

OUR 116TH SEASON OF FREE CLASSICAL MUSIC
CONCERTS FOR THE PEOPLE OF NEW YORK



NAUMBURG
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

PRESENTS

THE KNIGHTS

TUESDAY, JUNE 15, 2021 • 7:30PM

The Historic Naumburg Bandshell on the Concert Ground of Central Park
Please visit NAUMBURGCONCERTS.ORG for more information on our series.

TUESDAY, JUNE 15, 2021 ▪ 7:30PM

In celebration of 116 years of Free Concerts for the people of New York City -
The oldest continuous free outdoor concert series in the world

Tonight's concert is being broadcast live on classical WQXR - 105.9 FM -
and via live stream at www.wqxr.org with WQXR host Jeff Spurgeon

NAUMBURG ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS PRESENTS
THE KNIGHTS
GIL SHAHAM, Violin & AOIFE O'DONOVAN, Vocals

GEORGE T. WALKER (1922- 2018)

Lyric for Strings, (1946)

AOIFE O'DONOVAN (1982-)

America, Come, featuring Aoife O'Donovan, vocals (New York Premiere)

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

arr. Michael P. Atkinson (b. 1978),

Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 61, (1806),

featuring Gil Shaham, violin soloist

1. Allegro ma non troppo
2. Larghetto
3. Rondo: Allegro

The performance of The Knights has been made
possible by a generous grant from
The MacDonald-Peterson Foundation

The summer season of 2021 honors the memory of our past President,
MICHELLE R. NAUMBURG

PROGRAM NOTES

The Knights

The Knights are a collective of adventurous musicians dedicated to transforming the orchestral experience and eliminating barriers between audiences and music. Driven by an open-minded spirit of camaraderie and exploration, they inspire listeners with vibrant programs that encompass their roots in the classical tradition and passion for artistic discovery. The orchestra has toured and recorded with renowned soloists including Yo-Yo Ma, Dawn Upshaw, Béla Fleck, and Gil Shaham, and has performed at Carnegie Hall, Tanglewood, and the Vienna Musikverein. The Knights evolved from late-night chamber music reading parties with friends at the home of violinist Colin Jacobsen and cellist Eric Jacobsen, who serve as the group's artistic directors. This is their twelfth appearance with the Naumburg Orchestral Concerts.

The Knights are proud to be known as “one of Brooklyn’s sterling cultural products...known far beyond the borough for their relaxed virtuosity and expansive repertory” (*The New Yorker*). Their roster boasts musicians of remarkably diverse talents, including composers, arrangers, singer-songwriters, and improvisers, who bring a range of cultural influences to the group, from jazz and klezmer to pop and indie rock music. The unique camaraderie within the group retains the intimacy and spontaneity of chamber music in performance. Through the palatable joy and friendship in their music-making, each musician strives to include new and familiar audiences to experience this important art form.

Counted among the highlights from recent seasons are: a fully-staged version of Leonard Bernstein’s *Candide* in honor of his 100th birthday at both the Tanglewood Music Festival and the Ravinia Festival; the premiere of *The Head and the Load* with international artist William Kentridge at London’s Tate Modern and New York’s Park Avenue Armory; the recording of Prokofiev’s Second Violin Concerto on master violinist Gil Shaham’s Grammy-nominated 2016 release, *1930s Violin Concertos, Vol.2* and a performance in the NY PHIL BIENNIAL along with the San Francisco Girls Chorus (led by composer Lisa Bielawa) and the Brooklyn Youth Chorus, which featured world premieres by Rome Prize-winner Bielawa, Pulitzer Prize-winner Aaron Jay Kernis, and Knights violinist and co-founder Colin Jacobsen. The ensemble made its Carnegie Hall debut in the New York premiere of the Steven Stucky/Jeremy Denk opera *The Classical Style*, and has toured the U.S. with banjo virtuoso Béla Fleck and Europe with soprano Dawn Upshaw.

