



MAKING AN ENTRANCE

Featuring the 56th

Young Musicians Concerto Competition Winners

Balian Buttimer, Cello

Talya Hadari, Cello

Amanda Huang, Piano

Alexandra Lynch, Mezzo-Soprano



Saturday, April 25th, 2026

7:30 PM

Hamden Memorial Town Hall

Sponsored by Paul & Elizabeth Mathey

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About HSO

Tonight's performance concludes Hamden Symphony Orchestra's 64th season! An all-volunteer orchestra of more than 80 musicians from the Greater New Haven area and beyond, Hamden Symphony membership shares a passion for rehearsing and performing great music together.

Founded in 1962 by Ruth T. Brooks, the Orchestra provides cultural enrichment to the community of Hamden, Connecticut through its series of concerts, its annual Young Musicians Concerto Competition (YMCC), the Ruth T. Brooks Award for Excellence in Instrumental Music, and the rewarding experience offered to its members and guest artists.

The Orchestra's commitment to the musical development of local students is a source of great pride. For the last 56 years the Hamden Symphony Orchestra's YMCC has provided an invaluable educational experience to gifted high school musicians in the area: the chance to perform as a soloist with a full symphony orchestra. The competition is held annually each winter, and the winners are featured at the Orchestra's spring concert. In addition, for over 40 years the Orchestra has honored a graduating Hamden High School student with the Ruth T. Brooks Award for Excellence in Instrumental Music. The 2025 winner of this award was clarinetist Maya Gribbon, who was also a YMCC winner in 2024.

From 1969-2007, Hamden Symphony Orchestra was under the baton of Maestro Paul Gacek. To honor his distinguished leadership, continuing support and several return appearances to the podium after his term, Maestro Gacek was officially designated Hamden Symphony Orchestra's "Conductor Laureate" in 2017.

In 2008, Vesna Mehinovic became Music Director of the Hamden Symphony Orchestra. Under Vesna's baton, the Orchestra has continued to expand, and has presented compelling and innovative concert programs that have featured new compositions, talented instrumental and vocal soloists, and even dance and multimedia components. Hamden Symphony Orchestra has been honored to be invited by the Town of Hamden to perform at its Independence Day Fireworks Celebration for a vast audience several times in recent years.

Hamden Symphony Orchestra
Vesna Mehinovic, Music Director

Saturday, April 25th, 2026
7:30 PM
Hamden Memorial Town Hall

Concert Program

Symphony No. 1 in E minor
1. *Genesis* Oscar Lin

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor
1. *Allegro con brio* Ludwig van Beethoven

Amanda Huang, Piano

“Sta nell’irca pietrosa tana”
from *Alcina* George Frideric Handel

Alexandra Lynch, Mezzo-Soprano

Cello Concerto in B minor
1. *Allegro* Antonin Dvorak

Talya Hadari, Cello

Intermission

Cello Concerto in D minor
1. *Prelude, lento - Allegro maestoso* Édouard Lalo

Balian Buttimer, Cello

Sinfonia in Landscapes
1. *River - May Day*
2. *Rambles / Shambles*
3. *Village - Summer Wind* Joshua Groffman

Pini di Roma (Pines of Rome)
4. *I pini della Via Appia* (The Pines of the Appian Way) Ottorino Respighi

Please join us for a reception in the lobby following the performance!

Musicians of the Orchestra

Violin I

Stacy Shafer '09
Concertmaster,
The Ruth T. Brooks Chair

Kimberlee Arnett '23
Isabella Garcia Bernstein '25
Elizabeth Braddon '16
Ann Clemmons '10
Gabrielle Liberatoscioli '22
Andrea Osburne '17
Anna Schnee '91
Frank Schnee '91
Anat Shiloach '15
Tim Shizume '23
Amanda Zubek '22
Rebecca Zucconi '14

Violin II

Jennifer Kroeger '24
Yinchen Hao '22
Oscar Lin '24
Nancy Mangino '14
Joanna Novak '20
Robert Tavolieri '22
Rasheed Tazudeen '26
Avinash Veerarahav '23
Sophia Yu '25

Viola

Ariane Bolt '26
Karen Kriner-Souris '13
Kayla Sands '22
Rolland Strasser '17
Anand Veerarahav '23

Cello

Elizabeth Baldwin '17
Davi Bendavid '22
Noah Benjamin '25
Dorthy Fang '19
Liam Oraa '25
Alayna Petroski '25
Abigail Tubis '26
Tanya Townsend '17
Raffaella Zanetti '23

