



The Phoenix Symphony

and



A Side-by-Side CELEBRATION

Wednesday, March 25

6:30pm

Ikeda Theater, Mesa Arts Center

Maestro Alex Amsel, Conductor
The Phoenix Symphony



Welcome to an Amazing Side-by-Side Celebration!

Before we begin, I would like to extend our sincere thanks to Larry Thompson, Chair of the Arts at the Center Committee, and his committee for their work in making this evening's concert possible. Their support and dedication help create meaningful opportunities like tonight for our musicians and our community.

This evening is especially exciting as our Division 1 musicians take the stage alongside members of The Phoenix Symphony in this Side-by-Side performance. Experiences like this represent the very best of what youth music education can offer—bringing together challenge, inspiration, and unforgettable moments of growth. As these musicians share the stage tonight, they are also looking ahead to another remarkable milestone: an upcoming New York City tour and performance this June.

All of this is possible because of the extraordinary support that surrounds our musicians—families, volunteers, board members, staff, and conductors who give so generously of their time and talents. Thank you for believing in this organization and in the young people at its center.

This season is already proving to be something special. Tonight, we invite you to celebrate with us—to sit back, enjoy the music, and share in what matters most to MYS: our youth, their growth, and the music they create together.

Executive Director, MYS

Karalee K. Hagen



The Phoenix Symphony

Overture to Egmont, Op. 84 Ludwig van Beethoven



The Phoenix Symphony

and



Au Revoir Mon Amour.....Logan Phares

Pictures at an Exhibition.....Modest Mussorgsky

Promenade

The Hut on Chicken's Legs (Baba Yaga)

