

Scenes of Life

2025-2026 Season

VALDOSTA
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA



Dear Friends,

Welcome to the 2025-2026 Valdosta Symphony Orchestra season at Valdosta State University. As our nation marks 250 years of history, we invite you to explore, reflect, and celebrate the vast and varied musical landscape of America with us.

The VSO has crafted a season that, through music, tells America's story. It is a tribute to the soul of a nation through the voices that have shaped it, and it is about coming together to experience the power of music to move, unite, and inspire. We hope each performance uplifts your spirit, sparks reflection, and fills you with pride and possibility.



When the VSO performed its first concert in November 1990, VSU was the only institution of higher education in Georgia to have its own university-affiliated symphony orchestra. As South Georgia's flagship institution of higher education, having a professional orchestra playing live classical music in our backyard is just one example of how VSU is working to enhance communities through life-changing experiences.

The VSO serves both the cultural life of Valdosta and the regional academic mission of VSU. Its membership is a unique blend of resident artist-faculty, students studying professional music disciplines, talented community performers, and carefully selected professionals from a five-state region. It attracts guest soloists of national and international renown.

The VSO contributes to the cultural life of the entire region. In addition to its concert performances, it offers musical enrichment grants to support VSU students pursuing creative endeavors. It provides exploratory string classes for children and adults through the South Georgia String Project, presents a special Youth Concert Series for school children and their teachers, and introduces the instruments of the orchestra to young children during the annual Tunes for Tots.

We are deeply grateful for every member of the VSO for their tireless dedication to the musical arts and their willingness to share their talents with others. We are also grateful for you — the many individuals, families, and corporations who attend our events and generously support, protect, and nurture our university community's tradition of musical excellence.

Whether you've been part of our audience for years or you're joining us for the first time, thank you for being on this journey with us.

Here's to a season of discovery!



Richard A. Carvajal, Ph.D.
President of Valdosta State University

Good evening,

As our Valdosta Symphony Orchestra steps into its 36th season, I am both honored and delighted that you have chosen to spend your time supporting the Arts. More than just an award-winning symphony, the VSO represents a special relationship between education and community, students and professionals, and artists and audiences. The VSO is the perfect embodiment of why we do what we do at Valdosta State University, and it would not be possible without your support. As artists, educators, and performers, the College of the Arts prides itself on growing our students while pouring into our community—the VSO allows us to do just that. It is a testament to the collaborative spirit of the Arts and the role that the Arts play in a thriving community.



I would like to express my gratitude to our attendees, season ticket holders, generous donors, and sponsors. Your investment in the Valdosta Symphony Orchestra reflects a shared belief in the transformative power of music and the value of the Arts. It is because of you and your generosity that the VSO can continue.

I would also like to thank our outstanding faculty and student performers, the Executive Director, and the Director/Conductor of the VSO. Their passion for music drives the success of this enterprise; they are truly the unsung heroes of each performance.

Many thanks, again, for choosing to spend your evening with us. Enjoy!

Nicole B. Cox

Nicole B. Cox, Ph. D.
Dean, College of the Arts

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About the Music Director



Photo: Paul Leavy

Howard Hsu, conductor

Howard Hsu is the Music Director of the Valdosta (GA) Symphony Orchestra, which performs a vital cultural role in the South Georgia region, and he also serves as Professor of Music and Director of Orchestra Studies at Valdosta State University. Under his leadership, the Valdosta Symphony was selected as the 2014 winner of the American Prize in Orchestral Performance (community division), and has had performances aired statewide on Georgia Public Broadcasting Radio's "Midday

Music," "Orchestras of Georgia," and "Front Row Georgia" programs. Hsu has performed with the Canadian Brass, Robert McDuffie, Simone Dinnerstein, Jennifer Frautschi, Wendy Warner, Christine Brewer, Rachel Barton Pine, Orion Weiss, Stanford Olsen, Alexander Ghindin, Alexander Schimpf, Awadagin Pratt, Elena Urioste, the Empire Brass, Chris Brubeck, Jon Nakamatsu, Geneva Lewis, Maria Ioudenitch, Melissa White, Natasha Paremiski, Kelly Hall-Tompkins, Katia Skanavi, Amy Schwartz Moretti, and the Melodica Men. He conducted the world premiere of James Oliverio's Trumpet Concerto No. 1: *World House*; the U.S. premiere of Ned McGowan's Concerto for iPad and Orchestra (*Rotterdam Concerto 2*); and the Georgia premieres of Jessie Montgomery's *Rounds*, Jeff Beal's *Body in Motion*, James MacMillan's *Larghetto for Orchestra*, Fernande Decruck's Sonata for Saxophone and Orchestra, several Debussy/Matthews *Preludes*, and Jonathan Bailey Holland's *Motor City Dance Mix*. Through the Symphony's Youth Concert Series, he has introduced live classical music to thousands of children in the area.

