

NORTH CAROLINA **SYMPHONY**

Rachmaninoff Symphony No. 2 and Saint-Saëns Piano Concerto No. 2

THU, OCT 30, 2025 | 7:30PM

RIVERFRONT CONVENTION CENTER, NEW BERN

North Carolina Symphony
Stephanie Childress, *conductor*
Joyce Yang, *piano*

PROGRAM

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

***Simple Symphony* for String Orchestra, Op. 4**

- I. Boisterous Bourrée
- II. Playful Pizzicato
- III. Sentimental Sarabande
- IV. Frolicsome Finale

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)

Piano Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 22

- I. Andante sostenuto
 - II. Allegro scherzando
 - III. Presto
- Joyce Yang, *piano*

Intermission

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Symphony No. 2 in E minor, Op. 27

- I. Largo – Allegro moderato
- II. Allegro molto
- III. Adagio
- IV. Allegro vivace

About the Artists



Stephanie Childress, *conductor*

Stephanie Childress most recently conducted the North Carolina Symphony in November of 2024, for concerts in Raleigh and Chapel Hill that featured Holst's The Planets and Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 1.

Franco-British conductor Stephanie Childress concluded her 2024/25 season with debuts with the San Francisco, Houston, and San Diego symphonies, alongside a return to The Cleveland Orchestra. She began her tenure in 2024 as Principal Guest Conductor of Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona i Nacional de Catalunya. Her 2025/26 season began with a debut at The Juilliard School conducting Rachmaninoff's Second Symphony and leading the New York premiere of Anna Clyne's *Palette*. Orchestral engagements this season also include the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, hr-Sinfonieorchester Frankfurt, and Minnesota Orchestra. She will debut this season with the Zürich Chamber Orchestra and BBC National Orchestra of Wales, and make her Australian debut in April 2026 with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra.

Last season saw returns to the New World and Utah symphonies, as well as Konzerthausorchester Berlin, Orchestre national d'Île-de-France, and Opéra orchestre national de Montpellier. This season marks her first production of Verdi's *La Traviata*, at the Finnish National Opera, alongside a gala performance with l'Opéra de Paris at the Palais Garnier.

Since her second-prize win at the inaugural La Maestra conducting competition in 2020, Childress has conducted ensembles in France including Orchestre de Paris, Paris Mozart Orchestra, Orchestre national d'Île de France, and Orchestre de chambre de Paris. She will debut with the Orchestre national Bordeaux Aquitaine in the 2025/26 season.

Childress previously undertook a residency at the Villa Albertine, a network for arts and ideas spanning France and the United States. She is also a member of the Franco-British Young Leaders' Program. She enjoys a close connection to the Sun Valley Music Festival Institute, where she was previously Associate Conductor, and is a regular faculty member at the Sarasota Music Festival. During her own training, she served as Assistant Conductor of the St. Louis Symphony under Stéphane Denève from 2021 to 2023 and was one of the first conductors to join l'Académie de l'Opéra national de Paris.



Joyce Yang, piano

Joyce Yang made her North Carolina Symphony debut in 2013, performing Falla's Nights in the Gardens of Spain at concerts in Raleigh, New Bern, and Moore County.

Grammy-nominated pianist Joyce Yang first came to international attention in 2005 when she won the silver medal at the 12th Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. The youngest contestant at 19 years old, she took home two additional awards. In 2006 Yang made her New York Philharmonic debut. Subsequent appearances have included opening night of the 2008 Leonard Bernstein Festival, where *The New York Times* pronounced her performance in Bernstein's *The Age of Anxiety* a "knockout." Notable orchestral engagements have included the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and San Francisco Symphony. She received the Avery Fisher Career Grant in 2010 and earned her first Grammy nomination in 2018 with violinist Augustin Hadelich.

Yang made a return visit to the Aspen Music Festival in the summer of 2025 and a debut at San Diego's Mainly Mozart Festival. In the 2025/26 season, concerto appearances include New Jersey Symphony and Oregon Symphony and the St. Louis, Vancouver, Milwaukee symphony orchestras, among many others. As a chamber musician, she will reunite with the Takács Quartet performing Schumann's Piano Quintet.