Other recordings include the critically acclaimed *Azul*, released in 2016; 2015’s “instinctive and appealing” (*The Times*, UK) *the ground beneath our feet* on Warner Classics; an all-Beethoven disc on Sony Classical; and 2012’s “smartly programmed” (NPR) *A Second of Silence for Ancalagon*.

Gil Shaham – violin soloist

Gil Shaham is one of the foremost violinists of our time, whose combination of flawless technique with inimitable warmth and generosity of spirit has solidified his legacy as a beloved master. He is sought after for concerto appearances as well as for recital and ensemble performances in the world’s most hallowed concert halls and most prestigious festivals.

Shaham regularly performs with the world’s top orchestras including the New York Philharmonic, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Vienna Philharmonic, the Berlin Philharmonic, the Bavarian Radio Symphony, the Dresden Staatskapelle, the Israel Philharmonic and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, among others. In addition to his many orchestral engagements, Gil Shaham is an avid recitalist, chamber musician, and proponent of new works. He regularly collaborates with musical colleagues: composers William Bolcom, Bright Sheng and Avner Dorman; pianists Yefim Bronfman, Akira Eguchi and sister Orli Shaham; cellists Truls Mørk and Lynn Harrell, and his wife violinist Adele Anthony.

Shaham’s broad discography encompasses over 30 recordings including many award-winning discs, including multiple Grammys, a Grand Prix du Disque, a Diapason d’Or and Gramophone Editor’s Choice. Since 2004 Shaham’s recordings have been produced for his own label, Canary Classics, include Nigunim: Hebrew Melodies with Orli Shaham, *Butterfly Lovers* and the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto; *Sarasate: Virtuoso Violin Works* with Adele Anthony, Akira Eguchi and Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León. 2014 saw the release, to wide critical acclaim, of Volume 1 in his 1930s Violin Concertos (CC12) series encompassing concertos by Barber, Stravinsky, Berg, Hartmann and Britten, and in 2012 released his landmark recording of JS Bach’s solo sonatas and partitas (CC14), and in 2016 the Grammy nominated recording and second instalment in his 1930s Violin Concertos featuring Prokofiev and Bartók’s second violin concertos (CC16).

Shaham was awarded the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant in 1990, and in 2008 he received the coveted Avery Fisher Award, presented live on national television in the USA by conductor Gustavo Dudamel.

In 2012, he was named ‘Instrumentalist of the Year’ by *Musical America*, which cited the ‘special kind of humanism’ with which his performances are imbued.

Aoife O’Donovan – vocal soloist and composer

Grammy award-winning songwriter and musician Aoife O’Donovan is one of the most sought-after singers and songwriters of her generation. She has released 3 critically-acclaimed solo albums, is co-founder of the bands I’m With Her and Crooked Still, is the featured vocalist on The Goat Rodeo Sessions with Yo-Yo Ma, Stuart Duncan, Edgar Meyer, and Chris Thile, and spent a decade contributing to the radio variety shows “Live From Here” and “A Prairie Home Companion”.

For the lyrics to this evening’s songs – see naumburgconcerts.org

THE KNIGHTS

VIOLIN I

Colin Jacobsen
Sarah Vonsattel
Yaira Matyakubova

VIOLIN II

Christina Courtin
Kristi Helberg
Rebecca Anderson

VIOLA

Kyle Armbrust
Mario Gotoh

CELLO

Caitlin Sullivan
Jane Cords O’Hara

BASS

Lizzie Burns

FLUTE

Alex Sopp

OBOE

Liam Boisset

CLARINET

Agnes Marchione

BASSOON

Edward Burns

HORN

Michael P Atkinson
David Byrd-Marrow

TRUMPET

Gareth Flowers

TROMBONE

Mike Boschen
Nate Mayland

TIMPANI

David Stevens

For a downloadable program of tonight’s performance go to our website naumburgconcerts.org

Naumburg Orchestral Concerts

Thanks Pati Dynes our Production Stage Manager, and WQXR’s Ed Yim, Eileen Delahunty, Christine Herskovits, Matt Abramovitz & colleagues and Ed Haber, George Wellington & their sound and audio team.

