







CU ★ PRESENTS



MARCH-APRIL 2024

-  Takács Quartet March 10-11
-  Titanic, the Musical March 15-17
-  Ray Chen and Julio Elizalde March 21
-  Asleep at the Wheel April 5
-  American Stories April 25-28
-  Takács Quartet April 28-29

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Asleep at the Wheel with the CU Boulder Symphony Orchestra comes to Macky Auditorium on April 5 Photo by Jeff Fasano.

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MARCH-APRIL 2024

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College of Music: *Promotional art for Titanic*, the Musical

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Asleep at the Wheel to work with CU Boulder Symphony Orchestra to bring western swing to life

By Adam Goldstein

Symphonic music and country and western swing may seem like unlikely bedfellows for fans of either genre.

But according to Ray Benson, frontman of the world-renowned, Grammy Award-winning country group Asleep at the Wheel, the pairing of classical strings and honky-tonk twang isn't a new combination. The band will join the CU Boulder Symphony Orchestra and College of Music students for an exceptional performance at Macky Auditorium on April 5. Benson says the fusion of strings, guitars and country swagger will draw on a long-established musical partnership.

"We offer audiences a unique symphony show, in my opinion," Benson said, adding that Asleep at the Wheel has played symphonic concerts across the United States since the early 2000s.

"We play a genre of music called western swing which has roots in old-time fiddle music, country music, jazz, country and blues."

The 1940s saw a rare and ambitious fusion of styles. Western swing artists like Bob Wills, Milton Brown and Hank Thompson melded the folk roots of country music with the lush instrumental expressions of big band music, jazz and other idioms. Asleep at the Wheel continues that approach and—teaming up with the CU Boulder Symphony Orchestra—will bring the full scope of the genre to life for audiences.

The value of the show isn't limited to ticket holders. CU Boulder students will also play a role in the concert, a collaboration that echoes previous performances by Asleep at the Wheel on our campus.

"Fiddles are a big part of what we do and combining that approach with classically trained string musicians is very special. It's not often that you get a collaboration of these styles," Benson said. "We hope music students find this combination interesting and possibly educational."

Indeed, the value of the collaboration for CU Boulder students is immeasurable, according to Joan Braun, Executive Director of CU Presents and the College of Music's Assistant Dean for Concerts and Communications. This concert will offer students learning opportunities that aren't available in a classroom; it gives aspiring musicians the chance to work with award-winning artists in person.

"These are opportunities for our students to be on stage and to interact professionally with an award-winning touring band. That is unique and valuable," Braun said. "Part of our mission is to bring artists to Boulder that audiences wouldn't otherwise experience ... It's an opportunity to see a world-class act without going to New York or Los Angeles. You can see it right here at Macky Auditorium. That is a huge value."

There's also a benefit to the collaboration for the members of Asleep at the Wheel. Working with students and orchestral musicians on this stop gives the band the scope and framework to fully realize their tribute to an American genre forgotten by some.

"We encourage everyone to come out and check out this collaboration," Benson said. "We cover lots of musical ground and we've had some great charts written for the symphony. We always have a great time doing these symphony orchestra shows."

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March 15-17, 2024

CU Macky Auditorium



Ray Chen, violin and Julio Elizalde, piano

Thursday, March 21, 7:30 p.m.

★ Macky Auditorium



Asleep at the Wheel

With the CU Symphony Orchestra

Friday, April 5, 7:30 p.m.

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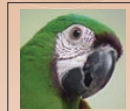


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A haunting double bill

By Henry Michaels

An open door. A broken window. Ghostly visages from the past. All this and more will feature on stage when the CU Boulder College of Music's Eklund Opera Program presents *American Stories by American Women*, an exciting operatic double bill featuring two uniquely American stories.

Amy Beach's 1932 chamber opera *Cabildo* is a story within a story. The frame sees a group of sightseers touring New Orleans' Cabildo, a government building that once held the imprisoned pirate Pierre Lafitte. After one of the tourists falls asleep in Lafitte's cell—a completely normal place for a nap—the action moves to her dreams of the imprisoned pirate. It's here that most of the roughly 45-minute-long opera's action takes place, including a prison escape, a visit from a lover's ghost and a War of 1812 connection.

Written in 2018, Missy Mazzoli's *Proving Up* is the tale of a family of Nebraska homesteaders seeking to achieve ownership of their land by satisfying the requirements—proving

up—of the Homestead Act: "House of sod, acres of grain, five years of harvest, a window of glass." It's a dark tale of a family haunted—figuratively and literally—by the ghosts of daughters lost to the harshness of prairie life: A father willing to do whatever it takes to prove up, a mother terrified of losing more children and a son confronted by a menacing stranger.

