

Spring Rites

Saturday, May 3, 2025 • 7:30 p.m.

First Free Methodist Church

Harmonia Orchestra & Chorus

William White, conductor



VINCENZO BELLINI (1801–1835)

Overture to *Norma*

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–1856)

Cello Concerto in A minor, Op. 129

Nicht zu schnell —

Langsam —

Sehr lebhaft

Carson Ling-Efird, cello

— intermission —

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847)

Die erste Walpurgisnacht, Op. 60

Overture: *Das schlechte Wetter* — *Der Übergang zum Frühling* —

Allegro vivace non troppo (*Es lacht der Mai*) —

Allegretto non troppo (*Könnt ihr so verwegen handeln?*) —

Andante maestoso (*Wer Opfer heut zu bringen scheut*) —

Allegro leggiero (*Verteilt euch, wackre Männer, hier*) —

Allegro moderato (*Diese dummen Pfaffenchristen*) —

Allegro molto (*Kommt mit Zacken und mit Gabeln*) —

Andante maestoso (*So weit gebracht, dass wir bei Nacht*) —

Allegro non troppo (*Hilf, ach hilf mir, Kriegsgeselle*) —

Andante maestoso (*Die Flamme reinigt sich vom Rauch*)

Karen Dunstan, soprano (an old woman) • **Lyon Stewart**, tenor (a Druid) • **Steven Tachell**, bass-baritone (the priest)

Gabriel Salmon, baritone (a Druid guard) • **Chad DeMaris**, tenor (a Christian guard)

John Garlid, tenor • **Jacob Malpocker**, tenor • **Brennan Brichoux**, baritone (choir of Christians)

Please silence cell phones and other electronics, and refrain from the use of cameras and recording devices during the performance.

Refreshments will be available during intermission in the Fine Center.

Harmonia Orchestra and Chorus

William White, music director • George Shangrow, founder

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Solo Artists

Nineteen-year-old cellist **Carson Ling-Efird**, a Seattle native, is currently a second-year student at the Curtis Institute of Music, studying cello with Peter Wiley, Gary Hoffman, Christine Lee, Nick Canellakis and Yumi Kendall. She made her solo debut with the Seattle Symphony in 2018 at the age of 12 after being selected as a Seattle Symphony Young Artist. In 2019, she was a KING-FM Young Artist Award grand-prize winner and the recipient of the Seattle Chamber Music Society Monika Meyer Clowes Memorial Award. She made her international solo debut with the Taipei Symphony Orchestra Youth in January 2020, and in November of that year appeared on NPR's *From the Top* as a fellow. This past summer she studied in France at the Ecoles d'Art Américaines de Fontainebleau. In addition to cello, Ms. Ling-Efird has also studied piano and composition, beginning piano at age six while spending a year with her family in Kunming, China, and composition in the summer of 2017. From 2019 to 2023, she was a selected participant in the Seattle Symphony's Merriman Family Young Composers Workshop program, during which time Seattle Symphony musicians premiered her compositions. Her latest work, *Procession Quintet*, is scored for piano, clarinet, flute, violin and cello. Ms. Ling-Efird plays a Matthias Neuner cello (Mittenwald, 1807), generously loaned to her by the Carlsen Cello Foundation.



Soprano **Karen Dunstan** hails from Ypsilanti, Michigan. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Music and in 2023 completed a Master of Music in Vocal Performance at the University of Washington. Ms. Dunstan has appeared in many opera productions, including *La Bohème*, *Dido and Aeneas* and *L'Elisir d'Amore*, and is most proud of her performance as Grimgerde in the "Flight of the Valkyries" scene from *Die Walküre*.

Tenor **Charles Lyon Stewart** hails from Washington, DC, where he began singing with the National Cathedral Choir at age nine and at 13 made his solo debut with the National Symphony in the annunciation scene of Handel's *Messiah*. He holds a Bachelor of Music in vocal performance from Indiana University and is now a cardiothoracic intensive care nurse enrolled in the Doctor of Nursing Practice program at the University of Washington. Recent solo performances include Britten's *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* with the Emerald City Chamber Orchestra.

Born in Minneapolis, baritone **Gabriel Salmon** grew up in Palo Alto before attending St. Olaf College, from which he earned a Bachelor of Arts in music and another in economics. After stints in Denver and Richmond, Virginia, he moved to Seattle a year and a half ago and immediately joined Har-

monia. He also currently sings with Epiphany Parish Church and previously with the St. Olaf Choir, Minnesota Opera and Picnic Operetta.

