

**Program Notes**  
**April 27, 2025 - Echoes & Riffs**

**Peter Bay, *Conductor***

**James D'León, *Piano***

**Program notes by J. Michael Allsen**



To close our 2024–25 season, this Arizona Philharmonic concert opens with *The Recorder of Many Moods*, a new work created in collaboration with third-grade students from Prescott Unified School District. We then move into a quiet and introspective piece by Arvo Pärt. Next comes Ernest Bloch's *Concerto Grosso No. 1*, a 20th-century piece written in a Baroque form. Then, a bit of musical impressionism: Delius's *Prelude to "Irmelin."* To round off our 2024–25 season, we welcome audience favorite James D'León to play the jazzy *Piano Concerto No. 4* by Nikolai Kapustin, a composer of the old Soviet Union who channeled the spirit of George Gershwin!

## **Prescott Area Third Graders**

### ***The Recorder of Many Moods***

Give a third grader a recorder and ask them to compose music about feeling “Silly” or “Worried,” and you’re in for something unexpected. This new piece grew from just that premise—nine classrooms of Prescott third graders each crafting a short melody to express an emotion, using only the few notes they had learned so far.

Designed in collaboration with Prescott Unified School District music teachers, and led by teaching artists Maria and Henry Flurry, this composition collaboration project brought the fundamentals of orchestration and emotional expression into PUSD classrooms. Supported by the Acker Trust Fund of the City of Prescott, the project unfolded over three or more sessions with each class. Students explored how musical elements—such as tempo, dynamics, harmony, and texture—can be shaped to express a feeling. They created melodies using just the three notes B, A, and G that they all knew on the recorder (with one class boldly adding C), and helped design string accompaniments for their musical ideas.

The result is *The Recorder of Many Moods*—a stitched-together suite of contrasting miniatures, each reflecting the creative voice of an entire class. Listen closely and you’ll hear a quick succession of moods: an Introduction, followed by Deep, Silly, Calm, Confused, Angry, Happy and Worried, Disgust, Elated, and finally a Closing.

At a school performance, the students joined an Arizona Philharmonic string quintet to play their melodies live. For this concert, the recorder part is performed by Amy Van Winkle, a retired public school music teacher and currently the Community Theater Events Manager at Ruth Street Theater.

This work by Pärt is an early example of what has become his trademark style: simple, beautiful harmonies and unhurried, often chantlike themes.

## **Arvo Pärt (b. 1935)**

### ***Fratres, for Strings Orchestra and Percussion***

*Pärt originally composed this work in 1977 for quintet, but has reworked it nearly a dozen times for various combinations since then. The version heard here dates from 1983. The original version was played in Berlin in 1977 by the early music group Hortus Musicus. The version heard here was premiered on April 29, 1983, in Stockholm, Sweden, played by the Swedish radio Symphony Orchestra, under Neeme Järvi. Duration 11:00.*

## **Background**

Estonia’s greatest living composer, Arvo Pärt, began his career when Estonia was under Soviet control. His early works were neoclassical in character, but by the early 1960s he had begun exploring serialism (controlling all aspects of a composition with a predetermined mathematical plan) and collage technique, and at the same time emulating the music of Bach—often in the same work. His style earned him increasing disapproval from Soviet authorities, and Pärt himself

was growing increasingly dissatisfied with his own music. By 1968, he had reached a kind of creative crisis, and largely withdrew from composing for several years, concentrating on studies of counterpoint, Gregorian and Orthodox chant, and early music. In the late 1970s he emerged again as a composer with works in a new, largely tonal style. Pärt was in fact one of several European composers, including his contemporaries John Tavener and Henryk Gorecki, who turned to what writers of the time dubbed the “new simplicity”—partly a reaction against the atonal complexity of modernist styles. In Pärt’s case, he used a technique he called “tintinnabuli.” According to the composer: “I have discovered that it is enough when a single note is beautifully played. This one note, or a silent beat, or a moment of silence, comforts me. I work with very few elements—with one voice, two voices. I build with primitive materials—with the triad, with one specific tonality. The three notes of a triad are like bells and that is why I call it tintinnabulation.” Increasingly frustrated with the artistically oppressive atmosphere in the Soviet Union, he left Estonia in 1980, settling briefly in Vienna, and eventually in Berlin, where he still lives. Though he continued to compose instrumental music after 1980—his *Symphony No. 4*, for example, was premiered in 2008—it has been Pärt’s gorgeous and moving sacred vocal works that have earned him an international reputation. One of the first works Pärt composed after his self-imposed “artistic silence” of the early 1970s was *Fratres (Brethren)*. He wrote it initially for five unspecified “early or modern instruments,” but there are several later versions—not simply arrangements, but reworkings of the same basic idea.