Bass

Evan Betancourt '25
Rachel Shaw '25

Flute

Judith Kramer Koret '08
Linda Latimer '24
Mamie Wang '22
Elyssa Wrubel '24

Piccolo

Maddie Chasse '25
Linda Latimer '24
Mamie Wang '22

Oboe

Terri Bennett '16
Misha Kummel '24
Clara Wang '22

English Horn

Terri Bennett '16

Clarinet

Kathryn Anderson '25
Kathy Muench '15

Bass Clarinet

Maddie Chasse '25

Bassoon

Sam Bergstrom '23
Alexandra Castro '25

French Horn

Reed Campbell '26
Bryan Kupferman '25
Matthew McAuliffe '24
Franco Ortiz '25
Michelle Scalzo '19

Trumpet

Jennifer Carlson '24
Kei Kohmoto '23
Jade Lewis '25*
Michael Marchand '26*
Steve Moskowitz '23
Pedro Torres Diaz '25
Christian Venturella '22*

Trombone

Jonathan Craig '24
Anna Franz '14
Jamie Medina '26
Gabriella Testani '26
Tylarr Throm '24
Alan Weide '22

Tuba

Matthew DeNegre '25

Harp

Olivia Fortunato '08

Keyboard

Clayton Farmer '26
Betsy Goldberg '15

Timpani

David Liskov '10

Percussion

Grace Brunner '23
Matthew Ennis '26
Betsy Goldberg '15
John Martin '25
Adam Weber '21
Jonathan Zhang '25

*Additional Trumpet for
Respighi

Support HSO Even More this May!



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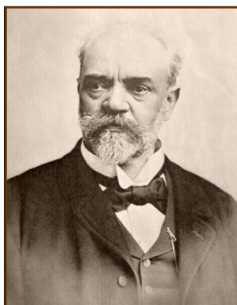
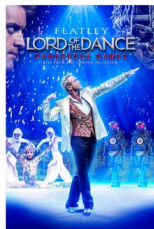
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Alcina

“Sta nell'Ircana pietrosa tana” (“In a stony Hyrcanian lair”)

Sta nell'ircana
pietrosa tana

In a stony Hyrcanian
lair

tigre sdegnosa e
incerta pende,

dwells a proud tigress,
and she lingers
irresolute,

se parte o attende il
cacciator.

whether to leave or
to await the
hunter.

Dal teso
strale
guardarsi
vuole;

From the
drawn
arrow she
would
protect
herself;

ma poi la
prole lascia
in periglio.

but that
would
leave her
offspring in
danger.

Freme e
l'assale
desio di
sangue,

She shudders
and is
assailed by
thirst for
blood,

pietà del
figlio,

pity for her son;

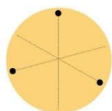
poi vince
amor.

love wins after all.

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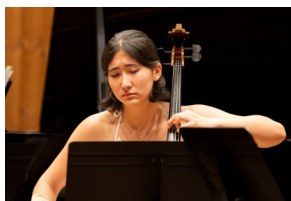
**St. Peter's Church
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Concert starts: 7:00 PM
Festivities: Immediately
following the concert**

About the Performers



Balian Buttimer started playing cello at age 4 in the Hartt School Community Division Suzuki Program. He previously studied with Carmen Irons and currently studies with Blake Brasch. He has been a participant in Hartt's Suzuki Orchestras and the Hartt Youth Chamber Music Program from 2016-2026. Balian participated in the cello group class at the First Suzuki Convention of the Americas in Cancun, Mexico in 2019. He won 1st place in the Society of American Musicians Junior Division in 2022. Balian has participated in CT Regionals and All-States, and is a current member of Connecticut Youth Symphony. He is 15 years old now and a sophomore at Loomis Chaffee where he is a member of his high school orchestra and chamber music program. At school, Balian is a music mentor where

he shares his love of playing the cello with a younger student. Outside of music, Balian has traveled extensively as a competitive Irish Step Dancer, placing in regional, national and world competitions. Balian enjoys following Premier League soccer and playing board games with his siblings.



A prizewinner in the Deborah Kahan competition, a finalist in the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra's Concerto Competition, a semifinalist of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra's Young Artists Competition, and a member of the JOY Conservatory scholarship program, **Talya Ahrin Hadari** is a cello student of Susan Robison's at the

Hartt School of Music Community Division, where she is also a recipient of the John Jorgenson Memorial Award. Talya is a tenth grader and the recipient of the Verney Family scholarship at the Loomis Chaffee School in Windsor, CT, where she runs cross-country, pole vaults, draws comics for the Log, the school's newspaper, and acts in musical theater productions. An avid chamber musician, Talya spends her summers at Greenwood Music Camp in MA. This past summer she worked closely with Grammy-nominated composer Missy Mazzoli to present the world premiere of her "Night Geometry" for string quartet. She has performed in venues all across New England and has participated in masterclasses with Darrett Adkins and members of the Julliard String Quartet.



