



MODESTO
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA
NICHOLAS HERSH
—Music Director—

About the Show

Modesto Symphony Orchestra Association

Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto

Friday, April 12, 2024, 7:30 pm

Saturday, April 13, 2024, 7:30 pm

Gallo Center for the Arts, Mary Stuart Rogers Theater

Nicholas Hersh, *conductor*

Tai Murray, *violin*

Program

Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)

Tangazo (Variations on Buenos Aires) (1969)

Louise Farrenc (1804-1875)

Symphony No. 3 in G minor (1847)

- I. Adagio—Allegro
- II. Adagio cantabile
- III. Scherzo: Vivace
- IV. Finale: Allegro

INTERMISSION

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

arr. Nicholas Hersh

Fugue in G minor BWV 578 "Little Fugue" (1707)

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64 (1844)

- I. Allegro molto appassionato
- II. Andante
- III. Allegretto non troppo—Allegro molto vivace

Tai Murray, *violin*



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Roster

Orchestra Roster

Nicholas Hersh, conductor

Violin 1

Ilana Blumberg, *concertmaster*
Dagenais Smiley, *associate concertmaster*
Naoko Nakajima, *assistant concertmaster*
Joseph Galamba
Xander Abbe
Kirstan Hilton
Milka Kraveva-Castro
Alex Gavrilidis-Petrin
Jay Zhong
Matthew Oshida

Violin 2

Myriam Cottin-Rack, *principal*
Aya Kiyonaga, *assistant principal*
Sarah Elert
Paul Kim
Juan Carlos-Guitierrez
Donna Harrison
Darren Sagawa
Baker Peebles

Viola

Patricia Whaley, *principal*
Kathryn Juneau, *assistant principal*
Pauline Metzgar
Valerie Tisdell
Anne Martin
Colin Belisle

Cello

Matthew Linaman, *principal*
Kyle Stachnik, *assistant principal*
Dina Weinschelbaum
Daniel Davies
Hannah Harrington
Jonathan Flaksman

Bass



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Raymond Vargas, *principal*
Bill Everett, *assistant principal*
Alden Cohen
Michael Taddei

Flute

Carmen Lemoine, *principal*
Gail Edwards

Oboe

Rong-Huey Liu, *principal*
Robert Walker

Clarinet

Robert Patterson, *principal*
Arturs Perts

Bassoon

Jamael Smith, *principal*
Amber Wyman

Horn

Melia Badalian, *principal*
William Klingelhoffer

Trumpet

William Harvey, *principal*

Timpani

John Weeks, *principal*

Percussion

Thomas Rance, *principal*
Joseph Runnels

Piano

John Hillebrandt, *principal*

Roster as of 4/1/2024



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Nicholas Hersh

conductor

American conductor **Nicholas Hersh** has earned critical acclaim for his innovative programming and natural ability to connect with musicians and audiences alike.

In the 2023-24 season, Hersh returns to the National, Houston, Baltimore, Colorado, and New Jersey Symphonies, while making debuts with the Springfield Symphony and Wintergreen Festival. Recent include engagements with the Detroit, Grand Rapids, New World, North Carolina, Phoenix, Portland (ME), Richmond, Tucson, Utah, and Winston-Salem symphony orchestras, Louisiana and Rochester Philharmonics, and the Florida and Sarasota Orchestras.

Over a remarkable tenure as Associate Conductor of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Hersh created the BSO Pulse series, through which he brought together indie bands and orchestral musicians in unique collaborations; he led the BSO in several subscription weeks, and concerts in and around Baltimore; and he directed the BSO's educational and family programming, including the celebrated Academy for adult amateur musicians. Hersh also maintains a close relationship with the National Symphony Orchestra, leading concerts throughout Washington, D.C. He stepped in to replace an indisposed Yan Pascal Tortelier, on subscription, to great acclaim.

Hersh is frequently in demand as an arranger and orchestrator, with commissions from orchestras around the globe for adaptations of everything from classical solo and chamber music to popular songs. His orchestration of Beethoven's Cello Sonata Op. 69 was premiered by the Philharmonie Zuidnederland in January 2022, while his symphonic arrangement of Queen's [Bohemian Rhapsody](#) continues to see worldwide success as a viral YouTube hit. He also serves as arranger and editor for the James P. Johnson Orchestra



Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto

April 12 & 13, 2024 / Exciting and
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Edition.

Hersh grew up in Evanston, Illinois and started his musical training as a cellist. He earned a Bachelor's Degree in Music from Stanford University and a Master's Degree in Conducting from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. Hersh is also a two-time recipient of the Solti Foundation Career Assistance Award. Nicholas lives in Philadelphia with his wife Caitlin and their two cats, and in his free time enjoys baking (and eating) sourdough bread.



