



2025-2026

Annual Report



Legacy
OF LIGHT



Eastern Connecticut
Symphony Orchestra

Toshiyuki Shimada
Music Director & Conductor

2025-2026 Board and Staff of The Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra

MUSIC DIRECTOR & CONDUCTOR

Toshiyuki Shimada

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Liane Crawford, *Immediate Past President*

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A MESSAGE FROM TOSHI



Toshiyuki Shimada
Music Director and Conductor

Toshiyuki Shimada reflects here on 16 years with our beloved orchestra!

This is my sixteenth season with the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra, and what a season to mark a new chapter. It has been a joy to make music with this extraordinary orchestra for so many years, and this season brought one of the biggest changes of all: welcoming Caitlin Meyer home as our new Executive Director. Caitlin's own roots in this orchestra, as a young flutist in our Youth Orchestra, made her return feel like a true homecoming for our whole musical family. I truly feel that Caitlin is an exceptional partner as we lead the ECSO toward limitless possibilities together. I look forward to all that we will accomplish.

We opened the season with *Voyage of Passion: Elgar and Beyond*, featuring the wonderful young violinist Nicholas Hammel in the Elgar Violin Concerto. In November, we marked the 150th anniversary of Maurice Ravel's birth with pianist Mark Markham in a program of Ravel and Berlioz. Our Holiday Spectacular brought Broadway to the Garde with Christopher Faison, and in February we presented an evening of American spirit featuring our own Principal Trumpet, Phil Snedecor, in Anthony DiLorenzo's *American Ingenuity* and our Concertmaster Stephan Tieszen in Kenneth Fuchs' *American Rhapsody*.

On Palm Sunday, we returned to the Cathedral of St. Patrick in Norwich with our Eastern Connecticut Symphony Chorus, under the continued leadership of Daniel McDavitt, for Dan Forrest's *Requiem*. We closed the season with *Sounds of America*, a celebration of Bernstein and Copland that was one of the most moving evenings I can remember on that stage.

I am deeply grateful to our devoted Board of Directors, our Associate Director Emma Bocciarelli, and to our new President, Jon Nickerson, as we begin this next chapter together. And of course, my thanks to our musicians, our Chorus, our Youth Orchestra, and every patron and donor who fills our hall season after season.

Now we look toward our 80th anniversary, From 80 to Infinity, with concerts ranging from *Shadows and Spirits* to a *Voyage Along the Silk Road* and *Boundless Beethoven*.

Eighty years after Victor Norman founded this orchestra, our mission to bring people together through music has never felt more alive. I could not be more honored to continue this journey, with Caitlin, with our Board, and with all of you, for many seasons to come.



*Toshi greets the crowd after our Season Finale on April 25th.
Photo Credit Cass Meehan-Marinich*

A MESSAGE FROM CAITLIN



Caitlin Meyer

Executive Director

Caitlin is thrilled to be joining the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra this season - her second stint with the organization since joining the youth orchestra as a young flutist.

When I walked back through the doors of the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra last year, I felt like I had come home.

The Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra was the very first concert I ever attended. I spent my own childhood as a flutist in the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Youth Orchestra, and to return all these years later as Executive Director has been one of the great privileges of my life.

Thank you for welcoming me so warmly into this role and for trusting me with the stewardship of an organization that means so much to this region, and to me personally.

None of this happens without this community. Thank you to Toshiyuki Shimada for sixteen seasons of extraordinary artistry and for welcoming me so generously into this family. Thank you to our Board of Directors, with whom I am already looking forward to building what comes next. And thank you to our musicians, our Chorus, our Youth Orchestra, the Friends of the Symphony, our amazing home at the Garde Arts Center, our volunteers, our subscribers, and our donors. You are the reason this orchestra has thrived for 79 seasons.

And now, the best part: we get to do it again, bigger. As we step into our 80th season, *From 80 to Infinity*, I could not be more excited for the music ahead, for this community, and for everything still to come.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT

What an extraordinary journey we have shared in my first year as President.