Howard Hsu has appeared as guest conductor with the Hartford (CT), Fox Valley (WI), Wyoming, Mankato (MN), Macon (GA), Johns Creek (GA), and New Britain (CT) Symphonies, as well as the Bronx (NY) Arts Ensemble, with whom he conducted the world premiere of Eleanor Cory's *O'Keeffe's Flora*. He was a Visiting Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Connecticut and Associate Conductor of the University of Connecticut Symphony Orchestra, and was Visiting Instructor of Music and Director of the Orchestra at Connecticut College.

Howard Hsu has worked closely with groups dedicated to training young musicians, including the Lake George (NY) Opera Festival, where he served as Associate Conductor and Music Director of the Apprentice opera scenes concerts. Hsu has conducted the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association All State Orchestra, Georgia Music Educators Association All State 9/10 Orchestra, and the Georgia Governor's Honors Program Orchestra and String Ensemble. Through the Hartford Symphony's Mentoring Program he served as a Master Teaching Artist, and was a faculty member with The Harlem (NY) School of the Arts. Hsu received his D.M.A. from the University of Connecticut, his M.M. from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and his B.S. from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Maria Valdes, soprano

American soprano Maria Valdes has been praised by the New York Times as a “first-rate singing actress and a perfectly charming Gilda.” In the 2024–2025 season, Ms. Valdes made her debut with the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra as the soprano soloist



in Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* and returned to the Greensboro Symphony to perform Mozart's *Exsultate, jubilate* and *Requiem*. A frequent artist with Hawaii Opera Theatre, she made her STUDIO101 debut in *I'll Be Seeing You*, reprised the role of Micaëla in *Carmen*, and helped create the roles of Hana Hooper Ha'alilio and Himiko Hamilton in workshops of *The Sheltering Tree* and *Tea*. Other highlights included a role and company debut with Opera Wilmington as Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, a recital tour in San Francisco and Hawaii with OperAloha, and returns to the Atlanta Master Chorale as the soloist in Mozart's *Requiem* and *Coronation Mass* and Berkshire Lyric in Haydn's *Die Jahreszeiten*. In the upcoming season, she will perform Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* with the Valdosta Symphony and Bellingham Festival of Music. Valdes returns to Symphony San Jose for Vaughan

Williams' *Dona Nobis Pacem* and Spanish River Concerts for “Broadway to Opera.” On the opera stage she returns to The Metropolitan Opera to cover Frida Ingebrigtsen in *El Último Sueño de Frida y Diego*.

Her 2023-2024 season was filled with returns to major orchestras and opera houses. On the symphonic stage, Ms. Valdes joined the Greensboro Symphony to sing *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* and Mahler's *Symphony No. 4* and returned to the Phoenix Symphony for Strauss's *Four Last Songs*. In recital, she was featured with Il Cenacolo Italian Club, the Cathedral of St. Paul, the First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta, Spanish River Concerts, and OperaAloha. Additionally, Ms. Valdes returned to Houston Grand Opera to cover Isabel Leonard in the title role of *The Sound of Music*.

In the 2022-2023 season, Ms. Valdes made her Metropolitan Opera debut, covering Papagena in *The Magic Flute*, returned to Atlanta Opera as Léontine in *The Anonymous Lover*, and appeared with Hawaii Opera Theatre as Lauretta in *Gianni Schicchi*. On the concert stage, she made her San Jose Symphony debut singing Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* and *Carmina Burana*, joined the Madison Chamber Music Festival in recital with tenor John Riesen, and performed in recital with renowned classical guitarist Pepe Romero at The Hamptons Festival of Music.

During the 2021-2022 season, Ms. Valdes debuted with the Georgia Symphony Orchestra as the soprano soloist in Mahler's *Symphony No. 4*, returned to the Berkshire Opera Festival for a recital of Mozart selections alongside tenor Alex McKissick, and made her Hawaii Opera Theatre debut as Micaëla in Peter Brook's *La tragédie de Carmen*. She also returned to The Phoenix Symphony as the soprano soloist in Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*, debuted as Maria in *The Sound of Music* with Charlottesville Opera and The Ellen Theater in Bozeman, joined Berkshire Lyric for Mozart's *Requiem* and *Laudate Dominum* in the prestigious Seiji Ozawa Hall at Tanglewood, made her Gulf Coast Symphony debut as the soprano soloist in a concert titled “A Grand Night of Opera,” and returned to the Bellingham Festival of Music for a concert of Strauss lieder.

