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BLOOMINGTON
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

2025-2026

*Sixty-third
concert season*

photo by Leslie Plessner

Art Finds a Way

Sunday, November 23, 2025
2:00 p.m.

Schneider Theater
Bloomington Center for the Arts
1800 West Old Shakopee Road
Bloomington

Manny Laureano
Music Director & Conductor

Megan Dvorak Werner
Oboe

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The Program

Florence Price

Concert Overture No. 1

This performance is made possible by a gift from William White

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Concerto for Oboe and Strings

- I. Rondo Pastorale (Allegro moderato)
- II. Minuet and Musette (Allegro moderato)
- III. Scherzo (Presto–Doppio più lent–Lento–Presto)

Megan Dvorak Werner, Oboe

— *INTERMISSION* —

Antonín Dvořák

Symphony No. 8 in G Major, Op. 88

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Adagio
- III. Allegretto grazioso–Molto vivace
- IV. Allegro ma non troppo

Lights will be kept on during the concert to facilitate the reading of programs.

Out of consideration for the musicians and audience members, please turn off your cell phone and refrain from using flash photography.

Program Notes

by Manny Laureano

Concert Overture No. 1

Florence Price (1887-1953)

The road to success is often subject to the whim of the time and is subsequently delayed. Such is the story of Black American composer Florence Beatrice Price who saw some celebration of her work during her lifetime but nothing like the current day, where her name is now known to musicians and audiences. Price was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, to a family that was able to provide her with piano studies with her mother, before the age of four. It was at that age that she held her first piano recital. Her studies eventually led her to composing, a necessary skill for young musicians to have a fuller appreciation for the craft of creating music, and create she did. This, despite the obvious challenges posed during a time of segregation and racial prejudice.

Art finds a way.

After an academic career that led her to become her class valedictorian by age 14, she gained admission to the Eastman School of Music, telling people that she was of Mexican origin rather than Black American. She excelled in piano and organ performance, being the only one in her class to hold those as a double major. Composition subsequently became a more profound interest for her, and she pursued it while holding down jobs in Atlanta and, later, Little Rock.

The encouragement she had picked up from one of her professors, American composer George Chadwick, proved to be pivotal, as he was a champion for his female composition students. Ironically for today's concert program, it was none other than Czech composer Antonín Dvořák who had earlier encouraged Chadwick to use the American folk melodies from the Black experience. He saw those melodies as rich in possibility for American composers. Price took that advice and ran with it, composing many works whose origins varied from African dances to traditional Negro Spirituals in traditional European formats such as symphonies, concertos and concert overtures.

Her Concert Overture No. 1 represents her endeavor to rhapsodize one of those Negro Spirituals in a non-theatrical overture form. It is to say, that the work is used in order for an orchestra to "raise the curtain" on a concert. She chose the spiritual "Sinner, Please Don't Let This Harvest Pass." Composed in 1937 and premiered in Chicago in 1939, her background as pianist and organist is evident in her writing style. She launches immediately into the melody replete with congregational amens and treats the theme almost as a set of variations, but it is more accurately described as a free rhapsody which ebbs and flows into a stunning climax. One can only imagine that Dvořák would have been pleased to hear an American composer utilizing music that is unique to our own culture and history.

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Program Notes

continued

Concerto for Oboe and Strings

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

I would imagine that for most composers, it is difficult enough to write music when things are good in their lives. How much more difficult would it be to conceive and give birth to thematic material, develop it, orchestrate it, and wrap it all up with a tidy bow, while the world around you is engaged in a world war? This, especially when you have already lived through what was supposed to be "the war to end all wars."

Art finds a way.

Consider the task of 72-year-old Ralph Vaughan Williams, who was self-compelled to write his Concerto in A Minor for Oboe and Strings on the heels of his Symphony No. 5 in D major. After rising to the challenge of writing in a more "modern style" in his Fourth Symphony and silencing his critics, he went back to the Vaughan Williams we know and wrote his more pastoral Fifth, choosing the same key as Johannes Brahms did for his Pastoral symphony. VW felt that drawing some earlier ideas from his recent symphony would work nicely as a basis for the oboe concerto that his mind had been tossing about. He chose oboist Leon Goosens, a favorite performer of his, to be the vessel of his creativity.

There'll always be an England,
And England shall be free
If England means as much to you
As England means to me.

