



St. Louis Symphony  
Orchestra

stéphane denève : music director

19:20  
140th season

Stéphane Denève, conductor  
James Ehnes, violin

Saturday, November 2, 2019 at 8:00PM  
Sunday, November 3, 2019 at 3:00PM

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**BARBER**

(1910-1981)

*Adagio for Strings* (1936)

**JOHN WILLIAMS**

(b. 1932)

Violin Concerto (1974)

Moderato

Slowly (in peaceful contemplation)

Broadly (Maestoso)

James Ehnes, Violin

INTERMISSION

**SAINT-SAËNS**

(1835-1921)

Symphony No. 3 in C minor, op. 78, "Organ" (1886)

PART I

Adagio—Allegro moderato

Poco adagio

PART II

Allegro moderato—Presto

Maestoso—Allegro

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**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The 2019/2020 Classical Series is presented by **The Steward Family Foundation** and **World Wide Technology**.

James Ehnes is the **Mr. and Mrs. Whitney R. Harris** Guest Artist.

The concert of Saturday, November 2, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from **Jim and Lois Urnes**.

The concert of Sunday, November 3, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from **Mr. and Mrs. Jack Bodine**.

Pre-Concert Conversations are sponsored by **Washington University Physicians**.

Media support is provided by **St. Louis Public Radio**.

# PROGRAM NOTES

BY TIM MUNRO



## SAMUEL BARBER

**Born** March 9, 1910, West Chester, Pennsylvania

**Died** January 23, 1981, New York, New York

### *Adagio for Strings*

No piece of twentieth century classical music is more popular than Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings*. It tugs hearts in movies. It is covered by artists of every genre. It is the western world's soundtrack to mourning.

But popularity can obscure its humble beginnings. The *Adagio for Strings* was written by a young man who was still largely unknown. It began as the middle movement of a string quartet. It was written at a time of calm and joy.

#### Holy Humor

The 25-year-old Barber began work on his first and only string quartet in the cottage of a French estate. "Sam has been in a holy humor all summer," wrote his partner Gian Carlo Menotti. "[He] fought with very few people and insulted only one or two of them."

Barber struggled with the quartet, but one movement gave him no trouble: the central *Adagio*. "It is a knockout!", he wrote on the day he finished it. Two years later, hoping to give it a longer life, he created an orchestral version.

#### Across the Nation

"Overnight sensations" are often exaggerated. But on a single night in 1938, Barber's name became known across the nation.

In 1938, the effects of the Great Depression hurt, the fight for civil rights raged, the clouds of war gathered. Into this turbulence, Samuel Barber offered his *Adagio for Strings*.

At the time, radio was king: some seven percent of America's population tuned in to Arturo Toscanini's live orchestral broadcasts. It was rare for the conductor to champion the music of an American composer, so when he introduced Barber's *Adagio* in a broadcast, the country took notice.

The title: so humble, so unassuming. *Adagio*, meaning "to be played slowly," is derived from the Italian words *adagio*, meaning "at ease." Yet, for more than 80 years this music has brought generations of listeners to tears.

Barber's music feels modern, yet also very old. A melody meanders, winding around the same notes, a reminder of ancient church chant. Perhaps Barber offers

this work as a secular prayer. Later, he arranged the work for choir, setting it to the text of the *Agnus Dei*:

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.  
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.  
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

**First performance:** November 5, 1938, in New York, Arturo Toscanini conducting the NBC Symphony Orchestra in a radio broadcast

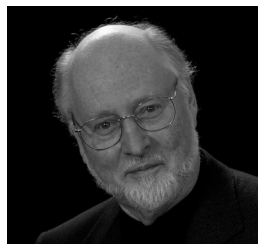
**SLSO premiere:** December 8, 1939, Vladimir Golschmann conducting

**Most recent SLSO performance:** March 24, 2013, David Robertson conducting

**Scoring:** strings

**Performance time:** Approximately 8 minutes

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## JOHN WILLIAMS

**Born** February 8, 1932, Floral Park, New York

## Violin Concerto

### A Tragedy

In 1974, John Williams was a film composer at the beginning of his career. He had steadily climbed Hollywood's rungs, working as a studio pianist, then arranger, then composer. He was the go-to composer for disaster movies like *The Towering Inferno* and *Earthquake*.