In the 2020-2021 season, Ms. Valdes was scheduled to return to Houston Grand Opera to sing the role of Amy in the world premiere of *The Snowy Day* (postponed to the 2021-22 season due to COVID-19) and to make her Hawaii Opera Theatre debut as Euridice in Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld* (COVID-19). In 2021, she sang the role of Younger Alyce in *Glory Denied* at Atlanta Opera, joined NYFOS@Home for their

ABOUT THE ARTIST

It's Summer in South America recital, covered the role of Lucy in *The Threepenny Opera* for Atlanta Opera, and joined the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra for their series of short films, *In The Key of Bach*. That summer, she reprised Younger Alyce in Berkshire Opera Festival's production of *Glory Denied* and performed as the soprano soloist in Mozart's *Requiem* with Summer Singers of Atlanta.

During the 2019-2020 season, Ms. Valdes returned to Atlanta Opera as Cristina Kahlö in *Frida* and made her Mobile Symphony debut in Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem*. Highlights of the 2018-2019 season included her debut with Atlanta Opera as Doris Parker in *Charlie Parker's Yardbird* and a company debut with Washington Concert Opera for their Opera Outside series. She also debuted as Violetta in *La traviata* at Gulfshore Opera, reprised Despina in *Così fan tutte* with the Rochester Philharmonic, and debuted with West Edge Opera as Euridice in *Orfeo ed Euridice*. In concert, Ms. Valdes performed Handel's *Messiah* with both the Virginia Symphony and the Phoenix Symphony, joined the Brooklyn Art Song Society singing *Chants d'Auvergne* by Joseph Canteloube, and debuted with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra in *Serenade to Music* by Ralph Vaughan Williams and Bach's *Cantata No. 29, "Wir danken dir, Gott."*

In the 2017-2018 season, Ms. Valdes debuted with New York City Opera, in collaboration with Houston Grand Opera, as Diana in the Mariachi opera, *Cruzar la cara de la luna*, and made her role and company debut with Opera San José as Despina in *Così fan tutte*. In the summer of 2018, she made company debuts with the Berkshire Opera Festival as Gilda in *Rigoletto* and with Opera Theatre of St. Louis as Amore in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*. On the concert stage, Ms. Valdes performed Mahler's *Symphony No. 4* and Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* with the California Symphony, Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem* with the Phoenix Symphony, and Poulenc's *Gloria* with the Bellingham Festival of Music.

In the 2016-2017 season, Ms. Valdes returned to San Francisco Opera to cover the role of Gilda, stepping in mid-performance when a colleague fell ill. A distinguished alumna of the SongFest program in Los Angeles, she performed a solo recital of Nordic, Spanish, and Latin American music in collaboration with pianist Javier Arrebola. Other season highlights included Mahler's *Symphony No. 4* and Mozart's *Exsultate, jubilate* with both the Las Vegas Philharmonic and Chattanooga Symphony, and performances with Kaleidoscope Chamber Orchestra singing Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* and the West Coast premiere of Scott Ordway's *Tonight We Tell the Secrets of the World*. Ms. Valdes also joined Concert Royal at St. Thomas Church in New York City for *Messiah*, where The New York Times noted she performed "beautifully, growing stronger as the evening progressed."

In the 2015-2016 season, Ms. Valdes joined the roster of Lyric Opera of Chicago, covering Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette*, and completed her time as an Adler Fellow with San Francisco Opera. As an Adler, she performed the roles of Musetta in *La bohème*, Papagena in *Die Zauberflöte*, Clorinda in *La Cenerentola*, and Barbarina in *Le nozze di Figaro*. Covers included Johanna in *Sweeney Todd*, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, Oscar in *Un ballo in maschera*, Magnolia in *Showboat*, and Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*, a role she also performed in 2013 as a member of the Merola Opera Program.