### **What to Listen For**

In the version of *Fratres* heard here, scored strings and percussion, the piece unfolds in a series of segments, each based upon a single harmony and separated by short percussion interludes. The sequence begins with a furious series of arpeggios—“tintinnabuli”—from the solo violin, and more serene music from the string orchestra. It is this solemn and beautifully chantlike music that seems to have inspired the title’s reference to monastic life. In the course of the piece, the orchestra’s music develops slowly, with a gentle overlay from the solo violin.

A conservative composer in an age that worshipped the *avant garde*, Bloch composed this work to prove to his students that it was indeed possible to write a 20th-century work using Baroque forms!

### **Ernest Bloch (1880-1959)**

#### ***Concerto Grosso No. 1 for String Orchestra with Piano Obligato***

*Bloch composed this work between December 1924 and April 1925. It was first performed at the Cleveland Institute of Music in June 1925. Duration 25:00.*

### **Background**

The Swiss-born composer Ernest Bloch was trained in his native Geneva, and in Brussels, Paris, and Germany. By 1916, he had emigrated to the United States, where he became a citizen in 1924. In 1920, Bloch became the founding director of the Cleveland Institute of Music, and later directed the San Francisco Conservatory. Though he lived in a time of modernist experimentation, his music remained essentially romantic and conservative in style. In 1917,

Bloch published a lengthy essay that argued against what he saw as the intellectual sterility of much of the music of the *avant garde*, stating that:

“...an intellectual barrier exists between their emotion and work—a sort of sensory perversion that twists their thoughts, inhibits their inspiration, and warps their taste. They are forever thinking of the development of their art, not as the corollary of a logical growth of thought, not as a spontaneous expression of life, but as a thing-in-itself, apart from life. And the truth is that they neither understand nor are they interested in anything so much as the elaboration of their technique.”

The *Concerto Grosso No. 1* reflects his conservative tastes, but it is also a “neoclassical” work in the same sense as contemporary pieces by Ravel and Stravinsky, adapting 18th-century forms in a 20th-century idiom. According to his daughter, some of Bloch’s students in Cleveland expressed doubts that a composer could write a truly modern work using Baroque forms and harmonies. In response, he sketched out the *Prelude* in late 1924 and had the student orchestra play it. When they responded enthusiastically, he reportedly said: “What do you think now? It has just old-fashioned notes!” He revised the *Prelude* and composed the remaining movements during an extended stay in Santa Fe over the next few months.

### **What to Listen For**

Bloch’s *Concerto Grosso No. 1* is scored for strings and piano, approximating the most common scoring of Baroque concertos. However, while the Baroque concerto grosso usually featured a strictly defined group of soloists alternating with the full ensemble, here the solo lines are freely intermixed in the texture, and the makeup of solo groups are changed frequently. The piano is not a true solo part, but instead an *obbligato*—a decorative part that plays off of the primary melodies. The brief *Prelude* begins with crisp chords, and continues in a brilliant “pseudo-Baroque” texture. The lovely *Dirge*, the longest and most complex movement, has a serious main theme that alternates with contrasting material. At the center, there is a lovely, but increasingly tense episode for piano and string sextet before the piano briefly takes a lead role and brings back the main idea. The movement eventually closes with warm chords. The *Pastorale and Rustic Dances* alternates between relaxed lyricism and a series of bumptious country dances—most of which were based upon fiddle tunes of Bloch’s native Switzerland. True to Bloch’s Baroque inspiration, the final movement is a lively *Fugue*, though its angular theme clearly comes from the 20th century, not the 18th. Solo instruments play somewhat more reserved contrasting episodes but Bloch brings the fugue to a close in a brilliant style.

This was a late work by Delius, inspired by an opera he had written nearly 40 years earlier. It is a lovely, transparent watercolor of a piece, with delicate, impressionistic harmonies throughout.