I want to thank our Immediate Past President, Liane Crawford, and all of our dedicated Board Directors for the unwavering support they have shown to me and our Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra.

We are so very fortunate to have Toshiyuki Shimada, entering his seventeenth season, as our Music Director and Conductor. He continues to move us with his mastery of live orchestra music.

When we welcomed our new Executive Director at the start of this year, we anticipated positive change. And change, she delivered. This past season has been nothing short of spectacular, marking a vibrant new chapter for our beloved Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra.

With Caitlin and Toshi's unbounded energy, exceptional leadership, dynamic vision, and collaborative spirit; our orchestra has reached new artistic and operational heights. We have seen full concert halls, increased presence in our schools and communities, and a renewed energy that resonates far beyond the stage.

This banner season belonged to all of us. It is the direct result of our musicians' breathtaking artistry and our administrative team's tireless efforts; the steadfast dedication of our Board of Directors, Friends of the Symphony, and volunteers; and the unwavering generosity of our donors, subscribers, and music lovers. Thank you all for playing your vital part in this triumphant season and sharing a passion for live orchestra music.

As we look ahead to our 80th Anniversary Season, I am filled with gratitude for the foundation Victor Norman built and with the excitement for everything this orchestra has yet to become.



Jon Nickerson

President of the Board

Jon is honored to have served his first year as President with the Board of Directors and looks forward to our 80th Anniversary Season, *From 80 to Infinity*!

BY THE NUMBERS

79

Seasons serving Eastern Connecticut and Western Rhode Island!

Duration

July 1, 2025 – July 1, 2026

Objective

Inspire, Educate, & Connect

Number of Students Served through Young People's Concerts and Music in the Schools Programs

1,200+



Total Interactions on Social Media

126,000



New Audience Growth

13%



Tickets

5,348 Total Single Tickets in Season 79

Salute to Service: 100

Tickets given to Service Members in Southeastern CT and beyond

179 Subscriber Households



Annual Fund

\$232,411

45 New Donors totaling \$31,004

7 New Major Gifts above \$1,000

Listening Stats



962 Minutes making Music in Eastern CT

6 Mainstage concert programs at the Garde Arts Center in Season 79

80+ Professional musicians performing with the ECSO

40+ volunteers

15 board members



Romance Showdown



118 Attendees

Net Revenue: \$25,679

Sponsorships: \$23,000

SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

Season Opener 10.04 & French Fantastique 11.08



Music Director and Conductor Toshiyuki Shimada opened his 16th season with a globe-spanning program! The concert showcased Nicholas Hammel, winner of the 2025 ECSO Instrumental Competition, in Elgar's magnificent Violin Concerto, alongside works by Strauss, Brahms, and Rimsky-Korsakov. On November 8th, in celebration of World Pianist Day and the 150th anniversary of Maurice Ravel's birth, the ECSO welcomed internationally acclaimed pianist Mark Markham for an evening steeped in French musical brilliance.

Holiday Spectacular

The ECSO brought the community together for its annual Holiday Spectacular, featuring the full symphony orchestra, the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Chorus, and the New London High School Chorus. Broadway vocalist Christopher Faison dazzled audiences with his powerful stage presence, while the SubTones, an a cappella ensemble from General Dynamics Electric Boat, set a festive tone in the Garde Arts Center lobby before the performance.



A Night in Vienna

the ECSO transported audiences to the grand concert halls of Vienna with an all-classical program featuring Mozart's Symphony No. 36 "Linz," Beethoven's Symphony No. 4, and Haydn's Cello Concerto in D. The evening's special highlight was ECSO Principal Cellist Amy Ward Butler performing the Haydn concerto as featured soloist, earning well-deserved recognition for her expressive artistry.

