

A Sea Symphony

"All souls...all nations...all identities..."

Auburn, WA: On **Sunday May 5th**, Auburn Symphony Orchestra collaborates with Seattle Pro Musica to present ***A Sea Symphony* by Ralph Vaughan Williams at Federal Way Performing Arts and Event Center at 2:30pm**. Tickets and information can be found at auburnsymphony.org or by calling the Federal Way box office at 253-887-7777. Ticket pricing is \$42 (\$37 seniors, \$12 students/families).

An additional performance will be given at St. James Cathedral in Seattle on Saturday, May 4, 2024, 8:00pm. Tickets available through Seattle Pro Musica.

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Walt Whitman's lyrics are a stirring embrace of all of humanity. Combined with the music of Ralph Vaughan Williams, *A Sea Symphony* uses the vastness and power of the sea as a backdrop for our search for meaning. Written for chorus, soloists, and orchestra, *A Sea Symphony* will fill you with a sense of awe and wonder in the face of a boundless universe. Auburn Symphony Orchestra is delighted to present this work in collaboration with Seattle Pro Musica and their conductor, Karen P. Thomas, and featuring Susan Payne O'Brien, soprano and Damien Geter, baritone.

ASO will perform ***The Boatswain's Mate Overture* by British composer Ethel Smyth**, a cheerful piece which also contains Smyth's defiant feminist spirit. *The Boatswain's Mate* is a witty take on gender roles with the heroine of the story outwitting a retired boatswain who is scheming to become her suitor.

SPM will open the concert with ***Canticum Calamitatis Maritimae* by Finnish composer Jaakko Mäntyjärvi**. This haunting work draws on folk song, news reporting, and the Requiem Mass to recount the ill-fated 1994 journey of the MS Estonia.

About Auburn Symphony Orchestra

Auburn Symphony Orchestra changes lives and our South Puget Sound community through the shared experience of live orchestral music performances and by nurturing the relationship between our audiences and our artists.

In 1996, Founding Conductor and Music Director Stewart Kershaw assembled a talented group of regional musicians to form a symphony orchestra. Now under the direction of Wesley Schulz, the fully-professional Auburn Symphony Orchestra has become one of the most acclaimed orchestras in the Northwest with its core of musicians from the Pacific Northwest Ballet Orchestra. Recent special projects include collaborations with other arts groups such as the

Reno Chamber Orchestra and the Guild Dance Company to co-commission new choreography for Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring*. Schulz and ASO were invited in July 2022 to perform for the closing concert of the American Guild of Organists National Convention with soloist Renée Anne Loupette at Benaroya Hall. With New Music USA's Amplifying Voices program and New Music for America, ASO has been a proud partner in co-commissions of new music, often as the smallest budget orchestra in these nation-wide projects.

The Orchestra's home is the Auburn Performing Arts Center in downtown Auburn. Chamber concerts take place around the Auburn community including St Matthew / San Mateo Episcopal Church, Soos Creek Botanical Gardens, and the Auburn International Farmers Market.

About Seattle Pro Musica

Seattle Pro Musica believes in the power of voices joined in harmony to enrich the lives of their audiences, their singers, and the community at large. SPM also believes in making the beauty of choral music available to as many people as possible. Though their members come from all walks of life and span generations, they are united by their desire to make beautiful music together and share it with the world.

Throughout their 51-year history, SPM has been recognized for the caliber of their programming and performances. They've received the Margaret Hillis Award for Choral Excellence and the ASCAP/Chorus America Award for Adventurous Programming, and they were ranked as "among America's very best choirs" by *American Record Guide*. Under the baton of Artistic Director and Conductor Karen P. Thomas, they've received international acclaim for their CD recordings and live performances. *Choir and Organ* writes, "Seattle Pro Musica presents a cappella singing at its best," and *Fanfare Record* says, "This is truly an extraordinary choir."

SPM has also appeared by invitation at numerous international and national festivals, and they've been fortunate enough to perform with artists like Jane Eaglen, Andrea Bocelli, Josh Groban, Pacific MusicWorks, and Seattle Symphony. Members of Seattle Pro Musica have also appeared on GRAMMY Award-winning and GRAMMY-nominated albums by Ricky Kej and Wouter Kellerman. Most importantly, Seattle Pro Musica is beloved by a community of listeners and supporters who make everything they do possible.

About the Soloists

Susan Payne O'Brien is a singer, director and pedagogue living in the Seattle Area. As a soloist, she has performed with Opera North, Opera UnBound, Quad Cities Opera, Forte Chicago, Links Hall Chicago, IIVA, Orvieto Musica, Chicago Chorale and Seattle Pro Musica. She is a frequent recitalist, with recent collaborations with Entre Rios Press, Folio, The Alliance Française de Seattle and the estate of composer Lockrem Johnson. In her teaching and work with theatrical and operatic ensembles, she is committed to helping students and artists of all levels access authenticity of voice using tools developed at the Piven Theatre

Workshop in Chicago where she trained and taught for over twenty years. As an opera staging director and pedagogue, her work has been featured on the stages of The Santa Fe Opera, Chicago Opera Theater, DePaul University, North Park Opera, El Paso Opera and The Chicago College of Performing Arts. She is the founding artistic director of Forte Chicago, an all-female improvisational comic opera troupe due to tour to Seattle in 2025. Her recent direction of *Francine and Monkey in The City of Tigers* can be seen this June at Seattle Opera and in outdoor spaces this summer as part of Seattle Opera in the Parks.

Damien Geter is a celebrated bass-baritone –“amazing to listen to. Possessed of a rolling, resonant voice even at the lowest register” (Northwest Reverb) – whose varied credits include performances from the operatic stage to the television screen. Opera Today praises his sound palette, which “is very much his own distinct voice, and invigoratingly fresh” while The News Tribune calls him “superb.” In addition to his vocal accomplishments, Geter serves as Portland Opera’s Interim Music Director and Artistic Advisor, Resonance Ensemble’s Artistic Advisor, and Richmond Symphony’s Composer-in-Residence. This season, Geter portrays the role of abolitionist and historian William Still in Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Paul Moravec’s oratorio *Sanctuary Road*, presented by Virginia Opera, and based on the writings of Still, who is credited with helping nearly 800 enslaved African Americans escape to freedom. He also joins Auburn Symphony Orchestra and Seattle Pro Musica in Ralph Vaughan Williams’ *A Sea Symphony* and Rembrandt Chamber Musicians in *The Wayfarer’s Melodies: A Musical Journey*, singing the John Ireland Songs of a Wayfarer Cycle. Last season’s performance credits featured the bass-baritone as Archibald Craven in *The Secret Garden* with Hawaii Opera Theatre, plus concert credits entailing Handel’s *Messiah* with North Carolina Symphony and Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9* with the Fresno Philharmonic.

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Auburn Symphony Orchestra is a registered nonprofit organization: 91-1719873
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