On one level, the American stories presented in Beach's and Mazzoli's operas could not be more different. The moment when the specter of Lafitte's lover idealistically exhorts him to "Pay thy debt to America," for example, seems worlds away from the grim portrait of American homesteading life in *Proving Up*.

Perhaps what they share, then, is a kind of idealism undercut by the reality that the American dream is complicated. Pierre Lafitte ultimately clears his name by fighting alongside Andrew Jackson, a moment of patriotism spurred on by the ghost of his lost love. Yet the pirate hero also participated in the slave trade,

a fact mentioned by the chorus of tourists in Beach's opera—"The Lafittes sold slaves ... Sold their slaves like cattle in the city"—a heavy statement that is flippantly answered by the tour guide's "Right-O!"

For the family in Mazzoli's opera, the Homestead Act and the idea of Manifest Destiny that it represented were built upon layers of exploitation: The settlers used as pawns in an attempt to expand American territory, but also the existing people whose land was stolen and "proved up." The father in *Proving Up* is desperate to achieve the American Dream for himself and his family, but at what cost? In the end, their story serves as a reminder that this dream is sometimes as fragile as a window of glass.

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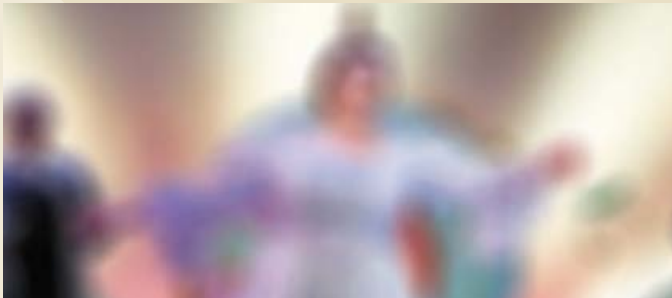
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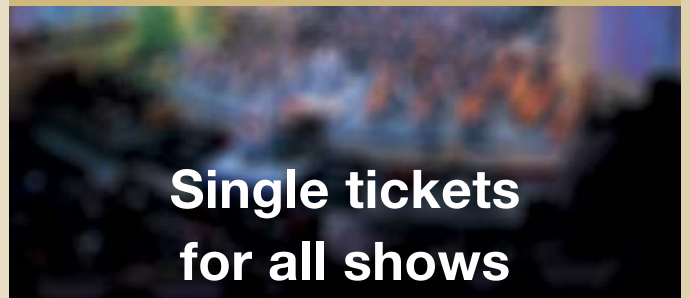
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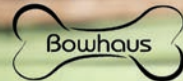
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Thompson Jazz Studies Program introduces new vocal jazz degree, new ensemble and more

By MarieFaith Lane

The College of Music is set to launch an exciting addition to its curriculum this fall—the new Bachelor of Music in Vocal Jazz degree in our Thompson Jazz Studies Program will offer intensive development of all aspects of musicianship as a jazz vocalist with study in jazz improvisation, theory, arranging, repertoire and history as well as individual study and performing in our jazz ensembles.

Professor of Jazz Studies John Gunther shares details of the long-anticipated program: “Thanks to the generous support of Jack and Jeannie Thompson, this program is finally coming to fruition. Jack and Jeannie are astute supporters of the College of

Music and are very involved and aware of the needs of the college.”

He continues, “The program is not only for aspiring jazz vocalists, as we hope it will serve the College of Music more broadly. Jazz improvisation is such an important part of the history of performance of American music and the skill sets that our musicians need to have in the 21st century.”

The methods incorporated into the Thompson Jazz program reflect a commitment to providing real-world experiences. Unlike traditional audition-based ensemble formation, the program embraces a unique approach. “Ensembles are formed without

auditions and then rotated every few weeks, fostering an environment where students of varying ages and experience levels come together and collaborate,” Gunther explains.

“This approach encourages students to build relationships, learn to communicate effectively and navigate the dynamics of working with musicians of varying backgrounds—mirroring the professional world, where collaboration is essential and musicians must adapt to different skill sets within the group.”

Developing and implementing the new degree program was both a response to internal recognition and driven by external demand. “The Jazz Studies department had been receiving inquiries from high school directors and prospective students eager to know when such a program would be offered,” Gunther says. “The call among young musicians for a broader experience is a clear recognition of the importance of engaging with contemporary music making, improvisation and diverse styles beyond their primary focus.”