American Ingenuity

The ECSO celebrated the spirit of American innovation with a program spotlighting two of the orchestra's own musicians. ECSO Principal Trumpet Phil Snedecor performed the world-premiere-associated trumpet concerto American Ingenuity by Anthony DiLorenzo, a work written for him and inspired by four landmark American achievements. ECSO Concertmaster Stephan Tieszen also shone as soloist in Kenneth Fuchs's American Rhapsody, rounding out an evening that was both a tribute to American ingenuity and a showcase of the remarkable talent within the ECSO's own ranks.



SEASON HIGHLIGHTS



Palm Sunday

ECSO and Eastern Connecticut Symphony Chorus brought together music and community for a free concert at the Cathedral of St. Patrick in Norwich. Under the direction of Toshiyuki Shimada and Chorus Director Dr. Daniel McDavitt, the program featured Samuel Barber's Agnus Dei, Daniel McDavitt's Crossing the Bar, and Dan Forrest's Requiem for the Living.

Season Finale

The ECSO closed its 2025-2026 season with a sweeping celebration of the American musical voice. The Eastern Connecticut Symphony Chorus joined the orchestra under the direction of Toshiyuki Shimada for an evening that wove together choral works by Daniel McDavitt, Randall Thompson, and Jake Runestad before building to Leonard Bernstein's iconic West Side Story Concert Suite, featuring soprano Sarah Callinan and tenor Henry Cox. The concert culminated in Aaron Copland's towering Symphony No. 3, one of the most celebrated American symphonies ever written, bringing the season to a triumphant close.



ECSYO/SE

Under the direction of Kate Anderson, the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Youth Orchestra and String Ensemble had a phenomenal year! Performing to sold-out crowds for both their winter and spring performances, the young musicians succeeded in wowwing the crowds with everything from Lady Gaga to Ponchielli's Dance of the Hours. This year, members of the Youth Orchestra performed alongside the orchestra for our annual Young People's Concert, allowing them an insiders look into the work of professional musicianship!



Romance Showdown

On April 11, the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra hosted its Romance Showdown, a one-of-a-kind fundraising event that brought together 118 guests for an unforgettable evening of music, friendly competition, and community celebration. Audiences were treated to live performances by ECSO musicians before taking center stage themselves — voting on romantic musical showdowns and helping crown the evening's winner. The night was capped by a special moment as Music Director Toshiyuki Shimada unveiled ECSO's upcoming season, generating excitement and anticipation for the year ahead.



EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Music belongs to everyone.
Here is how we made that real in Season 79.

Young People's Concerts and Carnegie Hall Link Up

Now in its many-year run as part of Carnegie Hall's nationally acclaimed Link Up education program, the ECSO's Young People's Concerts series reached more than 1,200 students across 13 schools in grades 3 through 5 this season. Each concert is preceded by in-classroom preparation materials developed in partnership with Carnegie Hall, ensuring that students arrive informed, engaged, and ready to experience a live orchestra. For many of these students, the ECSO is their introduction to orchestral music, and that introduction has the power to shape a lifetime of connection to the arts. This year, we also had students from the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra perform alongside the Symphony as a side-by-side!

We are deeply committed to expanding this program and ensuring that schools in Title I communities have equitable access to these experiences. Our ongoing work to grow partnerships in New London and Norwich reflects that commitment.

Salute to Service

The ECSO's Salute to Service program uses music to honor and support active duty military families of Eastern Connecticut and Western Rhode Island. Through live performances, community events, and dedicated programming, we aim to create meaningful experiences for those who serve our country. This season, we continued to deepen our relationships with veterans organizations and to explore new ways of bringing music into the lives of this community, and were honored to distribute over 100 free tickets to our concerts.

Check Out the Symphony

The ECSO's Check Out the Symphony program partners with local public libraries to place complimentary concert tickets directly in the hands of community members who might not otherwise access live orchestral music. Library card holders can check out tickets just as they would a book, removing financial and logistical barriers and extending the ECSO's reach into every corner of our community. This season, the program continued to grow and introduce new audiences to the transformative experience of a live symphony concert.