A Seattle native, bass-baritone **Steven Tachell** began his academic musical studies at the University of Washington and the Vienna Music Conservatory. With Seattle Opera, he has sung Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* and Ping in *Turandot*. He has appeared on stage and in concert throughout the United States, as well as Switzerland, Germany and Japan, singing with the Seattle Symphony, Spokane Symphony, St. Gallen Opera Theater and Opera Orchestra of New York, among many others.

Chad DeMaris has been recognized as a "strong lyric tenor" and for his "beautiful, warm tone with a strong sense of sincerity." He recently made his mainstage debut with Seattle Opera, singing Cop/Reporter 2 in *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*. Other engagements include solo roles in Mozart's Coronation Mass and Bach's *Jesu, meine Freude*, King Kaspar in *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and Eduardo Jr./Mr. Xoloti in *Frida Kahlo and the Bravest Girl in the World*.

Tenor **John Garlid** hails from Connecticut, where he began his vocal journey as a treble at Christ Church, Greenwich. At Bard College, he immersed himself in experimental music and recording engineering, guided by Marina Rosenfeld, Richard Teitelbaum and James Bagwell. He currently works as a union stagehand in Seattle, singing at St. Mark's Cathedral and Epiphany Parish Church while studying with countertenor José Luis Muñoz.

Originally from Colorado, tenor **Jacob Malpocker** holds a bachelor's degree in vocal music from Seattle University and a master's degree in choral conducting from Washington State University. He currently teaches music in the Highline School District and directs the ensemble *Fratres* at St. James Cathedral. A published composer and arranger of choral music, he currently sings with Opus 7, Cathedral Cantorei at St. James, and Epiphany Parish Church.

Baritone **Brennan Brichoux** has experience in opera, choral singing and musical theater, with a keen passion for the dramatic stage. He holds a bachelor's degree in music and vocal performance from Pacific Lutheran University, where he graduated *summa cum laude* in 2019. Since then, he has been an active in Seattle's musical scene, performing with many area ensembles and frequently serving as a solo cantor at St. James Cathedral.

We'd like to hear from you!

Let Harmonia know about your experience at this concert (or share anything else you might have on your mind). Scan this QR code:



or navigate to: www.harmoniaseattle.org/survey

Maestro's Prelude

Good evening, and welcome to Hallowe'en in May! If you came here tonight looking for DruidCon 2025 but found yourself at our concert instead, I don't think you'll be disappointed.

Our theme tonight is Paganism & Druidry, and it gets off to a rollicking start with the overture to Bellini's opera *Norma*. Set in Roman Gaul, the opera's plot centers around a steamy love triangle between two Druid priestesses and a Roman overlord, which erupts into an open conflagration (quite literally). *Norma* is a *bel canto* opera, a style that emphasizes voluptuous vocal lines above all else, and like most of these works, its instrumental music is rarely recognized in its own right, but I think this piece is a real humdinger with some great tunes.

As far as Druids are concerned, we're not going to get more on-theme than with Felix Mendelssohn's *Die erste Walpurgisnacht*. This is an incredible work that virtually no one has ever heard of, and I think this all comes down to the title. Even if you translate it into English, it's just "The First Walpurgis Night," which is hardly any less head-scratching. If Mendelssohn had instead called it "The Druids' Midnight Revenge," I think this piece would be a Top 40 hit.

Picture it: 800 AD in the Harz Mountains of Northern Germany. A band of Druids seeks to perform their spring-time rituals atop the local mountain peak, but they know that doing so risks death at the hands of the encroaching Christian settlers. They decide to use the Christians' belief system against them, dressing as devils and scattering throughout the woods. When the Christians arrive, the Druids put on an epic spookfest and the Christians beat a hasty retreat. The pagans celebrate their victory with a rousing anthem (which admittedly has a certain Lutheran ring to it, but such was Mendelssohn's wont).

What does any of this pagan stuff have to do with the Schumann cello concerto? Well, in a way, nothing, but in another way, quite a lot. If I could sum it up in one word (and I believe I can) that word would be: Romanticism.