An accomplished recitalist, Ms. Valdes has performed with Martin Katz, made her New York recital debut with NYFOS performing *Compositora*, a recital of female Latin American composers with Steven Blier and Michael Barrett, and attended the Steans Institute at the Ravinia Festival, performing in several concerts. Ms. Valdes can be heard on recordings, singing Mendelssohn's "Hear My Prayer" on the album *Evening Hymn* (Gothic Records) and on Atlanta Opera's recent release of *Glory Denied*. An award-winner in the regional Metropolitan Opera National Council auditions, Ms. Valdes is also the winner of the top prize at the Corbett Opera Scholarship Competition at Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and the recipient of a Shoshana Foundation Grant.

About the Assistant Conductor

Daniel Marcos Rodriguez



Daniel Marcos Rodriguez is an orchestral and opera conductor from Miami, FL. He began conducting at sixteen years old under Dr. Adalberto Yanes. He embarked to sharpen his skills at Miguel Harth-Bedoya’s Conducting Institute for three consecutive years. Consequently, Daniel has been a conducting fellow in numerous international workshops and received an Honorable Mention for the Respighi Prize in Conducting.

Daniel made his debut with Opera Orlando as their Associate Conductor in 2022 and remained for the 2023 - 2024 season contributing to numerous productions including *Tosca*, *Frida*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and was part of the fourth ever production of Philip Glass’s and Robert Moran’s *The Juniper Tree*. He currently serves as their Orchestral Librarian. In 2024, Daniel was appointed as the Assistant Conductor of the International Opera Festival of Morelia.

Daniel continues to be an effective conductor who truthfully communicates the intentions of the composer in order to inspire empathy within himself and the musicians he leads, while creating more access for all audiences to experience the power of classical music.

CONCERT ETIQUETTE

PLEASE DO

- Turn off your pager and watch alarms.
- Consult the program for the number of movements in a piece to know when to clap at the end.
- Unwrap your cough drop before the music starts so it's ready if you need it.
- Cover your mouth to cough/sneeze to muffle the sound.
- Put your cell phone on silent.

PLEASE DON'T

- Talk or whisper during the performance.
- Sing, or tap your fingers/feet to the music.
- Bring young children to the concert – our Youth concerts are specially geared towards developing attention spans.
- Leave or take your seat during the music (unless you did not follow the previous rule - in that case, please escort your disruptive child out as quickly as possible). Please wait until you hear applause.
- Clap between movements thinking it's the end of the piece. When in doubt, wait for others to clap first.
- Use flash photography or recording devices during the concert (these actions are illegal in this hall).

The Valdosta Symphony Orchestra 36th Season

Howard Hsu, Music Director

“SCENES OF LIFE”

November 15, 2025

This concert is sponsored by Stifel.

Circus Fantasia | 7 mins

Clarice Assad (b. 1978)

- i. *Curtain Raiser*
- ii. *Tightrope Walker*
- iii. *Clowns*
- iv. *Flying trapeze*
- v. *Jugglers and tumblers*

Daniel Marcos Rodriguez, conductor

Knoxville: Summer of 1915, Op. 24 | 16 mins

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

Old American Songs | 8 mins

Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

- Long Time Ago*
Simple Gifts
I Bought Me a Cat

Maria Valdes, soprano

***** **INTERMISSION** *****

Adagio for Strings | 9 mins

Samuel Barber

Daniel Marcos Rodriguez, conductor

Catfish Row: Symphonic Suite from “Porgy and Bess” | 23 mins

George Gershwin (1898-1937)

- I. *Catfish Row*
- II. *Porgy Sings*
- III. *Fugue*
- IV. *Hurricane*
- V. *Good Mornin’ Sistuh!*

Howard Hsu, conductor

Knoxville: Summer of 1915, Op. 24 by Samuel Barber presented under license from G. Schirmer Inc. and Associated Music Publishers, copyright owners.

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Clell Wright, *Chorus Master • Daniel Marcos Rodriguez*, *Assistant Conductor*

Violin I

Kristin Pfeifer Yu,
Concertmaster
Leona Strickland
Hudson Chair
Edward Charity,
Acting Concertmaster
Petra Bubanja
Stacey Sharpe
Livia Vieira
Lambert Hsieh
Sergio Sabillon
Emily Palmer
Jacqueline Hagen
Alex Reshetnichenko
Ilayda Ilbas

Violin II

Erika Sciascia, *Principal*
Catherine Yara
Cale Brandon
Alysia Johnson
Keat Zhen
Ethan Cannon
Elma Groetsch
Aubrey Lawson
Jennifer Clyde
Marina Volynets