The Great Gate of Kiev

Park Royal.....Charles Liu



The Phoenix Symphony

FIRST VIOLINS

Rolf Haas

*Concertmaster, Herberger
Foundation Chair*

Magdalena Martinic-Jercic

*Associate Concertmaster,
John and Ellen Ford Chair*

Dian D'Avanzo

*Assistant Concertmaster,
Mary K. Yearly Chair by
Douglas C. Yearly*

Leslie Frey Anderegge

Carla Ecker*

Haekyung Ju

Nancy Livingston

Dana Pasley

Karen Sinclair

Levon Zarsian

Jing Zeng

SECOND VIOLINS

Anna Kim Kazepides

Principal

Elise Haukenes

*Associate Principal, Freda
Levine Chair*

Dumitru Lazarescu

Assistant Principal

Adrienne Finet

Tessa Gotman Bock

Bin Gui

Aaron Requiro

Trista (Yat-Sze) Wong

VIOLAS

Daniel Wang

Principal

Mark Deatherage

Associate Principal

Isabel Tannenbaum

Assistant Principal

Karen Bea

Mark Dix

Christopher McKay

Mathieu Page Bouchard

Yang Yu*

VIOLONCELLOS

Melita Hunsinger

Principal, Elizabeth Shaw Chair

Bridget Pasker

Associate Principal

Jan Simiz

Assistant Principal

Frederick Chao*

Michael D'Avanzo

Jessamyn Fry*

Morgen Johnson*

Laurie Stearns Selby

DOUBLE BASSES

Michael Kazepides

Acting Principal

Sarah Wager*

Acting Associate Principal

John Ebinger

*Acting Assistant Principal,
Evelyn D. Barnard Chair*

Jonathan Imsande

Michael Zogaib*

FLUTES

Viviana Cumplido Wilson

Principal

Jenna Daum*

Acting Associate Principal

Jarrett May

PICCOLO

Jarrett May

OBOES

Jonathan Gentry

Principal

Angela Scates*

Paula Engerer

*Associate Principal Oboe
& English Horn, Mr. & Mrs.
Richard Snell Chair*

ENGLISH HORN

Paula Engerer

CLARINETS

Steve Hanusofski

*Acting Principal, Sol & Esther
Drescher Chair, by Susan
and Mark Mulzet*

Michael Robinson*

Acting Associate Principal

Phillip Solomon*

BASS CLARINET

Phillip Solomon*

BASSOONS

Douglas Brown

Principal

Christopher Witt

*Acting Co-Principal
Bassoon*

Ian Schneiderman*

*Acting Associate Principal
Bassoon*

Erik Ludwig

*Bassoon and Contrabassoon,
John Jay and Sandra Day
O'Connor Chair*

CONTRABASSOON

Erik Ludwig

HORNS

Gabriel Kovach

*Principal, H. Barry and Lucy
V. Holt Arts and Education
Fund Chair*

Cassie Walck

Associate Principal

Nancy Dimond

Assistant Principal

Thea Humphries

Shelby Nugent

TRUMPETS

Noah Dugan*

Acting Principal

Ben Nguyen

Associate Principal

Hayato Tanaka

Assistant Principal

TROMBONES

Jason Crimi*

Acting Principal

Harry Gonzalez

Associate Principal

Derek Mitchell

*Bass Trombone, Mr. & Mrs.
E. Louis Werner Jr. Chair*

TUBA

Cristina Cutts

Principal

TIMPANI

Bruce Pulk

Principal

Steve Fitch

Associate Principal

PERCUSSION

Shaun Tilburg

Principal

Matt Prendergast

Assistant Principal

Steve Fitch

*One-Year Appointment

• Leave of Absence

CONTACT

TICKETS: 602.495.1999

phoenixsymphony.org



Alex Amsel, Conductor

Alex Amsel is an Argentinian-Mexican conductor who has quickly established himself as a compelling presence on both orchestral and operatic podiums, and as a passionate music educator committed to serving communities of all ages. Guided by a belief in music's power to foster empathy, dialogue, and social connection, Amsel seeks to integrate music into the fabric of each community he serves, reshaping how we understand both society and our place within it. In the 2025–2026 season, Amsel joins the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra as Assistant Conductor. He made his CSO debut leading a sold-out Día de los Muertos program, which he curated to celebrate cultural tradition through symphonic music. This appearance marked the beginning of an ongoing relationship with the orchestra, culminating in his future engagements with the CSO.

Following two highly successful seasons as Associate Conductor of The Phoenix Symphony, Amsel has been invited to return as Guest Conductor for fifteen performances during the current season, leading subscription, film, education, and community concerts. During his tenure, he founded and curated the orchestra's sold-out Chamber Orchestra Subscription Series, Family Subscription Series, and Casual Friday Night Concert Discussions, and served on both the Artistic Advisory Committee and Patron Experience Taskforce. He was also elected Board Co-Chair of the Young Professionals Board, reflecting his commitment to institutional leadership and audience engagement. Amsel gained international recognition following a nationally televised performance at the George Enescu Competition in Romania, leading to return engagements across multiple seasons. As a Music Director finalist for the Elgin Symphony Orchestra, he was praised for delivering "a vibrant and textured account maintaining superb balance... punctuating a dynamic performance" (Chicago Classical Review). He served as Resident Conductor of Houston Grand Opera during the 2022–2023 season, conducting Verdi's *La traviata* and the world premiere of Jeremy Howard Beck's *Another City*, and has held conducting appointments with Cincinnati Opera during the 2024 and 2025 seasons. Previously, Amsel spent three seasons as Assistant Conductor of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, appointed by Robert Spano, where he led symphonic, chamber, and educational programs.

Alex Amsel, Conductor *cont.*

A multi-year participant at the Aspen Music Festival and Conducting Academy, he worked closely with Robert Spano, Patrick Summers, and Hugh Wolff, returning in 2022 as faculty and Assistant Conductor. He currently serves as Cover Conductor for Cristian Măcelaru with the Orchestre National de France and will join the Interlochen Center for the Arts on tour for a special program featuring a co-conducted performance with Măcelaru.

Highly sought after as both conductor and educator, Amsel has appeared at the Aspen Music Festival, National Repertory Orchestra, Round Top Music Festival, and Philadelphia International Music Festival, and founded the inaugural chamber orchestra for advanced students at the AFA Summer Festival in Houston.

Education and contemporary music remain central to Amsel's artistic mission. He has reshaped Phoenix Symphony education programs to center underrepresented composers and themes of empathy, inclusivity, and cultural understanding, and is a committed advocate for living composers including Gabriela Lena Frank, Carlos Simon, Jessie Montgomery, Eleanor Alberga, Victor Agudelo, and Carlos Zamora. He was selected as an Associate at the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music under Cristian Măcelaru and has led recordings of world premieres at Peabody Conservatory and Rice University's Shepherd School of Music.

Amsel completed his Master's degree in Orchestral Conducting at Peabody Conservatory as a Graduate Assistant to Marin Alsop and holds degrees from New England Conservatory and The University of Texas at Austin.



MYS MISSION

To educate young instrumental musicians in the art of performance to develop character, discipline, leadership, cultural awareness, and a strong commitment to excellence enabling MYS to contribute to the Valley of the Sun's musical heritage and create a higher level of appreciation for the performing arts.

MYS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Heidi Valle
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Courtney Davis
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Logan Huemiller
Toni Crawford-Jonas

DIVISION 1

Violin I

Katherine Jivcu
Preston Rule
Joshua Nguyen
Brandon Zhang
Emilie Valle
Ethan Whatcott
Beni Grozav
Melynn Wood
Avalinda Wagener

Violin 2

Christelle Lavin
Elizabeth Fowler
Emily Fletcher
Taylor Sym
Justin Bowman
Grace Faulk
Mia Kanuho
Brian Yi

Rehearsal Aides

Courtney Davis

 Jenn Boone

Viola

Rachel Seo
Brienne Robinson
Aaron Jury
Leo Zou
Abbie Lurye
Leila Lubovac
Aria Eaton
Carmen Acosta

Cello

Eliot Larsen,
Reid Cox Memorial Chair
Gigi Higgins
Olivia Zhong
Madison Moody
Sofia Mendoza
Luke Jivcu
Victoria Ramos

