

Montclair State University
JOHN J. CALI SCHOOL OF MUSIC
PRESENTS

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Kyle Ritenauer,
Director of Orchestra and Conductor

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12
7:30 P.M.
ALEXANDER KASSER THEATER

Daniel Gurskis
Dean, College of the Arts

Shea Scruggs
Director
John J. Cali School of Music



John J. Cali
School of Music

MONTCLAIR
STATE UNIVERSITY

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Kyle Ritenauer, *Director of Orchestra and Conductor*

Kasser Theatre at Montclair State University

Friday, December 12 - 7:30 p.m.

PROGRAM

Montclair State University Symphony Orchestra

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Overture to *Die Zauberflöte* (1791)

Gary Blackman, *conductor*

Short Pause

Chatham High School

Aaron Copland

Appalachian Spring Suite (1944)

Liam Keller, *conductor*

INTERMISSION

Montclair State University Symphony Orchestra

Antonin Dvořák

Symphony no. 8 in G major, Op. 88 (1889)

I. Allegro con brio

II. Adagio

III. Allegretto grazioso - molto vivace

III. Allegro ma non troppo

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MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The Montclair State University Symphony Orchestra is a core component of the John J. Cali School of Music, where students develop essential professional skills in preparation, etiquette, and collaboration, all while striving for the highest standard of performance. The Symphony provides a safe and inclusive environment, bringing together students from across the university—particularly those studying music performance, music education, and music therapy—at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Together, they perform a diverse repertoire, ranging from classical masterpieces to contemporary symphonic and operatic works.

Under the direction of Kyle Ritenauer since 2022, the Symphony Orchestra maintains a rigorous schedule, presenting four symphonic concerts, a mainstage opera, and a variety of projects, guest artists, and collaborations. Central to our mission is providing meaningful performance opportunities for Montclair's students. To that end, we host an annual Concerto Competition, a Vocal Competition (with winners performing as soloists with the orchestra), and workshops for student composers to develop their latest works through the experience of a live orchestra.

Recent highlights include the first-ever performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony on the MSU campus, in collaboration with the MSU Chorale. The Symphony has also partnered with the Jazz Department, most notably performing Duke Ellington's *Three Black Kings*. In 2025, the orchestra performed Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* with live synesthesia artist Helena Chywski as a central event for the University's donors, hosted by President Koppell's office. The orchestra continues to collaborate with world-class artists including Seth Parker Woods, Vijay Gupta, Bela Fleck, and Eric Whitacre among others. High-level opera productions have featured Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, and Cavalli's *La Calisto*.

Upcoming season highlights include visits from renowned artists such as violinist Stefan Jackiw, mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard, and the Kronos Quartet. The orchestra will perform Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 1 and present a full production of Mozart's opera *Die Zauberflöte*.

The Symphony Orchestra deepens its connection to the regional musical and educational community through growing outreach and collaborations. This year, the orchestra hosts its first StringFest, welcoming 250 high school students to campus for concerts and workshops. The orchestra created the Montclair Violin Prize to support young violinists pursuing music careers and will hold the 2nd Annual Orchestra Conductors Workshop with ASTA-NJ and the Pierre Monteux School, offering tracks for educators and performers. Partnerships with the New Jersey Symphony Youth Orchestra and The Pathways Project provide side-by-side performance opportunities for high school and college musicians, and this season, the Chatham High School Chamber Orchestra joins the December concert. Through these initiatives, the MSU Symphony Orchestra serves as a vital hub for musical education and community engagement in the region.

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

First Violin

Kiley Foxhall**
Oliver Costello
Marisol Zapata
Anthony Holc
Carlos Santamaria
Park Choy
Rachel O'Connor*
Rafael Linares

Second Violin

Jade Hattori-Hamilton
Briana Almonte
Sophie Jiang
Annamaria Alcaro
Giselle Gomez
Abigail Meighoo
E'nyla Latta
Haydn Ng

Viola

Emma Musial
Sam Omalyev
Denton Moreland
Noah Stevens*
Armando Atanda
Geanelly Vallecillo
Josie Dambeck
Hector Otero

Cello

Yubin Choi
Nailah Harris
Yitian Huang
Annamaria Witeck
Justene Valere
Eda Yildiz
John Sample
Paige Stewart
Kevin Guillen
Max Caulkins
Shayna Barkan