In November of 2025, Yang will perform a new work by Jonathan Leshnoff: *Rhapsody on America*, a piece written expressly for her. She has premiered piano concertos by Michael Torke, Jonathan Leshnoff, and Reinaldo Moya. Her 10 recordings include solo discs and a live recording of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 with Denmark's Odense Symphony Orchestra.

Born in Seoul, South Korea, Yang received her first piano lesson from her aunt at the age of four. By the age of ten, she had entered the School of Music at the Korea National University of Arts. In 1997, she began studies at The Juilliard School. During her first year, Yang won the pre-college division Concerto Competition. After winning The Philadelphia Orchestra's Greenfield Student Competition, she performed Prokofiev's Third Piano Concerto with that orchestra at just 12 years old. She graduated from Juilliard as the recipient of the school's 2010 Arthur Rubinstein Prize, and in 2011 she won its 30th Annual William A. Petschek Piano Recital Award. She is a Steinway artist.

About the Music



Simple Symphony for String Orchestra, Op. 4

[1933-34]

BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913-1976)

Benjamin Britten was a true musical prodigy who composed prolifically as a child and excelled at piano and viola. In 1927, his viola teacher introduced him to the composer Frank Bridge, who agreed to give Britten private lessons. Britten lost some of his youthful swagger working with Bridge—he later wrote, “I, who thought I was already on the verge of immortality, saw my illusions shattered”—but he emerged from the lessons with new rigor and technique to match his natural inventiveness.

Britten’s *Simple Symphony* from 1934 recycled a number of themes he had sketched out between the ages of nine and twelve, contributing to the charming innocence of this string symphony steeped in Baroque and Classical conventions. The first movement, *Boisterous Bourrée*, adapts the brisk tempo and phrasing of that French dance, while *Playful Pizzicato* aptly describes this all-plucked, scherzo-like romp. The slow and stately pace of the *Sentimental Saraband* again updates a time-honored French dance. In the *Frolicsome Finale*, drawn-out crescendos and colorful contrasts hark back to the rollicking rondos of Haydn and Mozart.

Strings



Piano Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 22

[1868]

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS (1835-1921)

The extraordinarily long and rich career of Camille Saint-Saëns began in the late 1850s, when his gifts as a piano and organ virtuoso won over important champions like Berlioz and Liszt. In the spring of 1868, Saint-Saëns played host to one of the world’s other leading pianists, Anton Rubinstein of Russia, who performed a series of concerts in Paris accompanied by an orchestra that Saint-Saëns conducted. On a lark, Rubinstein declared that he wanted to make his debut as a conductor in Paris, and that Saint-Saëns should write and perform a piano concerto for the occasion. They booked a date just three weeks out, and Saint-Saëns got to work composing his Piano Concerto No. 2.

In crafting a complete piano concerto on such a tight timeline, Saint-Saëns leaned on the art of improvisation he had mastered as an organist, a tradition that stretched back to Bach and beyond. The extended introduction that begins the *Andante sostenuto* first movement is a pianist's rendering of an improvised organ prelude, complete with counterpoint in the manner of Bach and the sustained "pedal points" that organists could hold indefinitely with their feet. After such an imposing introduction, this unusually slow and introspective first movement emphasizes lyrical melodies and balanced exchanges with the orchestra, including the main theme that Saint-Saëns derived from a composition exercise brought to him by his student Gabriel Fauré.

Any pathos lingering from the first movement gets swept away by the *Allegro scherzando* that follows, with the timpani ushering in a main theme as airy and ephemeral as a soufflé fresh from the oven. The *Presto* finale then returns to the original key of G-minor with feisty music that resembles a *tarantella*, the whirlwind Italian folk dance purported to ward off the poison of a tarantula bite. The first edition of the score provided easier alternatives for the soloist in some of the finale's most fiendish passages, but we can presume that Saint-Saëns allowed himself no such shortcut, despite finishing this composition mere days before the premiere.

Solo piano; two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, percussion, strings



Symphony No. 2 in E minor, Op. 27

[1907]

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF (1873-1943)

Sergei Rachmaninoff graduated from the piano program at the Moscow Conservatory with honors in 1891, and he capped his composition studies the next year by earning a rare "Great Gold Medal" and attracting his first publishing contract. An early Prelude in C-sharp minor became one of his most recognizable calling cards, and everything seemed aligned for Rachmaninoff to take his place as the leading young composer in Russia. Then disaster struck in 1897, when the botched premiere of his First Symphony was so traumatic that Rachmaninoff stopped composing for three years, and then only resumed after months of work with a hypnotherapist.