But a new direction beckoned. Later that year, he wrote the score for a small movie, *The Sugarland Express*, directed by a talented young man by the name of Steven Spielberg.

Then, a shock. Barbara Ruick, Williams' wife, died suddenly from a cerebral hemorrhage. Ruick was a singer and actor known for recurring TV roles and as a lead in *Carousel*. The loss was devastating.

When Ruick died, Williams was at work on the Violin Concerto. He later dedicated the work to her. Other than that dedication, Williams has not spoken publicly of any connection between the concerto and his wife's tragic death, but the work—yearning and snarling and lamenting and fighting—does put intense emotional demands on both performers and audience.

### Film or Concert?

Today, the worlds of film and concert music are close. "Concert music" composers often write film scores, and "film music" composers are commissioned to write concert works. But in 1974, these worlds were kept far apart.

Williams considers his concert works to be a totally separate realm of activity, requiring a different musical approach. Indeed, the Violin Concerto inhabits a different sound-world: gnarled, complex, with none of the melodic hooks of Williams' film music.

But there are still hints of John Williams the film composer: Does the slow movement bring to mind a scene of emotional connection? Does the final movement drop us occasionally into a chase scene? Does the end of the work give a glimpse of the wide-eyed adventure of a child?

## The Music

Williams was drawn to the violin as “an instrument of enormous expressive power.” The concerto's solo part presents huge challenges: it requires enormous technical skill, and reserves of stamina and emotional engagement.

The violin opens the work, musing, quietly. Intensity gathers—the violinist almost never stops playing throughout the concerto, like a person afraid of what might happen if they stop talking.

According to Williams, the songful second movement, with its gentle rocking rhythm, has the character of an elegy. Even many years later, he points to this movement as one with which he feels a strong connection.

For Williams, the creative process is “complex. It has to do with everything we've read and all the associations we have in our lives.” Might we imagine, in this slow music, the stillness of a house suddenly empty, the loneliness of a close partner now gone?

**First performance and SLSO premiere:** January 29, 1981, Leonard Slatkin conducting, with Mark Peskanov as soloist

**Scoring:** solo violin, 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes (2nd doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons (2nd doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, chimes, cymbals, glockenspiel, marimba, snare drum, suspended cymbal, two triangles, vibraphone, xylophone, harp, strings

**Performance time:** Approximately 31 minutes

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## **CHARLES-CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS**

**Born** October 9, 1835, Paris, France

**Died** December 16, 1921, Algiers, Algeria

### **Symphony No. 3, “Organ”**

#### **Renewal**

Saint-Saëns was a master of the miniature. His output is dotted with tiny piano solos, with voice and piano songs.

What would push him, aged fifty, to step outside his comfort zone, to return to the symphonic form after a gap of some twenty-five years?

#### **Enthusiasm**

Saint-Saëns loved England. Twenty years prior, he fled a bloody siege of Paris for England, and was treated with kindness. So when the Royal Philharmonic Society asked him for a grand new symphony, he immediately said yes.

The speed and enthusiasm of his response to the Royal Philharmonic's request might have had another cause. France was opera-mad, and the symphony as a genre had been gathering dust. This commission allowed Saint-Saëns, a French patriot, to come to the rescue, to “renew the symphonic form” for his country.

#### **Nerves**

Saint-Saëns was astonishingly gifted. A prolific and long-lived composer, an organ and piano virtuoso performer, he was also a celebrated writer and had knowledge of astronomy, botany, and philosophy.

Still, the challenge of this symphony made him nervous. “It will be terrifying,” he wrote. “[T]here will be much in the way of experiment in this terrible thing.” For an arch conservative, obsessed with concision, to put himself forward on such a public stage was risky.

“I am looking forward to conducting this symphony,” he wrote to the Royal Philharmonic. “Will the others look forward to hearing it?”

#### **Self-portrait**

The Third Symphony is a musical self-portrait. Within its walls are aspects of the composer, his talents, doubts, beliefs, fears, hopes.

His instruments are here. The pipe organ, which Saint-Saëns played in a Parisian parish, is included in two movements. The piano, which Saint-Saëns had played since childhood, receives a part of such virtuosity that two musicians are needed.

A passion for sacred music is here. Saint-Saëns, though an atheist, wrote dozens of sacred works, and several themes in the symphony have relationships with church hymn melodies.