Amanda Huang, age fifteen, is currently a sophomore at Farmington High School. Amanda has been playing the piano since she was 5 and loves it. Her teacher is Malgosia Lis, the chair of the piano department at the Hartt School of Music. Over the years, Amanda has eagerly been participating in a variety of competitions. She won first prize at the AADGT competition and second at American Protégé and was invited to play at Carnegie Hall both times. After that, Amanda participated and placed in many more competitions, such as the

Hartford Chopin International Competition, where she received Honorable Mention, 3rd place in her division for the Connecticut Bach Festival, 1st place in the Virtuoso Competition, 2nd place in the Audrey Thayer Competition, and 2nd place solo and 4th place four hands in the junior division, and 1st place in the senior division the next year for the JY Park Competition. Amanda continuously participates in the Honors Audition at Hartt School and gets in every year with high rankings. She also was chosen to take masterclasses with many well-known pianists, such as Anna Petrova and Charis Dimaras. She has also been in chamber groups for the past 3 years. Amanda has performed with these groups in nursing homes, recitals, and masterclasses multiple times. Other than piano, Amanda also plays the violin and loves math.



17-year old **Alexandra Lynch** began singing at the age of six when she made it to the finals of her school's talent show with her performance of Schubert's "Ave Maria". Alexandra has taken private weekly vocal and music theory lessons ever since and for the last eight years has worked with her very accomplished current vocal instructor, Claire Stadtmueller. Alexandra has focused on opera, classical and music theater compositions. She has a particular passion for opera and hopes to perform professionally in the future. Alexandra also enjoys acting and theatrical performances.

Alexandra enjoys performing and regularly competes in vocal competitions. In 2026, she has been selected as a Grand Winner of the National League of Performing Arts International Young Musicians competition, awarded First Place in the Connecticut National Association of Teachers of Singing Upper School Classical category and selected as a Winner of the Hamden, CT Symphony Orchestra Young Musicians Concerto Competition as the first vocalist selected in many years. In 2025, Alexandra was awarded Third place in

the Vocal Artist Management Services Young Vocalist Competition after having received Honorable Mention in the prior three years. Also, Sound Espressivo selected Alexandra to perform at the 2024 Carnegie Hall Gala. Previously, Alexandra received the Gold Cup Award in The Schubert Club of Fairfield County Young Musicians Festival Competition for three years running for perfect scores in the Art Song and Music Theater Categories.

Away from musical undertakings, Alexandra is an accomplished sports person, the conditioning of which helps with her vocal ranges. Alexandra is a three-sport varsity athlete and captain of all three teams at Rye Country Day School. Alexandra is a straight-A student with a focus on the psychological impact of music having already earned college credit on the topic through a summer long research project on the Lumiere platform in 2025. She is also President of the Music Mates Club which teaches music to middle school children.



Vesna Mehinovic has been the Music Director and Conductor of Hamden Symphony Orchestra since 2008. She began her formal education in music by receiving a diploma in Music Theory and Piano Teaching and Performing from the High School for Music in Sarajevo. She continued her Bachelor of Arts degree in Conducting and Music Theory at the Sarajevo Music Academy, and a Master of Arts in Conducting and Music Theory at Wesleyan University in Middletown.

Vesna has been the recipient of many honors in her native country, and is the first professional woman to conduct an orchestra in Bosnia and Herzegovina. She specialized in Conducting at the Academy for Music and Stage Arts in Graz, Austria in the class of Milan Horvat. Ms. Mehinovic has also served as guest conductor for orchestras in Austria, Serbia, and Croatia.

While in the United States, she has worked with several church and non-religious choirs both in Connecticut and Arizona. As a music teacher Vesna has taught in many elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as having worked with college students at Yale and Wesleyan Universities. Currently, she teaches music and directs the Orchestra and Choirs at Sacred Heart Academy in Hamden. She is also the Conductor of the Quinnipiac University Orchestra, and Organist & Choir Master at St. Michael's Church in Naugatuck.

About the Artist

Van L. Nguyen received his art training at Southern Connecticut State University. He had a long and successful career in the financial industry prior to his retirement as a Vice President of Citigroup in 2010. He holds an MBA from the University of Connecticut, where he was elected to the honor society Beta Gamma Sigma. His art has been exhibited at the Ely House Gallery (Of Yale University) and at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven, Connecticut. His most recent exhibits have been at the Blackstone Library in Branford (2017) and at concerts in the Hamden Memorial Town Hall in Connecticut (since 2018). His artist's statement follows:

“We are living in a world of widespread human suffering from wars, Covid-19 pandemic, huge floods, and wild fires as well as daily economic anxiety. Whether this suffering is caused by man-made actions or natural events, it is easy to feel that darkness is rising and about to overwhelm us. We want desperately to see a brighter future. My painting of blooming flowers on a completely black background symbolizes my own hope that we will survive this period of darkness, and that love and kindness will triumph over anger and malice.”

