

NORTH CAROLINA SYMPHONY

Rhapsody in Blue

FRI/SAT, OCT 16-17, 2026 | 8PM

MEYMANDI CONCERT HALL, RALEIGH

North Carolina Symphony
Carlos Miguel Prieto, conductor
Clayton Stephenson, piano

PROGRAM

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)
Overture to *Candide*

John Adams (b. 1947)
Harmonielehre

- I. (ohne Satzbezeichnung)
- II. The Anfortas Wound
- III. Meister Eckhardt and Quackie

Intermission

George Gershwin / Arr. Ferde Grofé
(1898-1937)
Rhapsody in Blue
Clayton Stephenson, piano

Leonard Bernstein
Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story*
I. Prologue
II. Somewhere
III. Scherzo
IV. Mambo
V. Cha Cha
VI. Meeting Scene
VII. "Cool" Fugue
VIII. Rumble
IX. Finale

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Mr. Philip W. Terrell, Jr. and **Mrs. Stephanie Gray** for their generous support

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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.



Clayton Stephenson, piano

Clayton Stephenson most recently appeared with the Symphony in September of 2025, performing Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue in Chapel Hill.

Hailed for “extraordinary narrative and poetic gifts” and interpretations that are “fresh, incisive and characterfully alive” (*Gramophone*), American pianist Clayton Stephenson is committed to making an impact on the world through his music-making. Upcoming orchestra engagements include the Oakland Symphony, Hartford Symphony Orchestra, and Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra.

Growing up in New York City, Stephenson started piano lessons at age seven, and the next year was accepted into The Juilliard School's Music Advancement Program—a full scholarship program for disadvantaged students—where he lingered to watch student recitals and fell in love with music. Stephenson practiced on a synthesizer at home until he found an old upright piano on the street. For the next six years that would be his practice piano, until, at the age of 17, he received a new piano from the Lang Lang Foundation.

Stephenson credits the generous support of community programs with providing him musical inspiration and resources along the way. As he describes it, the “Third Street Music School jump-started my music education; the Young People's Choir taught me phrasing and voicing; Juilliard's Music Advancement Program introduced me to formal and rigorous piano training, which enabled me to get into Juilliard Pre-College; the Morningside Music Bridge validated my talent and elevated my self-confidence; the Boy's Club of New York exposed me to jazz; and the Lang Lang Foundation brought me to stages worldwide and transformed me from a piano student to a young artist.”

Highlights of his 2025/26 season included a performance of the Brahms Concerto No. 2 with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and performances of Gershwin's Concerto in F with The Philadelphia Orchestra at the Saratoga Arts festival, Palermo Classica international festival (Italy), Boston Pops, and Sarasota Orchestra. He performed the Ravel Concerto in G with the Nashville Symphony and Portland (Maine) Symphony Orchestra as well as the Stuttgart Philharmonic (Germany), and finished his season on tour with the Stuttgart Philharmonic in Italy.

Recent seasons have included concerto performances with the Houston Symphony and the Virginia and Cincinnati symphony orchestras; festival appearances at Grand Teton, Grant Park, and Tippet Rise; recitals at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the 92nd Street Y in New York City; and gala performances with the New York and Las Vegas Philharmonics. He also served as the 2024/25 Artist-in-Residence at the Hartford Symphony Orchestra.

Stephenson graduated from the Harvard-New England Conservatory (NEC) dual degree program in spring 2023 with a bachelor's degree in economics from Harvard and a master's degree in piano performance from NEC under Wha Kyung Byun. In addition to being the first Black finalist at the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in 2022, he has been a recipient of a 2024 Avery Fisher Career Grant, won the inaugural Nina Simone Piano Competition in 2024, and received a Sphinx Medal of Excellence in 2025.

About the Music

Overture to *Candide* [1956]

LEONARD BERNSTEIN (1918-1990)

Leonard Bernstein was a composer who could write serious symphonies one day and Broadway hits the next, a conductor who rose to lead the New York Philharmonic, a pianist, a writer, an educator, a TV personality, an activist, and an all-around embodiment of everything a modern American musician could hope to be. While his 1953 musical *Wonderful Town* was enjoying a Tony Award-winning run on Broadway, a playwright friend proposed that they develop another show based on Voltaire's 1759 novella *Candide*, a suggestion that Bernstein followed through on while simultaneously creating *West Side Story*.