Background Photo: Principal Clarinetist Kelli O'Connor directs her Clarinet Ensemble in the historic Garde Arts Lobby prior to the American Ingenuity Concert on February 21, 2026. Photo Credit Cass Meehan-Marinich

Financial Overview

Orchestra Revenue:

Annual Fund and Events	\$275,271
Investment Draws	\$223,778
Performance and Other Earned	\$246,013
Grants and Foundations	\$125,646
Concert Sponsors	\$24,360

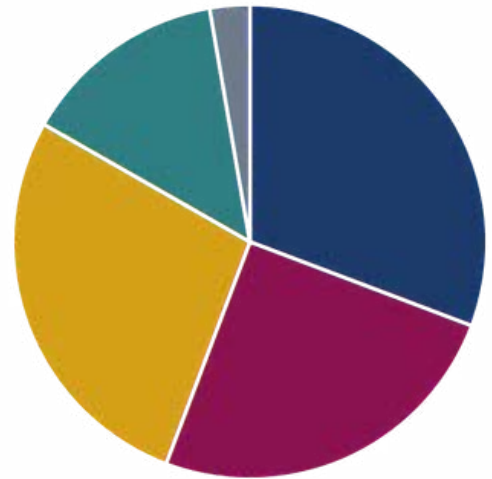
TOTAL REVENUE	\$895,068
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Orchestra Expense:

Artistic Personnel	\$509,376
Production	\$140,327
Admin Personnel	\$165,432
Office & General Admin	\$76,275
Marketing, Development	\$46,850

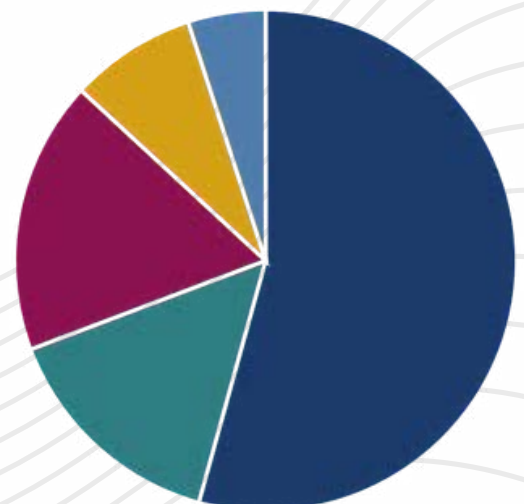
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$938,260
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Revenue Breakdown



- Annual Fund and Events
- Investment Draws
- Performance and Other Earned
- Grants and Foundations
- Concert Sponsors

Expense Breakdown



- Artistic Personnel
- Production
- Admin Personnel
- Office & General Admin
- Marketing, Development

These numbers convey more than mere attendance and participation. They highlight the dedication and commitment of donors, grantors, board members, volunteers, and every musician and staff member who invested in this organization.

We are grateful for each one.

2025-2026 Contributions

Given July 2025 to June 2026

MAESTRO • \$10,000 +

Anonymous	Patricia T. Hendel ∞	Ivan Otterness ∞ ♪
Liane & Don Crawford ∞ ♪	Frank Maletz	Thomas D. Sanford
Stephen & Susan Forbes ♪	MNB Charitable Fund ♪	Paul Sweeney ♪

PRESIDENT'S SOCIETY • \$5,000-\$9,999

Dr. Thomas H. Althuis	ASA Environmental Products, Inc	Mildred E. Devine	Linda Mariani
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CONCERTMASTER'S GUILD • \$500-\$999

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Deborah J. Donovan	Victor Johnson	Helen Milo Sandalls	Roger Tremblay & Pauline Zimmer
Judith & David Fales	Harriet Juli	Isabelle G. Singer	

PATRON • \$250-\$499

Barbara Timken	Martin Glavan	Ravi Kurumbail	Nancy Olsen
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Dr. & Mrs. Thomas C. Cherry, Jr.	Gay Story Hamilton	Robert McCracken	April Posson
Brenda Lowe & Paul Chomet	Ulysses & Christine Hammond	Alan & Hadas Merriman	Betsy & Grant Ritter
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Mel Foti	David & Eileen Kalla	Marleen Nienhuis	

♪ Bravo Circle Members: Annual fund donors who commit for three years to give to support the mission of the ECSO. See page 35 to learn more.

