrich, and transform one another, creating a musical language rooted in renewal, resilience, and the enduring possibility of hope and light emerging from darkness.

A single movement, *Elixir of Life* keeps the string players on their toes with near-constant meter changes. Jenkins divides the strings into as many as nine parts, making for complex textures. There are solos for the concertmaster (the first, a series of neo-Baroque arpeggiated figures), then later, towards the end, two brief violin cadenzas. The entire piece is unabashedly tonal, in D major—an exceptionally idiomatic key for strings. Both playful and irrepressible, *Elixir of Life* brims with optimism.

HAYDN: SYMPHONY NO. 91 IN E-FLAT, HOB. I:91

By 1788, Joseph Haydn was the most famous composer in Europe. His international reputation had received an enormous boost through the success of six symphonies commissioned by the Concert de la Loge Olympique in Paris; we know them as the "Paris" Symphonies. The three symphonies numbered 90-92 are the last he wrote before his first trip to London in 1791. He found multiple uses for them, displaying a commercial savvy that may even have skirted the boundaries of ethical behavior. First, he presented the handwritten manuscripts to Claude-François-Marie Rigoley, Comte d'Ogny, a principal backer of the Concert de la Loge Olympique, with handwritten dedications. This gesture was presumably a thank you for the great success of the Parisian performances and the handsome fees Haydn had been paid for the "Paris" Symphonies.

At the same time, he sent copies of the three symphonies to Prince Krafft Ernst von Oettingen-Wallerstein, a Bavarian nobleman who had requested three new works. The Prince objected that he had not received original manuscripts, since he had commissioned exclusive rights to the works. Haydn protested that age and poor eyesight had made his handwritten scores nearly illegible. He had sent additional copies to a Viennese patron, Franz von Kees, who was arranging for the symphonies to be published in Vienna. In all fairness, Haydn was scrambling to satisfy the increasing demand for his music, and he freely acknowledged that he did not compose rapidly. All the same, the eyebrow-raising circumstances of these three symphonies lends credibility to the accusation that Haydn was a crafty businessman.

Musically, these works are significant as examples of Haydn's mature style. The E-flat symphony that opens this final festival concert is less well known than its companions, particularly the splendid "Oxford" Symphony, No. 92 in G. The E-flat work has its own special charm. It is a more intimate symphony, employing a modest orchestra without trumpets or drums. Apart from that, it is consistent with most of Haydn's late symphonies, comprising four movements arranged as follows: slow introduction/allegro; slow movement; minuet/trio; and finale. That stated, the opening movement has an elegance that benefits from a more leisurely pace. The ascending chromatic line of the main theme is quite unusual, nicely balanced by contrary motion in the bass line. Haydn's judicious use of triplets underscores the grace of the movement's triple meter.

IN BRIEF

BORN:
March 31, 1732, Rohrau, Austria

DIED:
May 31, 1809, Vienna, Austria

FIRST PERFORMANCE:
1789, Salles des Gardes of the Tuileries Palace, Paris, France.

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC PERFORMANCE:
This afternoon marks the first performance of this work on our series.

DURATION:
25 minutes

The slow movement is a set of variations in B-flat major. The first variation is a bassoon solo; the second a *minore*—in the startling key of B-flat minor—that strays so far afield from the theme that it feels more like an episode than a variation. Only in the concluding *maggiore* variation does Haydn call on the full resources of his orchestra. He retains full strength for the Minuet, but solo bassoon returns in the exquisite trio section here in unison at the lower octave with the first violins. Punctuation from the oboe and a contrapuntal answering melody from the flute attest to Haydn's subtle and appealing orchestration. To close the symphony, Haydn gives us a lovely, balanced main theme that preserves the spacious elegance of the first movement. He proves that *Vivace* can designate "lively" without having to mean "at a breakneck pace."