Bass

Niles Scott
Illana Zeidman
JP Bernabe*

Flute

Luiza Ribiero
Sofia Scamurra
Julianna Taveras-Garcia
Anaya Torrence
Arianna Nguyen-Haberneski

Oboe

Bailey Coon
David Reinstein
Iva Verba
Tristan Shafran

Clairnet

Nicolette Dibari
Emmet Milleri
Emily O'Brien

Basoon

Darren Butler
Jonathan Hart
Taylor Lee
Jose Zapata

Horn

Jeison Campoverde
Faith Santana
Sheldon Senek

Trumpet

Clifton Little
Kevin Jacobsen

Trombone

Aidan Andreoli
David Laird
Dan Harkin

Tuba

Isaac Galang

Percussion

Hannah D'Elia

Assistant Conductors

Gary Blackman
Alec Hamilton
Tristan Hughes

CHATHAM HIGH SCHOOL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

First Violin

Sabrina Wang
Ella Li
Audrey Lee
Lara Paglinawan
Annie Sham
Diya Nandakumar
Cas Muehter
Allison Hsieh

Second Violin

Aidan Ryu
Chris Hock
Stacey Kim
Kelly Nie
Levi Zhou
Dylan Zhou
Hana Nieves
Vin Gurando
Joana Jayanth
Ellie Sayani

Viola

Sung-il Ryou
Alexander Rato
Aoibheann Hillman
Sana Gupta

Cello

Anderson Chan
Shashwat Chakraborty
Katelyn Moy
Jackson Wang
Liam Chang

Bass

Shakthi Prasanth

Flute

Ariana Nguyen-Haberneski

Clarinet

Nicolette DiBarri

Bassoon

Taylor Lee

Piano

Alan Chan

*Alumni String Fellows

**Orchestra Graduate Assistan



Kyle Ritenauer is an emerging presence in the classical music world, noted for his versatility across the symphonic stage, opera, and ballet. He made his Kennedy Center debut in 2024, conducting the National Symphony Orchestra in performance. A frequent presence at Lincoln Center, Kyle recently debuted with the New York City Ballet, leading six performances of George Balanchine's *Episodes* (music of Anton Webern). Following the success of these performances, he has been re-engaged to conduct six performances of the company's iconic production of *The Nutcracker*, as well as multiple performances of Tchaikovsky's *The Sleeping Beauty* later this season.

In the world of opera, Kyle has worked with companies including Opéra de Montréal and Des Moines Metro Opera, the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Singers, and most recently prepared Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* with The Juilliard School Orchestra and Vocal Department. As principal conductor of the Cali Opera Program, Kyle has led productions of Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*, Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, Cavalli's *La Calisto*, and is excited for this year's production of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*.

A teacher at heart, Kyle works to make classical music meaningful and relevant for his students, guiding them to approach their craft with both excellence and imagination. His primary appointment is as Interim Director of Orchestral Studies at Montclair State University, where he leads the John J. Cali School of Music Symphony Orchestra, collaborates with the Cali Opera Program, and teaches a full studio of graduate orchestral conducting students. Kyle considers the John J. Cali School his musical home.

Nationally sought after as a teacher, Kyle has served on the artistic staff of the Manhattan School of Music since 2021, is a member of the conducting faculty at the internationally recognized Pierre Monteux School, and regularly guest conducts at The Juilliard School. He maintains deep connections with youth orchestras and high school musicians across the country and was recognized as *Collegiate Teacher of the Year* by the American String Teachers Association.

Kyle has conducted the Elgin Symphony Orchestra, Symphony New Hampshire, Capital Philharmonic of New Jersey, Norwalk Symphony Orchestra, the Hudson Valley Philharmonic, and Carnegie Hall's Ensemble Connect. As a cover conductor Kyle has worked with the New York Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Utah Symphony, New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, and the American Composers Orchestra.

An advocate for the music of today, Ritenauer has premiered more than seventy works and collaborated with leading composers including John Adams, Caroline Shaw, Carlos Simon, Quinn Mason, Nina Young, Andy Akiho, Jon Batiste, and Anna Clyne. He is a student of David Robertson and has received mentorship from conductors Gianandrea Noseda, Gustavo Dudamel, and others.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) - Overture to *Die Zauberflöte* (1791)

Mozart's *Magic Flute* Overture sets the stage for the opera's mix of ceremony, humor, and Enlightenment ideals. It begins with three solemn chords before launching into a bright, energetic Allegro filled with quick scales and lively orchestral exchanges. A brief fugato highlights Mozart's mastery of counterpoint, and the overture ends in a burst of clarity and exuberance. Compact yet full of character, it captures the spirit of Mozart's final operatic masterpiece.