A love of logic and balance is here. The music of this sprawling work is fastened together tightly. Divided into four sections (two sections per movement), Saint-Saëns carefully crafted many melodies to relate to one another.

The forces of darkness are here. When he wrote the symphony, Saint-Saëns was bereft. His mother was advanced in years, and several close friends had died. Dark thoughts lurk in this symphony. The *Dies irae* (the Latin mass of the dead) stalks the symphony's pages. Teeth chatter in the first movement.

And, finally, there is hope. The symphony gradually progresses from darkness into light, exploding into the work's dazzling conclusion. In fact, some writers have heard this work as a sort of personal "Resurrection."

### The Final Word

"I have given all that I had to give," wrote Saint-Saëns about the Third Symphony. "What I have done I shall never do again."

**First performance:** May 19, 1886, in London, the composer conducting the Royal Philharmonic Society

**SLSO premiere:** February 11, 1937, Vladimir Golschmann conducting

**Most recent SLSO performance:** March 1, 2009, Jun Märkl conducting

**Scoring:** 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbal, triangle, organ, piano (four hands), strings

**Performance time:** Approximately 36 minutes

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## JAMES EHNES

Mr. and Mrs. Whitney R. Harris Guest Artist

James Ehnes has established himself as one of the most sought-after violinists on the international stage thanks to his rare combination of stunning virtuosity, serene lyricism, and unfaltering musicality. This season, he will perform the complete cycle of Beethoven Sonatas at Wigmore Hall, and will take them to several festivals across the globe, including Dresden, Prague, Aspen, and Vail. Currently Artist-in-Residence with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, his performances will include the Elgar concerto with Fabio Luisi, a play/direct program led by Ehnes, and a chamber music program.

Ehnes works with orchestras includes the Boston, Chicago, London, NHK, and Vienna symphony orchestras, the London, Los Angeles, New York, Munich, and Czech philharmonic orchestras, and the Cleveland, Philadelphia, Philharmonia, and DSO Berlin orchestras. Recent orchestral highlights include the MET Orchestra at Carnegie Hall with Gianandrea Noseda, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig with Alexander Shelley, San Francisco Symphony with Marek Janowski, Frankfurt Radio Symphony with Andrés Orozco-Estrada, London Symphony with Daniel Harding, and Munich Philharmonic with Jaap van Zweden. In 2017, Ehnes premiered the Aaron Jay Kernis Violin Concerto with the Toronto, Seattle, and Dallas symphony orchestras, and gave further performances of the piece with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester and Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

Alongside his concerto work, Ehnes maintains a busy recital schedule, performing regularly at Wigmore Hall, Carnegie Hall, Symphony Center Chicago, and the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, among many others. In 2016, he undertook a cross-Canada recital tour, performing in each of the country's provinces and territories to celebrate his 40th birthday. Ehnes is the Artistic Director of the Seattle Chamber Music Society. As a chamber musician, he has collaborated with leading artists such as Leif Ove Andsnes, Renaud Capuçon, Louis Lortie, Nikolai Lugansky, Yo-Yo Ma, Antoine Tamestit, Jan Vogler and Yuja Wang. In 2010, he formally established the Ehnes Quartet, with whom he has performed in Europe at venues including the Wigmore Hall, Auditorium du Louvre in Paris and Théâtre du Jeu de Paume in Aix, amongst others.

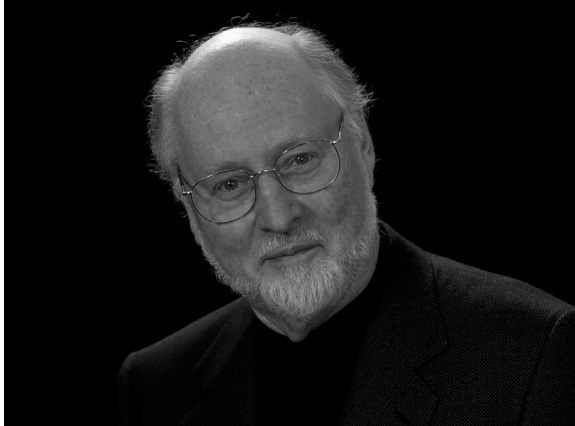
Ehnes has won many awards for his recordings, including a Grammy Award for his live recording of Aaron Jay Kernis' Violin Concerto with the Seattle Symphony and Ludovic Morlot, as well as for his recording of the Barber,

Korngold, and Walton violin concertos. He also received a Gramophone Award for his live recording of the Elgar Concerto with the Philharmonia Orchestra and Andrew Davis, and several JUNO awards, including one for Best Classical Album of the Year.