∞ Shannon Society Members: legacy donors dedicated to preserving our rich orchestral tradition for generations to come. See page 34 to learn more.

PATRON CONTINUED • \$250-\$499

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David Schulz & Karen Stone
Barbara Timkin

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Harold & Elizabeth White Fund
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Theresa Wilson
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Patty & Tom Adams
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Martha Minich
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Christina Moore
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Charles Primus
Charles & Margaret Rich
Greg Roth
Sally Ryan
Anne Scheibner
Elwin & Cheryl Schwartz
Paul Silverio
Phyllis Holtzman & Richard Simonson
Katherine Sullivan
Marc Tattersall
Robert Thevenet
Joanie Thorp
Axel Westerberg
Pierre & Maryse Wicker
Kristen M. Widham
Fred & Pat Ziegler

SUPPORTER \$50-\$99

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Dr. & Mrs. Howard J. Cohen
Ted & Stephanie Cyr
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Mary Fitzgerald
Ford Gerritt

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Martha Wakeman
Corrine & David Weber
Joan H. Wiles
Bill & Nancy Willetts

Robert F. Shannon Society Members

The Robert F. Shannon Society is a circle of legacy donors dedicated to preserving our rich orchestral tradition for future generations.



Robert F. Shannon was Principal Timpanist of the Orchestra from 1961 to 1994. Robert served on the Board of Directors for close to 50 years as President, Vice President, and Treasurer. In 2002, the ECSO received a generous bequest from Mr. Shannon which laid the groundwork to sustain the Orchestra for years to come.

Glen and Lois Andrews
John & Marti Bradshaw
Beth Tillman & Van Brown
Tom & Dorrit Castle
Liane & Don Crawford
Ellen & Bruce D. Cummings

Gay Story Hamilton
Pamela Akins & Barry Levinson
Ivan & Naomi Otterness
Alan & Bettie Proctor
Bob & Mary Reed

2025-2026 Community Support

YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONCERT

Bodenwein Benevolent Trust • Chelsea Groton Bank Foundation • The Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut • The Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut - Norwich Youth • Dime Bank Foundation
George A. & Grace L. Long Foundation • Windham Regional Arts Council • Eastern CT Chamber of Commerce
Jewett City Savings Bank • Taco White Family Foundation

SALUTE TO SERVICE

ASA Environmental Products, Inc. • Rings End

MUSIC IN THE SCHOOLS

James P. and Mary E. Shea Trust • R.S. Gernon Trust

GENERAL OPERATIONS SUPPORT

Anonymous Foundation • Frank Loomis Palmer Fund

PALM SUNDAY CONCERT

Edward and Mary Lord Foundation

CONCERT AND ROMANCE SHOWDOWN SUPPORT

Upton Bass • Interstate Navigation • American Landscape and Lawn Science • McQuade's Marketplace • Garde Arts Center

INSTRUMENTAL COMPETITION

Leonard & Irene Zuckerbraun Family Fund

With the support of the Development of Economic and Community Development, Office of the Arts, which also receives support from the federal CARES Act and from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

Support has been provided from CT Humanities (CTH), with funding provided by the Connecticut State Department of Economic and Community Development / Connecticut Office of the Arts (COA) from the Connecticut State Legislature.

EASTERN CONNECTICUT SYMPHONY CHOIR

A MESSAGE FROM DANNY MCDAVITT, CHOIR DIRECTOR

The ECSC continues its efforts to be versatile and active collaborator in the region. Our fall concert included a joint performance with New London High School, who joined us again for the holiday concert along with the EB's Subtones.