It also thanks our graphic designer, Brian Chojnowski and our volunteers: Susan Angermeier, Amy Friedner, David Hutchinson, Danish Kinariwala, William McCauley.

MUSIC PAVILION

In 1859 Jacob Wrey Mould, an amateur musician and the architect who designed many of the original structures in Central Park, persuaded his wealthy friends to pay for free band concerts at a temporary bandstand in the Ramble, and he arranged their musical programs. The first concert, on July 13, included the Festival March from *Tannhäuser*, Mendelssohn's song, "I would that my Love," selections from *La Traviata* and Strauss's Sorgenbrecher Waltz. In the **summer of 1860** concerts were transferred to the **Mall**, and *The New York Herald* reported that the September 22 concert attracted "at least five thousand persons gathered around the performers, while outside of these were stationed an immense number of carriages...filled with the beauty and fashion of New York." The overwhelming popularity of the concerts prompted Central Park's board to finance them and to build a permanent Music Pavilion on the west side of the Mall near the Terrace. Mould designed the elaborately painted and brightly gilded Moorish-style wooden and cast-iron structure, completed in 1862. The Parks Department razed the Music Pavilion in 1923.

The Naumburg Bandshell, a gift of Elkan Naumburg 'to the City of New York and its Music Lovers', replaced in purpose the former structure. Though the Naumburg Bandshell opened on September 29th 1923, the Art Commission of New York had approved of the change in 1912 and the design of the Bandshell in 1916. "On the Mall", composed by Edwin F. Goldman in 1923, to honor Elkan Naumburg, was premiered that September afternoon, conducted by Franz Kaltenborn. Astonishingly, during that summer, 959 concerts were presented on the Concert Ground, over 400 of which were underwritten by the Parks Department. It was a popular place, providing a well-like activity.

The design of the Bandshell has historic precedents in the Pantheon of Rome, or more closely, the Imperial Russian pleasure park's pavilion at Gatchina Palace, by Vincenzo Brenna, his 'Eagle Pavilion' of the 1790's, and the later work of the architect F.G.P. Poccianti, his 'Cisternone' at Livorno of 1829-42. It has historic precedents for its function in the outdoor theatres and pavilions of Versailles, for example, or the temples and 'eye-catchers' found in park-like gardens of British country houses such as Stourhead and Stowe. The use of European park architecture as a model for what to insert in Central Park was in keeping with Olmsted's design sources and methods of nearly 60 years earlier. The Naumburg Bandshell was set into the Manhattan schist hillside, which nestles it, to prevent views being blocked across the Mall and Concert Ground which caused an earlier proposal of Carrère & Hastings to be found wanting by city and park officials. Thoughtfully, the design also stands centered between the two projecting pergola viewing points, and it admirably reflects the architect William G. Tachau's (nephew of Elkan Naumburg) own Ecole des Beaux-Arts classicist and historicist training. The result was Central Park's only Neo-Classical building. For Central Park, **it is also a singular and excellent example of the 'City Beautiful Movement' in architecture**, widely popular across America when it was designed.



From a Tiffany & Co. card © 1995

THE MALL, CENTRAL PARK

Saturday, May 23, 1874

The double rows of American Elms, planted fourteen years earlier, create a green tunnel. Sunlight filters through the canopy of new leaves and throws dappled patterns of light and shade on the gravel walk. It is a beautiful day, the Mall is crowded: ladies in voluminous skirts and colorful hats; Irish nurses in bonnets and white aprons, pushing baby carriages; gentlemen in frock coats and top hats; a few young clerks in stylish broadcloth suits; the children in a variety of dress, miniature versions of their parents. It is a decorous crowd; tomorrow - Sunday - is when working people have a holiday and attendance will be even larger.

