

**Renowned Composer Jennifer Higdon Joins Metropolitan Youth Symphony for the West Coast
Premiere of her Celebrated *Cold Mountain Suite***

Leading up to the premiere, Higdon will lead a multi-day artistic residency with MYS musicians and local young composers.



*Jennifer Higdon
headshot, courtesy of
J.D. Scott*

PORTLAND, ORE., FEBRUARY 2, 2023 – Pulitzer Prize and three-time Grammy-winner Jennifer Higdon will join Metropolitan Youth Symphony for “**Tales of Love and Justice with Jennifer Higdon**” at the Newmark Theatre on **March 5 at 7:30pm**. At this concert, MYS’ Symphony Orchestra will present the West Coast premiere of Higdon’s *Cold Mountain Suite*. MYS was invited to co-commission *Cold Mountain Suite* in cooperation with The League of American Orchestras and a consortium of 15 professional orchestras and two youth orchestras.

Higdon also joins MYS for a special artistic residency leading up to the show. This residency was inspired by the work MYS does to cultivate and showcase the work of students from Fear No Music’s Young Composers Project through The Authentic Voice commissioning series. Higdon will attend MYS rehearsals to work with students performing the suite, present a Saturday session on her music that is open to the public, and hold a Sunday master class with students from Young Composers Project, also open to the public.

- **An Exploration of the Works and Inspirations of Jennifer Higdon**
Saturday, March 4, 9:30am-11:00am at Portland State University, LH 75: Higdon will present an overview of her works and answer questions. MYS Music Director Raúl Gómez-Rojas will emcee.
- **Young Composer Master Class with Jennifer Higdon**
Sunday, March 5, 9:30am-11:00am at Portland State University, LH 225: Higdon will facilitate a master class for Fear No Music’s Young Composers Project students, workshoping scores and recordings of works in progress.

Accompanying the *Cold Mountain Suite*, MYS is proud to present the work of two other female composers: distinguished composer Margaret Allison Bonds (1913-1972) and burgeoning young composer and MYS trumpeter Margot Pullen, who will work with Higdon in the weeks preceding the concert.

From Bonds, MYS will perform *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.

From Pullen, MYS will premiere *Cascade Silhouette*. Pullen’s piece seeks to depict the PNW landscape, from dense skylines of mountainside blanketed with trees down to each individual tree, through contrasting sections. *Cascade Silhouette* is presented by The Authentic Voice, a student commissioning series that showcases the fully orchestrated compositions of student composers at MYS concerts.

Rounding out the repertoire, this show will spotlight one of the winners of MYS’ annual Concerto Competition. 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.

“Tales of Love and Justice with Jennifer Higdon” will take place on March 5, 2023 at 7:30pm, at the Newmark Theatre. Tickets range from \$11-\$40, and are now available for purchase at www.playmys.org or 503-239-4566.

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About Jennifer Higdon

Jennifer Higdon is one of America’s most acclaimed and most frequently performed living composers. She is a major figure in contemporary Classical music, receiving the 2010 Pulitzer Prize in Music for her Violin Concerto, a 2010 Grammy for her Percussion Concerto, a 2018 Grammy for her Viola Concerto and a 2020 Grammy for her Harp Concerto. In 2018, Higdon received the Nemmers Prize from Northwestern University which is given to contemporary classical composers of exceptional achievement who have significantly influenced the field of composition. Most recently, the recording of Higdon's Percussion Concerto was inducted into the Library of Congress National Recording Registry. Higdon enjoys several hundred performances a year of her works, and *blue cathedral* is today’s most performed contemporary orchestral work, with more than 600 performances worldwide. Her works have been recorded on more than seventy CDs. Higdon’s first opera, *Cold Mountain*, won the prestigious International Opera Award for Best World Premiere and the opera recording was nominated for 2 Grammy awards. Her music is published exclusively by Lawdon Press.

About Music Director Raúl Gómez-Rojas

Member of the 2018 class of the prestigious Bruno Walter National Conductor Preview (League of American Orchestras), Raúl Gómez-Rojas inspires audiences and artists of all ages and backgrounds to use music as a vehicle to connect, pursue excellence, and spread joy. Lauded as a “visionary conductor” (Oregon ArtsWatch), Raúl has built a reputation as an insightful leader that “captivates both performing musicians and audiences alike,” and whose “positive attitude and enthusiasm make him a joy to be with” (C. Mumm, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, NY).

In high demand as a guest conductor, Raúl is equally at home on stage and in the pit, leading professional orchestras in the USA and Latin America, new music ensembles, youth, and community groups, and collaborating with a vast array of guest artists across many genres and disciplines. Highlights include performances with the Oregon Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, Oregon Ballet Theatre, 45th Parallel Universe, Fear No Music, Third Angle New Music, Tilikum Chamber Orchestra, the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, the Oregon International Ballet Academy, jazz violinist Regina Carter, Steward Copeland, Boyz 2 Men, Lyle Lovett, The Tenors, Kermit Ruffins, Rick Springfield and more. Raúl is on his seventh season as Music Director of the Metropolitan Youth Symphony.

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 ensemble 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. Together with theory classes, instrumental

coaching in small groups, and opportunities to collaborate with performers across artistic disciplines, MYS ensemble programs develop the whole musician.

MYS also provides free beginning string lessons for 70 students, as well as tuition assistance, loaner instruments, and in-school concerts at Title 1 schools. 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.

About the Authentic Voice

In partnership with Fear No Music's *Young Composers Project*, MYS continues 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.