Program Notes by Laurie Shulman ©2026

AARON J. SZALAJ
IN MEMORIAM



The Board of Friends of Chamber Music is deeply saddened by the passing of Aaron J. Szalaj, FCM Board member and longtime patron. Aaron was a leader on the board, always lending thoughtful perspective and energy wherever and whenever it was needed. A lifelong violinist, he was passionate about music in all its forms and was one of the primary supporters of FCM's recently created Commissioning Initiative. Our hearts go out to his wife, Becky, and daughters, Mia and Margaret, as well as his extended family. Aaron will be greatly missed. Aaron's family has established the Aaron J. Szalaj Memorial Fund, which will support FCM's Commissioning Initiative. We are grateful to have been a part of Aaron's life and to be a beneficiary of his generous spirit and legacy.

https://www.denverpost.com/obituaries/aaron-john-szalaj-cherry-hills-village-co/

BRINGING MUSIC TO CRAIG HOSPITAL



In September, Friends of Chamber Music launched a new partnership with Craig Hospital, bringing live chamber music to patients and families through its world-renowned music therapy program. Four concerts will be presented throughout the year, beginning with September's performance by the Astrodon String Quartet, CU Boulder's new Quartet in Residence.

We're delighted to share the joy and connection of live music with the Craig community—and look forward to many more musical moments together!

WELCOMING VETERANS THROUGH VET TIX



This season, we're proud to continue our partnership with Veteran Tickets Foundation – Vet Tix – helping make live music accessible to veterans, active-duty service members, and their families. FCM donates 20 tickets to every concert, opening the door to extraordinary musical experiences for those who have served.

Here's a note from an active-duty U.S. Air Force member following our September opening concert with the Isidore String Quartet and Jeremy Denk:

"A big, big thank you to the Friends of Chamber Music here in Denver, to DU, and to Vet Tix for making it possible for us to attend this magnificent performance. It's not often we have the joy of welcoming a MacArthur Fellow, alongside noteworthy world-class performers. Spectacular, grazie."

We look forward to welcoming many more veterans and their families to our concerts this season.

UPCOMING EVENTS

NIKOLAI LUGANSKY, PIANO
SUN, JAN 24, 2027 | 4:00 PM | GATES CONCERT HALL



Described by *Gramophone* as "the most trailblazing and meteoric performer of all," Nikolai Lugansky is making his long-awaited solo debut on our series. Lugansky will lend his extraordinary depth and versatility to two Beethoven Piano Sonatas, Op. 31 and Op. 109, as well as Schumann's Fantasie in C Major.

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Interested in joining us? Email info@friendsofchambermusic.com or visit www.friendsofchambermusic.com/support to learn more. We'd love to hear from you!

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CONCERT COURTESY

To preserve the listening experience for our audience and performers, we ask that any patrons causing a disturbance quietly step outside the concert hall. We appreciate your cooperation in creating an environment where everyone can fully enjoy the music. Ushers will be happy to assist with reentry at an appropriate break in the performance.

COLORADO GIVES DAY IS DECEMBER 8!

At Friends of Chamber Music, we believe in the transformative power of live music. Each concert brings world-renowned musicians to our stage, enriching our community through extraordinary music.

Ticket sales cover only part of the cost of presenting these artists in an exceptional concert hall—and those costs continue to rise. As we approach Colorado Gives Day, we invite you to make a gift to support the music you love. Every donation you make will be boosted by the Colorado Gives Foundation/PNC incentive fund.

Make your gift anytime at www.coloradogives.org/FCM-CO.

Thank you for your support. Together we can continue to provide world-class performances for generations to come.



UPCOMING CONCERTS

CHAMBER SERIES

Nikolai Lugansky, piano
Sun, Jan 24, 2027 | 4:00 pm

Danish String Quartet
Thu, Feb 18, 2027 | 7:30 pm

Pavel Haas Quartet
Sun, Mar 14, 2027 | 4:00 pm

Anthony McGill, clarinet
Conrad Tao, piano
Mon, Apr 5, 2027 | 7:30 pm

Imani Winds
Wed, May 12, 2027 | 7:30 pm

COMMUNITY EVENTS

MUSIC IN THE GALLERIES

Cantare Montibus
Sunday, February 14, 2027
12:00 & 1:00 pm (identical concerts)

The Femme Quartet
Sunday, April 11, 2027
12:00 & 1:00 pm (identical concerts)

Clyfford Still Museum
1250 Bannock St., Denver

SPECIAL THANKS

SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL FACILITIES DISTRICT (TIER III)
for supporting FCM's 2026-27 season

COLORADO PUBLIC RADIO (KVOD 88.1 FM)
for broadcasting FCM concerts on its "Colorado Spotlight" programs

BONFILS-STANTON FOUNDATION
for sponsorship of FCM's audience development programs

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for providing lead gifts to the FCM Endowment Fund

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for streaming FCM concerts this season

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