Additionally, the jazz program has introduced a new extracurricular ensemble—Ralphie’s Ramblers—committed to embodying the spirit of New Orleans brass bands. Ralphie’s Ramblers ensures that students across disciplines have the opportunity to experience and collaborate in jazz in meaningful ways.

Looking ahead, over spring break, faculty and students from Thompson Jazz will spend a week-long intensive in Havana, studying and performing with master musicians of Afro-Cuban jazz, underscoring the College of Music’s commitment to providing a comprehensive education beyond the classroom walls.

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Takács Quartet

Haydn, Ngwenyama and Dvořák

4 p.m., Sunday, March 10, 2024

7:30 p.m., Monday, March 11, 2024

Grusin Music Hall

Program

String Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 76, No. 4 “Sunrise”

Joseph Haydn

- I. Allegro con spirito
- II. Adagio
- III. Minuet. Allegro - Trio
- IV. Finale. Allegro ma non troppo

Flow

Nokuthula Ngwenyama

- I. Prelude
- II. Lento
- III. Quark Scherzo
- IV. Finale

—Intermission—

String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 51 “Slavic”

Antonín Dvořák

- I. Allegro ma non troppo
- II. Dumka (Elegia). Andante con moto
- III. Romanza. Andante con moto
- IV. Finale. Allegro assai

NEED TO KNOW FOR THE SHOW

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- See **Page 9** of this publication for additional show and venue policies.

Program notes

*Haydn and Dvořák notes by Marc Shulgold
Ngwenyama note provided by the composer*

String Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 76, No. 4 “Sunrise”

Joseph Haydn

Life was rarely easy for the hundreds of composers seeking to earn a living in the late 18th century. Most had to elbow their way through a crowded field in order to be heard and hired by music-loving patrons. Mozart's struggles in Vienna are well-known. But then, there is Haydn, doubly blessed with a long life and a long association with members of the Esterházy, a wealthy Hungarian family who provided living quarters, steady employment and an on-call ensemble of fine players. A composer couldn't ask for more. (Well, a loving wife who didn't despise music would have been nice.) No wonder Haydn produced so many compositions: more than 100 symphonies, numerous sonatas, concertos, operas, choral works and a huge body of chamber pieces. In all, he wrote 83 string quartets, returning to this exciting new genre throughout his life—experimenting with its possibilities and stretching its boundaries (aided in no small measure by Mozart and his inspired thoughts on the subject).

After successful visits to London in 1791 and 1794, where his final symphonies were premiered, Haydn returned to Vienna as the greatest composer in Europe. No longer in the employ of the Esterházy in their lavish palace, he now joined the ranks of freelance composers seeking work. Not surprisingly, his lofty reputation brought him numerous offers once he settled back in his Austrian home. Among them was a commission in 1796 for six quartets from the Hungarian count Joseph Erdödy (brother-in-law of Haydn's former patron, Anton Esterházy). This would prove to be his last complete quartet collection. Two more quartets, released as Op. 77, would follow, along with a fragmentary piece published as Op. 103.

Finished in 1797, though not released for two more years, the half-dozen quartets of Op. 76 represent more than a taste of the composer's mature thoughts on the genre—they are among his greatest works, period. The B-flat Quartet, known as the “Sunrise,” became the most popular

and (critics have offered) perhaps the finest of the six. There is on every page abundant invention, charming wit, heartfelt soulfulness and memorable melody, starting with that evocative opening.

A gentle sustained chord supports a softly rising pair of phrases in the first violin—suggesting a sunrise that subsequently gave the work its nickname. Ever fond of exploring all the possibilities of minimal ideas, Haydn then inverts that simple rising motif and hands it to the cello for the movement's second theme (a “sunset,” perhaps?). Playful interaction among the four voices contrasts magically with those early moments of repose. More simplicity emerges in the *Adagio*, built on a dark recurring five-note phrase. Sunshine returns in the jaunty *Minuet*, a ballroom ditty that playfully contrasts with its central *Trio*, whose heavy beat, low drone and unison melody suggest a dance performed by common folk. Haydn's trademark wit is in full flower as the Finale unfolds, ending in an amusing, whirlwind treatment of the theme. Here, the players' talents are given a severe test, as Haydn instructs the music to be played fast, faster and, in a mind-boggling coda, fastest.