Those song lyrics to the 1939 patriotic song *There'll Always be an England* could easily express VW's long-held desire that there be a more national approach to English music, that music from England be somewhat identifiable. This certainly was not without precedent since the Russians, led by Modest Moussorgsky, believed that a nationalist approach to composing had that same notion many decades before. Dvořák encouraged American composers to do the same. Why not the English? Given all of that, how wonderfully ironic is it that VW also used an ancient antiphon, *Salve Maria Regina* of Gregorian origin, as thematic material for this bucolic walk through a countryside unspoiled by the ravages of war? VW must have smiled to himself as he included that material amongst his own musical thoughts.

The work is in three movements, the first of which alternates between moments of the aforementioned walk as well as pauses to glance at nature's beauty and smell the flowers a bit. The second is a gentle minuet and musette which takes us from the promenade of the first movement to a simple dance. The third movement is fleet of foot and makes much use of a musical device called hemiola. Apropos of today's program, this was an oft-used rhythmic technique of Dvořák's, in which the rhythmic pulses of two against three are employed. As we enjoy the calming and pastoral quality of the work, we note that the closing bars end with a glance over the shoulder in recognition of a clear and present danger, ebbing as it might be, for the moment.

Symphony No. 8 in G Major, Op. 88

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

Antonín Leopold Dvořák was a strong Catholic and absolutely loved the music of his native Bohemia. Indeed, when one finds an old map of Europe with Bohemia still included (it has since given way to the Czech Republic and surrounding territories), it is clear that it bordered many countries whose traditions with music were, and still are, quite strong. I highly recommend for you, my dear reader, to search for historical Bohemian folk songs on the internet and what you will find is beyond charming. They are songs of joy as well as longing. In other words, they move the soul in a variety of ways. Your humble scribe confesses to listening to them as he writes these notes!

Dvořák enjoyed singing the melodies he knew and playing them on the violin and, like Florence Price, on piano and organ, upon both of which he excelled. This is all to say that young Antonín was an instrumentalist long before composing took hold of him. His father decided young Antonín would be a church organist and enrolled him in a school for the same. Had his father not made this decision, this would likely have denied the world one of the most (if not the most) influential composers who ever lived.

Program Notes

continued

Art finds a way.

Dvořák's love for music was not limited to the music of his immediate surroundings. He developed a love for the music of Wagner's operas to the point where he actually played viola in an orchestra for a program of Wagner's music. The cherry on the sundae was that the composer himself served as conductor for that concert. It was then that Dvořák was inspired to compose, and he drew upon his experiences to write his first composition, the String Quartet in A Minor, Opus 1. One piece led to another and another, and immediate acceptance of his music found its way to the ears of Johannes Brahms who lived in nearby Vienna. Brahms became an instant admirer of young Dvořák's music. That stamp of approval brought an offer from Simrock, Brahms's publisher, and Dvořák was on his way to writing chamber music, concerti, operas, choral works, and, of course, nine symphonies. All of this while he found time to travel to the new world and become the head of the National Conservatory of Music of America in New York City. He even made his way to the Midwest and visited our Minnehaha Falls in Minneapolis.

His popular Symphony No. 8 in G major (formerly published as his Symphony No. 4) is a work filled with a richness which appears on the printed page to be somewhat scant orchestration. But we are not deceived by economy. Rather, we hear the middle instruments lay a foundation of beautiful sound that goes from a warm embrace to unabashed joy and explosive climaxes . . . and that's just the first movement! The second movement has a conversational and story-telling quality that takes a dark turn before it returns to the optimism of a C-major ending, complete with nocturnal trumpet calls, beckoning us to rest. The third movement reminds us that there is always time to dance in Dvořák's world. He cleverly transitions out of a three pulse to a quickstep of two to close the movement in unprecedented fashion. Once again, the trumpets sound a call as the fourth movement begins, but not for military purposes, as Czech conductor Rafael Kubelik points out. "In Bohemia the trumpets never call to battle—they always call to the dance!" Dvořák surely calls us to move with grace and with fury for this finale to a grand symphony.



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Featured Performers

Photo by Dawn Anderson



Manny Laureano
Music Director & Conductor

The Bloomington Symphony appointed **Manny Laureano** the Artistic Director and Conductor in April 2013. Laureano has worked with a variety of ensembles, ranging in roles from the Music Director of the Calhoun-Isles Community Band in Minneapolis, and Music Director of the Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, to several appearances in Young People's Concerts with the Minnesota Orchestra. He has been in demand as a clinician for youth orchestras and bands throughout the state of Minnesota.