Palm Sunday brought about a significant collaboration not just with ECSO but also choirs from the US Coast Guard Academy and the US Merchant Marine Academy to perform Dan Forrest's Requiem for the Living, Barber's Agnus Dei, and McDavitt's maritime anthem Crossing the Bar. We performed Handel's Messiah in a more audience-friendly venue at Palmer Auditorum and look forward to returning there again for next season's Messiah performance. The coming year will include a new collaboration in November with ECSO and two local choirs joining us for Gjeilo's Sunrise Mass, along with some instrumental chamber music.

ECSC continues to maintain a calendar and repertoire on par with any professional group in the country. That an entirely volunteer group with a wide range of singing experience achieved this with such aplomb speaks to how dedicated the ensemble is to the role we play in the ECSO organization and in this region.



Danny McDavitt

Choir Director

FRIENDS OF THE SYMPHONY

Congratulations to the ECSO's musicians, music director, executive director and board for completing another highly successful season. 2025-2026 was filled with wonderful music and memorable events. And I'd like to believe that the Friends of the Symphony played a significant role making the past season so successful.

Among the contributions from the Friends were:

- Providing many hours on manpower (actually, more womanpower) at events such as the instrumental competition, the Palm Sunday concert, the Romance Showdown fundraiser, and many participations at Music in the Schools and Musical Storytime events.
- Raised money for the orchestra by continuing our sales of ECSO banded merchandise.
- Issuing membership cards to Friends members.
- Assisting the orchestra's office staff with critical tasks such as stuffing envelopes and other office tasks.
- Manning information tables in the lobby of the Garde Theater prior to concerts and during intermissions.

On a personal note, after four years as president of the Friends organization, I am stepping down at the end of this fiscal year and passing the reins to our most capable vice president, Ann Marie Perry. But the Friends will continue to contribute the continued success and growth of this fabulous cultural institution, the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra.

David Jacobs
President, Friends of the ECSO

David was instrumental in ensuring the completion and distribution of the membership cards!



David Jacobs
President, Friends of the Symphony

David has served as Friends President for five years, and additionally serves on the "Big Board" as well!



FRIENDS OFFICERS

David W. Jacobs, *President* • Ann Marie Perry, *Vice President* • Barry Thorp, *Treasurer* • Stephanie Thorp, *Secretary*

FRIENDS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Marcie Brensilver • Gay Clarkson • Deborah Donovan • Laurie Markowicz • Dutcha Slieker-Hersant • Marc Tattersall • Pauline Zimmer

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Vicki Anderson
Kristian Balinski
Joe & Catherine Benedict
John & Marti Bradshaw
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Lynn & Jean Brown
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Tom & Dorrit Castle
Will & Gay Clarkson
James & Bette Collins
Thomas Combs
Davnet Conway
Eric Cooper

John Cory
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Ted & Stephanie Cyr
Mildred Devine
Deborah J. Donovan
Shirley Ewing
Sara Fanning
Stephen & Susan Forbes
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Barry & Stephanie Thorp
Rose & Donald Werner
Kay & John Whritner
Kristen M. Widham
Karen & David Zoller

OUR 80TH: FROM 80 TO INFINITY!



OCT
24

Shadows and Spirits

Saint-Saëns: Danse macabre
Prokofiev: Violin Concerto No. 1
Rachmaninoff: The Isle of the Dead
Mussorgsky: Night on Bald Mountain

Paris to Pathos: A Journey Through Sound

Gershwin: An American in Paris
Barber: Knoxville: Summer of 1915
Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6

Nov
21

Dec
05

Holiday Spectacular

Holiday favorites including Frozen, Christmas Singalong, and Sleigh Ride

Infinite Seasons

Vivaldi: The Four Seasons
Mozart: Serenade No. 6 in D
Brahms: Symphony No. 3

Jan
23

Feb
20

Voyage Along the Silk Road

Ippolitov-Ivanov: Caucasian Sketches
He/Gang: The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto
Say: Flute Concerto

Boundless Beethoven

Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 4
Beethoven: Symphony No. 9

April
03