**Frederick Delius (1862-1934)**  
***Prelude to “Irmelin”***

*Delius’s opera Irmelin was completed in 1892. The Prelude heard here was composed in 1931. Its first performance was in London’s Covent Garden on September 23, 1935, by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Thomas Beecham. Duration 6:00*

**Background**

Delius, sometimes called the “English Impressionist,” took a rather roundabout path into music. He was born in England, to German parents. After spending time working on a citrus farm in Florida, Delius found a counterpoint teacher, and spent more and more of his time with music, eventually establishing himself as a music teacher in Virginia. His father finally agreed to pay for formal training in music, and in 1886, Delius returned to Europe to begin studies at the Leipzig Conservatory. While his studies in Leipzig were useful, the connections he made there were invaluable: particularly with the Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg. It was a letter from Grieg that finally convinced Delius’s father that his son would never return to take over the family wool business. Delius spent much of his life in France, an active part of the vibrant artistic and intellectual life of Paris, where he met his wife, the painter Jelka Rosen. His style is distinctive—atmospheric music full of chromatic harmony, but Delius frequently used folk material: African-American spirituals (a legacy of his time in the American south), and English and Scandinavian folk songs.

He wrote his first opera, *Irmelin*, in 1890-92. It was never performed during his lifetime, but in 1953, long after his death, Sir Thomas Beecham—a conductor who had long championed Delius’s music—mounted a production of *Irmelin* in Oxford. *Irmelin* has a fairly predictable fairytale plot. A princess, facing a deadline by which she must be married, has been betrothed to a rich but unpleasant suitor. Nils, a prince who is disguised for much of the opera as a swineherd, finally finds his way to the princess’s balcony on the eve of the wedding. A conventional happy ending ensues! The *Prelude* heard here was composed in 1931, one of the late works dictated to Eric Fenby. By this time Delius was blind and ill: the result of syphilis he had contracted in Paris decades earlier. Fenby, who served as a musical secretary, allowed Delius to keep working in the last years of his life.

**What to Listen For**

The brief *Prelude* uses two themes from the opera: an upward-reaching arch-form melody first heard at the beginning, traded among solo woodwinds, and a more serious minor key melody introduced by the violins. This is all accompanied by hazy impressionistic harmony

This concerto by Kapustin is full to the brim with jazz rhythms and expression.

**Nikolai Kapustin (1937-2020)**  
***Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 56***

*Kapustin composed this work in 1989. It was premiered in 2008 in Murcia, Spain, by pianist Ludmilla Angelov and the Symphony Orchestra of Murcia, conducted by José Miguel Rodilla. Duration 23:00.*

It can't have been easy pursuing an interest in jazz piano in the Soviet Union in the 1950s...but Nikolai Kapustin managed it! Jazz was regarded with deep suspicion by Stalinist musical authorities—it was seen as a degenerate, bourgeoisie foreign import—and even in the thawed atmosphere following Stalin's death in 1953, it remained difficult to lay hands on recordings. However, like most things that are discouraged, jazz developed an intense following among some Soviet citizens. One of them was Kapustin. Born in the Donetsk region of Ukraine, at age three, he and his family were among the thousands of civilians evacuated to Kyrgyzstan. A prodigiously talented pianist as a child, he studied with the best of Russian teachers. One of them, Alexander Goldenweiser, with whom Kapustin studied in at the Moscow Conservatory, encouraged Kapustin's interest in jazz. By the early 1960s, he was playing in and arranging for his own jazz quintet and a couple of Moscow big bands, including the pioneering jazz orchestras of Yuri Saulsky and Oleg Lundström. He also began writing works that blended jazz with classical styles, like the *Concertino, Op. 1* (1957) written for Saulsky, and the *Toccata for Piano and Big Band* (1964) for Lundström. In a later interview, he talks about switching careers: "I thought I was going to be a virtuoso classical player, but [in my early 20s], I understood that jazz was very important. And I didn't like performing; composition was more interesting." In later years, Kapustin's music was relatively little known in Russia, and was even scarcer in the West. (It took nearly 20 years before his *Piano Concerto No. 4* was premiered!). However, Kapustin, who once professed that "I never had a desire to be famous," lived long enough to see many of his works, notably the *Piano Concerto No. 4*, receive performances and recordings around the world.