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Behind the Curtains
Reflecting on 5 Years of "Blind Auditions" for the YMCC
by David Liskov

On January 25th, 2020, Hamden Symphony Orchestra's 51st annual Young Musicians Concerto Competition (YMCC) would prove momentous in two ways. Foremost, it occurred merely weeks before the COVID-19 pandemic reached the United States. The implications of these events would affect every facet of society, performing arts organizations certainly not excepted. Though that Spring's concert was cancelled and no competition would be held the following year, one of the three 2020 winners was fortunately able to perform their concerto excerpt during the outdoor season that would mark our return to rehearsals and live performance in the Summer of 2021.

The 2020 competition would also be the last to occur before what could be described as a radical change in approach to its format. In December, 2021 after the Orchestra had resumed indoor rehearsals in anticipation of two concerts set for the following Spring, HSO's Board of Directors approved planning for the 52nd YMCC to be held that March. Yet, a few items of constructive feedback and some observed anecdotes from the competitions prior had lingered through the hiatus and a "what if" began to stir about the competition's eventual return.

"I have a crazy idea. I don't think it's feasible. Feel free to shoot me down", I expressed to our Music Director, Vesna, on the phone in early 2022. Could using a "Blind Audition" format, where curtains separate the performer (in our case the student auditioning to perform their chosen piece with the Orchestra) from adjudicators (typically 5-7 HSO musicians who represent a cross-section of instruments and an occasional guest on the panel) create a more fair competition that is decided solely by the participating students' performances on the day, and not on any demographic characteristics of the musician or other factors? I ran it by HSO Flautist Judith Kramer Koret, our YMCC chairperson, and then our entire Board, who approved (though I believe with some reluctance or at least curiosity of how was this all going to work).

The origins of "Blind Auditions" in classical music date back to the 1970's, when professional orchestras, particularly in the US, began a concerted effort to reform their hiring practices and increase gender and ethnic diversity in their memberships. Vast improvements have occurred in this regard over the past decades, yet their implementation has been heavily scrutinized by researchers and commentators. A prominent classical music critic of a major American newspaper argued for their discontinuation in a 2020 editorial. It is unclear, however, of the extent of any changes adopted since. While their usage in the realm of professional orchestra auditions and classical music at-large makes for an interesting debate, the pros and cons in just the Concerto Competition setting seem to be more practical in

nature than ideological. In fact, based on some online research, it appears that our competition might be the only one that has adopted this practice.



So how did we pull it off? In our first attempt in March, 2022, it was through finding literally anything we could get our hands on to fabricate a hodge-podge of curtains and even large cardboard signs. A relatively light seven participants was also advantageous for getting our footing. By 2023, a real set of curtains and frames from PVC pipes was built by one of HSO's

musicians (as shown in the image at left). Each subsequent year has brought more participating students and process refinements.

It would be remiss not to mention that Southern Connecticut State University's Music Department has offered us the ideal venue; A large competition room ensures that from the student entering the room, performing with their accompanist, and exiting the room, judges can't see a glimpse of them. Multiple practice rooms for the students to warmup keep them cloaked, while careful coordination by our front-of-the-house volunteers with the judges prevents exposures in the hallway over the course of what is typically a long day of music.

Alongside the physical addition of curtains came a few corresponding administrative changes. The competition's application form was shortened to simply confirm participant eligibility and approval of their music selection. While the front-of-the-house greeters see the full list of participants for logistical purposes, the judges are only provided with a blinded program that lists an audition number and instrument, and refer to those during the evaluation phase. Only after the winners have been selected do the judges find out who they are, which makes for a fun and often surprising moment.

The 2026 YMCC, held this past February, marked the fifth year of "blind auditions". In reflecting on this milestone, I reached out to current and recent competition winners, as well as those who have served as judges, volunteers and on our Board of Directors for their thoughts and perspectives. Overall, reactions to this approach have been mostly positive, though with some critiques as well. Vesna Mehinovic, HSO Music Director, shows wholehearted enthusiasm, arguing "This is the way it should be done for this competition."

In terms of benefits, the most common theme mentioned was fairness. Kathy Muench, a clarinetist in the Orchestra who adjudicated for the first time this year, expressed “Having had no experience with things before the blind audition procedure was implemented, I can’t imagine how non-blind auditions could have been all that objective/fair.” On a similar note, this approach keeps the panel’s attention strictly to what is heard in each audition. Violinist Avinash Veeraghav, who has seen both sides of the competition as a judge and greeter, notes that “It compels us to focus on musicianship, and only musicianship. That is where our focus should be, after all.” In regards to not seeing demographic information or resumes of the participants upfront he says, “The less I know about the student, the better, and I think this in general applies to everyone.”

