

Metropolitan Youth Symphony's Season Finale Showcases Composers Who Went Against the Grain

From forbidden love to standing against gun violence, this concert will explore stories and themes as told by both historic and burgeoning composers.

PORTLAND, ORE., APRIL 10, 2023 – Wrapping up its 2022-23 season, Metropolitan Youth Symphony will present “Against the Grain” on Friday, May 19, 2023, 7:30pm at Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall. This season finale will showcase formidable composers such as Emilie Mayer and Leonard Bernstein, along with work by local young composer Elaina Stuppler addressing gun violence and performances by co-winners of the MYS annual Concerto Competition.

Heading up the repertoire, **MYS' Symphony Orchestra will perform *Faust Overture* by Emilie Mayer.** Considered the most prolific German woman composer of the Romantic era, 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.

“Playing this piece is an especially unique opportunity for our students, as many of her Mayer’s pieces are still in their original handwritten form, creating a barrier for groups to perform her work for larger audiences,” says MYS Music Director Raúl Gómez-Rojas. “As such, we feel honored to have this opportunity to bring *Faust Overture* to the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall stage.”

MYS' Symphony Orchestra will also premiere student composer Elaina Stuppler's piece addressing gun violence, titled “Locks, Light, Out of Sight.” As part of the “The Authentic Voice” student commissioning project (a collaboration of MYS with the Young Composers Project,” Stuppler began the process of composing this piece just a few weeks after the tragic shooting at Robb Elementary School, in Uvalde, Texas. “Writing a piece about the devastating effects of gun violence was a way for me to express the traumatic and unfortunate, rippling impact it has on our society,” says Stuppler. Stuppler’s previous compositions have been performed by local ensembles including MYS, Oregon Symphony and more.

MYS' Symphony Orchestra will also 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.* As a historic composer, conductor, and lifelong activist, Bernstein accomplished many firsts, including the first American-born conductor to lead a major American symphony orchestra, the first conductor to share classical music with a large audience over television, and the first American conductor to receive international acclaim.

Rounding out the repertoire, co-winners of MYS' annual Concerto Competition will perform their winning pieces alongside MYS' Symphony Orchestra. Winds/Brass/Percussion/Piano category winners Amir Avsker and Cyrus Ngan will play *Mozart Piano Concerto K. 466, Mov 3* and *Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 3, Mov 3*, respectively. Both Avsker and Ngan play string instruments for Symphony Orchestra, in addition to studying piano with local pianist and educator Maria Garcia. Held each January, this competition tests mastery of challenging and mature solo repertoire for strings, winds, brass, and percussion. Its winners are showcased during MYS Symphony Orchestra's March and May performances.

MYS' Interlude Orchestra will also perform.

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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 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, Beaverton Symphony, 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 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.