

SUITE TRIBUTES

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2023 | 3:00 PM

CENTURY II CONCERT HALL

Holly Mulcahy

Violin

Daniel Hege

Music Director & Conductor

PROGRAM NOTES



AARON COPLAND

Born November 14, 1900 in Brooklyn, New York

Died December 2, 1990 in Peekskill, New York

Fanfare for the Common Man

Last performed by the Wichita Symphony on March 13 and 14, 2010 with Andrew Sewell conducting.

The genesis of Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man* began in 1942, shortly after Pearl Harbor and the United States' entry into the Second World War. The conductor Eugene Goosens, then Music Director of the Cincinnati Symphony, determined that a series of newly commissioned fanfares would serve as a rallying cry for the Symphony's 1942-1943 season. Goosens had supported a similar project with English composers during World War One, stating, "It is my idea to make these fanfares stirring and significant contributions to the war effort." Goosens invited composers working in the United States, among them Aaron Copland, Howard Hanson, Walter Piston, and fifteen others, to compose brief fanfares between two- and three-minutes using brass and percussion that he would program to start each concert of the Symphony's season. Ten composers eventually submitted new works, most meeting the standard expectations for a fanfare and dedicated to a military unit or American ally. Only Copland's proved to have lasting value and became identifiable as an iconic example of American music.

Copland dabbled with several titles for his piece, including *Fanfare of the Spirit of Democracy* and *Fanfare for the Rebirth of Lidice* (a Czech town destroyed by the Nazis). Eventually, he settled on *Fanfare for the Common Man* because, as he wrote, "it was the common man who was doing all of the dirty work in the war." After receiving the music, conductor Goosens wrote to Copland, "Its title is as original as its music, and I think it is so telling that it deserves a special occasion for its performance. If it is agreeable to you, we will premiere it March 12, 1943, at income tax time." Copland responded that he was all in favor of honoring the common man at income tax time.

Copland's *Fanfare* became, and remains, one of his most popular pieces. Besides its frequent use at Symphony concerts, it exists in arrangements for Woody Herman's Band in "boogaloo style" and in a free-form ten-minute improvisation by the rock band Emerson, Lake, and Palmer. It has also been arranged for performance by one hundred Notre Dame Marching Band clarinetists! Copland returned to the music for the fourth movement of his Third Symphony (1944 – 1946), quoting it in its entirety and then using it as the basis for the last movement, which provides a "noble finale that reflects upon the war's victorious struggle." The Wichita Symphony audience heard this Symphony in April 2013.

Fanfare for the Common Man lasts just under three minutes and is scored for four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, and tam-tam (gong). It is worth noting that this concert is the debut of one of the Wichita Symphony's newest acquisitions, a 40-inch Chinese-made tam-tam. Its purchase was made possible by a generous gift from Kelly and Kurt Harper and others who contributed to the "Gong Fund" during a Giving Tuesday campaign before the pandemic.

Fanfare for the Common Man

continued

Here are several versions of *Fanfare for the Common Man* to listen to before you attend the concert.

The original version with Leonard Bernstein conducting the New York Philharmonic for an Aaron Copland birthday celebration in 1985 and seen by millions on PBS' "Live from Lincoln Center."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MK1N46dRPVg>

A performance by the Woody Herman New Thundering Herd:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fAFC1clszTc>

A performance by Emerson, Lake, and Palmer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2zurZig4L8>

And last, but not least, a performance by the entire Notre Dame Marching Band, but with lots of clarinets, too.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=329608430917995>

JAMES STEPHENSON

Born 1969 in the Chicago, Illinois area

“Tributes” - A Violin Concerto in Three Movements (27')

1. Allegretto deciso (7')
2. Andante (7')
3. Allegro Agitato (13')

This is the Wichita Symphony premiere performance of this concerto.

James Stephenson is a prolific and sought-after Chicago-based composer. Winning a position as Principal Trumpet with the Naples (FL) Philharmonic upon graduating from the New England Conservatory, Stephenson performed with that orchestra for seventeen seasons. It was only in 2007 that he decided to become a full-time composer and arranger. His compositions include concertos and sonatas for nearly every instrument, with many works commissioned by principal players of orchestras such as Boston, Chicago, Minnesota, New York, Philadelphia, and many others.

Stephenson’s website lists over 800 compositions, many of which exist in multiple formats for orchestra, chamber orchestra, wind ensemble, or concert band. Many works have been recorded, and his music is represented on over thirty CDs. The United States Marine Band premiered his *Fanfare for Democracy* (2021) at the inauguration of President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris. This Fanfare was performed by the WSO Brass and Percussion Ensemble at the first Symphony in the Gardens at Botanica in May 2021.