It is also evident that the addition of curtains dividing the room has changed the physical environment of the competition experience for both the performer and the judging panel. In the first years, especially, there was often discussion during deliberations about room acoustics. Slight modifications have occurred each year to the positioning of performers and accompanists. Still, several of this year’s winners, including cellist Balian Buttimer and vocalist Alexandra Lynch, mentioned not needing to adjust their practicing and preparations when they found out the audition format.

Of course, the most drastic change has been the judges not directly seeing the musician perform their selection. Violinist Tim Shizume, whose first experience with HSO, occurred when his son Braeden auditioned and became one of the 2023 YMCC winners, views this as a major drawback:

The reason for not utilizing blind auditions is clear. The performance of music, though mainly an auditory function, also has a visual component to it. A performer must not only play the notes properly, paying attention to all of the musical nuances necessary, but must also convey to the audience their own unique self-expressive characteristics. Blind auditions rob the judges of an important component to assess the performer.

Violist Anand Veeraghav, who has also been in the judge and greeter roles, sees a flip-side to this; “I’m impressed by how well the judges have still been able to pick up on how the students play. It takes extra concentration when we can’t see them.”

Hamden Symphony’s Young Musicians Concerto Competition has continued to evolve over its 56 years of existence in all aspects from competition eligibility and recruitment, to event logistics and the experience of its participants. What the next decades bring about is anyone’s guess, but ideas will continue to be explored so that the YMCC remains as one of the Orchestra’s signature program offerings and a valuable educational opportunity for exceptional student musicians throughout Connecticut.

Hamden Symphony Orchestra has enjoyed gathering weekly to make music together this Spring! All financial contributions, whether small or large, will help keep the music going as we move into our 65th season this September!

Donations are being accepted this afternoon at the lobby table; Cash, checks or digital payments made out to Hamden Symphony Orchestra are accepted.

Checks can also be mailed to:
Hamden Symphony Orchestra
PO Box 185412
Hamden, CT 06518

Hamden Symphony Orchestra will be participating in the **2026 Great Give®**, sponsored by the **Community Foundation for Greater New Haven**, on **May 6th & 7th**. All donations designated to Hamden Symphony Orchestra, Inc. on these dates at the website - www.thegreatgive.org - are matched, and could help us win additional prizes during the event.

Online contributions via the secure DonorBox platform are also accepted at www.hamdensymphony.org throughout the year. The following QR code goes directly to our direct donation page:



With any donation method, we continue to offer the following sponsorship opportunity for a **\$400 gift**:

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Amanda Zubek, Elective Director

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Bill Gambardella, Legal Counsel
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Tracy Turner, Logo Design

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- ♪ Town of Hamden Mayor Adam Sendroff.
- ♪ Rose Lion, Town of Hamden Legislative Council Administrator.
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- ♪ Student musicians from Albertus Magnus College, Quinnipiac University, Central CT State University, Southern CT State University & Yale University.
- ♪ Carpool Drivers: Yinchen Hao, John Martin, Rolland Strasser, Clara Wang, Adam Webber.
- ♪ Concert Support Staff: Caden Effrece, Jade Lewis, Michael Marchand, Van Nguyen, Charlie Shafer, Nicholas Kriner-Souris, Adam Weber & Henry Zubek.
- ♪ Jon Bean & Christopher Bradley, Notre Dame High School (Chimes use).
- ♪ Riley George, Lyman Hall High School (Marimba & Vibraphone use).
- ♪ David Liskov, John Martin, Kayla Sands & Vesna Mehinovic (Percussion transport).
- ♪ Southern Connecticut State University Music Department (Joshua Groffman, Chair), YMCC Venue.
- ♪ YMCC Chairperson: Judith Kramer Koret.
- ♪ YMCC Judges: Davi Bendavid, Elizabeth Baldwin, Judith Kramer Koret, Kathy Muench, Irene Senedak, Karen Kriner-Souris, Tim Shizume.
- ♪ YMCC Event Support Staff: Kathryn Anderson, Kei Kohmoto, David Liskov, Nicholas Kriner-Souris, Anand Veeraraghav & Avinash Veeraraghav.

Program Notes

Biographies and notes for “Symphony No. 1 & Sinfonia in Landscapes” written by their composers. All others by David Liskov.