Bass

Malin Anderson
Simone Barhitte
Juan Carlos Patino
David Sdiddi

Flute

Lia Galadriel Neira
Kylie Myers
Claire Kim
Thomas Burton
Soham Das

Oboe

Keegan Pope
James Burton
Mathias Knudson-Krantz

Clarinet

Mia Ronneseth
Sydney Davis
Olivia Pivaral
Catalina Rippel

Bassoon

Owen Shovelin

Horn

Luke Gonzales

Harp

Tatum Searle
Jenny Norris
Emma Busby

Alto Saxophone

Aarya Venkat
Halen Tucker

Trumpet

Warrick Darling
David Payne
Jonathan Carson
Owen Minium
Emilia Coscarelli

Trombone

Trenton Henley
Ryan Bennett
Jacob Swanson

Tuba

Elias Roemhild

Percussion

Eliza Dugan
Lyla Coons
Silas Miera

Division 1 Conductor

MYS Executive Director

Karalee Hagen has been part of the Metropolitan Youth Symphony since 2007, serving the past decade as Executive Director and conductor of Division 1.

This season marks her final year leading Division 1 as she transitions fully into her Executive Director role, continuing to advance MYS's mission of inspiring young musicians.

With over 30 years of public school teaching experience, Mrs. Hagen has taught general music, strings, and orchestra at the elementary through high school levels. She earned her Bachelor of Music Education from Kansas State University and a Master's in Conducting from West Texas A&M University. A double bassist, she has performed with orchestras in Kansas, Texas, and Arizona. Since moving to Arizona in 1994, Mrs. Hagen has coordinated the Arizona Bass Jam for 18 years, served on the Arizona Bass Players Executive Board, and held leadership roles in ABODA and AMEA. Her honors include the George C. Wilson Leadership Service Award and the ASTA Outstanding Public School Teacher of the Year Award.





Charles Liu - Park Royal

Chinese-Canadian composer Charles Liu was born in Hong Kong in 1982. His family immigrated to Canada in 1988. He began studying violin at age 12 under the late Alec Hou. In 2002, he was admitted into the University of Western Ontario (now Western University) in London, Canada, studying violin under Ralph Aldrich, Robert Skelton, and Virginia Barron, composition under Kim Lundberg, and Peter Paul Koprowski, and conducting under Jerome Summers, graduating in 2006 with a B.Mus. in Theory and Composition.

Mr. Liu moved to Arizona in 2010 and was an active violinist, conductor, and composer. He was primarily associated with the Chandler Symphony Orchestra, including a commissioned work for the orchestra's 25th anniversary (Festival Overture), and with the Metropolitan Youth Symphony as a guest composer (Secrets of the Oceans Deep), and chamber music coach. In addition to the pieces for the ensembles, he has also written for

the Burn City String Quartet (String Quartet No. 3), Saguaro High School Orchestra (Violin Concerto), and was a guest composer/clinician with the West Valley Youth Orchestra Summer Camp (Campfire). Most recently, he held the Office Manager position at Andrew's Fine Violins for almost a decade.

Mr. Liu returned to Canada in 2024, and is currently pursuing a degree M.Mus in Composition at the University of Toronto. He is honored to present Park Royal to Mrs. Karalee Hagen in honor

of her service to the community, and in celebration of her retirement as Music Director for Division 1. Mr. Liu looks forward to future collaborations with the music community in Arizona and beyond. His current activities include performing with Milton Philharmonic Orchestra, and maintaining two violin studios. He is a current Member of the Advisory Board for the Metropolitan Youth Symphony, and an external community member of the Board of Directors for the Flagstaff Chamber Music Series. In the Fall of 2026, Mr. Liu will be continuing with his professional development in a D.M.A. in Composition at the University of Toronto.

Logan Phares - Au Revoir Mon Amour

My name is Logan Phares, and I am a Senior at Boulder Creek High School, where I primarily play the trombone. My musical journey began in fifth grade when I started studying piano under the guidance of Bill Miller. Although I eventually shifted my focus to playing, the foundational music theory lessons I learned from Mr. Miller continue to support my growth as a musician and composer. He remains an important mentor in my compositional studies to this day.

I began playing the trombone in seventh grade at Gavilan Peak Elementary School, under the direction of Rachal Stanford. Since then, I have continued my trombone studies at Boulder Creek High School with instructors Joshua Burrola and Michael Warner. After my first year, I have consistently been selected for the Wind Ensemble and have proudly served as drum major for the past two years.

Throughout my trombone education, I've worked with several teachers, beginning with Bill Miller and continuing with Rob Wren, who has guided me over the past year on trombone. While Rob Wren has helped refined my trombone performance, Mr. Miller has continued to support my academic musical development, preparing me for the continued education at NAU next year through private lessons, particularly focusing on the study and application of counterpoint. With Mr. Miller's mentorship, I have composed several original works, some of which have been practiced and performed through the Rhapsody Music Summer Programs. Among these, "Au Revoir Mon Amour" is my most refined composition.