Flow

Nokuthula Ngwenyama

*Come in and out of silence
Tone swirling in the balance.
Nothing, then everything
Waving into space.*

*Then light.
And after a longer while
Air.
And now sixteen strings manually animated
Vibrating through time.*

When Harumi Rhodes of the celebrated Takács Quartet asked me about writing a piece for the group I was surprised, greatly honored and fearful. The string quartet is considered a “perfect” ensemble. It inspires delicacy, sensitivity and adventure. The core range is smaller than that of the piano, yet its timbre allows for beautiful interplay. Harumi asked that the quartet be about anything in the natural world, an idea requested by lead commissioner Cal Performances. Fortunately, patterns in music and science pair well, so that brought relief.

I researched a wide array of subjects for over a year. Topics included the life cycle, carbon reclamation,

environmental protection, animal communication, starling murmurations, our last universal common ancestor (LUCA), black hole collisions and the sub-atomic realm. I listened to the recordings of the Takács Quartet with gusto. Systems layered upon other systems revealed a common flow to existence tying us to the initial outburst of energy and matter at the birth of our universe.

Flow starts like gas seeping from an infinitely full balloon about to pop. Then, as matter inflates space, climactic material is presented almost immediately before abruptly burning out for the universal dark ages. The *Prelude* examines “B’ing/BE’ing” melodically and harmonically through moments of pranayama (the transformative power of breath). It ends with a trailing Om.

The *Lento* brings further cooling and space in chorale around an octave B-centric pedal. *Prelude* motifs are given room to develop.

Quark Scherzo explores our fundamentally playful selves vibrating here, there—and where? Our sub-atomic realm giddily waltzes up and down while we embrace the ideas of solidity and ego. The opening cello mimics quark motion. The trio, whose only claim to three are triplets in the cello line, provides no break for anyone and instead intones a ballade. The movement ends in virtuosic flurry.

The *Finale* settles into a stylized recitative where three lower strings solo before coming together to feature a soaring treble voice. Flowing triplets turn into a Classical Indian Dadra Tal (even six beat) rhythm in the bass line while upper strings bow their bouts simulating Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB) radiation. Upper strings join in via pizzicato glissandi. There is a return to the *Prelude* opening, then a slingshot into the ecstatic joy of starling murmurations. Lower strings continue unrelenting while violin lines blissfully chase one another, turning, merging and enjoying. They eventually land, the sky calms through long D overtone glissando, and a retreating tremolo reveals: Enjoy and go with the *Flow*, we only know what we know.

Heartfelt thanks to Harumi Rhodes and the entire Takács Quartet for asking a Divinity School graduate to write this. Thanks also to all of the commissioners: Cal Performances; University Musical Society; Shriver Hall Concerts; 92nd Street Y New York; Philadelphia Chamber Music Society; Friends of Chamber Music, Portland, Oregon;

BroadStage; Boston Celebrity Series; and Capital Region Classical (Schenectady, New York). Thanks also to musicians Dewa Putu Berata (director of Cudamani), I Wayan Arya Misha and Dewa Ogen for the opportunity to share and learn about different layers of instrumentation in Balinese Gamelan.

String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 51 “Slavic” Antonín Dvořák

The music world discovered Dvořák in 1878 with his enticing set of *Slavonic Dances*, published thanks to the enthusiastic prodding of Brahms. The talented Czech composer had already established himself as a fan of folk music with his charming collection of *Moravian Dances*, so it’s no surprise that he would soon be sought after by musicians anxious to pry more ethnic-flavored works from him. Which brings us to Jean Becker, first violinist of the renowned Florentine Quartet, who commissioned Dvořák to produce a work for the ensemble “in the Slavic style.” The result was Opus 51, the tenth string quartet, completed in a few months and unveiled at a private performance in July, 1879.

Folk tunes and dances predominate in this sunny composition. Just to be clear about that term “Slavic,” we’re talking Western and Southern Slavic styles, referring to Czech, Polish, Croatian, Bulgarian and other cultures from those regions, rather than Eastern Slavic, particularly Russian and Ukrainian. East European dance pulses and tunes appear everywhere. We sample the gentle Bohemian rhythms of the polka, heard in the opening *Allegro*, and the mournful strains of the second movement’s *Dumka* in G minor—the latter’s melody introduced in a violin-violin duet with guitar-like strumming from the cello. As folk traditions dictate, the *Dumka*’s achingly lovely melody is quickly chased off by a cheery middle section in G major, built on the bounce of the *furiant*, a rhythmically tricky Bohemian dance. The finale features a giddy Bohemian fiddle tune known as the *skačna*, reminiscent of an Irish reel.