Viola

Laurel Yu, *Principal*
Brantley and Barbara
Jenkins Chair
Noel Medford
Miriam Tellechea
Tarcis Ostiano
Joshua Singletary
Justin Pham
Benjamin Suarez

Violoncello

Kathryn Troy, *Principal*

Daniel and Carolyn **Coleman Chair**

Lee Holbrook
Steve Taylor
Thu Vo
Kyna Elliott
Noah Gregg

Contrabass

Tod Leavitt, *Principal*
Gabriel Monticello,
Assistant Principal
Rene De Leon
Samuel James
Vadim Volynets

Flute

Sarah Jane Young, *Principal*
Ana Ribot Dominguez
Elizabeth Downs
Mackenzie Taylor

Oboe

Sherwood Wise, *Principal*
Allan and Joan
Dear Chair
Lindsay Wood

Clarinet

Julie Detweiler, *Principal*
Kay Jennett Chair
Jeriah Howard
Christian Windish

Bass Clarinet

Dennis Savoie

Bassoon

Shannon Lowe,
Acting Principal
Josie Whiteis

Horn

Matthew Monroe, *Principal*
Paul Basler

Kelly Langenberg
Alex Burch
Theo Horton
Jacob Posey
Caden Powell

Trumpet

Paul Morelli, *Principal*
Valdosta Symphony
Guild Chair
Johnny Dixon
Brody Johnson
Samuel Jones
Noah Tomas

Trombone

Douglas Farwell, *Principal*
Jerry Jennett Chair
Riley Carr

Bass Trombone

Michael Lurie

Tuba

Ryan Sorenson, *Principal*
Justin McKinney

Timpani

Ryan Smith, *Principal*

Percussion

Bette and Bernard
Bechtel Chair

Jakalin Bryant
Ramiyah Fulton
Jacob Walden

Harp

Isabelle Scott

Keyboard

Valerie Holton Smith,
Principal
Cecil "Monty" and
Marilyn Miller Chair

Banjo

Jay Hicks

Valdosta Symphony Orchestra

ABOUT THE MUSIC

by Alan M. Rothenberg

Circus Fantasia

Clarice Assad (born 1978)

Born in Rio de Janeiro, educated at the University of Michigan, conversant in multiple languages and musical styles, composer/vocalist/educator Clarice Assad “endeavors to harness the incredible and intangible power of music to connect people and transform lives.” She has performed and recorded with Bobby McFerrin, Yo Yo Ma, Paquito D’Rivera, and many other multi-faceted musicians. Her music has been performed by the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Tokyo Symphony, Orquestra Sinfônica de São Paulo, and others.

Composed in 2023 for the Allentown (PA) Symphony, where Assad is currently Composer-in-Residence, *Circus Fantasia* recalls the composer’s childhood experiences:

Amidst ever-changing times, the circus—a fascinating art form—always faces challenges, adapting gracefully to modernity...It struggles to continue to thrive, it never truly dies; it simply evolves because of its need for survival. I grew up in rural Rio de Janeiro... the circus would always come to town and joyfully fill our young hearts by weaving dance, theater, and acrobatics into a chaotic canvas. Creative storytelling and awe-inspiring skills captivated a diverse audience. *Circus Fantasia*, a work for a chamber orchestra, unlocks the doors to this enchanting world almost lost in my childhood memories. The composition brims with playfulness and theatricality, extending a musical invitation to embark on a wondrous adventure in the circus ring. The piece encapsulates the spirit of an art form that defies the hands of time, inviting the listener to witness the essence of the circus—where dreams unfold, and imagination takes flight.

Knoxville: Summer of 1915, Op. 24

Samuel Barber (1910–1981)

Samuel Barber can be considered just as eclectic a composer as any other twentieth century American. There is no one term that adequately describes his music as he wrote in many idioms. He was fiercely independent, ignoring whatever trends were current at any given moment, causing some to see his music as old-fashioned, or, perhaps more politely, “neo-Romantic.” Born and raised in the Philadelphia suburb of West Chester, Barber studied at Philadelphia’s Curtis Institute of Music.

Barber was a proficient and prolific composer through his entire life—he completed his first composition, a short piano piece, at the age of seven. After Barber’s death in 1981, *New York Times* critic Donal Henahan wrote “probably no other American composer has ever enjoyed such early, such persistent and such long-lasting acclaim.”