Bernstein called *Candide* "an American's Valentine to Europe," and that Old World flavor is evident in the electrifying overture. The manic opening has the flavor of a Rossini overture, infused with jazzy syncopations that put a contemporary sheen on this story from the Age of Enlightenment. Besides its own catchy music, the overture previews tunes that appear later in the show, including "Oh, Happy We" and "Glitter and Be Gay."

Piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, E-flat clarinet, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, strings

Harmonielehre [1985]

JOHN ADAMS (b. 1947)

At 25, John Adams left behind his New England roots and the Eurocentric modernism he learned at Harvard to settle in San Francisco. There in that capital of counterculture, influenced by the mysticism of John Cage and the pioneering minimalism of Steve Reich, Terry Riley, and Philip Glass, Adams developed his own approach to repetitive cycles and stretched-out forms that bore fruit in the standout works that defined his early career, including *Phrygian Gates* and *Shaker Loops*. Soon, though, Adams began to diverge from the ascetic purity of minimalism, making room within his precise sound world for the orchestral opulence and jazzy punctuation that have defined his unmistakable voice since the mid-1980s.

Harmonielehre, composed for the San Francisco Symphony in 1985, marked a pivotal juncture in Adams' creative path. He took the title—German for “Treatise on Harmony”—from a textbook of the same name that the trendsetting composer Arnold Schoenberg published in 1911, at a time when he was making a case for how music could evolve past the rules of traditional harmony. In *Harmonielehre*, Adams looked back to the immersive grandeur of music composed around the turn of the 20th century, at the peak of Romantic excess—works like Debussy's *La Mer*, Mahler's all-encompassing symphonies, or Schoenberg's own gargantuan *Gurrelieder*. But instead of relying on old-fashioned harmonic progress to shape such large swaths of music, Adams leaned into the new minimalist toolkit of repetitive cycles and superimposed layers that morph over time, proving that a technique known for its cool, meditative restraint could also fuel music as thrilling and saturated as any ever created.

Describing the untitled first movement in a program note, Adams wrote, “The pounding E-minor chords at the beginning and end of the movement are the musical counterparts of a dream image. ... In the dream I'd watched a gigantic supertanker take off from the surface of San Francisco Bay and thrust itself into the sky like a Saturn rocket.”

Work on *Harmonielehre* coincided with Adams' interest in the writings of the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung, “particularly his examination of Medieval mythology,” Adams explained. “I was deeply affected by Jung's discussion of the character of Anfortas, the king whose wounds could never be healed. As a critical archetype, Anfortas symbolized a condition of sickness of the soul that curses it with a feeling of impotence and depression.” This myth inspired the slow central movement, “The Anfortas Wound,” in which “two enormous climaxes rise up out of the otherwise melancholy landscape,” Adams wrote, “the second one being an obvious homage to Mahler's last, unfinished symphony.”

Adams labeled the third movement “Meister Eckhardt and Quackie,” and wrote “The Zappaesque title refers to a dream I'd had shortly after the birth of our daughter, Emily, who was briefly dubbed ‘Quackie’ during her infancy. In the dream, she rides perched on the shoulder of the Medieval mystic, Meister Eckhardt, as they hover among the heavenly bodies like figures painted on the high ceilings of old cathedrals.”

Three piccolos, four flutes, three oboes, English horn, four clarinets, two bass clarinets, three bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, four trumpets, three trombones, two tubas, timpani, percussion, two harps, celesta, piano, strings

Rhapsody in Blue [1924]

GEORGE GERSHWIN (1898-1937)

Born in Brooklyn into a family of Russian-Jewish immigrants, George Gershwin used the piano lessons he took as a teenager to get himself a job demonstrating songs in New York's music publishing district known as "Tin Pan Alley." By 21 he had written a hit song himself ("Swanee," popularized by Al Jolson), and by 25 he was at the top of the field, teaming up with his lyricist brother Ira to write a Broadway show starring Fred Astaire.