Oscar Lin (2005 -) is a Software Engineering student at Quinnipiac University. Oscar started his music journey with the violin and oboe when he was 10 years old, and continued playing in school ensembles, local ensembles, and often attending PMEA band/orchestra festivals. Oscar attributes his early love of music to his long-time Band Director Marcia White and Marching Band Director Aaron Reinard, Youth Orchestra Director Chelci Leary, and long time mentor Joseph Glarner. While pursuing his Bachelor's at QU, Oscar studied violin extensively under Professor Gretchen Frazier and Music Theory under Dr. Lauren Reed, and greatly attributes them for elevating his musicianship to now being able to write this piece and performing confidently.

Symphony No.1 is Oscar's first symphonic work. Oscar has composed a small collection of music including a duet, short pieces, and some video game soundtracks. The remainder movements are still works in progress.

Lin's *Symphony No.1* aims to tell myths and legends. The first movement, *Genesis*, explores the theme of creation and "coming to be". The audience can expect waves of building tensions and releases akin to the powerful and often explosive birth of stars.

Composer and Pianist **Ludwig van Beethoven** (1770 - 1827) is regarded as one of the most influential figures in Western Music. For many scholars his vast career is viewed as the bridge between the Classical and Romantic eras. He was born in Bonn, Germany, where his grandfather of the same name was a prominent music director and his father Johann was a tenor. Ludwig was taught keyboard from an early age by his father, who was aware of the similar trajectory of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. At the age of seven he gave his first public performance. By 1781, he began compositional studies with Christian Gottlob Neefe and within 2 years published his first set of keyboard variations. After initially assisting his teacher, who was the Organist at the court chapel in nearby Cologne, he later took over the position.

In 1792, a few years after his mother's death and his father's subsequent issues with alcoholism, Beethoven moved to Vienna. There he sought to master counterpoint under the tutelage of Joseph Haydn, as well as violin performance. His acquaintance, Nikolaus Simrock, took to publishing some of his early works, but many of his works he chose to withhold until he felt they would have more of an impact. This included one of his first piano concertos, which he had worked on for many years before he first performed it in 1795.

Musicologists date Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor* to 1800, with some early sketches traced back a few years before. The only one of his piano concertos written in a minor key, it debuted at the Theater an der Wien on April 5, 1803. The massive program also included the premiers of his *Symphony No. 2 in D Major* and his oratorio, "*Christ on the Mount of Olives*." Beethoven performed the solo almost from memory, with just sketches in front of him, as he had yet to fully notate it. It was eventually published the following year in dedication to Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia.

George Frideric Handel (1685 - 1759) was born in Halle, then of the Brandenburg-Prussia region, the same year as composers J.S. Bach and Domenico Scarlatti. His father Georg Handel was a self-made barber-surgeon, who cared for those injured in war. Wishing the same career for his son, Georg was initially dismayed his early inclinations towards music. According to biographer John Mainwaring, though musical instruments were forbidden in the household, the younger Handel managed to secretly store a spinet (a small clavichord) in their attic. Georg's rigidity eventually relaxed after a visit to Weissenfels, where, in the palace chapel of the Holy Trinity, his son found his way to the pipe organ. Duke Johann Adolf I overheard his playing and was so impressed that he recommended to Georg a music education for his son.

He began lessons with Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow, organist at the Market Church in Halle. Zachow grounded him in the traditions of fugue, canon and counterpoint, so prevalent in religious music, and also introduced him to a growing body of more dramatic and concertized music from Germany and Italy. His composition instruction was reinforced through the task of copying scores in a variety of styles. In addition to practicing harpsichord, organ and violin, Handel took

particular interest in the oboe, and would write for the instrument throughout his career. At the age of nine, Handel began assuming more of Zachow's church roles and began composing for the weekly services.

In 1702, a few years after the death of his father, Handel matriculated at the University of Halle, in accordance to Georg's desire that he attain a liberal arts education. After completion, he settled in Hamburg and joined its opera company as a violinist and harpsichordist. The next few years brought him to Florence, Italy by the invitation of Ferdinando de' Medici, and in 1712 to London, where he spent most of his compositional career.

In 1719, along with a group of benefactors and with the support of King George, Handel established The Royal Academy of Music to produce "opera seria," dramatic operas in the style of those performed in Venice and elsewhere across Europe. Despite artistic acclaim and the premiere of several operas during his tenure, the company was not financially successful. He eventually started a company at the Covent Garden Theater in 1734. For its inaugural season, he composed *Alcina*, which he set to the poem "Orlando furioso" by Ludovico Ariosto. The opera premiered on April 16, 1735. Typically sung by a mezzo-soprano, "Sta nell'ircana pietrosa tana" is a solo aria for the heroic knight Ruggiero, who embarks on an expedition determined to be the one who overthrows the title sorceress.

