NORTH CAROLINA **SYMPHONY**

Mendelssohn Violin Concerto

SUN, OCT 18, 2026 | 3PM
MEYMANDI CONCERT HALL, RALEIGH

North Carolina Symphony
Carlos Miguel Prieto, *conductor*
Justin Bruns, *violin*

PROGRAM

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)
Symphony No. 49 in F minor, "The Passion"
I. Adagio
II. Allegro di molto
III. Menuet
IV. Finale: Presto

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64
I. Allegro molto appassionato
II. Andante
III. Allegretto non troppo – Allegro molto vivace

Justin Bruns, *violin*

Intermission

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)
Symphony No. 2 in C, Op. 61
I. Sostenuto assai – Allegro, ma non troppo
II. Scherzo: Allegro vivace
III. Adagio espressivo
IV. Allegro molto vivace

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DNCR North Carolina Department of Natural & Cultural Resources

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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. Since 2008, he has been the music director of Orquesta Sinfónica de Minería (OSM), guiding the ensemble to a Latin Grammy award and residencies at Bravo! Vail in 2024 and 2025. 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. From 2007 to 2022, he was Music Director of the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de México.

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. In March 2026, Prieto conducted Britten's *War Requiem* with the Radio Television Orchestra Madrid (RTVE) in a special concert for victims of terrorism attended by the Spanish Royal Family; he also returned to the National Orchestra of Spain this past season.

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, on a 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.

Justin Bruns, *violin*
The Annabelle Lundy Fetterman Chair

Justin Bruns is Concertmaster of the North Carolina Symphony, appointed in 2025 after serving as Associate Concertmaster of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. He was previously Assistant Concertmaster at the Colorado Symphony. A seasoned orchestral leader and passionate chamber musician, Bruns is also concertmaster of the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music and Bellingham Music Festival and has served as guest concertmaster with the São Paulo Symphony, Hong Kong Sinfonietta, River Oaks Chamber Orchestra, and others.

Bruns began his studies at age three and won his first competition two years later. He made his solo debut with an orchestra at age nine. Since then he has appeared with orchestras throughout the United States, South America, and Europe. He has premiered over 20 solo, concerto, and chamber works. His chamber music highlights include a Carnegie Hall debut, residences at the Savannah and San Miguel Chamber Music Festivals, and frequent performance broadcasts on Performance Today. He has recorded with Bruce Springsteen, Faith Hill, and Pearl Jam.

A committed educator, Bruns has mentored students at Emory University, the National Youth Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, the NTSO Festival in Taiwan, and as an advisor and faculty of the ASO's Talent Development Program. Bruns graduated summa cum laude from the University of Michigan and was awarded the top prize upon graduation, the Stanley Medal. He earned his master's degree from the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University.

About the Music

Symphony No. 49 in F minor, "The Passion" [1788]

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN (1732-1809)

When Prince Nikolaus Esterházy completed a lavish country palace in 1766, the workload for his tireless *Kapellmeister*, Joseph Haydn, increased dramatically. The "summer" seasons at the estate stretched to be nearly year-round, and all the while Haydn had to produce operas, provide music for church services, mount concerts, and attend to any other musical needs for his insatiable patron.

Some of Haydn's most original efforts in the late 1760s and 1770s reflected an artistic trend that has been dubbed *Sturm und Drang* ("Storm and Stress") after a play of the same name. From literature to painting to playwriting, artists dared to explore emotional extremes and dark discomfort; for Haydn, it led to his first symphonies constructed in minor keys.

The Symphony No. 49 was among Haydn's earliest minor-key symphonies, and it is arguably his darkest. Instead of the usual order of movements, the symphony begins with a devastating *Adagio*, a practice in line with the older "church sonatas" that arranged the movements slow-fast-slow-fast. A rather fast second movement continues in the home key of F-minor, its main theme marked by aggressive leaps and driving counterpoint. The key persists for the *Menuet*, at least until the contrasting trio section in F-major provides the symphony's only substantial relief. The brisk, throbbing finale confirms the symphony's F-minor fate.

This symphony has been known as "The Passion" ever since it was advertised as such for a performance during Holy Week in 1790, but there is nothing specifically religious about the work, and the nickname didn't come from Haydn. In a fascinating twist, another early source labels this symphony *"Il quakuo di bel'humore" ("The Waggish Quaker")*, the name of a popular play that satirized a pious Quaker character. Haydn often recycled the incidental music he wrote for plays into symphonies, so it's possible that, in its original setting, this music's over-the-top emotion actually played as farcical comedy.

Two oboes, bassoon, two horns, strings, continuo

"This is music we truly adore—the repertoire that made us become musicians."

Carlos Miguel Prieto, *Music Director*

Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64 [1844]

FELIX MENDELSSOHNFF (1809-1847)

Felix Mendelssohn surely inherited the intellectual curiosity of his grandfather, the famous Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, but it was really the fortune his father amassed in the banking business that gave Mendelssohn every possible advantage to capitalize on his extraordinary gifts. Guided by elite tutors, he developed into a prodigy unlike any the world had ever seen—a preternaturally mature composer and pianist who could improvise or sight-read anything, and who could also play violin, paint hyper-realistic watercolors, and speak and read in six languages, among his myriad talents. For fun, he would invite Berlin's finest musicians over to his family's mansion to play chamber music, which is how he became lifelong friends with a fellow prodigy one year younger than him, the violinist Ferdinand David.

