

NORTH CAROLINA **SYMPHONY**

Chopin Piano Concerto No. 1

OPEN REHEARSAL FOR DONORS

THU, MAR 5, 2026 | 10AM

MEYMANDI CONCERT HALL, RALEIGH

North Carolina Symphony
Eduardo Strausser, *conductor*
Claire Huangci, *piano*

PROGRAM

Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)
Overture to *La Cenerentola*

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)
Piano Concerto No. 1 in E minor, Op. 11

- I. Allegro maestoso
 - II. Romanze
 - III. Rondo
- Claire Huangci, *piano*

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
Symphony No. 3 in A minor, Op. 56, "Scottish"

- I. Andante con moto – Allegro un poco agitato
- II. Vivace non troppo
- III. Adagio
- IV. Allegro vivacissimo – Allegro maestoso assai

There will be a 20-minute intermission.

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.



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



Eduardo Strausser, *conductor*

Eduardo Strausser's previous concerts with the North Carolina Symphony, in 2023, featured Schumann's Overture to Manfred and Duett-Concertino and Dvořák's Symphony No. 7.

Brazilian conductor Eduardo Strausser began his tenure as Principal Conductor and Music Director of Norrlandsoperan in the 2024/25 season. As a guest conductor, he has returned in the 2025/26 season to the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and made his debut with the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra and Pacific Symphony. Working extensively across Australia, he appeared twice in the 2024/25 season with the Sydney and Queensland symphony orchestras and made his debut with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra.

A regular collaborator with Antwerp Symphony Orchestra, Strausser conducted the orchestra and pianist Yeol Eum Son in 2024 for his first appearance at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. He has made recent return visits to the Hallé, Ulster Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and Orchestre de Montpellier, and had a debut engagement with Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa. Recent US engagements have included the symphony orchestras of Detroit and Indianapolis and the symphonies of San Diego, Kansas City, and Utah.

Previously Resident Conductor of Teatro São Paulo from 2014-2016, Strausser has conducted operas in Europe with Zurich Opera, Northern Ireland Opera, Theater Magdeburg, Staatstheater Hannover, and Teatro Verdi di Padova.

From a young age, Strausser developed an interest in works by contemporary composers. He worked with Karlheinz Stockhausen and as a student took part in the International Forum for Conductors at the Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in Darmstadt. He studied orchestral conducting at the Zurich University of Arts.

Strausser has worked with soloists including Javier Perianes, Nobuyuki Tsujii, Alexandra Lowe, Isata Kanneh-Mason, Marie-Ange Nguci, Paul Lewis, Augustin Hadelich, Richard Galliano, Cédric Tiberghien, and Steven Osborne, among others. He is now based in Berlin but still returns home to Latin America for guest conducting.



Claire Huangci, *piano*

These concerts are the North Carolina Symphony debut for Claire Huangci.

American pianist Claire Huangci has toured in recital to Europe and South America during the 2025/26 season and performed with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in October. Recent debut appearances include the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. In recent seasons, she has also conducted various concertos from the piano in the play-conduct tradition.

Huangci's recordings include a Mozart concerto album with the Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg and an all-American solo disc titled *Made In USA*. Her musical partners include the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra, Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, Musikkollegium Winterthur, Munich Chamber Orchestra, and Basel Chamber Orchestra, and she has been a guest at the Lucerne Festival, Rheingau Musik Festival, and Klavier-Festival Ruhr, among others.

Born in Rochester, New York, Huangci displayed an early penchant for piano and was invited to the White House in 1999. She studied at the Curtis Institute of Music before moving to Hannover for further studies. She rose to international prominence with top prizes at several major competitions, including European and US Chopin competitions, ARD Music Competition, Geza Anda Competition, and Grand Prix of the Paris Play Direct Academy. Huangci is Artistic Director of the Erbach Kammerkonzerte series.

Kicking off a string of international orchestral engagements, Huangci will return to the Frankfurt Opera and Museum Orchestra, Porto, Iceland, Vorarlberg, Nordwestdeutsche, and Pacific symphony orchestras, and debut with the Basel, Hannover, Bremen, Bochum, and Milwaukee symphonies.

In solo recitals and with orchestras, Huangci has appeared in Carnegie Hall, Suntory Hall Tokyo, Paris Philharmonie, Frankfurt Alte Oper, Dortmund Konzerthaus, Munich Prinzregententheater, Hamburg Elbphilharmonie, Berlin Philharmonie, Vienna Konzerthaus, and Salzburg Festspielhaus.

About the Music



Overture to *La Cenerentola*

[1817]

GIOACHINO ROSSINI (1792-1868)

His father was a trumpeter and his mother sang professionally in comic opera—but even so, Gioachino Rossini’s rise to the center of the operatic world was astoundingly quick. At nine he was already playing viola in a pit orchestra, and by 12 he was both singing onstage and accompanying from the keyboard professionally. While in music school, he began occasionally writing substitute arias. It all led to his first commission, at 18, for an opera under his own name. He added another 38 operas over the next 19 years, transforming Italian opera in the process.

Rossini composed *La Cenerentola* (*Cinderella*) in 1817 for a theater in Rome, using a libretto based on the fairy tale *Cendrillon*, as it known in the classic French telling by Charles Perrault. Given only three weeks to pull together the score, Rossini recycled the overture from *La Gazzetta*, an opera he had debuted a few months earlier in Naples. The majestic introduction builds suspense for a fast and lively overture filled with scampering runs and thrilling crescendos; it’s clear how curtain-raisers like this one propelled Rossini to the forefront of the opera.

Piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, bassoon, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, strings



Piano Concerto No. 1 in E minor, Op. 11

[1830]

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810-1849)

Chopin, at the age of 20, was at a crossroads. A child prodigy on the piano, he had been a published composer since the age of seven; while still in high school in Warsaw, he wrote music that soon led his peer Schumann to declare him “a genius.” It was clear that Chopin’s talents were bound to take him beyond his native Poland, so he embarked on the most obvious path and started composing showpieces to play with orchestras.

The problem was that Chopin, a finely-nuanced pianist and an extraordinarily sensitive person, didn’t possess the razzle-dazzle expected on the touring circuit in that era. He wrote two piano concertos that he performed himself at splashy concerts in Warsaw, composed and premiered in the opposite order from how they were published. When he left for what was meant to be his first European tour, he ended up lingering in Vienna and eventually settled in Paris. Finding his niche in the salons of the upper crust, Chopin forged a whole new kind of career as a pianist, where he rarely performed for the general public. After the twin concertos of 1830, he only followed up with one Polonaise for piano and orchestra completed the next year, and then for the rest of his life he managed to avoid doing anything that extroverted again.

The Concerto opens with the bold entrance of the piano at a *fortissimo* dynamic, and the piano hardly releases the spotlight throughout. The orchestra’s linking passages and subtle accompaniments never overshadow the unquestioned star of the show—even the pianist’s silences constitute noteworthy events.

The delicate Romance is closest in spirit to the intimate forms that proved so fruitful for Chopin in later years. The muted strings impart a comforting warmth, while an excursion into the foreign key of G-sharp major, ending with a clock-like cadenza, adds a dash of fantasy.

The Rondo finale struts to the cadence of a *krakowiak*, a Polish folk dance from the Krakow region in the south of Poland. This bit of local flavor surely helped win over the concerto’s first audience in Warsaw, and it still makes for a lively sendoff for one of the most exuberant concertos in the piano repertoire.

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



Symphony No. 3 in A minor, Op. 56, "Scottish"

[1842]

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)

Felix Mendelssohn was one of music's most remarkable prodigies, creating immortal compositions while still a teenager. At 20, he performed a typical rite of passage by embarking on a "grand tour" of Europe, with extended visits to the British Isles and Italy.

The first germ of musical material for a "Scottish" Symphony emerged when Mendelssohn and a friend visited Holyrood Castle in Edinburgh. Mendelssohn was struck by the gloomy, crumbling palace, especially a chapel he described in a letter home: "Now roofless, grass and ivy grow there, and at the broken altar Mary was crowned Queen of England. Everything around is broken and moldering and the bright sky shines in. I believe I have found today in that old chapel the beginning of my Scottish symphony." He soon sketched the elegiac melody that would serve as the theme of the introduction, but he struggled to recapture the misty mood of Scotland when he revisited the symphony during his time in Rome.

Mendelssohn set the "Scottish" Symphony aside for over ten years, meanwhile writing two other symphonies, No. 4 ("Italian") and No. 5 ("Reformation"). Upon completing the "Scottish" Symphony in 1842, he conducted it in Leipzig and then in London. The first published edition did not include the now ubiquitous nickname, but it did play up its dedication to the British monarch, Queen Victoria, with her name printed in a font nearly as big as the composer's.

The "Scottish" Symphony does not depict any fixed scene or story, nor is it explicitly Scottish in its musical material. Instead, Mendelssohn allowed the aura of a romanticized Scotland to inform a taut, cohesive, and independent orchestral essay. He specified that the movements should follow each other without pauses.

A slow introduction establishes the noble and wistful mood, contrasting the fast and edgy tempo in the body of the movement. That agitated quality overflows in a late passage of swelling chromatic rises and falls, surging in sheets like a vicious squall. The material of the introduction makes a brief reprise to close the movement on a somber note.

The scherzo enters next without pause, and the clarinet reels out a playful melody, perhaps inspired by a bagpipe contest Mendelssohn heard in Scotland. The slow movement that follows is a gorgeous song without words. One theory speculates that this music is meant to evoke Scotland's own Sir Walter Scott and his poem "The Lady of the Lake," in which a girl sings the "Ave Maria" accompanied by a harp (rendered here by plucked strings).

The finale thunders in with a militaristic theme in a tempo Mendelssohn initially labeled as *Allegro guerriero* (fast and warlike). The ferocious music slinks away, and a majestic conclusion in the major key rises up to bring the symphony to a triumphant finish.

Two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, timpani, strings

The Musicians of the North Carolina Symphony

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Swalin Chair*

Grant Llewellyn,
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Sophie Sze-Ki Mok,
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*The Annabelle Lundy Fetterman
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Anna Black*,
Associate Concertmaster
*The Assad Meymandi and Family
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Karen Strittmatter Galvin,
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Rotating,
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The Blanche Martin Shaw Chair

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Qi Cao

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Chris Jusell

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Subin Shin

Jeanine Wynton

Viola

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Jacob Cate and Alma Yondorf and
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The Betty Ellen Madry Chair

Brian Sherwood, Assistant Principal
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Sandra Schwarcz
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To Be Filled

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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

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Omar Haffar
*The Harlee H. and Pauline G. Jobe
Chair*

Bruce Ridge
*The John C. and Margaret P. Parker
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Megan Torti, Principal
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Vaynu Kadiyali

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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