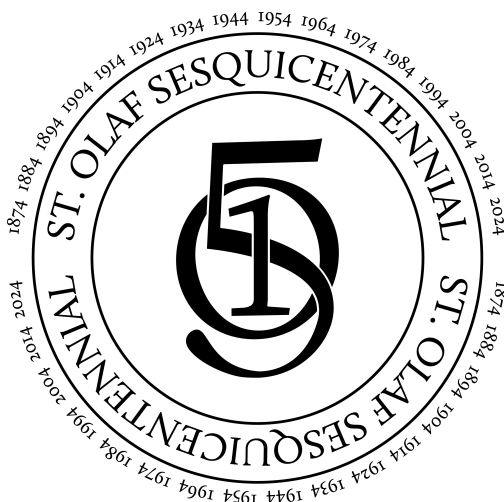

ST. OLAF PHILHARMONIA

CHUNG PARK, *CONDUCTOR*

with

NORTHFIELD H.S. CAMERATA | THOMAS O'KEEFE, *CONDUCTOR*
and BRENDA BRENNER, *CONDUCTOR*



SATURDAY, MARCH 15, 2025 | 7:30 P.M.

SKOGLUND AUDITORIUM

PROGRAM

NORTHFIELD H.S. CAMERATA AND ST. OLAF PHILHARMONIA BRENDA BRENNER, CONDUCTOR

Andante Festivo

Jean Sibelius (1865–1957)

Written in 1922 and conducted by Sibelius in 1939, *Andante Festivo* is a smooth and even piece. Jean Sibelius composed this piece in the style of his older music in response to commissions for a celebratory theme. Ironically enough, much later in the century, this celebration would be played at his funeral. A product of the romantic period of classical music, a version of this lulling and melodic work was performed first at the wedding of Sibelius's niece. *The New York Times* asked Sibelius to conduct a piece over live broadcast, so in response, the composer adapted the piece to accommodate for the radios of the time. This piece tells the story of a post-war world rebuilding and adapting to changing times and technology.

Beginning with a slow and melodic tune that you can hear repeated throughout the piece, the scene is set for a flowing orchestral procession. The piece starts off balancing the lower and upper registers of the orchestra with a communal melody. As the piece moves with a lazy forward momentum, the theme develops and returns to its familiar sound, time and time again. Without abrupt deviation from the slow elegance, we can take a glimpse into the sounds of a world months before the Second World War. As the composition comes to a conclusion, listen for the timpani roll, which is distinct from the otherwise reserved sound of the piece.

— Program notes by Kai Trelstad-Larsen '28

ST. OLAF PHILHARMONIA CHUNG PARK, CONDUCTOR

Nun last uns Gott dem Herren (“His Word, Baptism, and Sacrament”)

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Sein Wort, sein Tauf, sein Nachtmahl
Dient wider allen Unfall,
Der Heilig Geist im Glauben
Lehr tuns darauf vertrauen.

*His word, his baptism, his supper,
are proof against all misfortune,
the holy spirit in faith
teaches us to place our trust in these.*

— English trans. by Francis Browne
Sourced from www.bach-cantatas.com. Used by permission.

Overture to Omar

Rhiannon Giddens (b. 1977) and Michael Abels (b. 1962)

Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels's opera *Omar* is based on the autobiography of Omar Ibn Said, a Muslim scholar from West Africa who was enslaved and forcibly brought to the United States in 1807. He escaped from his first enslaver after a month, was captured, jailed, and sold again to James Owen, a prominent politician. Owen attempted to convert Omar to Christianity and allowed him to write an autobiography of his life.

The opera was commissioned by a group of seven U.S. opera companies, and premiered in 2022 at Spoleto Festival in the USA. It was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Music for 2023. The text of the opera presents a fictionalized version of Ibn Said's experiences as even his own memoir presents scant details of his life. Giddens, an American roots and folk musician, wrote the libretto and co-composed the music with Abels, who is best known as a film composer.

The overture to *Omar* is adapted from "Coromantee," the earliest known North American transcription of African songs sung by slaves. This lively dance establishes the opera's opening scene in Omar's home village in Futa Toro, an Islamic nation in modern-day Senegal. Listen for the strong rhythmic pulse throughout, the use of hand drums — specifically the Kidi and Sogo from the West African Ewe Drumming tradition — and the contrast between the sections of the piece.

— Program notes by Tarkel Price '25

Vermont State Fair

Steve Danyew (b. 1983)

Steve Danyew's vibrant orchestral piece, *Vermont State Fair*, captures the energy and atmosphere of its namesake event. Written in 2015, this contemporary full symphonic work vividly reflects Danyew's personal experiences at the Vermont State Fair. According to the original program notes from its premiere, Danyew aimed to evoke the "exciting, vibrant place, with rides and games, animals, horse racing, and fried dough." Danyew's fair experience is characterized in this piece, the orchestral version of which was premiered in Orlando, Florida by the UCF Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Dr. Chung Park. *Vermont State Fair* utilizes a standard contemporary symphonic orchestra. Adding a unique and evocative touch involving the usage of many key signatures, the piece incorporates random chatter and scripted lines from the wind section, further immersing the listener in the bustling soundscape of a fair. This creative instrumentation brings Danyew's memories of the fair to life in a dynamic and engaging orchestral work.

