

NORTH CAROLINA **SYMPHONY**

Beethoven “Eroica” Symphony

THU, NOV 13, 2025 | 7:30PM

MEMORIAL HALL, CHAPEL HILL

North Carolina Symphony
Carlos Miguel Prieto, *conductor*
Paul Watkins, *cello*

PROGRAM

Jennifer Higdon (b. 1965)
Suite from *Cold Mountain*

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)
Cello Concerto in A minor, Op. 129

- I. Nicht zu schnell
 - II. Langsam
 - III. Sehr lebhaft
- Paul Watkins, *cello*

Intermission

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
Symphony No. 3 in E-flat, Op. 55, “Eroica”

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Marcia funebre: Adagio assai
- III. Scherzo: Allegro vivace
- IV. Finale: Allegro molto

This concert is made possible in part by **The E.T. Rollins, Jr. and Frances P. Rollins Foundation Fund**, in memory of E.T. Rollins, Jr.

Thank you also to the generous individuals, businesses, foundations, and community partners who support the North Carolina Symphony through contributions each season.

About the Artists



Carlos Miguel Prieto, *Music Director*

The Maxine and Benjamin Swalin Chair

Mexican conductor and Grammy-winner Carlos Miguel Prieto started his tenure as Music Director of the North Carolina Symphony at the beginning of the 2023/24 season. From 2007 to 2022, he was Music Director of the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de México. In 2023, he received the Fine Arts Medal—Mexico’s highest honor for a musician. He served as Music Director of the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra from 2006 to 2023, helping lead the cultural renewal of New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina and earning a Grammy in 2024. Since 2008, he has also led the Orquesta Sinfónica de Minería (OSM), guiding the ensemble to a Latin Grammy award and residencies at Bravo! Vail in 2024 and 2025. This past summer, he continued an ambitious recording project of the complete works of Revueltas and Ortiz, as well as recording Beethoven Piano Concertos with Anne-Marie McDermott.

Prieto is in demand as a guest conductor for major orchestras, including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; the symphony orchestras of Atlanta, Dallas, and Toronto; The Cleveland Orchestra and Minnesota Orchestra; and the San Francisco, Houston, and New World symphonies. In 2025, he led concerts with the Philharmonia Orchestra in London and Switzerland and conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl. He also served as Semifinal and Final Round Conductor for the 2025 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition.

Since 2002, Prieto has conducted the Orchestra of the Americas, serving as Principal Conductor until 2011, when he was appointed Music Director. He has also worked extensively with young musicians at The Juilliard School, the Colburn School, the Curtis Institute, and elsewhere. In 2025 he led the Sinfónica Azteca (Mexico’s acclaimed youth orchestra) tour of Mexico. He continues to mentor emerging talent through the Carlos Miguel Prieto Conducting Fellowship at OAcademy, an online conservatory bringing together teachers and students from around the world. He has also worked with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and conducted both the National Youth Orchestra-USA and NYO2 at Carnegie Hall.

Prieto has conducted over 100 world premieres of works by Mexican and American composers, many commissioned by him. He has an extensive discography and was recognized by *Musical America* as Conductor of the Year in 2019. He is a graduate of Princeton and Harvard universities.



Paul Watkins, *cello*

These concerts are the North Carolina Symphony debut for Paul Watkins.

Paul Watkins is the Artistic Director of the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival in Detroit (since 2014) and Visiting Professor of Cello at Yale School of Music (since 2018). He took first prize in the 2002 Leeds Conducting Competition and has held the positions of Music Director of the English Chamber Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor of the Ulster Orchestra.

As a cellist, Watkins has given regular concerto performances with orchestras across the globe, including at the BBC Proms, where he most recently performed with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in Lutoslawski's cello concerto, and with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales in the world premiere of the cello concerto composed for him by his brother, Huw Watkins. His extensive discography includes Britten's Cello Symphony; the concertos of Delius, Elgar, Finzi, Lutoslawski, Walton, Scott, and Tobias Picker; and recitals of Mendelssohn, Martinů, and 20th-century British and American music for cello and piano with Huw Watkins.

Also a dedicated chamber musician, Watkins was a member of the Nash Ensemble (1997-2013) and the Emerson String Quartet (2013-2023). After 47 years, the Emerson Quartet decided to retire and undertook an extensive series of farewell tours, culminating in their final performances in New York's Lincoln Center in October 2023. The concert was filmed for a documentary by filmmaker Tristan Cook, and their final recording, *Infinite Voyage*, includes works by Berg, Chausson, Schoenberg, and Hindemith and features as guests soprano Barbara Hannigan and pianist Bertrand Chamayou.

As a conductor, Watkins has conducted all the major British orchestras and a wide range of international orchestras, including recent debuts in America with the Minnesota Orchestra and Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Recordings as a conductor have included music by Mozart, Glière, Röntgen, and a Grammy-nominated pairing of the Berg and Britten violin concertos with Daniel Hope.

Watkins plays on a cello made by Domenico Montagnana and Matteo Goffriller in Venice, c.1730.

About the Music



Suite from Cold Mountain

[2022]

JENNIFER HIGDON (b. 1962)

Jennifer Higdon is one of America's most acclaimed figures in contemporary classical music, receiving the 2010 Pulitzer Prize in Music for her Violin Concerto, a 2010 Grammy for her Percussion Concerto, a 2018 Grammy for her Viola Concerto and, most recently, a 2020 Grammy for her Harp Concerto. Higdon's first opera, *Cold Mountain*, won the International Opera Award for Best World Premiere and the opera recording was nominated for two Grammy awards. In 2018, Higdon received the prestigious Nemmers Prize from Northwestern University, awarded to contemporary classical composers of exceptional achievement who have significantly influenced the field of composition. Most recently, she was invited to become a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Higdon enjoys several hundred performances a year of her works and her works have been recorded on more than 70 CDs.