While Barber wrote a considerable amount of instrumental music, the majority of his output is for voice—choral works, songs for voice with piano or orchestra, and opera. *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* was completed in 1947, using a prose poem by James Agee, a nostalgic recollection of childhood. Agee was experimenting with “improvisatory writing,” extemporaneous, continuous writing without editing, which he described as “a kind of parallel to improvisation in jazz.” The resulting piece was published in *The Partisan Review*; Barber read it and wrote to a mentor that it “particularly struck me because the summer evening he describes in his native southern town reminded me so much of similar evenings when I was a child at home... You see, it expresses a child’s feeling of loneliness, wonder and lack of identity in the marginal world between twilight

and sleep.” When Barber met Agee they found other similarities in their childhood lives: “We both had back yards where our families used to lie in the long summer evenings...I remember well my parents sitting on the porch, talking quietly as they rocked...Agee’s poem was vivid and moved me deeply, and my musical response that summer of 1947 was immediate and intense.” Barber wrote the piece in about a week, dedicating it to his father, who died shortly after its completion.

In the mid-1940s Boston Symphony music director Sergei Koussevitzky wanted Barber to compose a multi-movement piece for voice and orchestra. At the same time, soprano Eleanor Steber wanted to commission a piece for voice and full orchestra from Barber. The composer was uncertain whether Steber’s voice could be heard over a full orchestra, but once he completed *Knoxville* Barber knew she was the right singer for the piece. The first performance took place in Boston in April 1948. In the winter of 1949, Barber created a chamber orchestra version of the accompaniment, which was premiered by Steber in April 1950 and has since become the definitive version of the piece. Steber later reflected on the relationship of Agee’s text, Barber’s music, and her own background, having grown up in Wheeling, West Virginia: “That was exactly my childhood!” Composer David Diamond wrote that *Knoxville* was “as clear and original and American as anything yet written.”

Old American Songs

Aaron Copland (1900–1990)

In 1950 Aaron Copland set a group of folk and traditional songs for voice and piano, calling them *Old American Songs*. Premiered in Europe by Peter Pears with Benjamin Britten accompanying, and then in America by William Warfield with Copland accompanying, these songs became so popular that in 1952 Copland composed a second set and then orchestrated all of them. Warfield sang the first performance of the orchestrated version in 1955.

The songs themselves are from various sources. “Long Time Ago” is a nostalgic ballad Copland found when perusing the Harris Collection, an assemblage of over 250,000 volumes of American poetry, plays, and music housed at Brown University. “Simple Gifts” dates from 1848, written by a member of the Maine Shaker community. The song was virtually unknown outside of the Shaker community until Copland incorporated it into the 1944 ballet *Appalachian Spring*. The children’s song “I Bought Me a Cat” probably originated in Great Britain in the late nineteenth century and was also found in Kentucky in 1916.

Adagio for Strings

Samuel Barber

Adapted from his second String Quartet (1936), the *Adagio for Strings* is Samuel Barber’s best-known work. Shortly after completing the arrangement in 1938, he sent it to Arturo Toscanini, who returned the score to the composer with no comments. The sensitive composer thought Toscanini had rejected the piece, but the conductor had memorized it and then presented it for the first time with the NBC Symphony Orchestra on November 5, 1938. The recording of that performance was selected for permanent preservation through its inclusion in the National Recording Registry of the Library of Congress.

The piece is constructed from simple materials—the opening melody moves evenly in stepwise motion, with harmonic suspensions that gradually build to a powerful climax. Violinist Ida Kavafian says, “You have to be a rock in the middle of nowhere not to have your gut wrenched out by this music... Barber creates a great tension by changing harmonies, staggered in such a way that the dissonances form and then resolve. It’s all about tension.”

Sad but not melancholy, Barber’s *Adagio* has become one of the most performed pieces of twentieth century American music. It has been incorporated into numerous film and television scores and even popular songs. It has become an unofficial “memorial music,” used to note the

death of prominent Americans, including Presidents Franklin Roosevelt, and John Kennedy. It was also performed at London's *Last Night of the Proms* concert on September 15, 2001, breaking a long-standing tradition of performing only patriotic British music on that night.

"You never are in any doubt about what this piece is about," says Barber biographer Barbara Heyman. "There's a kind of sadness and poetry about it. It has a melodic gesture that reaches an arch, like a big sigh... and then exhales and fades off into nothingness."

Catfish Row: Symphonic Suite from "Porgy and Bess"

George Gershwin (1898–1937)

George Gershwin was born in New York City to Russian-Jewish immigrant parents. He was a true prodigy—essentially self-taught as a pianist and composer, nurtured by Tin Pan Alley and Vaudeville, flourished on Broadway and Hollywood, and matured in the concert hall and opera house. His rise as a composer matched the increasing popularity of radio as an entertainment medium, which also helped put Gershwin the composer, and Gershwin the personality, in the national spotlight.