Because *Norma* and *Die erste Walpurgisnacht* are dramatic works, it's easy to see how they are awash in Romantic themes such as the macabre and tragic love, but Robert Schumann swam in those same artistic waters — we need look no further than the 300 songs he wrote in his short lifespan. Schumann was a profoundly literary musician, and he developed his musical ideas in tandem with poetic texts. The better we know his songs and character pieces, the more easily we can see how his instrumental works were telling stories and singing songs, albeit without words.

I doubt you'll have any trouble hearing the poetry as it spins forth from the cello of our excellent soloist, Carson Ling-Efird. I've had the pleasure of collaborating with Carson before, and I can tell you that she's truly something special.



Program Notes

Vincenzo Bellini

Overture to *Norma*

Bellini was born November 3, 1801, in Catania, Sicily, and died September 2, 1835, near Paris. He composed his two-act opera Norma in 1831. It received its premiere at La Scala on December 26 of that year. The overture calls for pairs of woodwinds (with one flute doubling piccolo), 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, harp and strings.

Bellini is considered by many to be first among equals at the art of *bel canto* opera, and *Norma* perhaps his greatest work. Before he reached the age of 30 he had composed seven operas, among them *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (premiered in Venice in March 1830) and *La sonnambula* (which debuted in Milan in March 1831). He and his librettist, Felice Romani, then turned their attention to an adaptation of a French play, *Norma, ou L'infanticide*, by Alexandre Soumet.

In Roman-occupied Gaul circa 50 B.C.E, a Druid priestess, Norma, tries to persuade Pollione (the Roman proconsul and her former lover), to end his relationship with Adalgisa, a younger Druid priestess. When he refuses, Norma confesses in public that she has broken her vow of chastity and borne two children with Pollione. As she prepares to sacrifice herself, Pollione experiences a change of heart and joins her on a flaming pyre.

Bellini's overture incorporates material from a frenzied Act II chorus ("Guerra, guerra") and an ensuing duet between Norma and Pollione ("In mia man alfin tu sei").

Robert Schumann

Cello Concerto in A minor, Op. 129

Robert Alexander Schumann was born in Zwickau, Saxony, on June 8, 1810, and died near Bonn on July 29, 1856. He composed this concerto between October 10 and 25, 1850. Ludwig Ebert was the soloist in the premiere, which took place at the Leipzig Conservatory on June 9, 1860. The accompaniment calls for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns and trumpets, plus timpani and strings.

On September 1, 1850, Robert and Clara Schumann moved their family from Dresden to Düsseldorf, where Robert had been engaged as director of the orchestra and chorus. Initially the Düsseldorfers welcomed the Schumanns, but Robert's inexperience as a conductor led to discord with the choir (who rebelled at his programming of the Bach Passions) and eventually the orchestra (who felt he played too much of his own music). Fortunately, Robert began to earn enough from the publication of his compositions to supplement his part-time conducting salary (although the money Clara made as a performer and teacher also supported their family). Robert would produce fully a third of his mature works during his few years in Düsseldorf, including his "Rhenish" Symphony.

The first major work he tackled in this new city (over the span of a mere 15 days) was his cello concerto, which he originally called a *Konzertstück* ("concertpiece"), perhaps due to its compact form in three continuous segments rather

than the traditional three discrete movements. "We must come up with a genre," he had written in an 1839 *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* article, "that consists of a longer movement in a moderate tempo, in which the preliminary section would take the place of a first *Allegro*, the *cantabile* section, that of the *Adagio*, and a brilliant ending, that of the Rondo."

Schumann had studied cello a bit as a child, and toyed with the instrument after a self-inflicted injury to his right hand at age 22 dashed his hopes of becoming a piano virtuoso, but the concerto was apparently not inspired by any particular performer or occasion. "There are so few works for this lovely instrument," he later wrote, hoping that the concerto "will perhaps be welcomed by many."

Robert finished the cello concerto on the same day that he conducted his first subscription concert in Düsseldorf (which featured Clara as soloist in a Mendelssohn piano concerto). "It pleases me very much and seems to me to be written in true violoncello style," Clara wrote the following month. And a year later: "I have played Robert's Violoncello Concerto through again, thus giving myself a truly musical and happy hour. The romantic quality, the vivacity, the freshness and humor, also the highly interesting interweaving of violoncello and orchestra are indeed wholly ravishing, and what euphony and deep feeling one finds in all the melodic passages!"