Mendelssohn was a seasoned pro when, at the age of 26, he took over as Music Director of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. He invited David to join the orchestra as its concertmaster, and he soon suggested writing a concerto for him. "One in E-minor sticks in my head," Mendelssohn wrote, "the beginning of which will not leave me in peace." He finally drafted the concerto six years later, a process that involved many letters back and forth with David to discuss technique. The concerto turned out to be the last orchestral score that Mendelssohn completed; two years after its 1845 premiere in Leipzig, he suffered a series of strokes and died at the age of 38.

Some of the concerto's most magical moments are those that defy conventional responsibilities, like when the violin launches immediately into the brooding first theme. Instead of a big flourish at the end of the cadenza (which is placed earlier than would be expected), the violin simply continues its ghostly arpeggios while the orchestra brings back the main melody.

A single held note from a bassoon links the first movement to the second, which blooms into an expressive aria for the violinist. As the slow movement recedes, a halting transition builds anticipation and points the concerto toward its sunny conclusion in E. As a contrast to the flirty main theme, a regal secondary theme injects new grandeur and gravitas. This last big tune reworks the rhythms and intervals of the violin's initial melody, transforming what first appeared as a lonely question into a communal affirmation.

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

Symphony No. 2 in C, Op. 61 [1846]

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

Robert Schumann was an unlikely candidate to become one of music's most influential and enduring figures. The son of a bookseller and translator, Schumann had developed into a talented poet in his teens, and he toyed with pursuing a literary career until he committed to music with a dream of becoming a virtuoso composer/performer. Those writing skills came in handy when his overzealous practicing soon left him with a chronically injured hand and no clear career path besides music journalism.

What Schumann lacked in raw talent, he made up for in tenacity. Like the Biblical underdog King David, he fought to protect art music in its purest forms from the crass "Philistines" of music; he battled for years for the right to marry his beloved Clara, the daughter of his disapproving old piano teacher; he stretched out of the comfort zone of piano music to master songwriting, orchestral music and chamber music; and through it all, he navigated a lifetime of bipolar episodes and other debilitating symptoms that today might be diagnosed as schizophrenia.

In 1844, during one of his worst mental health breakdowns, his symptoms included insomnia, depression, phobias, paranoia and a constant ringing in the ears. He wrote virtually no music for a year, and could no longer depend on sheer intuition to keep his ideas flowing. He later wrote in a diary, "I used to compose almost all of my shorter pieces in the heat of inspiration. … Only from the year 1845 onwards, when I started to work out everything in my head, did a completely new manner of composing begin to develop."

Schumann turned his attention to symphonies for the first time since his 1841, the year he wrote his first two symphonies and several other orchestral works in a rapid burst. He may have been partly drawn to the task after hearing the long overdue premiere of Franz Schubert's Ninth Symphony, a monumental work that Schumann had personally rescued from oblivion. Days later he began sketching his own symphony in the same key of C-major, which debuted in Leipzig in 1846, and which was published the next year as Schumann's Symphony No. 2.

The Second Symphony opens with a hymn-like prelude, establishing a noble tone that continues into the fast body of the movement, thanks in part to the ceremonial snap of the many "dotted" rhythms—i.e. alternating long and short notes, a hallmark of grand overtures and royal music from centuries past. The *Scherzo* comes second, built around a playful theme in perpetual motion that keeps tumbling down the shaky footing of a particularly slippery harmony (a diminished-seventh arpeggio to be precise) and clambering back up.

One key to Schumann's renewed musical vigor was formal counterpoint, following a deep dive into the music of J. S. Bach that helped pull him out of his depression. That influence is especially evident in the *Adagio espressivo* slow movement, which evokes those quintessential Bach arias that throb with drawn-out suspensions and delayed resolutions spinning out over an unyielding bass line.

The finale gets halfway through its triumphant valediction (again filled with those regal dotted rhythms) before it pauses to introduce a tender new theme that quotes a song by Beethoven from the cycle *An die ferne Geliebte*. The gist of the original song is that music is a conduit for love that bridges any distance, and Schumann had already quoted it once before in a piano piece he wrote while pining for Clara.

Two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, strings

The Musicians of the North Carolina Symphony

Carlos Miguel Prieto,
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Assistant Conductor
The Lucy Moore Ruffin Chair

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David Kilbride, Assistant Principal

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Nicholas Garcia-Hettinger
The Joseph C. and Diane Bastian Chair

Janet Gayer Hall

Chris Jusell

Oskar Ozolinch

Subin Shin

Jeanine Wynton

Viola

Samuel Gold, Principal
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The Betty Ellen Madry Chair

Brian Sherwood, Assistant Principal

Petra Berényi

Pin-Hao Liao

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Peng Li, Assistant Principal
Anonymously Endowed

Yewon Ahn
Anonymously Endowed

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Alexandra Stokes*

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Taylor Troyer,
Assistant Orchestra Librarian

**Acting position*
***Leave of absence*

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

NORTH CAROLINA
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