— Program notes by Carson Macynski '28

Porgy and Bess: Selection for Orchestra

George Gershwin (1898–1937)
arr. Robert Russell Bennett (1894–1981)

Brooklyn composer and musician extraordinaire George Gershwin was one of the best-known composers of his generation. With a brilliantly broad oeuvre, his most notable works ranged from popular hits like *I Got Rhythm* (1930) to symphonic works like *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924). It was this bridging of genres that defined Gershwin's most critical legacy — helping legitimize African American art at the forefront of American expression. *Porgy and Bess* is perhaps the best representation of this. Designed as a "folk-opera," the piece is a veritable fireworks show of the musicianship and style of American and African American culture.

Based on the libretto *Porgy* (1926), Gershwin decided to set the stageplay to music. In 1934, he worked on the opera in South Carolina in order to gain a greater understanding of African American music of the location. The story is centered around a Charleston slum in which the distressed heroine Bess meets Porgy, a beggar who helps her overcome the vices of her old life. This arrangement features a broad selection of the opera's music, displaying its many varieties of dance and song: the sardonic "A Woman is a Sometime Thing," the sappy "Bess, You Is My Woman Now," the rambunctious "It Ain't Necessarily So." Most iconic is the slow-swinging lullaby "Summertime." The bluesy tune has become an American staple, famously recorded by American icons like Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald. In this arrangement, the sweltering melody is refrained by violins and oboe backed by drone from lower strings.

Porgy and Bess has cemented itself as a great American work by its critical place in history along with its innovative inspiration and orchestration from Black folk music. It has not only helped express African American to America, but the world at large.

— Program notes by James Bajzer '28

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BIOGRAPHIES



Dr. Chung Park is a nationally-recognized conductor, music educator, and editor. He serves as the conductor of the award-winning St. Olaf Orchestra and began conducting the St. Olaf Philharmonia in the fall of 2023. Park maintains an active schedule as a guest conductor in both the professional and educational realms, with engagements including the Sarasota Orchestra, Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra, and student honor orchestras throughout the United States. His recently published transcription of the Cello Suites of J.S. Bach for Bärenreiter-Verlag is used by students and faculty at top institutions internationally. He is currently working on an edition of the Violin *Sonatas and Partitas* of J.S. Bach for Bärenreiter, to be released next year. Park comes to St. Olaf College most recently from the University of Central Florida, where he served as conductor of the UCF Symphony and Chamber Orchestras, head of string music education, and instructor of viola. Park earned his doctorate in instrumental conducting from the University of Miami, and holds M.M. degrees in orchestral conducting (University of Illinois) and viola performance (Western Michigan University), and a B.M. in viola performance from the Peabody Conservatory of Music. Deeply engaged in the life of the American music education community, Dr. Park has given hundreds of clinics in schools throughout the United States for all levels and ensemble types. He is an ardent believer in the value of a liberal arts education, the breadth and depth it provides, and the possibilities inherent in its ability to address the whole person.

Brenda Brenner is the Eugene O'Brien Bicentennial Executive Associate Dean (Interim) and professor of music education at the Indiana University (IU) Jacobs School of Music. She specializes in string music education, teaching applied violin, as well as courses in violin and string pedagogy. Brenner received a B.M. and B.M.E. from Wichita State University and an M.M. and D.M.A. in violin performance from the Eastman School of Music. In addition to her appointment to the Music Education Department, she serves as co-director of the IU String Academy, a position she has held since 1993. Her string academy students have been featured in concerts in major venues throughout the United States and have presented tours throughout Europe, Asia, and South America. As director of the Fairview Project – a program in which every first and second grader in a Title I school learns violin as part of the curriculum – Brenner researches the cognitive, academic, and social outcomes of early instrumental music instruction. An active performer of chamber music throughout the United States, Brenner partners with her husband, organist Christopher Young. She also teaches and conducts at the IU Summer String Academy and is assistant director of the IU Retreat for Professional Violinists and Violists. Brenner is an active international clinician, is a past president of the American String Teachers Association, and is on the board of the Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic.



Thomas O'Keefe is a music educator and conductor who teaches at Northfield High School. In his role, he leads three curricular string orchestras, teaches music theory, and runs private lessons for his students. He earned his B.M. in music education from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota. His prominent teachers included Dr. Kevin Sütterlin and Dr. Peter Haberman (conducting), as well as Dr. Sonja Bosca-Harasim (violin). Before coming to Northfield, he taught in West Fargo, and then pursued his master's in orchestral conducting at James Madison University under the mentorship of Professor Foster Beyers.

ST. OLAF PHILHARMONIA

CHUNG PARK, CONDUCTOR

VIOLIN

Vienna Adler, *Hopkins, Minn.*
 Charlie Barsanti, *St. Paul, Minn.*
 Maddy Boyko, *Burnsville, Minn.*
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 Kacie Cortes, *Elmhurst, Ill.*
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 Abby Degen, *Brooklyn Park, Minn.*
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 Alexander James, *Marine On St. Croix, Minn.*
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 Grace Meyers, *Sioux Falls, S.D.*
 Lydia Miller, *Eau Claire, Wis.*
 • Mathea Petersin, *Eau Claire, Wis.*
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 Tessa Snicker, *Bristol, Ill.*
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 Jameson Drieslein, *Eden Prairie, Minn.*
 Ash Graber, *Eden Prairie, Minn.*
 ***^ Annika Knudson, *Bemidji, Minn.*
 Sage Koppana, *Paonia, Colo.*
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 Ryan Moore, *Arden Hills, Minn.*
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NORTHFIELD H.S. CAMERATA

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• Atticus Mayer

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Eden Coudron

* Merri Kmoch

Alyssa Malecha

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