

The Metropolitan Youth Symphony's 2022-23 Season Showcases Themes of Americana, Storytelling, and Tragic Love

Repertoire pieces include Jennifer Higdon's Cold Mountain Suite, compositions inspired by Eric Carle's The Very Hungry Caterpillar, and work from student composers through The Authentic Voice Program.

PORTLAND, ORE., SEPTEMBER 16, 2022 – Today, the Metropolitan Youth Symphony announces its 2022-23 season for its Symphony Orchestra Downtown Series, with work from notable composers such as Antonin Dvorak, Jennifer Higdon, Margaret Allison Bonds, Emilie Mayer, and Leonard Bernstein. The season will span four Symphony Orchestra performances on November 13, January 8, March 5, and May 19, with themes of Americana, storytelling, tragic love, and multicultural influences woven throughout.

The robust season lineup, programmed by dynamic MYS music director and conductor Raúl Gómez-Rojas, includes:

From the New World

November 13, 2022, 7:30pm at Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall.

The MYS Symphony Orchestra will feature Antonin Dvorak's *New World Symphony*. This orchestral masterpiece, reflective of both Old and New World styles and themes, was created by Bohemian composer Antonín Dvořák while he lived in New York City in the early 1890s. As one of the first classical compositions to draw inspiration from New World music and lore, this piece was purportedly inspired by Dvorak's reflections on American South spirituals and Native American traditions while incorporating stylistic elements of Old World sources.

In its fifth year, The Authentic Voice commissioning series will feature a collaborative *Dance Suite* by student composers Skye Neal, Amir Avsker, Aidan Bagby, Adrian Valenzuela, and Kate Andrews.

The Magic of Eric Carle

January 8, 2023, 4:00pm at Newmark Theater.

MYS' January concert for the young and young at heart will pay homage to **the life, work, and legacy of Eric Carle** with a screening of five animated stories by Illuminated Films. All Classical Portland radio hosts will accompany the screening with live narration, and the Symphony Orchestra will perform Julian Nott's music for *The Very Hungry Caterpillar & Other Stories*. This distinctive, collaborative, and novel project brings beloved film tunes to the stage from *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *I See A Song*, *The Mixed-Up Chameleon*, *The Very Quiet Cricket*, and *Papa, Please Get The Moon For Me*, celebrating Carle's storytelling mastery. MYS will also include an instrument petting zoo, providing aspiring musicians an opportunity to try out instruments.

Tales of Love and Justice with Jennifer Higdon

March 5, 2023, 7:30pm at Newmark Theater.

Pulitzer Prize and three-time Grammy-winner Jennifer Higdon will join MYS for an artistic residency and to attend the **March 5** concert, during which MYS will perform the West Coast premiere of Higdon's *Cold Mountain Suite*. Winner of the International Opera Award for Best World Premiere in 2016, *Cold Mountain* debuted as an opera, telling the story of a Confederate soldier grappling with conflicts of

violence, love, and redemption. The piece was co-commissioned by MYS through New Music for America in cooperation with The League of American Orchestras and a consortium of 15 professional orchestras and one youth orchestra.

Accompanying the *Cold Mountain Suite* are four selections from Margaret Allison Bonds' *The Montgomery Variations (Decision, March, Dawn in Dixie, and Benediction)*. Based on the African American Spiritual "*I Want Jesus to Walk with Me*" and edited by John Michael Cooper, these variations focus on the Montgomery Bus Boycotts, the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing, and resistance to segregationist policies in the Jim Crow era.

Additionally, the show will feature the world premiere of a piece by student composer Margot Pullen as part of The Authentic Voice commissioning series, along with a showcase of one of the winners of MYS' annual Concerto Competition.

Against the Grain

May 19, 2023, 7:30pm at Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall.

The season finale will showcase *Faust Overture* by Emilie Mayer, an underappreciated contemporary of Richard Wagner and Franz Liszt. Emilie challenged the expectations of female composers during her time, veering away from salon music in favor of grand form. Despite her eight symphonies and numerous overtures, the *Faust Overture* was the only work printed during her lifetime.

Wrapping up the 2022-23 season, MYS will play Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story: Symphonic Dances*, telling the iconic story of forbidden love and power struggles on the streets of Upper West Side New York in the 1960s. The narrative will unfold across nine interconnected pieces of music, including *Prologue, 'Somewhere,' Scherzo, Mambo, Cha-Cha, Meeting Scene, 'Cool' Fugue, Rumble, and Finale*.

Student composer Elaina Stuppler will finish off this season's lineup for The Authentic Voice commissioning series with her piece addressing gun violence, and one of the winners of the MYS Concerto Competition will perform as well.

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Ticket prices range from \$11-\$45. Tickets are now available for purchase, with additional information available at www.playmys.org or 503-239-4566.

About the Authentic Voice

In partnership with Fear No Music's *Young Composers Project*, MYS will continue its fifth year of **The Authentic Voice** commissioning series. The partnership gives young composers an opportunity to write full symphony orchestra and to hear their work performed while musicians get to play never-performed music written by their peers. During the composition process, each student composer hears their piece played by MYS students on multiple occasions, allowing opportunities for questions, feedback, revisions, and collaboration. While student compositions were initially only performed by the Symphony Orchestra, this program has expanded to include Concert Orchestra, and the Portland Camerata, MYSticks, and MYSfits ensembles.

About the Concerto Competition

MYS' annual Concerto Competition is held each January, with its winners showcased during the March and May shows alongside the Symphony Orchestra. This competition tests mastery of challenging and mature solo repertoire for strings, winds, brass, and percussion.

About Director Raúl Gómez-Rojas

Conductor, violinist, and violist Raúl Gómez-Rojas begins his seventh season as Music Director of the Metropolitan Youth Symphony. Lauded as a “visionary conductor” (Oregon ArtsWatch), Gómez-Rojas inspires audiences and artists of all ages and backgrounds to use music as a vehicle for connecting with others. Recent highlights include performances with the Oregon Symphony, the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, and guest artists as diverse as Regina Carter, Boyz 2 Men, Lyle Lovett, The Tenors, Kermit Ruffins, the 610 Stompers, and Rick Springfield.

Gómez-Rojas was selected as one of six conductors to be featured in the League of American Orchestra's 2018 Bruno Walter National Conductor Preview, after competing for the honor with nearly 150 applicants from around the world. He received masters and doctoral degrees from Louisiana State University where he studied with Carlos Riazuelo (conducting), Kevork Mardirossian and Espen Lilleslåtten (violin/viola). His conducting training also includes a fellowship at the Aspen Music Festival.

About the Metropolitan Youth Symphony

With a foundational commitment to make music education accessible to all, the Metropolitan Youth Symphony educates, develops, and promotes young musicians of all ages and levels of experience each year, with enrollment of over 400 students in the 2022-23 season. MYS is one of the nation's largest youth orchestra programs, with students from six counties participating in fourteen ensembles including orchestra, strings, band, percussion, and jazz. By providing theory classes, instrumental coaching in small groups, and opportunities to collaborate with performers across artistic disciplines, MYS seeks to develop the whole musician.

MYS provides tuition-free beginning strings, as well as tuition assistance, loaner instruments, and in-school concerts in low-income neighborhoods. MYS ensembles reflect a broad diversity of cultures and life experiences while fostering a tight-knit community through music, collaboration, peer support, and self-expression.