Tai Murray

violin

Described as “superb” by The New York Times, violinist **Tai Murray** has established herself a musical voice of a generation. “Technically flawless... vivacious and scintillating... It is without doubt that Murray’s style of playing is more mature than that of many seasoned players... “ (Musos Magazine)

Appreciated for her elegance and effortless ability, Murray creates a special bond with listeners through her personal phrasing and subtle sweetness. Her programming reveals musical intelligence. Her sound, sophisticated bowing and choice of vibrato, remind us of her musical background and influences, principally, Yuval Yaron (a student of Gingold & Heifetz) and Franco Gulli. Winner of an Avery Fisher Career Grant in 2004, Tai Murray was named a BBC New Generation Artist (2008 through 2010). As a chamber musician, she was a member of Lincoln Center’s Chamber Music Society II (2004-2006).

She has performed as guest soloist on the main stages world-wide, performing with leading ensembles such as the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Symphony Orchestra, and all of the BBC Symphony Orchestras. She is also a dedicated advocate of contemporary works (written for the violin). Among others, she performed the world premiere of Malcolm Hayes’ violin concerto at the BBC PROMS, in the Royal Albert Hall.



Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto

April 12 & 13, 2024 / Exciting and
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As a recitalist Tai Murray has visited many of the world's capitals having appeared in Berlin, Chicago, Hamburg, London, Madrid, New York's Carnegie Hall, Paris and Washington D.C., among many others.

Tai Murray's critically acclaimed debut recording for harmonia mundi of Ysaye's six sonatas for solo violin was released in February 2012. Her second recording with works by American Composers of the 20th Century was released by the Berlin-based label eaSonus and her third disc with the Bernstein Serenade on the French label mirare.

Tai Murray plays a violin by Tomaso Balestrieri fecit Mantua ca. 1765, on generous loan from a private collection.

Murray is an Assistant Professor, Adjunct, of violin at the Yale School of Music, where she teaches applied violin and coaches chamber music. She earned artist diplomas from Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music and the Juilliard School.

Program Notes

Tangazo (Variations on Buenos Aires)

Astor Piazzolla

Astor Piazzolla

Tangazo (Variations on Buenos Aires)

Composer: born March 11, 1921, Mar del Plata, Argentina; died July 5, 1992, Buenos Aires

Composed: 1969

Premiere: 1970 in Washington, D.C., by the Ensemble Musical de Buenos Aires.

Duration: 15 minutes

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, cymbals, glockenspiel, guiro, tom-toms, triangle, xylophone, piano, and strings

"For me, tango was always for the ear rather than the feet." – Astor Piazzolla

Astor Piazzolla is inextricably linked with tango. He took a dance from the back rooms of Argentinean brothels and blurred the lines between popular and “art” music to such an extent that, in the case of his music, such categories no longer apply.

Tangazo is a later composition, originally scored for solo bandoneon, piano, and strings. Piazzolla was a master of the bandoneón, a small button accordion of German origin, which originally served as a portable church organ. The distinctive sound of the bandoneón became a fundamental element of Piazzolla’s tangos; its insouciance and melancholy permeate Piazzolla’s music, even in works scored for other instruments.

Tangazo begins in the low strings, which murmur a slow introduction with more than a hint of menace. Harmonically, *Tangazo* often ranges beyond conventional tango tonalities to explore a modernist palette replete with unexpected detours. After the deliberate legato pace of the introduction, a solo oboe takes off with a skittish tango full of bounce and swagger. Legato interludes featuring pensive horn solos alternate with the agitated tango. Overall, *Tangazo* conveys restlessness, even as its last notes fade away.

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Symphony No. 3 in G minor, Op. 36

Louise Farrenc

Louise Farrenc

Symphony No. 3 in G minor, Op. 36



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Composer: born May 31, 1804, Paris; died September 15, 1875, Paris

Work composed: 1847

World premiere: 1849, by the Orchestre de la Société des concerts du Conservatoire in Paris

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, timpani, and strings

Estimated duration: 33 minutes

During her lifetime, Louise Farrenc was well known as both a composer and outstanding pianist. Throughout the 19th century, she was also the first and only female professor of music on the faculty of the Paris Conservatory.

Farrenc grew up in a family of artists who encouraged their daughter's musical interests. Young Louise displayed extraordinary talent at the piano in early childhood, and soon began composing her own music. When she was 15, her parents enrolled her at the Paris Conservatory to continue her composition studies, although she was tutored privately by its faculty because women were not admitted to the Conservatory's composition program at the time.

At 18, Louise married a flutist, Aristede Farrenc, who later founded a music publishing house. By the 1830s, Farrenc was balancing a busy, multifaceted career as a teacher, composer, and pianist who concertized all over France. As a composer, Farrenc also began expanding her portfolio from solo piano music to larger forms such as symphonies, concert overtures, and a number chamber works, including piano quintets and trios. Farrenc, unlike many female composers whose music was discovered only long after their deaths, was able to hear the public performance of all three of her symphonies – which were well-reviewed – during her lifetime.