Arnold Schoenberg (his neighbor in Hollywood and frequent tennis partner) considered Gershwin a true innovator: "... serious or not, he is a composer. What he has done with rhythm, harmony and melody is not merely style, his melodies are units and could therefore not be taken to pieces. [His] melody, harmony and rhythm are not welded together, but cast." It is this fusion of elements that has led to the immense popularity of Gershwin's music around the world. He was one of the first composers to create a uniquely "American" sound, filled with syncopation, blue notes and the vitality of the Jazz Age.

In 1926, with rehearsals for the musical *Oh, Kay!* in full swing, an excited Gershwin had trouble falling asleep one night, so he began to read a current bestseller, a novel of Black life in Charleston, South Carolina called *Porgy*. He was so taken by the story and its musical possibilities that he read it in one sitting and then wrote to the author, DuBose Heyward. The author's wife, Dorothy, was already at work on a play based on the book, which was produced to great acclaim in 1927.

Gershwin's idea of an opera based on *Porgy* lay dormant until 1932. For the next three years, he and his lyricist brother Ira worked with Heywood on the project, which premiered in October 1935. The reception of *Porgy and Bess*, a *Folk Opera* at its 1935 premiere was lukewarm, at best. Straddling the line between opera and musical, critics and audiences didn't know what to make of it, although individual songs quickly became standards in their own right. An early 1950s tour starring Leontyne Price and William Warfield took the opera to Berlin, London, and Vienna. Since then, *Porgy and Bess* has become universally recognized as a uniquely American contribution to music.

In 1936, shortly after the opera's first performances, Gershwin created the *Suite from Porgy and Bess*, a five-movement selection of music from the opera. Over the next two years the suite was performed, with Gershwin's participation, about ten times. After Gershwin's premature death in 1937, the only copy of the score ended up at Ira Gershwin's house, where it laid dormant for the next twenty years. Meanwhile, in 1942 conductor Fritz Reiner asked Robert Russell Bennett, who at the time was the prevailing orchestrator for Broadway musicals, to create a symphonic medley of music from *Porgy*. Bennett called his suite *Porgy and Bess: A Symphonic Picture*. The score for George's suite was rediscovered in 1958, and Ira remained it *Catfish Row*, to differentiate it from Bennett's work. Both pieces are now frequently performed.

Gershwin's suite is in five movements:

1. *Catfish Row* includes the piano blues introduction (frequently cut from the opera), "Summertime," and music heard during the first act crap game.
2. *Porgy Sings* includes "I Got Plenty o' Nuttin'" and "Bess, You Is My Woman Now."
3. *Fugue* is the music heard when Porgy murders Crown.
4. *Hurricane* contains the turbulent music of the hurricane that occurs in the middle of the opera.
5. *Good Morning, Sistuh* contains the introduction to the final scene of the opera, when Porgy departs for New York in search of Bess, to the sounds of "Oh, Lawd, I'm on My Way."

Knoxville: Summer of 1915

Text: James Agee

It has become that time of evening when people sit on their porches, rocking gently and talking gently and watching the street and the standing up into their sphere of possession of the trees, of birds' hung havens, hangars. People go by; things go by. A horse, drawing a buggy, breaking his hollow iron music on the asphalt; a loud auto; a quiet auto; people in pairs, not in a hurry, scuffling, switching their weight of aestival body, talking casually, the taste hovering over them of vanilla, strawberry, pasteboard and starched milk, the image upon them of lovers and horsemen, squared with clowns in hueless amber.

A streetcar raising its iron moan; stopping, belling and starting; stertorous; rousing and raising again its iron increasing moan and swimming its gold windows and straw seats on past and past and past, the bleak spark crackling and cursing above it like a small malignant spirit set to dog its tracks; the iron whine rises on rising speed; still risen, faints; halts; the faint stinging bell; rises again, still fainter, fainting, lifting, lifts, faints foregone: forgotten. Now is the night one blue dew

Now is the night one blue dew, my father has drained, he has coiled the hose. Low on the length of lawns, a frailing of fire who breathes. Parents on porches; rock and rock. From damp strings morning glories hang their ancient faces. The dry and exalted noise of the locusts from all the air at once enchants my eardrums.