Rachmaninoff redeemed himself in 1901 with the acclaimed debut of the Second Piano Concerto, but he still hesitated to plunge into another symphony. It was only after he moved his family to Dresden in 1906 that he found enough relief and distance to start plotting his massive Second Symphony, which he completed in 1907 and conducted the following year in St. Petersburg. After an initially positive reception, it began to suffer from

the innumerable cuts that conductors made (and which Rachmaninoff begrudgingly accepted) to trim it down from its unwieldy span of an hour or more. During Rachmaninoff's heyday as a touring pianist, this symphony all but disappeared from the concert repertoire.

Those qualities of grandeur and emotionality that 20th-century tastemakers sometimes found off-putting in Rachmaninoff's music now stand out as strengths, extending the Russian Romantic tradition he inherited from Tchaikovsky. Like Tchaikovsky's Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, Rachmaninoff's Second Symphony enters its slow introduction quietly, beginning with a bare theme from the cellos and basses and ending with a plaintive solo for English horn. The *Allegro moderato* body of the movement develops a violin melody related to the introduction's opening theme, offset by contrasting material that colors the movement with a sentimental glow.

After such a weighty opening movement, the symphony proceeds directly to the invigorating scherzo. The main theme quotes the *Dies irae* ("Day of wrath") plainchant that became an obsession for Rachmaninoff, appearing in more than a dozen works, from the tone poem *Isle of the Dead* (1909) to the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* (1934).

Not unlike Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff had a preternatural gift for crafting lyrical melodies that just beg to be hummed or sung. The main tune of the *Adagio* had a particularly rich afterlife when it became the basis of the pop star Eric Carmen's 1976 hit "Never Gonna Fall in Love Again."

Again copying the template from Tchaikovsky's Fifth and Sixth Symphonies (and before those, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony), the finale transports the home key from E-minor to E-major. Echoes of earlier movements seal the work's interconnectedness, and a classic Rachmaninoff tune provides a passionate capstone for this lush, nostalgic symphony.

Piccolo, three flutes, three oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, strings

The Musicians of the North Carolina Symphony

Carlos Miguel Prieto,
Music Director

*The Maxine and Benjamin
Swalin Chair*

Grant Llewellyn,
Music Director Laureate

Sophie Sze-Ki Mok,
Assistant Conductor
The Lucy Moore Ruffin Chair

Violin I

Justin Bruns, Concertmaster
*The Annabelle Lundy Fetterman
Chair*

Anna Black*,
Associate Concertmaster
*The Assad Meymandi and Family
Chair*

Karen Strittmatter Galvin,
Assistant Concertmaster

Rotating,
Assistant Concertmaster
The Anne Heartt Gregory Chair

Emily Rist Glover
The Jessie Wyatt Ethridge Chair

Paul Goldsberry
The Richard and Joy Cook Chair

Seula Lee
*The Governor James B. Hunt, Jr.
Chair*

Joseph Meyer*

Maria Meyer
*The Tom and Mary Mac Bradshaw
Chair*

K. Lee Morris
The Harvey At-Large Chair

Esther Roestan

Jessica Ryou
The James C. Byrd and Family Chair

Pablo Sánchez Pazos**
The Phyllis ("Pat") Conrad Wells Chair

Erin Zehngut
The J. Felix Arnold Chair

Violin II

Jacqueline Saed Wolborsky,
Principal
The Nancy Finch Wallace Chair

Tiffany Kang, Associate Principal
The Blanche Martin Shaw Chair

David Kilbride, Assistant Principal
Qi Cao

Janet Gayer Hall

Chris Jusell

Oskar Ozolinch

Subin Shin

Jeanine Wynton

Viola

Samuel Gold, Principal
*The Florence Spinks and Charles
Jacob Cate and Alma Yondorf and
Sylvan Hirschberg Chair*