In 2002, Manny and his wife Claudette, were invited to guest conduct the National Suzuki Youth Orchestra Festival Orchestra and were invited to serve again in 2004. Manny served as Co-Artistic Director of the Minnesota Youth Symphonies (MYS) from 1988-2020. Laureano served as Assistant Conductor of the Minnesota Orchestra during the 2005-06 season and served as conductor of the 2008-09 Minnesota All-State Orchestra.

Manny was the conductor for concerts given by Musicians of the Minnesota Orchestra at Lake Harriet and various Twin Cities high schools, as well as for a Young Person's Concert for inner city youth in North Minneapolis under the auspices of the ACME/El Sistema program. He is also in demand as a guest conductor of community orchestras and clinician for school ensembles all over the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Manny and Claudette live in Plymouth, Minnesota.

Megan Dvorak Werner grew up in Hayward, Wisconsin, where a chance encounter with an oboist during a church service sparked a lifelong love of the instrument. Wanting more experience beyond school band, she and her mom, Kris (chauffeur by necessity until Megan got her license), made weekly Monday-night treks to Duluth for oboe lessons with DSSO's Laurie van Brunt and Duluth Youth Symphony rehearsals and performances.

Megan went on to earn her Bachelor of Music in oboe performance from St. Olaf College, where she studied with Dana Maeda and performed with both the St. Olaf Band and Orchestra. Her warm tone and expressive phrasing reflect the teaching traditions of both Maeda and Van Brunt, rooted in the legacy of Marcel Tabuteau.

By day, Megan works in nonprofit fundraising as a Development Officer at Greater Minneapolis Crisis Nursery—and brings that expertise to her role on the Bloomington Symphony Orchestra's Board of Directors. As a performer, she has played with the Kenwood, Mankato, and Mississippi Valley Orchestras and currently serves as principal oboe with the BSO.

A passionate chamber musician, Megan performs alongside fellow BSO musicians Becky Jyrkas and Charlotte Bartholomew in the Solerna Winds. She has also performed extensively as a freelance oboist, including two touring seasons with Lorie Line's holiday show.

Megan lives in Andover with her husband Mike, a high school band director and fellow BSO musician. They met backstage at a BSO concert nearly eight years ago and now share a life filled with music, two dogs (Bailey and Cooper), and several rescue cats. In her limited spare time, Megan enjoys gardening, textile crafts, and tackling home improvement projects.



Photo by Steven Garcia

Megan Dvorak Werner

Oboe

Personnel

Violin I

Michael Sutton
Concertmaster
John Wiggins Memorial Chair
Jennifer Volby
Associate Concertmaster
Kelly Carter
First Assistant Principal
Clair Bernard
Second Assistant Principal
Deonne Gray
Erik Lange
Lori Pommer
Jon Poupore
Jon West
Theresa Wise

Violin II

John Holm
Principal
Rachel Christensen
Associate Principal
Kiana Welsch
Assistant Principal
Grace Abt
Emily Anderson
Jenna Carr
Akiko Durbin
Kristin Parker
Nellie Ponarul
Brenda Ruberto
Barbara Whiteman-Brown

Viola

Chris Chelgren
Principal
Clyn Barrus Memorial Chair
Sarah Oxendale
Associate Principal
Julia Wells
Assistant Principal
Will Bartruff
Chuck Clay
Hilary Sackett Crosbie
Rolf Krogstad
Suzanne Ludwig
Thomas Plante

Cello

Laurie Maiser
Principal
Dorothy & Don Hodapp Chair
Daniel Ericksen
Associate Principal
Sylvia Pickett Memorial Chair
Greg Marget
Assistant Principal
Kristin Reller Memorial Chair
Jane Amundson
Katherine Canon
Matthew Maxam
Tom Niemisto
Scott Zeltinger

Bass

Charles Kreitzer
Principal
John Bulger
Associate Principal
Gary Hede
Conrad Hultquist
Miranda Morgan Lilla
Thomas Pieper
Rahn Yanes+

Celeste

Franco Holder+

Flute

Charlotte Bartholomew
Principal
Ruth Giles Chair
Jeeyoun Kang
Bianca Najera

Piccolo

Jeeyoun Kang

Oboe

Maya Wellendorf
Acting Principal
Garrett O'Connell

English Horn

Julian Ernst+

String section players are listed in alphabetical order. String section personnel, with the exception of titled players, rotate on a per-concert basis.