On the rough wet grass of the back yard my father and mother have spread quilts. We all lie there, my mother, my father, my uncle, my aunt, and I too am lying there. They are not talking much, and the talk is quiet, of nothing in particular, of nothing at all. The stars are wide and alive, they seem each like a smile of great sweetness, and they seem very near. All my people are larger bodies than mine, ...with voices gentle and meaningless like the voices of sleeping birds. One is an artist, he is living at home. One is a musician, she is living at home. One is my mother who is good to me. One is my father who is good to me.

By some chance, here they are, all on this earth; and who shall ever tell the sorrow of being on this earth, lying, on quilts, on the grass, in a summer evening, among the sounds of the night.

May God bless my people, my uncle, my aunt, my mother, my good father, oh, remember them kindly in their time of trouble; and in the hour of their taking away.

After a little I am taken in and put to bed. Sleep, soft smiling, draws me unto her: and those receive me, who quietly treat me, as one familiar and well-beloved in that home: but will not, oh, will not, not now, not ever; but will not ever tell me who I am.

Long Time Ago

Text: Traditional

On the lake where droop'd the willow
Long time ago,
Where the rock threw back the billow
Brighter than snow.
Dwelt a maid beloved and cherish'd
By high and low,
But with autumn leaf she perished
Long time ago.
Rock and tree and flowing water
Long time ago,
Bird and bee and blossom taught her
Love's spell to know.
While to my fond words she listen'd
Murmuring low,
Tenderly her blue eyes glisten'd
Long time ago.

Simple Gifts (Shaker Song)

Text: Joseph Brackett, Elder

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift
to be free
'tis the gift to come down where you
ought to be
And when we find ourselves in the
place just right
'Twill be in the valley of love and
delight.

When true simplicity is gained
To bow and to bend we shan't be
ashamed

To turn, turn will be our delight
'Till by turning, turning we come
round right.

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift
to be free

'tis the gift to come down where you
ought to be
And when we find ourselves in the
place just right
'Twill be in the valley of love and
delight.

I Bought Me a Cat

Text: Traditional

I bought me a cat, my cat pleased me,
I fed my cat under yonder tree.
My cat says fiddle eye fee.

I bought me a duck, my duck pleased
me,
I fed my duck under yonder tree.
My duck says, "Quaa, quaa",
My cat says fiddle eye fee.

I bought me a goose, my goose pleased
me,
I fed my goose under yonder tree.
My goose says, "Quaw, quaw",
My duck says, "Quaa, quaa",
My cat says fiddle eye fee.

I bought me a hen, my hen pleased me.
I fed my hen under yonder tree.
My hen says, Shimmy shack, shimmy
shack",
My goose says, "Quaw, quaw",
My duck says, "Quaa, quaa",
My cat says fiddle eye fee.

I bought me a pig, my pig pleased me.
I fed my pig under yonder tree.
My pig says, "Griffey, griffey".
My hen says, Shimmy shack, shimmy
shack",

My goose says, "Quaw, quaw",
My duck says, "Quaa, quaa",
My cat says fiddle eye fee.

I bought me a cow, my cow pleased
me.
I fed my cow under yonder tree.
My cow says "Moo, moo",
My pig says, "Griffey, griffey".
My hen says, Shimmy shack, shimmy
shack",
My goose says, "Quaw, quaw",
My duck says, "Quaa, quaa",
My cat says fiddle eye fee.

I bought me a horse, my horse pleased
me.
I fed my horse under yonder tree.
My horse says, "Neigh, neigh",
My cow says "Moo, moo",
My pig says, "Griffey, griffey".
My hen says, Shimmy shack, shimmy
shack",
My goose says, "Quaw, quaw",
My duck says, "Quaa, quaa",
My cat says fiddle eye fee.

I bought me a wife, my wife pleased
me.
I fed my wife under yonder tree.
My wife says, "Honey, honey",
My horse says, "Neigh, neigh",
My cow says "Moo, moo",
My pig says, "Griffey, griffey".
My hen says, Shimmy shack, shimmy
shack",
My goose says, "Quaw, quaw",
My duck says, "Quaa, quaa",
My cat says fiddle eye fee.

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Susan Boddie, soprano

Lynnette Chambers, mezzo-soprano

Samuel Cook, tenor

Bradley Sowell, baritone

Valdosta State University Concert Choir

Valdosta State University Chamber Singers

Valdosta State University Musical Union

Clell Wright, conductor

Whitehead Auditorium



Boddie



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