**What to Listen For**

Kapustin once noted that "I am not a jazz pianist"—a reference to his discomfort with jazz improvisation. However, his mastery of jazz rhythm and styles is clear in every note of this concerto. It is divided into three interconnected movement. The opening (*Allegro molto*) begins with a fiery statement by piano, before the orchestra settles into a determined boogie-woogie groove in support of the piano theme. In the next section (*Meno mosso*) the soloist plays a bluesy new theme above an equally bluesy string accompaniment. The boogie woogie feeling returns while Kapustin tosses off ferocious 16th-note passages in octaves worthy of his hero Oscar Peterson. The intensity gradually fades, and the second movement (*Andante*) opens with an Art Tatumesque presentation of a wistful new theme by solo piano, which is then picked up by the orchestra and decorated with a piano filigree. The tempo suddenly quickens for the last and longest movement (*Allegro*), a return to the aggressive style of the opening. Though the orchestra settles at one point into a rather relaxed swing feel, the piano will have none of it, and is soon playing a wild version of the opening movement theme. Oboe and strings recall the opening movement's contrasting theme which is decorated by the piano, but soon cast aside for a return

of piano virtuosity. A pair of grand statements by the orchestra introduce an extended solo cadenza in which the dominant influence is Gershwin: think of the solo piano moments in *Rhapsody in Blue* or the *Concerto in F*. However, near the end of this cadenza is a bit of modern jazz—a jazz waltz that could have been played by Bill Evans. This is quickly brushed aside and the concerto ends (*Allegro assai*) in a wild free-for-all!

## PROGRAM

### **PUSD 3<sup>RD</sup> GRADERS WITH HENRY & MARIA FLURRY**

*The Recorder of Many Moods*

### **ARVO PÄRT**

*Fratres, for Strings, and Percussion*

### **ERNEST BLOCH**

*Concerto Grosso No. 1 for String Orchestra with Piano Obbligato*

*Prelude*

*Dirge*

*Pastorale and Rustic Dances*

*Fugue*

## INTERMISSION

### **FREDERICK DELIUS**

*Prelude to “Irmerlin”*

### **NIKOLAI KAPUSTIN**

*Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 56*

*Allegro moto—Meno mosso—Tempo I—Moderato*

*Andante—Lento*

*Allegro—Allegro assai*

James D’León, piano

## BIOGRAPHIES

### **Peter Bay, Conductor**

Peter Bay became Music Director and Conductor of the Austin Symphony Orchestra in 1998 and the Arizona Philharmonic in 2018. He returns to the Britt Festival Orchestra (OR) as Music Advisor and Guest Conductor for the 2024 summer season.

Maestro Bay has appeared with over eighty different orchestras including the National, Chicago, St. Louis, Houston, Dallas, Baltimore, New Jersey, North Carolina, San Antonio, Tucson, West Virginia, Colorado, Hawaii, Sarasota, Fort Worth, Bochum (Germany), Carinthian (Austria), Lithuanian National, and Ecuador National Symphonies, the Minnesota and Algarve (Portugal) Orchestras, the Louisiana, Buffalo, Rhode Island and Boca del Rio (Mexico) Philharmonics, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Eastman (Postcard from Morocco) and Aspen (The Ballad of Baby Doe) Opera Theaters, and the Theater Chamber Players of the Kennedy Center. Summer music festival appearances have included Aspen and Music in the Mountains (CO), Grant Park and Ravinia (IL), Round Top (TX), OK Mozart (OK), Mostly Modern (NY), and Skaneateles (NY). In June 2018 he led fully staged performances of Leonard Bernstein's Mass as part of the Bernstein100Austin celebration.



Peter is the primary conductor for Ballet Austin. For Austin Opera he has conducted A Streetcar Named Desire, La Traviata, Turandot, The Marriage of Figaro, and La Bohème.

Other positions held by Bay have included Music Director of the Erie Philharmonic, Annapolis Symphony Orchestra, Breckenridge Music Festival (CO), Britt Festival Orchestra (OR), Bravo! Big Sky Classical Festival (MT), Hot Springs Music Festival (AR), and posts with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and Richmond Symphony. Bay and the ASO with pianist Anton Nel released a critically acclaimed Bridge CD of Edward Burlingame Hill's music. With the Richmond Symphony he recorded the U.S. premiere of Britten's The Sword in the Stone for Opus One Records, and with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra Voices, featuring the percussion ensemble NEXUS. He is conductor for Christopher Cross' Secret Ladder album and Hanan Townshend's soundtrack to the 2016 movie The Vessel.

In 1994, he was one of two conductors selected to participate in the Leonard Bernstein American Conductors Program. He was the first prize winner of the 1980 Baltimore Symphony Orchestra Young Conductors Competition and a prize winner of the 1987 Leopold Stokowski Competition sponsored by the American Symphony Orchestra. In July 2012 and January 2020, he appeared in Solo Symphony, a choreographic work created for him by Allison Orr of Forklift Danceworks,

and was inducted into the Austin Arts Hall of Fame in May 2016.