The symphonic format evolved from earlier German and Italian genres; by the mid-19th century, symphonies epitomized German style. In fervently nationalist France, particularly in Paris, symphonies and their composers faced aesthetic discrimination from those who deemed the symphony an exclusively German art form. Moreover, the idea of a woman writing symphonic music – in the eyes of some putting herself on par with symphonic greats such as Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Schubert, and others – seemed an outrageous provocation.



Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto

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After a brief Adagio for winds, a graceful Allegro ensues, featuring themes in the strings. This opening movement is full of vigor, artful melodies, and a sense of orchestral mastery. Farrenc follows this confident beginning with a serene Adagio cantabile, featuring a solo clarinet soaring over low winds and brasses, suggesting the intimacy of a woodwind quintet. An agitated Scherzo follows, full of quicksilver flashes of light and shadow that showcases the upper winds. The Finale bristles with dramatic energy and features several powerful statements that unleash the strings' fiery virtuosity with a series of scalar passages. Minor-key symphonies of this period usually conclude in their corresponding major key, but Farrenc maintains the G-minor intensity right up to the closing notes.

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Fugue in G minor, BWV 578 "Little" arr. Hersh

Johann Sebastian Bach

Johann Sebastian Bach

Fugue in G minor, BWV 578 "Little" arr. Hersh

Composer: born March 21, 1685, Eisenach; died July 28, 1750, Leipzig

Work composed: c. 1703-07, written while Bach served as an organist in Arnstadt.

World premiere: undocumented

Instrumentation: flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, 2 horns, trumpet, chimes, vibraphone, and strings

Estimated duration: 3.5 minutes

Nicknames can be misleading. The only thing "little" about Johann Sebastian Bach's Fugue in G minor, BWV 578, is its length. Just under four minutes long, this fugue features one of Bach's best known and most recognizable fugue subjects, and it has been arranged for diverse ensembles, including Leopold Stowkowski's brass-heavy arrangement for full orchestra, and the Swingle Singers' popular vocal jazz version.



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Bach was renowned during his lifetime for his extraordinary ability to improvise at the keyboard. It is possible the distinctive fugue subject emerged first as an improvisation; at over four measures long, it is an unusually lengthy statement. Bach allows each voice to shine, including the basses (played by foot pedals on the organ). The opening three notes cut through the dense counterpoint, announcing the subject's entrance clearly each time, as the music swirls and eddies towards a bold conclusion.

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Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in E minor, Op. 64

Felix Mendelssohn

Felix Mendelssohn

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in E minor, Op. 64

Composer: born February 3, 1809, Hamburg; died November 4, 1847, Leipzig

Work composed: July 1838 – September 1844

World premiere: Niels Gade led the Gewandhaus Orchestra and violinist Ferdinand David in Leipzig on March 13, 1845

Instrumentation: solo violin, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, and strings

Estimated duration: 27 minutes

“I would like to write a violin concerto for you next winter,” wrote Felix Mendelssohn to his longtime friend and colleague Ferdinand David in the summer of 1838. “There’s one in E minor in my head, and its opening won’t leave me in peace.” Mendelssohn, then conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, had known David for years. The two prodigies met as teenagers; 15-year-old David was a budding violin virtuoso and 16-year-old Mendelssohn had just completed his Octet for Strings. Years later, when Mendelssohn was appointed director of the Gewandhaus concerts in 1835, he hired David as concertmaster. In 1843, Mendelssohn founded the Leipzig Conservatory and quickly appointed David to the violin faculty.



Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto

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Mendelssohn had played the violin since childhood, and by all accounts was quite accomplished. However, the E minor Violin Concerto required a level of technical knowledge and skill beyond Mendelssohn's abilities, so he turned to David for hands-on advice. During the composition of the E minor Concerto, Mendelssohn wrote the melodies and designed the overall structure, while David served as technical consultant.

In this concerto, the violin is always and indisputably the star, while the orchestra's role provides what the late music critic Michael Steinberg called "accompaniment, punctuation, scaffolding and a bit of cheerleading." Music this familiar can be difficult to hear as a "composed" work at all; instead, it seems to emerge *sui generis*, like Athena bursting fully formed from the head of Zeus.

In a break with convention, the solo violin rather than the full orchestra opens the Allegro molto appassionato with the main theme. Mendelssohn also defied expectations by placing the first movement cadenza, which David composed, between the development and return of the main theme, rather than at the end of the movement.

A solo bassoon holds the last note of the Allegro and pivots without interruption to the Andante. Here the soloist leads with a lyrical, singing melody full of tender poignancy. The gentle Andante flows almost without pause into the Allegro molto vivace. The exuberant quicksilver theme of the finale contrasts sharply with the intimate Andante, and demands all the soloist's technical and artistic skill.

Op. 64 turned out to be Mendelssohn's last completed orchestral work; he died two years after its premiere. Scholar Thomas Grey observed, "It seems fitting, if fortuitous, that [the Violin Concerto] should combine one of his most serious and personal orchestral movements (the opening Allegro) with a nostalgic return to the world of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the finale – the world of Mendelssohn's 'enchanted youth' and the music that, more than any other, epitomizes his contribution to the history of music."

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