Although the principal cellist of the Düsseldorf orchestra read through a piano reduction of the concerto with Clara, no performance materialized. After various revisions, two publishers rejected the work, but Breitkopf & Härtel finally issued a cello-and-piano version in 1854. The premiere took place four years after Robert's death, at a Leipzig concert marking his 50th birth anniversary.

The concerto opens in A minor, which was "Clara's key," according to Schumann biographer Judith Cherniak, while "Clara's name appears throughout the concerto in the falling figure sounding 'Clara,' especially in the tender slow movement, and more playfully in the last movement." Robert forgoes an extended orchestral introduction, with the solo instrument dominating from the work's opening bars. The F-major central section follows seamlessly from the first, and a reminiscence of the concerto's opening material leads a transition to the Rondo finale, which near its conclusion features the work's only cadenza (largely accompanied by the orchestra).

Felix Mendelssohn

Die erste Walpurgisnacht, Op. 60

Jakob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn was born February 3, 1809, in Hamburg, and died November 4, 1847, in Leipzig. He composed this cantata in 1831 and 1832. After a first public performance in January 1833, he withdrew the work, making various revisions over the course of the next decade. In addition to soloists and chorus, the published score calls for pairs of woodwinds (plus piccolo), horns and trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, percussion and strings.

In addition to reigning as the most influential writer in the German language, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–

1832) was a true polymath, making important contributions as a botanist, producing plays by Friedrich Schiller as director of the theater in Weimar, and writing novels, poems and plays that would inspire composers from Mozart and Beethoven to Wagner and Mahler.

Goethe expressly intended his 1799 poem *Die erste Walpurgisnacht* for a musical setting, entrusting it to the composer Carl Friedrich Zelter, who made three unsuccessful attempts over the course of several years before ultimately abandoning the project. Yet Zelter unwittingly provided the solution to this dilemma when in 1821 he introduced his septuagenarian friend to his 12-year-old composition pupil, Felix Mendelssohn.

Goethe, who had heard Mozart perform at age 7, pronounced young Felix an even greater prodigy: "What this little man can do in extemporizing and playing at sight borders the miraculous, and I could not have believed it possible at so early an age." In spite of a six-decade age difference, the two struck up a fast friendship via correspondence and the occasional meeting at Weimar. The last of these occurred as Mendelssohn embarked on a trip to Italy (which would result in his beloved A-major "Italian" symphony) and it was then that Goethe entrusted his young scion with the *Walpurgisnacht* text.

In his poem, Goethe depicts the very first St. Walpurgis' Night (held each April 30), the name deriving from a Christian attempt to co-opt a pagan festival that welcomed spring but had long been rumored to involve witchcraft and Satan worship. Belief in witches had waned during the Enlightenment, so here Goethe retcons the origin of the celebration as an attempt by Druids (in actuality, Saxons) to ward off Christian soldiers bent on disrupting their peaceful rituals by playing into the Christians' fears and superstitions.

"It seems that the German heathen priests and elders," wrote Goethe, "after they had been driven out of their holy groves and Christianity had been forced upon them, went with their faithful followers to the wild, inaccessible peaks of the Harz Mountains in the beginning of the spring, there (in the old way) to direct prayer and flame to the formless God of heaven and earth. Now, in order to secure against the armed missionaries who were tracking them, they found it good to disguise a number of themselves and thereby to hold their superstitious enemies at bay, and, protected by devils' masks, to fulfill the purest service to God."

Mendelssohn's "Ballade for chorus and orchestra" opens with an extended overture depicting a winter storm giving way to spring. Each section follows its predecessor without pause, forging ahead with a dramatic impetus that equals any operatic finale of the day. Hector Berlioz praised the "impeccable clarity" of the score. "Voices and instruments are completely integrated, running in opposite directions, even colliding, with an apparent disorder that is the perfection of art." He singled out for praise the concluding chorus: "One scarcely knows what to admire most in this finale—the orchestral or the choral writing, or the whirlwind movement of the whole!"