Peter is married to soprano Mela Sarajane Dailey and they have a son Colin.

## **James D'León, Piano**

**James D'León** was born in South Korea into a musical family and began studying piano at the age of four, performing his first recital at five. After early training with his mother, he was awarded a full scholarship to the San Francisco Conservatory of Music as a pre-college student. By age 12, he had won both the San Francisco Symphony and Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra competitions, performing the Grieg Piano Concerto and Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23, respectively. He later relocated to Pennsylvania to further refine his technique and performance skills. At 14, he made his debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra at the Academy of Music, performing Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2.



He continued his piano studies in Philadelphia with the late George Sementovsky, graduating summa cum laude from Temple University. These formative years shaped his pianistic style and deepened his philosophy of performance, particularly regarding expressive physical movement. He later earned a Doctor of Musical Arts in Piano Performance and Literature from the Eastman School of Music in New York.

D'León went on to receive recognition in numerous international competitions, including the Bachauer, Kapell, Leeds, and Van Cliburn. He was selected as a top-five finalist from a field of 250 pianists in the Naumburg International Piano Competition and received top honors at the New York Artist International Competition, leading to his New York debut at Carnegie Hall. He also earned the Gold Medal at the New Orleans International Piano Competition, helping to launch his international career. In 2009, he was named an official Steinway Artist, with inclusion on both the New York and Hamburg rosters. Since then, he has performed in England, Ireland, Italy, Germany, Canada, and in over 40 states across the U.S.

His performances have drawn critical acclaim, with the *Philadelphia Inquirer* noting his "exciting pianism filled with powerful emotion," and *The Salt Lake Tribune* describing him as "a musical sorcerer who mesmerized the audience with every note." *International Piano Magazine*, following his appearance at the Reading Festival in England, wrote, "D'León is one of the latest U.S. pianists to watch, and his recital was a sheer and dazzling delight!" He has been a featured performer at festivals including Banff (Canada), Boyle (Ireland), Schlern (Italy), and Mendocino (California).

As a chamber musician, he has collaborated with distinguished ensembles such as the Muir and Shanghai String Quartets. His performance of the Brahms Piano Quintet with the Shanghai

Quartet drew a ten-minute standing ovation from a full house. He is also in high demand as a master class presenter and adjudicator, having taught at more than 75 universities worldwide and judged international piano competitions across age groups.

As a recording artist, his performances have been praised by *American Record Guide*, which called his playing “a revelation and a real treasure,” and by *eMusic Magazine*, which described his Schubert and Liszt interpretations as “amenable and remarkable.” Upcoming recording projects include the first complete set of Ástor Piazzolla’s tangos transcribed for piano quintet.

A champion of contemporary music, D’León premiered *Currents*, a piano concerto by American composer Henry Flurry inspired by Hurricane Katrina, with Arizona Philharmonic in 2018. Known for his versatility, he is equally at home performing as a concerto soloist, recitalist, or chamber musician. He continues to captivate audiences with his commanding technique, expressive movement, and interpretive depth.

## **The Musicians**

### **Flute**

Jeannette Hirasawa Moore, Principal

### **Oboe**

Mary Simon, Principal

### **Clarinet**

Scott Richardson, Principal

### **Timpani**

Maria Flurry, Principal - *chair sponsored by Jon & Christena Cavaletto*

### **Percussion**

Joshua Ferrell, Principal - *chair sponsored by RoJean Madsen*

### **Piano**

Andrew Campbell

### **Violin I**

Katherine McLin, Concertmaster  
Luke Hill, Assistant Concertmaster  
Louis Coste  
Branan Harrison  
Danny Yang

### **Violin II**

Michael DiBarry, Principal  
Luke Stikeleather

Ben Whitehouse  
Ava Wipff

**Viola**

Bryn Cannon, Principal - *chair sponsored by RoJean Madsen*  
Katie Baird  
Nicole Allen  
Samara Humbert-Hughes

**Cello**

Wesley Skinner, Principal - *chair sponsored by Barbara Metz & Mark Schufletowski*  
Barbara Metz  
Charlie Pabst  
Claudia Vanderschraaf

**Contrabass**

Tzu-I Yang, Principal Jason Roederer, Associate Principal  
Glenn Stallcop