Meanwhile the popular bandleader Paul Whiteman had managed to position himself as "the king of jazz" by tidying up the rough and unpredictable sounds of early improvised jazz and presenting it in the grandest possible way, with a large and impeccably polished dance band. In his efforts to "legitimize" jazz and bring it the same respect as European art music, he sought to fuse jazz and classical styles together—and he saw in Gershwin just the partner he needed. Using a bit of chicanery to overcome Gershwin's resistance (by planting a story in a newspaper that the piece was already being written for a concert five weeks away), Whiteman secured the commission of the century, with Gershwin rushing to compose the jazz concerto he titled *Rhapsody in Blue*. Whiteman's orchestrator Ferde Grofé made quick work of the original arrangement for his boss' touring band, and he also created the orchestral version.

Rhapsody in Blue borrows many elements from jazz, starting with a sultry clarinet melody that leans heavily on the flattened-seventh tone of the scale, a quintessential "blue note." The lyrical theme that makes a grand entrance some nine minutes into the work would be gorgeous in any setting, but it is the syncopated counter-line that drives home its emotional impact. As the first of Gershwin's forays into "classical" music, *Rhapsody in Blue* captures the moment that this brash, confident young New Yorker truly made the world his oyster.

Solo piano; two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, two alto saxophones, tenor saxophone, three horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, banjo, strings

Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story* [1961]

LEONARD BERNSTEIN

Leonard Bernstein was just 25 and fresh off his much-heralded debut conducting the New York Philharmonic when his new ballet, *Fancy Free*, opened at the Metropolitan Opera House, with choreography by Jerome Robbins. The compelling scenario of three Navy sailors on shore leave in New York City had Broadway producers seeing dollar signs, and with help from his lyricist friends Betty Comden and Adolph Green, Bernstein expanded it into *On the Town*, his first hit musical. From then on, his identity as a composer would continually straddle the loftiness of classical music and the populist appeal of music theater.

It was his old collaborator Jerome Robbins who hatched the idea that would become Bernstein's most iconic musical. At first Robbins suggested adapting Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* to take place on Manhattan's Lower East Side, and the playwright Arthur Laurents drafted a scenario he called *East Side Story*. Later the immigrants were recast as Puerto Ricans, and the setting shifted to the rough, rundown streets of San Juan Hill west of Central Park (an entire neighborhood that would soon be razed, ironically, to make way for Lincoln Center, the arts complex where Bernstein later directed the New York Philharmonic). Bernstein was disappointed when his old pals Comden and Green weren't able to join the creative team, but the silver lining was that it led him to an aspiring young songwriter by the name of Stephen Sondheim who signed on to help with the lyrics.

West Side Story was a hit when it opened on Broadway in 1957, and it made history when the 1961 feature film version won Best Picture and nine other Oscars at the Academy Awards, while its soundtrack topped the *Billboard* charts for an astonishing 54 weeks. Bernstein also worked with assistants in 1961 to make an orchestral adaptation that he titled *Symphonic Dances from West Side Story*.

Piccolo, three flutes, two oboes, English horn, E-flat clarinet, two clarinets, alto saxophone, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, celesta, piano, strings

The Musicians of the North Carolina Symphony

Carlos Miguel Prieto,
Music Director
*The Maxine and Benjamin
Swalin Chair*

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

Violin I

Justin Bruns, Concertmaster
*The Annabelle Lundy Fetterman
Chair*

Kai Bryngelson, Associate
Concertmaster
*The Assad Meymandi and Family
Chair*

Anna Black, Assistant
Concertmaster
The Anne Heartt Gregory Chair

Karen Strittmatter Galvin,
Assistant Concertmaster

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

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

Qui Cao

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
*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

Pin-Hao Liao

Amy Mason
The J. Sidney Kirk Chair

Daniel Moore

To Be Filled
*The Samuel H. and Anne Latham
Johnson Chair*

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

Samuel Sykes
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*

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

Javier Hernandez

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

Alexandra Stokes*
The Jack and Sing Boddie Chair

Piccolo

Alexandra Stokes*

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 Roger Colson and Bobbi Lyon Hackett Chair

To Be Filled
The Mary Susan Kirk Fulghum Chair

Trumpet

To Be Filled, Principal
The George Smedes Poyner Chair

David Dash*,
Associate Principal
The Henry and Martha Zaytoun and Family Chair

Benjamin Hauser**

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

Rajesh Prasad*, Principal
The Margery and Earl Johnson, Jr. Chair

To Be Filled*, 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

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

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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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