Stephenson’s arrangements for Pops concerts include over seventy-five commissions from the Cincinnati Pops and others, such as the Boston Pops and New York Pops. Children in Wichita attending the Symphony’s Young People’s Concerts later this fall will experience Stephenson’s arrangements for Classical Kids Music Education’s new production of *St. Georges’ Sword and Bow*, for which he served as music supervisor and editor. The Minnesota Orchestra and its then Music Director, Osmo Vänskä, with violinist Jennifer Frautschi, commissioned the Violin Concerto heard at this concert. They premiered the work on April 11, 2012. The work itself was composed in 2009.

Wichita Symphony Concertmaster Holly Mulcahy performed the Concerto three times with orchestras in Illinois, Iowa, and Tennessee. This work will be new for everybody else in the audience, and at nearly a half-hour in length could be daunting. The title of the work, “Tributes,” does not offer us a lot of help. In his preface to the score, the composer writes, “Tributes” is a conscious nod to all of the people who have contributed to the creation of this work: Composers and soloists – past and present – who have written/performed timeless and inspiring violin concertos.”

The **first movement** bolts from the beginning with three important elements in the opening bars, starting with rapidly repeated chords (a) in the brass and xylophone, the violin follows with a syncopated rhythmic pattern (b) before ascending into a high lyrical passage (c) soaring over the exclamations of the rhythmic motives (a and b) that leap around the instruments of the orchestra.

A harp glissando and a brief solo “lick” for the tuba marks a whimsical second theme that the solo violin picks up. The music moves forward relentlessly, driven by splashes of color in the percussion section and a kaleidoscopic treatment for the rest of the orchestra.

"Tributes" - A Violin Concerto in Three Movements (27')

continued

The music becomes even faster with a driving bass beat, while the violin solo alternates between technically challenging virtuosic writing and melodic lyricism. For some, the motoric drive of the music may be reminiscent of a Danny Elfman score depicting Gotham City.

The orchestration of the concerto is noteworthy. Scored for a large orchestra with a bustling percussion section, Stephenson skillfully limits his orchestral forces when the soloist performs, never overwhelming the soloist. When the soloist is silent, he allows the whole orchestra to burst out during interludes. The percussion section is extensive for a concerto and calls for a xylophone, marimba, vibraphone, chimes, glockenspiel, suspended cymbal, two snare drums, bass drum, triangle, cabasa¹, wood block, crotales, slap-sticks, tam-tam, bongo, tambourine, two small polished stones, and four tom-toms. Instructions for playing the percussion instruments abound throughout the score. You may hear wire brushes on a snare, striking it with a rim shot, hitting the cabasa with a wire brush, or using rute² drumsticks on the bass drum shell. These percussion instruments and performance techniques add a palette of colors and often contribute jazz-like elements to the music.

After expending its energy, the first movement transitions via a brief adagio into the **second movement** without pause. In his preface to the score, Stephenson writes that this movement is inspired and based entirely on Louis Armstrong's spontaneous scat-singing solo from a 1920s recording of "Hotter Than That." Here's a side-by-side sample on YouTube of Louis Armstrong and Stephenson's violin writing "in the style."

It's okay if you don't hear a direct connection. The mood that Stephenson achieves in this movement is far more important than whether you detect the Louis Armstrong quote. The music is sultry and evocative of a late-night jazz club. Repeating dark-colored minor chords establish a backdrop against which the solo violin sings, sometimes in conversation with a horn or a muted trombone. A bass drum and piano chords provide a background pulse. The music's pace quickens, leading to an outburst from the entire orchestra. Arpeggiated passages for the soloist mimic scat-singing. The movement quietly ends as it began.

The **third movement** begins with an extended orchestral introduction, the longest passage (but still brief) for orchestra alone in the entire concerto. The high woodwinds carry the flourishes against a quarter-note marching rhythm in the clarinets and bassoons with punctuations by the brass. The soloist enters with perpetual motion energy against the driving rhythm in the bass. A quieter section of contrast occurs, but the steady quarter-note rhythm remains like a vamp to drive the music forward in a machine-like fashion. At the same time, the soloist takes us on a rollercoaster of scales and arpeggios. A slow section (lento) interrupts the momentum. A chorale-like passage in the low brass leads directly into an extended cadenza for the soloist. The cadenza reflects the moods and elements of the concerto, including the scat-singing evocation. A string of arpeggio signals the orchestra's return, and the momentum drives the music to its final cadence.