At the north end of the Mall, on the west side, is the bandstand. Mould has pulled out all the stops for this design. The raised platform is covered by a Moorish-style cupola, dark blue and covered with gilt stars. It is topped by a sculpture of a lyre. The roof is supported by crimson cast-iron columns. The bandstand is unoccupied - the Saturday-afternoon concerts start next month. The annual summer series is so popular - **up to forty-five thousand people attend** - that the park board has provided extra seating and has taken the unprecedented step of allowing listeners to sit on the grass. Not everyone admires these free concerts. "The barriers and hedges of society for the time being are let down," sniffs the Times, "unfortunately also a few of its decencies are forgotten."

The barriers of society are not altogether absent. Across the Mall from the bandstand is a broad concourse where the wealthy park their carriages and, separated from the lower orders by a long wisteria arbor, listen to the music in comfortable isolation. Beside the concourse stands a large one-story building with a swooping tiled roof and deep overhanging eaves. Originally the Ladies Refreshment Stand, it has recently been converted into a restaurant called the Casino.

— An excerpt from Witold Rybczynski—*A Clearing in the Distance*, pp.317-18 in which a letter of Frederick Law Olmsted—a principal designer of Central Park is quoted

THE NAUMBURG BANDSHELL AND MUSICAL CONCERTS AT THIS SITE

Central Park has hosted outdoor concerts on the Concert Ground since the park opened in the mid-nineteenth century. The site's design offers great natural beauty and tranquility for those who attend its live musical performances.

This free musical series was established by Elkan Naumburg, a philanthropist and ardent supporter of classical music, for the purpose of encouraging and stimulating the public's interest in symphonic and semi-classical music. Our outdoor summer performances, begun in 1905, are the oldest classical music series of its type in the world. The events now feature promising new classical music talent, with many performers being young and often New York based. The concerts also promote the professional development of young composers and conductors, featuring newly commissioned music, and new arrangements.

We welcome your support, contributions and suggestions. We would also like to enlarge our financial reserves so that we can both improve and expand our own concert schedule. So, please feel free to speak to one of us at a concert, or write to the [Contacts] on the Naumburg Orchestral Concerts website, **naumburgconcerts.org**.

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updated 8 June 2021 – please contact us with any corrections.

FROM E.B. WHITE'S *HERE IS NEW YORK*, 1949

Another hot night I stop off at the band concert in the Mall in Central Park. The people seated on the benches fanned out in front of the band shell are attentive, appreciative. In the trees the night wind sings, bringing leaves to life, endowing them with speech; the electric lights illuminate the green branches from the under side, translating them into a new language. On a bench directly in front of me, a boy sits with his arm around his girl; they are proud of each other and are swathed in music. The cornetist steps forward for a solo, begins, "Drink to me only with thine eyes..." In the wide, warm night the horn is startlingly pure and magical. Then from the North River another horn solo begins—the "Queen Mary" announcing her intentions. She is not on key; she is a half tone off. The trumpeter in the bandstand never flinches. The horns quarrel savagely, but no one minds having the intimation of travel injected into the pledge of love. "I leave," sobs Mary. "And I will pledge with mine," sighs the trumpeter. Along the asphalt paths strollers pass to and fro: they behave considerately, respecting the musical atmosphere. Popsicles are moving well. In the warm grass beyond the fence, forms wriggle in the shadows, and the skirts of girls approaching on the Mall are ballooned by the breeze, and their bare shoulders catch the lamplight. "Drink to me only with thine eyes." It is a magical occasion, and it's all free.

We hope you enjoy tonight's musical performance presented by the Naumburg Orchestral Concerts. We need your support in order to help fund these concerts. Please either stop at the reception desk on the Concert Ground to donate or join our mailing list, or visit our website to learn how to donate online or join our email list:
naumburgconcerts.org

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