

MUSIC CENTER
STRATHMORE

Strathmore Presents

**ORPHEUS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
WITH BRANFORD MARSALIS**

GENEROUSLY SPONSORED IN PART BY HELEN LOUISE PETTIS

Thursday, January 20, 2022, 8pm



PROGRAM

GIOACHINO ROSSINI: Overture to *The Barber of Seville*

COURTNEY BRYAN: *Carmen Jazz Suite on Themes by Bizet*

Branford Marsalis, *alto saxophone*

JOAQUÍN TURINA: *La oración del torero*

Intermission

CLAUDE DEBUSSY: *Rhapsody for alto saxophone & chamber orchestra*

Branford Marsalis, *alto saxophone*

JACQUES IBERT: *Concertino da camera*

Branford Marsalis, *alto saxophone*

This concert is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council. Orpheus is represented by Dorn Music. Orpheus has recorded for Deutsche Grammophon, Sony Classical, EMI Classics, BMG/RCA Red Seal, Decca, Nonesuch, Verve, Avex Classics, and its own label, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra Records.



Photo by Palma Kolansky

BIOGRAPHIES

ORPHEUS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

In 1972, a group of young artists made history by creating an orchestra without a conductor in which musicians led themselves democratically. Since then, the Grammy award-winning **Orpheus Chamber Orchestra** has recorded over 70 albums on all major classical labels, toured to 46 countries across 4 continents, and collaborated with hundreds of world-class soloists.

Orpheus' 34 member musicians work together as a collective and rotate leadership roles for all works performed, giving flight to unconventional interpretations. This democratic structure also extends to organizational functions including programming and governance: the orchestra elects three members to Artistic Director positions and three to the Board of Trustees.

An essential part of New York City's cultural landscape, Orpheus presents an annual series at Carnegie Hall. Orpheus tours to major international venues and has appeared regularly in Japan for 30 years; recent engagements include the Prague Spring and Dresden Music Festivals and a 12-concert tour of Asia. The orchestra's extensive discography includes a June 2021 release on Nonesuch Records with pianist Brad Mehldau, and the monumental 55 CD box set of Orpheus' complete recordings on Deutsche Grammophon released in August 2021. Orpheus has commissioned and premiered over 50 new works.

Orpheus shares its collaborative model through education and community engagement initiatives that promote equity and access to the arts for listeners of all ages around the world. These include programs for K-12 students, opportunities for emerging professional musicians, and a music and wellness program for people living with Alzheimer's Disease and other forms of dementia.

BRANFORD MARSALIS

The world first came to know saxophonist **Branford Marsalis** as a visionary jazz artist, a status reflected in his being named an NEA Jazz Master and his Grammy Awards. At the same time, Marsalis has gained growing recognition for his performances with symphonic and chamber classical ensembles. In addition to a repertoire including works by Debussy, Glazunov, Ibert, Mahler, Milhaud, Rorem and Vaughan Williams, Marsalis has premiered new works by contemporary composers Sally Beamish and Gabriel Prokofiev. Marsalis has appeared with orchestral and chamber ensembles internationally including the New York Philharmonic, the Chicago, Cincinnati, Detroit, Dusseldorf, North Carolina, and Toronto Symphonies, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the Boston Pops and the Kontras Quartet. Praised by the *New York Times* for bringing "a graceful poise and supple tone...and an insouciant swagger" to his classical performances, Marsalis has proven that his musical command knows no bounds.

PROGRAM NOTES

Carmen Jazz Suite on Themes by Bizet, written for the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra featuring Branford Marsalis, is a contemporary take on Bizet's classic 1875 opera, *Carmen*. In this version of the timeless story, Carmen's voice is centered, as portrayed by Branford Marsalis. The music features her freedom, love, and fearlessness, celebrating an imagined world in which Carmen lives and wins.

The suite begins with *Carmen's Freedom*. Carmen is free and unbound. Following an improvised introduction by Marsalis, the celli enter with Bizet's iconic ostinato from "L'amour est un oiseau rebelle," which is based on the Cuban rhythm, *habañera*. In honor of the historical music of Congo Square of New Orleans, the hometown of Branford Marsalis and myself, the string section layers entrances with figures based on various African-derived rhythmic cells (by West Africa, often by way of

Haiti and Cuba) that would have been heard at Congo Square – the *habañera*, *tresillo* or *bamboula*, *cinquillo*, and a 3-2 clave. Bizet’s melody is played by Marsalis with responses from the orchestra and continues into an improvisation on the themes.

Carmen’s Loves begins with a 2-3 clave in the percussion. Carmen is still free and unbound and begins to contemplate her loves. While Marsalis plays Carmen’s seguidilla melody, “Près des remparts de Séville,” the clarinet and oboe later state Bizet’s theme of danger before the bassoon enters with a theme from Don José’s “La fleur que tu m’avais jetée.” Later in this section, the horn and trumpet alternate playing the theme from Escamillo’s toreador song, “Votre toast je peux pas le rendre,” supported by the string section figures from the initial Habañera theme. Carmen’s two loves serve as

secondary themes, while her seguidilla melody remains the primary theme.

Carmen’s Omen of Death is based on the card scene when Carmen sings of her impending fate in the original opera. This theme is a key part of the story, and here it is expanded upon including improvisation. There is a feeling of defiance and yet one of resignation. Yet, for the final section, in a twist on the original story, *Carmen Defeats Death*. This section is based on themes from Act IV, from the duet between Don José and Carmen, “C’est toi? C’est moi!” Particularly, inspiration comes from Carmen’s statement, “Jamais Carmen ne cédera! Libre elle est née, et libre elle mourra!” (“I won’t give in, this is goodbye! Free I was born, and free I shall die!”) Yet, Carmen escapes her expected fate. She lives and is heard rising towards freedom.

MUSICIANS

VIOLIN

Ronnie Bauch
Abigail Fayette
Laura Frautschi
Njioma Grevious
Liang-Ping How
Renée Jolles
Adelya Nartadjieva

VIOLA

Ramon Carrero-Martínez
Nardo Poy
Caeli Smith

CELLO

Madeline Fayette
Melissa Meell

DOUBLE BASS

Jordan Frazier

FLUTE

Anthony Trionfo

OBOE

James Austin Smith

CLARINET

Alan Kay

BASSOON

Gina Cuffari

HORN

Zohar Schondorf

TRUMPET

Carl Albach

TIMPANI

Maya Gunji

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Gregg August, *bass*

HONORARY MEMBERS

Richard Goode
Lizabeth Newman
Richard Prins
Connie Steensma

EMERITUS MEMBERS

Martha Caplin, *violin*
Sarah Clarke, *viola*
Nicolas Danielson, *violin*
Matthew Dine, *oboe*
Guillermo Figueroa, *violin*
Maureen Gallagher, *viola*
Joanna Jenner, *violin*
David Jolley, *horn*
Kyu Young Kim, *violin*
Julia Lichten, *cello*
Charles Neidich, *clarinet*

William Purvis, *horn*
David Singer, *clarinet*
Naoko Tanaka, *violin*

IN MEMORIAM

Dennis Godburn
Charles William Henry