Holly Mulcahy writes about the Violin Concerto, "Tributes encompasses every quality I seek in a violin concerto, from the gripping opening to the seductive melodies in the second movement to the blazing ending. It leaves the audience and performers satisfied and happy! What a pleasure to perform!"

1. The cabasa is a percussion instrument that is constructed with loops of steel ball chain wrapped around a wooden cylinder. The cylinder is fixed to a long, wooden or plastic handle.

2. Rutes are usually made of a bundle of thin birch dowels, thin canes, or even twigs attached to a drum stick handle.

"Tributes" - A Violin Concerto in Three Movements (27')

continued

Stephenson scores his "Tributes" Concerto for solo violin, piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, E-flat Clarinet, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four French horns, three trumpets in C, two trombones, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, four or five percussionists, harp, a keyboard player on piano and celesta, and strings. A reduced orchestration is available.

If you wish to listen to the Concerto before you attend the concert, you will find it here on Stephenson's website: <https://composerjim.com/works/violin-concerto-tributes/>

ARAM KHACHATURIAN

Born June 6, 1903 in Tbilisi, Georgia (Tiflis Governorate, Russian Empire)

Died May 1, 1978 in Moscow, Russia

Adagio of Spartacus and Phrygia* from *Spartacus Suite No. 2

Last performed by the Wichita Symphony on January 30 and 31, 2009 with Andrew Sewell conducting.

You likely know this music even if you are unfamiliar with the composer's name. The Adagio appears in figure skating routines, popular songs, and movies. More about these connections are below.

Khachaturian was an Armenian composer and conductor who was a member of the circle of noted Soviet composers that included Kabalevsky, Prokofiev, and Shostakovich. His music became popular with American audiences primarily through performances of his Piano Concerto (1936), championed by the American pianist William Kapell during the 1940s, and the 1942 ballet *Gayane*, from which the Sabre Dance became another work that entered popular mass culture.

Along with many of his colleagues, including the three mentioned above, Khachaturian was denounced and censored in 1948 by Tikhon Khrennikov, the head of the Soviet Composers Union, for composing music that was "anti-people," a viewpoint that might cause more head-scratching to listeners today. The Composers Union restored Khachaturian's reputation after his "confession" and apology before the Composers Union.

In 1957, he was appointed Secretary of the Composers Union and served until his death. During those years, he was a spokesperson for Soviet cultural policy. In 1968, Khachaturian visited the United States in a cultural exchange. He conducted concerts of his music in seven cities, including the National Symphony in Washington, DC.

The ballet *Spartacus* was composed in 1954 and loosely based on a slave uprising against the Roman Empire in 73 BC known as the Third Servile War, or the Gladiator's War. In Act 1 of the ballet, the Thracian King Spartacus, his wife Phrygia, and other followers are taken captive by the Roman consul Crassus. Phrygia is hauled off to join Crassus' harem of concubines. Spartacus is sent to the gladiator's ring and forced to fight a close friend, who he kills. Filled with remorse, Spartacus incites his followers to rebel. They escape and rescue Phrygia from the harem.

The Adagio heard at this concert occurs at the end of Act II, where Spartacus and Phrygia celebrate their reunion. [In Act III, Crassus' army discovers Spartacus's hideout. The legionnaires surround the camp and kill Spartacus, impaling him on their spears. Phrygia is left to grieve her loss.]

The music of the *Spartacus* Adagio is typical of much of Khachaturian's style: lush orchestration, a romantic melody, and exotic infusions of color, marking the influence of Armenian folk music and the blending of cultures at the crossroads between East and West in the Caucasus Mountains region. After a brief introduction, the famous melody enters in the solo oboe.

***Adagio of Spartacus and Phrygia* from Spartacus Suite No. 2**

continued

For listening pleasure, explore the YouTube links below.

Here's the full Adagio performed by the Armenian Philharmonic:

<https://youtu.be/LZLMKkEGFRo?si=SxLB9sAvjM60MyuB>

Here, the Adagio theme appears in a popular song, "Journey's End," sung by the popular 20th-century crooner Andy Williams:

https://youtu.be/MwyrG_PMXM?si=l4QxHiwsWeoCo2a0

Figure skating enthusiasts will surely remember this skate by champion figure skater Michelle Kwan to the Adagio edited for competition:

https://youtu.be/laskgB44eIM?si=Bdgx6_cgNSP60072

The Mexican rock band Caifanes, from the late 80s to mid-90s, adapted Khachaturian's Adagio for their song, "Antes de Que Nos Olviden" ("Before We're Forgotten"):

<https://youtu.be/OMDxJS5wBTI?si=6ykeFasWDXJiFMci>

In John Powell's score for the animated film *Ice Age: Meltdown*, listen to this moment from Scrat's Heavenly Vision of the Pearly Gates:

<https://youtu.be/Pw1ipuuti6A?si=kOypTVfBRHDxCfB1>

RICHARD STRAUSS

Born June 11, 1864 in Munich, Germany

Died September 8, 1949 in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany

Rosenkavalier Suite, Op. 59

This is the first known performance by the Wichita Symphony.