Kurt Tseng, Associate Principal
The Betty Ellen Madry Chair

Brian Sherwood, Assistant Principal
Petra Berényi

Amy Mason
The J. Sidney Kirk Chair

Daniel Moore

Sandra Schwarcz
*The Samuel H. and Anne Latham
Johnson Chair*

To Be Filled

Cello

Bonnie Thron, Principal
The June and Tom Roberg Chair

Elizabeth Beilman,
Associate Principal
*The Sarah Carlyle Herbert Dorroh
Chair*

Peng Li, Assistant Principal
Anonymously Endowed

Yewon Ahn
Anonymously Endowed

Emma Cary

The Sara Wilson Hodgkins Chair

David Meyer
The Nell Hirschberg Chair

Marc Moskovitz*
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Nathaniel Yaffe
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Double Bass

Leonid Finkelshteyn, Principal
*The Martha and Peyton Woodson
Chair*

Joshua DePoint, Associate Principal
*The Dr. and Mrs. Preston H. Gada
Chair*

Bruce Ridge
*The John C. and Margaret P. Parker
Chair*

Jakob Gerritsen

To Be Filled
*The Harlee H. and Pauline G. Jobe
Chair*

Flute

Megan Torti, Principal
*The Mr. and Mrs. George M. Stephens
Chair*

Mary E. Boone, Assistant Principal
*The Dr. and Mrs. Shaler Stidham, Jr.
Chair*

Vaynu Kadiyali
The Jack and Sing Boddie Chair

Piccolo

Vaynu Kadiyali

Oboe

Melanie Wilsden, Principal
The Hardison and Stoltze Chair

Joseph Peters, Associate Principal
The Lizette T. Dunham Chair

Hoon Chang
The Clarence and Alice Aycock Poe Chair

English Horn

Joseph Peters
The Bruce and Margaret King Chair

Clarinet

Samuel Almaguer, Principal
The Mr. and Mrs. J. Christopher Walker, II Chair

Sammy Lesnick, Assistant Principal
The Kathryn Powell and Green Flavie Cooper Chair

Bassoon

Aaron Apaza, Principal
The Mr. and Mrs. Fitzgerald S. Hudson Chair

Wenmin Zhang, Assistant Principal,
The Beethoven Chair

French Horn

Rebekah Daley, Principal
The Mary T. McCurdy Chair

Kimberly Van Pelt, Associate Principal
The Paul R. Villard and Gabriel Wolf Chair

Gabriel Mairson
The James Marion Poyner Chair

Russell Rybicki
The Mary Susan Kirk Fulghum Chair

The North Carolina Symphony gratefully acknowledges financial support from the State of North Carolina, the honorable Josh Stein, Governor; Wake County; and the City of Raleigh.



Trumpet

Paul Randall, Principal
The George Smedes Poyner Chair

Benjamin Hauser, Associate Principal
The Henry and Martha Zaytoun and Family Chair

Trombone

Devin Drinan, Principal
The Thomas Warwick Steed, Jr. Family Chair

John Ilika, Assistant Principal
The Frances Armour Bryant Chair

Bass Trombone

Matthew Neff
Anonymously Endowed

Tuba

Seth Horner, Principal
The Governor and Mrs. James G. Martin, Jr. Chair

Timpani

Colin Hartnett, Principal
The Patricia R., Steven T. and George F. Hackney III Chair

Percussion

Richard Motylinski, Principal
The Margery and Earl Johnson, Jr. Chair

Rajesh Prasad, Assistant Principal
The Abram and Frances Pascher Kanof Chair

Organ

To Be Filled
The Albert and Susan Jenkins and Family Organ Chair

Library

Stephanie Wilson, Principal Orchestra Librarian
The Mary Colvert and Banks C. Talley Chair

Taylor Troyer, Assistant Orchestra Librarian

*Acting position

**Leave of absence

Named musician chairs are made possible through very meaningful gifts to the Symphony's endowment. As such, these donor families are also members of the Lamar Stringfield Society.

All string players rotate stands on a periodic basis in each section with the exception of titled players: Principals, Associate Principals, and Assistant Principals.

The North Carolina Symphony is a member of the League of American Orchestras and the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians.

The North Carolina Master Chorale is the Resident Chorus of the North Carolina Symphony.

The North Carolina Symphony Foundation gratefully acknowledges the generous gift of the Lupot violin from Arnold and Zena† Lerman.
†deceased

NORTH CAROLINA SYMPHONY

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