Clarinet

Karen Hansen Gurstelle
Principal
Marjorie Hansen Chair

Laila Stainbrook
Karen Hansen Gurstelle Chair

Bassoon

Briana O'Connell
Principal
Nancy Jacobson

Horn

Rebecca Jyrkas
Principal
Roger & Doreen Klages Chair
Melanie Ditter
Emily Helland+
Annie Ausen

Trumpet

Brad Shermock
Principal
Allan & Debby Schneider Chair
Steven Garcia
Chris Houser

Trombone

Gary Zielinski
Acting Principal
Ian Kronbeck

Bass Trombone

Brooklynne Audette+

Tuba

Michael Werner
Principal

Timpani

Trevor Haining

Percussion

Alex Gedstad+
Cayden Granger+
Julie Henry+
Greg Wood

+ substitute player

Music Director

Manny Laureano
*Dr. Leonard & Karen Nordstrom
Chair*

Executive Director

Sara Kleinsasser Tan

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Production Coordinator

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Gifts may be designated to the BSO's Endowment Fund which allows the group to "harvest" a percentage of earnings each year. Consider giving an "over and above" gift to the Endowment to honor a musician or loved one, honoring their legacy and supporting the BSO for years to come.



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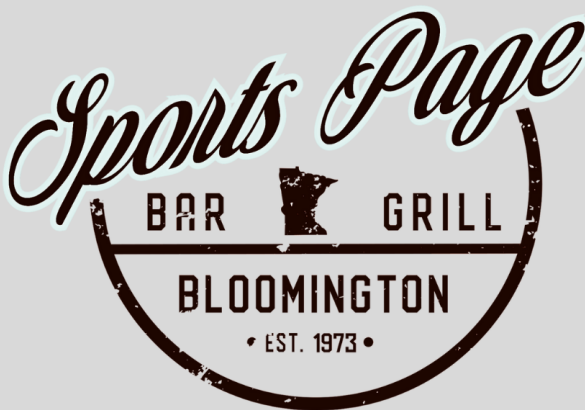
We gratefully acknowledge our concert benefactors, Dr. Leonard & Karen Nordstrom, and Allan & Deborah Schneider. These friends have been supporting the Bloomington Symphony Orchestra and the arts in Bloomington for decades. We are grateful for their impact and encouragement.

BSO friend William White is supporting today's performance of the Concert Overture by Florence Price. He is also supporting Florence Price-related projects with other local arts organizations including the Minnesota Opera.

Thank you to the City of Bloomington and its residents for their support through the Resident Arts Support Grant program.

The Bloomington Symphony would like to recognize the late Mr. & Mrs. Bernard M. Granum for the donation of the Adams timpani set, given in 2003. Their gift is an enduring legacy to the BSO.

Thank you to Jane Bishop, Jane VeVea, Dan Lenort, and the congregation at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Bloomington, for hosting our weekly rehearsals.



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Sunday, February 8, 2026 — 2pm

Ives Auditorium at the Minnesota Masonic Heritage Center
11411 Masonic Home Drive, Bloomington

Joan Tower—*Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman*

Sergei Rachmaninoff—Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 1, F-sharp Minor

Soojung Hong, piano

Sergei Prokofiev—Selections from *Romeo and Juliet*



April Tickets
bit.ly/BSOApril2025

Impressions: How Do They Do It?

Sunday, April 12, 2026 — 2pm

Ives Auditorium at the Minnesota Masonic Heritage Center
11411 Masonic Home Drive, Bloomington

Marko Bajzer—*Sky-Tinted Water: Place Where the Water is so Still it Reflects the Sky*

Camille Saint-Saëns—Cello Concerto No. 1 in A Minor, Op. 33

Samuel Dangerfield, Cello

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Ottorino Respighi—*Pines of Rome*

Summer Fete

Friday, July 3, 2026 — 8:30pm

Normandale Lake Bandshell
5901 West 84th Street, Bloomington



BLOOMINGTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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The mission of the Bloomington Symphony Orchestra is to bring music lovers and accomplished musicians together to experience inspirational performances of orchestral music, with community as our cornerstone.

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The Bloomington Symphony Orchestra will continue to be a vibrant, creative, and ever-evolving ensemble that is recognized as a leader in the Twin Cities for its accomplished volunteer musicians, capacity audiences, and an engaged community.

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Bloomington Symphony Orchestra

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