Aaron Copland (1900-1990) - *Appalachian Spring Suite* - original version (1944)

Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring* has come to embody the open sound and optimistic spirit often associated with American concert music. Originally composed in 1943–44 for Martha Graham and her modern dance company, the work first appeared not as a full orchestral suite but as a chamber score for just thirteen instruments. This original instrumentation reveals the ballet's remarkable clarity and transparency. Instead of the broad, resonant textures of the later orchestral suite, the chamber version offers sharply etched lines, close-up colors, and an almost conversational interplay between instruments.

The ballet tells a simple story centered on a young Shaker community in rural Pennsylvania. At its heart is the experience of a new couple beginning their life together, surrounded by neighbors whose presence suggests both tradition and continuity. Although the scenario unfolds in specific dramatic scenes, Copland's music communicates a more universal sense of hope, renewal, and communal strength. The chamber ensemble lends an intimacy that suits the rural setting and the understated emotional arc.

The score unfolds in a series of musical episodes that follow the action of the ballet: gentle morning music, lively dances, moments of reflection, and celebrations that capture the pacing and emotional tone of Graham's choreography. Copland's characteristic harmonic language shapes the entire work. Open intervals, spare textures, and buoyant rhythms evoke spacious landscapes and energetic movement without relying on literal folk material. Even so, the music carries a distinctly American character, shaped by the clarity and directness for which Copland became known.

Near the end of the piece comes the most recognizable section, a set of variations on the Shaker tune "Simple Gifts." Copland presents the melody with disarming simplicity, then transforms it through increasingly expansive variations that mirror the ballet's growing sense of communal affirmation. In the chamber version, this sequence feels especially poignant. The smaller forces highlight the tune's plainspoken contours and allow each variation to register with crisp, individual color.

The Appalachian Spring Suite in its original form offers a close look at Copland's craft. It reveals the piece not as a broad symphonic canvas but as a finely woven ensemble work in which every line, rhythm, and gesture is exposed. The result is a vivid portrait of American musical modernism shaped not by grandiosity but by clarity, restraint, and expressive sincerity. For many listeners, the chamber version remains the most intimate and direct way to experience one of Copland's defining creations.

Antonin Dvořák (1841–1904) - *Symphony No. 8 in G major, Op. 88* (1889)

Antonin Dvořák Symphony No. 8 is one of the brightest and most lyrical works in the symphonic repertoire. Written in 1889 at his country home in Vysoká, it reflects his deep love for the Czech landscape and his growing confidence as a composer with an international presence. Compared with the darker Symphony No. 7 or the expansive later symphonies, this work is filled with pastoral color, folk influenced melodies, and a sense of openhearted joy.

The symphony opens in an unexpected way with a quiet, contemplative idea in the lower strings and winds. Its mood quickly gives way to a warm flute melody that sets the tone for the movement's free flowing sequence of musical ideas. Rather than developing a small number of themes in a strict traditional manner, Dvořák lets the music unfold in vivid scenes that suggest birdsong, dance rhythms, and rustic fanfares.

The slow movement brings a more reflective atmosphere. Moments of calm lyricism alternate with surges of heightened emotion, as if sunlight and shadow pass over a landscape. Solo woodwinds trade expressive lines while the orchestra adds color and depth to the shifting moods.

The third movement replaces the traditional scherzo with a graceful dance that suggests a gentle waltz touched by folk character. Its main idea moves with an affectionate, nostalgic lilt. A contrasting central section bursts with more energetic rustic motion before the initial dance returns with quiet charm.

The finale begins with a striking trumpet call that introduces a set of variations. Dvořák uses this structure to reveal the many personalities of a single theme, moving from exuberant to reflective to playful. The music alternates between propulsive brilliance and moments of pastoral calm until it drives toward a jubilant conclusion supported by radiant brass writing.

Symphony No. 8 was first performed in Prague in 1890 and quickly became one of Dvořák most beloved pieces. Its blend of folk spirit, vivid orchestration, and unaffected optimism continues to make it a favorite among audiences and orchestras. If many symphonies center on drama and struggle, this one celebrates nature, melody, and the simple vitality of everyday life.

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