—Jeff Eldridge

Soprano

Barb Anderson
Ann Bridges
Karen Dunstan
Susanna Erber
Hsing-Hui Hsu
Peggy Hudson
Alivia Jones
Peggy Kurtz §
Veena Ramakrishnan
Kyla Roberts
Ananya Saxena
Cassie Van Pay
Jennylynn Vidas

Alto

Anjali Chudasama
Jennifer Chung
Deanna Fryhle
Pamela Ivezić
Ellen Kaisse
Jan Kinney
Theodora Letz §
Laurie Medill

Tenor

Dan Charlson §
Sixing Chen
Steve Kauffman
Aaron Keyt
Lincoln Klopfenstein
Lyon Stewart
Rick Thompson

Bass

Juan Pablo Bustos
Stephen Carl
Rory Flannery
Andrew Jones
Jeremy Pfister Schneider
Gabe Salmon
Steve Tachell
Derrick White
William Willaford §
Rick Wyckoff

Violin

Leah Anderson*
Susan Beals
Lauren Daugherty
Dean Drescher
Stephen Hegg
Jason Hershey
Manchung Ho
Fritz Klein
Pam Kummert
Ellyn Liu
Gregor Nitsche
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Stephen Provine**
Elizabeth Robertson
Janet Showalter
Kenna Smith-Shangrow
June Spector

Viola

Deborah Daoust
Grant Hanner*
Katherine McWilliams
Stephanie Read
Karoline Vass
Alexa Woodard

Cello

Christy Johnson
Max Lieblich
Kira McDaniel
Katie Sauter Messick
Valerie Ross
Matthew Wyant*

Bass

Jo Hansen
Ericka Kendall
Kevin McCarthy
Steven Messick*

** *concertmaster*

* *principal*

§ *section leader*

Flute

Virginia Knight Janof
Shari Muller-Ho*

Piccolo

Lisa Hirayama

Oboe

Yuh-Pey Lin*
Margaret Siple

Clarinet

Steven Noffsinger*
Chris Peterson

Bassoon

Aaron Chang
Jeff Eldridge*

French Horn

JJ Barrett
Laurie Heidt*
Carey LaMothe
Robin Stangland

Trumpet

Patrick Hunninghake
Janet Young*

Trombone

John Griffin*
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Eric Hodel & Hsing-Hui Hsu

Eric Ishino & Ron Shiley

Virginia Knight Janof

& Tim Janof

Katherine McWilliams

& Curt Feig

Kara Novak

Susan & David Ovens

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Liz Rush

Ellen M. Smith

June Spector & Max Lieblich ♪ ♪

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Rick Wyckoff & Carol Judge

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Rodney Combellick

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& Chris Bretherton

Eugene Duvernoy

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Kathleen Flood

Alison Heald

E. Kay Heikkinen

Laura & Michael Hooning

Sophie Hager Hume

Patrick Hunninghake

& Lyon Stewart

Maria Hunt & Moc Escobedo

Carol Jaeger

Sven & Marta Kalve

Pam Kummert

Carlin Ma

Jack Meyer

Marian Nachman

Ken & Lisa Nowakowski

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Julan Chu

Jennifer Chung & Aaron Keyt

Cristina Cruz-Uribe

Charles Doak

Genevieve Dreosch

Bridget Dubois

Cynthia Ely

The Gianola Family

Phillip Gladfelter

Sherman Griffin

Jamia Hansen-Murray

Laurie Heidt & Joe Jimenez

Ron and Virginia Hebron

Nori Heikkinen

Jim & Joanne Hendrickson ♪ ♪

Elizabeth Hewitt

William & Irmgard Hunt

Dana Jackson

Elizabeth Kennedy

& Robert Kechley

Jan Kinney

Penelope Koven

Kathy Kreps & Mark Wysoski

Yuh-Pey Lin

Ellyn Liu

Joseph & Helga Marceau

Jodi Markus

Lila Woodruff May

Rebecca Minich ♪ ♪

Judy Minninch

Erica Pardee ♪ ♪

Kyla Roberts

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Sheila Smith & Don Ferguson

Robin Stangland

Steve Tachell & Kathryn Weld

John Tirpak

Matthew Tracy

Peter & Tjitske van der Meulen

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Karoline Vass

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Matthew Wyant & Bonnie Light

Evelyn Yenson

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Lisa Hirayama • Jody Jacobs •

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Susan Lampe • Emily Leslie •

Anna & Jeffrey Lieblich •

Andrew Maki • Missy Meyer •

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In Honor of

David Brewer

Kyla DeRemer ♪

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Katherine McWilliams

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