Antonin Dvorak (1841 - 1904) was considered to be the second Czechoslovakian composer to achieve prominence in composition, the first being Bedrich Smetana (1824 - 1884). Like Smetana, who was also deemed a nationalist, he utilized the folk melodies of Moravia and Bohemia, integrating them into the norms of Western symphonic music. From 1892 to 1895 he was Director of the National Conservatory of Music of America, in New York, and in his travels throughout America ventured as far Spillville, Iowa. Dvorak incorporated several American folk melodies and idioms into his works, notably in his *American String Quartet* and *Symphony No. 9 (From The New World)*.

Dvorak composed his *Cello Concerto in B minor* at the request of his friend cellist Hanus Wihan, during his tenure in New York. Years earlier, Dvorak had begun work on a *Concerto in A major* for his friend Ludevít

Peer, which had been given to the soloist for review but never proceeded. In the intervening years, Wihan and others had been requesting a Cello Concerto from him, though he continued to refuse, deeming the instrument unsuitable for a solo work. He finally relented, perhaps after hearing two performances of a concerto for the instrument by the American composer Victor Herbert and the work was finished in 1895. A series of scheduling mishaps involving Wihan, Dvorak, and the London Philharmonic Society ultimately led to cellist Leo Stern performing the work's premiere and Wihan not performing it in concert until 1899.

Édouard-Victoire-Antoine Lalo (1823 - 1892) was a French composer and string-player and regarded mainly for his innovations in the concerto form, during an era where most attention was on the operatic genre. He was born of Spanish descent and was raised in the north of France, in Lille. His father, a military veteran, was against his early interest in music. At 16 Lalo left for Paris to study violin at its Conservatoire under François Antoine Habeneck. For many years he performed as a violist and violinist in the Armingaud Quartet, which he had founded and like his teacher focused extensively on Beethoven and other German and Austrian composers.

Though Lalo had been writing persistently for chamber groups, as well as vocal repertoire, the 1871 founding of the Société Nationale de Musique after the Franco-Prussian War was influential to him turning more fully to composition. His 5-movement violin concerto *Symphonie espagnole*, which was written for the virtuoso Pablo de Sarasate in 1875, brought Lalo his greatest success to date. In 1877 he followed with his *Cello Concerto in D minor* for Adolf Fischer of Paris. The concerto is grounded in the structure that Beethoven epitomized, especially reflected in the stern and slow introduction, but with some Spanish flair and lyricism woven throughout.

Joshua Groffman (1984 -) is a composer, researcher, and chairperson of music at Southern Connecticut State University. His scholarly and creative work often focuses on music, sound, place, and environment in New York's Hudson Valley.

"*Sinfonia in Landscapes* is in three short movements that use the traditional forms of the classical symphony to depict the forms of landscape. A few of these are more-or-less real places, rooted in the physical human and non-human world. Others are landscapes of emotion and memory, depicting place as the interplay of environment, time, and interior experience. The places I know best are those of New York's Hudson River Valley and these most influenced *Sinfonia*. But, the listener will hopefully hear something that resonates with the feeling of their own environments, wherever those may be."

Ottorino Respighi (1879 - 1936) was born in Bologna, Italy to middle-class and artistically-inclined parents. His father Giuseppe, who was both a postman and pianist, encouraged his musical training, but Ottorino showed scant interest until the age of 8. He began formal instruction in violin and viola at 12, and enrolled at the Liceo Musicale di Bologna. The school's director, the composer Giuseppe Martucci, became an early mentor. After completion, he became the principal violist at the Russian Imperial Theatre in Saint Petersburg for its opera company. There he studied orchestration and composition with Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. Subsequent years brought him to Berlin and in 1913 he became professor of composition at the Liceo Musicale di Santa Cecilia in Rome. He described Rome: "marvelous fountains and umbrella-like pines that appear in every part of the horizon were two characteristics that have spoken to my imagination above all".

This setting inspired his trilogy of tone-poems; *Pini di Roma* (Pines of Rome) was its middle work and premiered in 1924. It was preceded by 1916's *Fontane di Roma* (Fountains of Rome). A 1918 performance of it conducted by Arturo Toscanini brought the composer to international fame after its disappointing initial reception. It was later followed by 1928's *Feste Romane* (Roman Festivals).

"I pini della via Appia" ("The Pines of the Appian Way") is the suite's concluding movement. Here Respighi evokes a triumphal legion of the Roman Empire marching into the city at dawn. With its massive orchestration, including 6 buccine (typically played by offstage brass) and organ, he expressed to his wife that its conclusion made him feel "I-don't-know-what" in the pit of his stomach and the first time that a work he had imagined turned out how he wanted it.

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Meet HSO

This Spring's edition introduces two musicians in the Strings and Winds sections; Elizabeth Baldwin & Maddie Chasse



Elizabeth Baldwin, Cello

Where are you from? I was born in Connecticut, having lived most of my childhood in Branford. I currently live in New Haven, the Pizza Capital.