By the time the 19th century ended, Richard Strauss had gained fame through large-scale symphonic poems and numerous songs. Among these orchestral works, all of which remain in the repertoire, were *Don Juan* (1888), *Till Eulenspiegel* (1895), *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1896), and *Ein Heldenleben* (1898). They furthered the program music models that Berlioz and Liszt began earlier in the century and the massive orchestrations and harmonic language of Richard Wagner.

In his music, Strauss proved that he could describe nearly anything from the mundane activities of home life (*Sinfonia Domestica*, 1903) to jousting with windmills (*Don Quixote*, 1897) to the bickering of his music critics (*Ein Heldenleben*, 1898). He demonstrated a natural affinity for the voice and its lyrical possibilities through his songs, especially when composing for women's voices. (He married a soprano.)

The direction of Strauss's musical activities changed in the 20th century. Upon viewing a German translation of Oscar Wilde's play, *Salome* (1891), in 1902, Strauss turned his focus to opera, composing in succession *Salome* (1905) and *Elektra* (1909). These operas won Strauss acclaim and fortune, but their choice of subject and the depiction of bloodthirsty lust, revenge, and even necrophilia also received censorship and condemnation. It was as if the operas captured the Freudian angst of the day and the dissolution of the 19th century as the new century plummeted toward the cataclysm of the Great War.

Musically, *Salome* and *Elektra* shook and thrilled the audiences with their gargantuan orchestras in excess of one hundred musicians and post-Wagnerian harmonies that took music to the precipice of atonality. For Strauss and his librettist for *Elektra*, Hugo von Hoffmannstahl, this was a little too much like playing with fire. If the duo were to have another success, they would need to retreat and recapture some of the past in story and musical style. This situation brought the two men to their next collaboration, *Der Rosenkavalier*, or the "The Knight of the Rose."

Work on *Rosenkavalier* began shortly after the premiere of *Elektra*. In seeking something completely different, Strauss and Hoffmannstahl looked back to the 18th century, deciding to create a comic opera in a Mozartean style, even to the point of borrowing a Cherabino-like character, assigning the part of the young man, Octavian, to a mezzo-soprano for what's known as a "pants role" in opera. Capturing the flavor of Vienna, Strauss turned to the popular, late-19th-century waltz, treating it both as an anachronism in an 18th-century setting and as music recognizable to everyone for its conventional harmonic tonality.

The opera premiered on January 26, 1911, in Dresden. Critics were initially cool to the comedic and farcical elements, but audiences loved it. Strauss and Hoffmannstahl had a blockbuster on their hands. Strauss subsequently made two orchestral arrangements of the waltzes and other dance music in the opera and even allowed some of the music to be used in a 1920s movie, even though Strauss had no interest in becoming a film score composer. While the opera is in three acts, with a run time of about three-and-a-half hours, the Suite is a composite of the "best" highlights and runs about twenty-two minutes.

Rosenkavalier Suite, Op. 59

continued

Conductor and then Music Director of the New York Philharmonic, Artur Rodzinski, was the likely arranger of the Suite and premiered it with the Philharmonic on October 5, 1944. After WWII, Strauss, who needed cash, approved the Suite, and Boosey & Hawkes published the work in 1945. The opera, a popular vehicle for leading singers of the day, and the orchestral Suite remain in the regular repertoire of opera houses and symphony orchestras and are beloved by audiences.

The Suite has five main sections that flow from one to the next. The music, which doesn't entirely follow the sequence of events in the opera, can be enjoyed independently of any knowledge of the story, but a little background can help. First, we're introduced to the Marschallin, a 32-year-old woman trapped in a loveless marriage with an absent Field Marshall and her 17-year-old lover, Count Octavian Rofrano. (No one said it would be scandal-free!)

The opera's introduction and the Suite begin with rambunctious music featuring whooping horns and straining strings that depict a night of lovemaking and the haze of the morning's afterglow between the Marschallin and Octavian.