Ehnes began violin studies at the age of five, became a protégé of the noted Canadian violinist Francis Chaplin by nine, and made his orchestra debut with the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal at 13. He continued his studies with Sally Thomas at the Meadowmount School of Music and The Juilliard School, winning the Peter Mennin Prize for Outstanding Achievement and Leadership in Music upon his graduation. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and in 2010 was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada. Ehnes was awarded the 2017 Royal Philharmonic Society Award in the Instrumentalist category.

Ehnes plays the “Marsick” Stradivarius of 1715.





## JOHN WILLIAMS

In a career spanning more than five decades, John Williams has become one of America's most accomplished and successful composers for film and for the concert stage, and remains one of our nation's most distinguished and contributive musical voices. He has composed the music for more than 100 films, including the *Star Wars* films, the first three *Harry Potter* films, *Superman*, *Memoirs of a Geisha*, *Home Alone*, and *The Book Thief*. His 45-year artistic partnership with director Steven Spielberg has resulted in many of Hollywood's most acclaimed and successful films, including *Schindler's List*, *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*, *Jaws*, *Jurassic Park*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, the *Indiana Jones* films, *Saving Private Ryan*, *The BFG*, and *The Post*. Mr. Williams has composed themes for four Olympic Games. He served as music director of the Boston Pops Orchestra for 14 seasons and remains its Laureate Conductor. He has composed numerous works for the concert stage, including two symphonies and concertos commissioned by many of America's most prominent orchestras.

Mr. Williams has received five Academy Awards and 51 Oscar nominations (making him the second-most nominated person in the history of the Oscars), seven British Academy Awards (BAFTA), 24 Grammys, four Golden Globes, and five Emmys. In 2003, he received the Olympic Order, the IOC's highest honor, for his contributions to the Olympic movement. In 2004, he received the Kennedy Center Honors, and in 2009 he received the National Medal of Arts, the highest award given to artists by the U.S. Government. In 2016, he received the 44th Life Achievement Award from the American Film Institute—the first time a composer was honored with the award.

# celebrate the holidays with the SLSO



## The Nutcracker

November 29-  
December 1

Presented by the Thomas A. Kooyumjian  
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\*Please note this is not a dance performance.



## A Gospel Christmas with Kennedy Holmes

December 18-19

Supported by Bayer Fund



## Big Band Holidays: Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis

December 4

\*Please note the SLSO will not  
perform on this program.



*film with live score*

## Home Alone in Concert

December 20-21



## Baroque Fireworks

December 6-8



*film with live score*

## Beauty and the Beast in Concert

December 27-28



## Mercy Holiday Celebration

December 13-15

Presented by Mercy 



## BMO Wealth Management New Year's Eve Celebration

December 31

Presented by BMO Wealth Management



St. Louis Symphony  
Orchestra

stéphane denève : music director

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# First Time Here? Welcome!

Whether it's your very first visit or your first time back since a grade school field trip, welcome to Powell Hall and to your St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. We're happy you're here!

An incredible thing about symphonic music is that you don't need to be an expert to feel its powerful impact. Even so, here are some insider tips to help you feel in tune. Relax and enjoy the experience. This is *your* SLSO.

## What should I expect?

Classical concerts last approximately two hours with a 20-minute intermission.

Movies and other Live at Powell Hall events typically have one intermission in the middle of the program.

The Program Notes in the center of this Playbill have a list of pieces to be performed and provide interesting background on the composers and artists.

See the Audience Information page in the back of this Playbill for more FAQs and helpful tips.

## When do I clap?

For classical concerts, tradition is to wait until an entire piece is finished before clapping. Keep in mind there may be multiple movements in one piece. Look to the conductor for cues and, if you're unsure, wait until you hear everyone else begin to applaud.

## Food & Drink

Non-iced beverages purchased on site in SLSO Keep Cups may be taken into the auditorium for all performances.

All concessions purchased on site may be taken into the auditorium for select performances when indicated by signage.

## Social Media

Check out our designated Selfie Spots in the Grand Foyer for the best photos! Share your experience on social media before and after the concert.

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