What do you do for school or work? I currently work for an auction house where I do research and cataloguing for various vintage and antique items that come to us. I've been doing this type of work for 5 years, and have enjoyed it for the most part. In between work, I give private lessons on cello, violin, and piano.

When did you start playing your instruments? I started playing the violin in elementary school, having been inspired by the local strings teacher Lawrence Rothermel. I was so impressed with his ability to play anything by ear that we asked him to play, and I wanted to perform to the same ability. I switched to the cello later at 14 years old and fell in love with the deeper and more dramatic tones, and would choose this instrument to focus on for the rest of my time. I attended the Hartt School of Music as a cello performance student, studying with Mihai Tetel and Astrid Schween.

Other than classical, what other types of music do you like to play or listen to? I have a profound love for music composed for video games, having always spent time learning and playing this music on various instruments. I currently perform with the Norwalk Gamer Symphony Orchestra, an amazing group of musicians who share the same passion. My favorite music comes from the Final Fantasy series, mostly composed by Nobuo Uematsu.

Favorite musical experiences with HSO or elsewhere? It's really hard to pick a famous HSO performance, but the first one that comes to mind is our Fall concert from 2024 where we performed the Saint Saens Symphony No. 3, the 'Organ' symphony. It was such a transcendent experience to perform and to hear the organ played with the orchestra. I will never forget the feeling of hearing the organ playing with us for the first time at rehearsal.

Favorite concerts you've attended? One of my favorite concerts was seeing A Perfect Circle perform for the first time after almost a decade of hiatus. It is always an emotional experience seeing a favorite artist perform live, hearing songs you've played over and over in your car now coming from the artists themselves on stage just in front of you.

Favorite composer(s) or composition(s)? My favorite composer by far is Ludwig Van Beethoven, and my favorite piece by him is the Third Symphony. I hope to one day perform it with the HSO, or any of his other symphonies.

Any other hobbies or fun-facts? I have recently formed a quartet known as the Sea Street String Quartet, which has been a longtime goal of mine. Playing in a quartet is one of the most intimate and rewarding musical experiences a performer can have. I host rehearsal sessions at my apartment on Sea Street in New Haven.



Maddie Chasse, Bass Clarinet & Flute

Where are you from? I'm originally from Southington, CT and graduated from high school there in 2019. I now live in New Haven and love it here!

What do you do for school or work? I'm currently pursuing my second masters degree in Educational Psychology Research Methods from UConn. I also work at the Avery Point campus in Groton for the Center for Students with Disabilities and I'm a research assistant for a project on the accuracy of police-reported injuries in crash reports at the Connecticut Transportation Institute.

When did you start playing your instruments? The first instrument I played was piano, probably around age 6 or 7, but I had a hard time sticking to it. I started playing clarinet in 4th grade and switched to bass clarinet at the end of 6th grade, and taught myself to play flute sometime in 7th or 8th grade. During middle school, I also started playing mallet percussion for jazz band. For several years, I mostly played flute and piccolo, but had the opportunity to play bass clarinet again with the HSO since they had one for me to borrow! I also play electric bass, guitar, fife, penny whistle and dabble in a bit of saxophone occasionally.

Other than classical, what other types of music do you like to play or listen to? Some of my favorite pieces to play on flute have been traditional Irish jigs and reels. I listen to a lot of music, but some artists and bands I've been listening to frequently lately are Rage Against the Machine, System of a Down, Oasis, Tom Petty, and Outkast.

Favorite musical experiences with HSO or elsewhere? So far, I've only had a couple performances with the HSO. But I think my favorite performance overall was playing flute in the pit for my high school's production of Les Miserables in 2018.

Favorite concerts you've attended? In 2022, I got to see Graham Nash in a very small venue which was such an incredible experience. Other than that, some of my favorite concerts have been Sheryl Crow, Pierce the Veil, Neil Young, and Greta Van Fleet (4 times).

Favorite composer(s) or composition(s)? For playing, I've always enjoyed Dvorak, Tchaikovsky, Grainger, Holst, Sousa, and John Williams. As far as compositions go, *Isle of the Dead* is one of my favorites. An honorable mention is *Days of Future Passed* by the Moody Blues with the orchestral score composed by Peter Knight.

Any other hobbies or fun-facts? In my free time, you can find me reading, climbing, or at the gym. When it's nice out, you can probably find me outside on a hike or a walk around East Rock. Musical fun fact: In 8th grade, I got my braces put on a week before the Memorial Day parade and could no longer play piccolo, so I got a copy of the percussion part on Friday and had it memorized by Sunday, and played it on a 5-gallon bucket in the parade.

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Hamden Symphony seeks musicians interested in joining the Orchestra for our Summer 2026 season and beyond.

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