Among living American composers, Higdon stands out for the uncommon beauty of her orchestral pieces. She had an unlikely start for a musician of her stature: after picking up the flute at the age of 15, she enrolled as a flute performance major at Bowling Green State University, where she received her first formal training and composed her first piece.

Higdon lived in Atlanta as a child before moving to eastern Tennessee when she was 10. Spending her formative years in the Appalachians left a lasting impression on her musical personality, a connection that proved especially valuable when she and librettist Gene Scheer selected the 1997 novel *Cold Mountain*, by North Carolina novelist Charles Frazier, as the basis for her first opera.

Set during the Civil War on a farm in the Smoky Mountains of North Carolina, *Cold Mountain* features music imbued with longing and nostalgia to match the high drama of the story. When a consortium of 37 orchestras commissioned Higdon to create a suite from the opera, she extracted and rearranged sections to create an exciting musical arc, assigning vocal parts to solo instruments and adding new material to stitch it all together.

Two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, percussion, strings



Cello Concerto in A minor, Op. 129

[1850]

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

After a chaotic few years, the Schumann family was enjoying a fresh start when they moved to Düsseldorf in 1850 so Robert could begin a stable, salaried job as Municipal Music Director.

One of the first pieces he wrote there was a *Konzertstück* ("Concert Piece") for cello and orchestra, which he later published under the title of Cello Concerto. It took Schumann just two weeks to draft the score, and he had enough lingering doubts about it that he canceled the scheduled premiere—but his wife Clara (herself a brilliant composer) saw it for the masterpiece that it was, writing at the time, "The romantic quality, the vivacity, the freshness and humor, also the highly interesting interweaving of violoncello and orchestra are indeed wholly ravishing, and what euphony and deep feeling one finds in all the melodic passages!"

Schumann had played the cello as a boy, and again briefly after a hand injury curtailed his piano playing, and he put his intimate understanding of the instrument to use in this concerto that exploits the full sonic range of the instrument, from the growling bass of the open C-string to the steely soprano territory. He also approached the work with an aim to prioritize cohesion and interconnectedness throughout, bucking his era's trend of frilly virtuosity for its own sake. The opening gesture of three successive chords, for example, takes on new forms in the second and third movements; likewise, the interval of a descending fifth that pervades the slow movement reappears in the accompaniment to the finale's cadenza.

Schumann's persistent mental health struggles soon caught up with him, and not long after their move, Clara noted his "highly nervous, irritable, excited mood." He was forced out of his job in 1853, and the next year he threw himself into the Rhine River in a suicide attempt. He lived out his remaining two years in an asylum, suffering from delusions and other crippling symptoms that silenced one of history's most passionate and determined composers.

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



Symphony No. 3 in E-flat, Op. 55, "Eroica"

[1804]

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

When Ludwig van Beethoven started writing symphonies in his twenties, he adopted the bright, congenial style perfected by his onetime teacher, Joseph Haydn. Over time, as Beethoven's self-assuredness grew and his hearing deteriorated, his style evolved into something radically direct and almost obsessive in how it wrung every last drop of meaning out of the most basic materials. The dramatic arrival of this "middle period" of Beethoven's career coincided with his birth of his monumental Third Symphony, an effort that dwarfed his previous two symphonies and all others that came before him.

Initially, Beethoven gave the Symphony No. 3 in E-flat the subtitle of "Bonaparte," but the composer's adulation turned to disgust in 1804 when he learned that Napoleon, a hero of the French Revolution, had crowned himself Emperor. According to the student who delivered the disturbing news, Ferdinand Ries, "Beethoven went to the table, seized the top of the title-page, tore it in half and threw it on the floor." When preparing the symphony for publication in 1806, Beethoven re-titled it "*Sinfonia eroica*, composed to celebrate the memory of a great man," without specifying who that other hero was. (It might have been Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia, a friend of a patron who died in 1806 fighting against Napoleon's army.)

The defining motive of the "Eroica" Symphony's first movement is a rocking cello strain that trails into foreign harmonies after four measures. As the central development section closes, a French horn makes a surprise entrance with a recapitulation of that same theme a few measures ahead of schedule—an effect so unexpected that even Beethoven's student Ries, upon hearing the symphony for the first time, suspected the horn player of having lost count of the measures.

The symphony's second movement, labeled a funeral march, sinks into a prolonged state of despair that might induce misery if not for its undeniable grace and beauty. A major-key interlude, providing respite, incorporates an arpeggiated accompaniment that recalls the gentle sway of the first movement. After returning to the minor key, the appearance of fugal counterpoint reinforces the profound, ceremonial atmosphere of the funeral march.

Out of this grief comes a giddy Scherzo, a symphonic construct that Beethoven popularized as an alternative to Haydn's slower, tamer minuets. A contrasting trio section features the horns in vigorous hunting calls.

The finale, built as a theme and variations, incorporates material from the ballet *The Creatures of Prometheus* that Beethoven had also used in an earlier set of piano variations. A short but fiery introduction gives way to an unusual presentation of the theme, reduced to its bare skeleton.

Two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, three horns, two trumpets, timpani, 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*
The William Charles Rankin Chair

Nathaniel Yaffe
*The Secretary of Cultural Resources
Betty Ray McCain Chair*

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

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

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.



NORTH CAROLINA SYMPHONY

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