[The opera continues: A commotion outside the door, and thinking it's the Field Marshall returning, Octavian ducks into a closet and emerges dressed as a maid. (Yes, it's a pants role where a woman plays a young man who will now play a young girl). Instead of the Field Marshall, it's only Baron Ochs, a distant cousin of the Marschallin and a coarse man of minor nobility. He's come to announce his engagement to Sophie von Faninal, the daughter of a successful local merchant. He needs the Marschallin's notary to draw up a marriage contract. Ochs sought a dowry to his enriching benefit. He also required a young man who could deliver a symbolic token of commitment – a silver rose – (hence the opera's title) to his fiancée.

The Marschallin shows Ochs a portrait of Octavian. Ochs indicates that the young man will do for task, even as he flirts with and marvels at the portrait's similarity to the maid, who has been introduced as Mariandel. The Marschallin and Octavian play this ruse for all of its humor, and Ochs is gullible and smitten at the same time. Other business of the morning proceeds, and after everyone has left, including Octavian, back in his count's clothing, the opera and music turn serious as the Marschallin reflects on the inevitable passage of time and how she will eventually lose Octavian.]

Act 2 opens with the hustle and bustle at the von Faninal house as Sophie and the Faninal household await the arrival of the Rose Cavalier. The excitement builds, and Octavian appears to present the rose. The Suite captures this moment in its second section. The music's magnificent climax and denouement tell us everything we need to know about love at first sight between two young people, even as they display proper courtesy and chaperoned conversation on the opera's stage. Listen to the orchestral color of flutes, harp, celesta, and violins as they evoke the color of the silver rose in a descending passage of shimmering triads.

[Eventually, Ochs shows up along with his lecherous sidekicks, who proceed to chase the maids of the Faninal household. Ochs, in boorish fashion after sizing up Sophie like a filly, exits to draw up the marriage contract. In his absence, Octavian and Sophie agree to stop the marriage. Their duet is interrupted by two spying characters who call for Ochs to come quickly. Ochs appears. Octavian announces that Sophie will not be marrying him. Ochs brushes him off, but Octavian challenges him to a duel.

Rosenkavalier Suite, Op. 59

continued

In the process, Ochs gets nicked in the arm and screams bloody murder. Octavian is ordered to leave. Faninal orders his daughter to her room and threatens her with a convent if she fails to marry the Baron. While Ochs's lackeys administer to him, Ochs receives a note. It is from "Mariandel" inviting him for a tryst at a local inn of ill repute. The opportunity for a new conquest cures Ochs ails, and he sings the music of the famous waltz, quite possibly the show's biggest hit. "With me, no night is too long."]

Section 3 of the Suite transitions to this waltz music. We hear it first in a chamber orchestra version as it appears at the beginning of Act 3 as Octavian begins to lay out the plan to turn the table on Ochs at the inn. As the waltz music expands, it incorporates the rich orchestration that appears at the end of Act II.

[Eventually, Ochs gets his comeuppance at the hands of Octavian in his "Mariandel" portrayal. The Marschallin, with Faninal and Sofie in tow, appears at the height of the comedic and chaotic sequence. Ochs learns that his gig is up, and the marriage is called off. He leaves in a huff, chased after by characters playing the roles of his creditors and illegitimate children.]

Musical magic and transformation occur at this point, captured in the Suite's fourth section. The Marschallin, Octavian, and Sophie are left alone on stage, with their thoughts captured by the intertwining weaving of the musical counterpoint. The Marschallin becomes aware that this is the moment when she loses Octavian, who is torn in his thoughts between the past (the Marschallin) and the future (Sophie), while poor Sophie remains uncertain about how all of this turns out. This complex and emotional musical texture begins tentatively, then builds to an extraordinary climax as the Marschallin relinquishes Octavian to Sofie and departs. The music resolves into a simple, folk-like duet between Sophie and Octavian as they realize and express their love for each other.

Finally, the fifth section of the Suite reprises the waltz, bringing this compilation of *Rosenkavalier* highlights to an exhilarating conclusion.

The *Rosenkavalier Suite* is scored for a large orchestra consisting of three flutes including piccolo, three oboes including English Horn, four clarinets including E-flat and Bass, three bassoons including contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, a large percussion battery that includes bass drum, cymbals, glockenspiel, ratchet, snare drum, tambourine, and triangle, two harps, celesta, and strings.

For your listening pleasure before attending the Wichita Symphony concert, here's a YouTube performance of the Rosenkavalier Suite by the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin at the 2019 BBC Proms.

https://youtu.be/PkZLhGC53LU?si=M0C8w_CcMJoe147f