That said, this work—the first of Dvořák’s mature string quartets (five more would follow)—is not merely a collection of sweet dance ditties. There is also a faithful approach to the technique of composition here. The first movement slavishly follows the structure of sonata form, while the finale is a clearly delineated rondo, one that even includes some old-fashioned counterpoint—all displaying

the composer's nimble juggling of classical discipline and folksy spontaneity. Apart from this adherence to the rules is Dvořák's unfailing gift for pure melody, best displayed in Opus 51's slow movement, a lovely, effortlessly flowing *Romanza*.

About the performers

The world-renowned **Takács Quartet** is now entering its 49th season.

Edward Dusinberre, **Harumi Rhodes** (violins), **Richard O'Neill** (viola) and **András Fejér** (cello) are excited about the 2023-2024 season that features varied projects including a new work written for them. Nokuthula Ngwenyama composed *Flow*, an exploration and celebration of the natural world. The work was commissioned by nine concert presenters throughout the USA. July sees the release of a new recording of works by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and Dvořák for Hyperion Records, while later in the season the quartet will release works by Schubert including his final quartet in G major. In the Spring of 2024 the ensemble will perform and record piano quintets by Price and Dvořák with long-time chamber music partner Marc-André Hamelin.

As Associate Artists at London's Wigmore Hall the Takács will perform four concerts featuring works by Hough, Price, Janacek, Schubert and Beethoven. During the season the ensemble will play at other prestigious European venues including Berlin, Geneva, Linz, Innsbruck, Cambridge and St. Andrews. The Takács will appear at the Adams Chamber Music Festival in New Zealand. The group's North American engagements include concerts in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington DC, Vancouver, Ann Arbor, Phoenix, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Portland, Cleveland, Santa Fe and Stanford. The ensemble will perform two Bartók cycles at San Jose State University and Middlebury College and appear for the first time at the Virginia Arts Festival with pianist Olga Kern.

The members of the Takács Quartet are Christoffersen Fellows and Artists in Residence at the University of Colorado Boulder. For the 23-24 season the quartet enter into a partnership with El Sistema Colorado, working closely with its chamber music education program in Denver. During the summer months the Takács join the faculty at the Music Academy of the West, running an intensive quartet seminar.

In 2021 the Takács won a Presto Music Recording of the Year Award for their recordings of string quartets by Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn, and a Gramophone Award with pianist Garrick Ohlsson for piano quintets by Amy Beach and Elgar. Other releases for Hyperion feature works by Haydn, Schubert, Janáček, Smetana, Debussy and Britten, as well as piano quintets by César Franck and Shostakovich (with Marc-André Hamelin), and viola quintets by Brahms and Dvořák (with Lawrence Power). For their CDs on the Decca/London label, the Quartet has won three Gramophone Awards, a Grammy Award, three Japanese Record Academy Awards, Disc of the Year at the inaugural BBC Music Magazine Awards, and Ensemble Album of the Year at the Classical Brits. Full details of all recordings can be found in the Recordings section of the Quartet's website.

The Takács Quartet is known for its innovative programming. In 2021-22 the ensemble partnered with bandoneon virtuoso Julien Labro to premiere new works by Clarice Assad and Bryce Dessner, commissioned by Music Accord. In 2014 the Takács performed a program inspired by Philip Roth's novel *Everyman* with Meryl Streep at Princeton, and again with her at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto in 2015. They first performed *Everyman* at Carnegie Hall in 2007 with Philip Seymour Hoffman. They have toured 14 cities with the poet Robert Pinsky, and played regularly with the Hungarian Folk group Muzsikás.

In 2014 the Takács became the first string quartet to be awarded the Wigmore Hall Medal. In 2012, Gramophone announced that the Takács was the first string quartet to be inducted into its Hall of Fame. The ensemble also won the 2011 Award for Chamber Music and Song presented by the Royal Philharmonic Society in London.

The Takács Quartet was formed in 1975 at the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest by Gabor Takács-Nagy, Károly Schranz, Gabor Ormai and András Fejér, while all four were students. The group received international attention in 1977, winning First Prize and the Critics' Prize at the International String Quartet Competition in Evian, France. The Quartet also won the Gold Medal at the 1978 Portsmouth and Bordeaux Competitions and First Prizes at the Budapest International String Quartet Competition in 1978 and the Bratislava Competition in 1981. The Quartet made its North American debut tour in 1982. Members of the Takács Quartet are the grateful beneficiaries of an instrument loan by the Drake Foundation.

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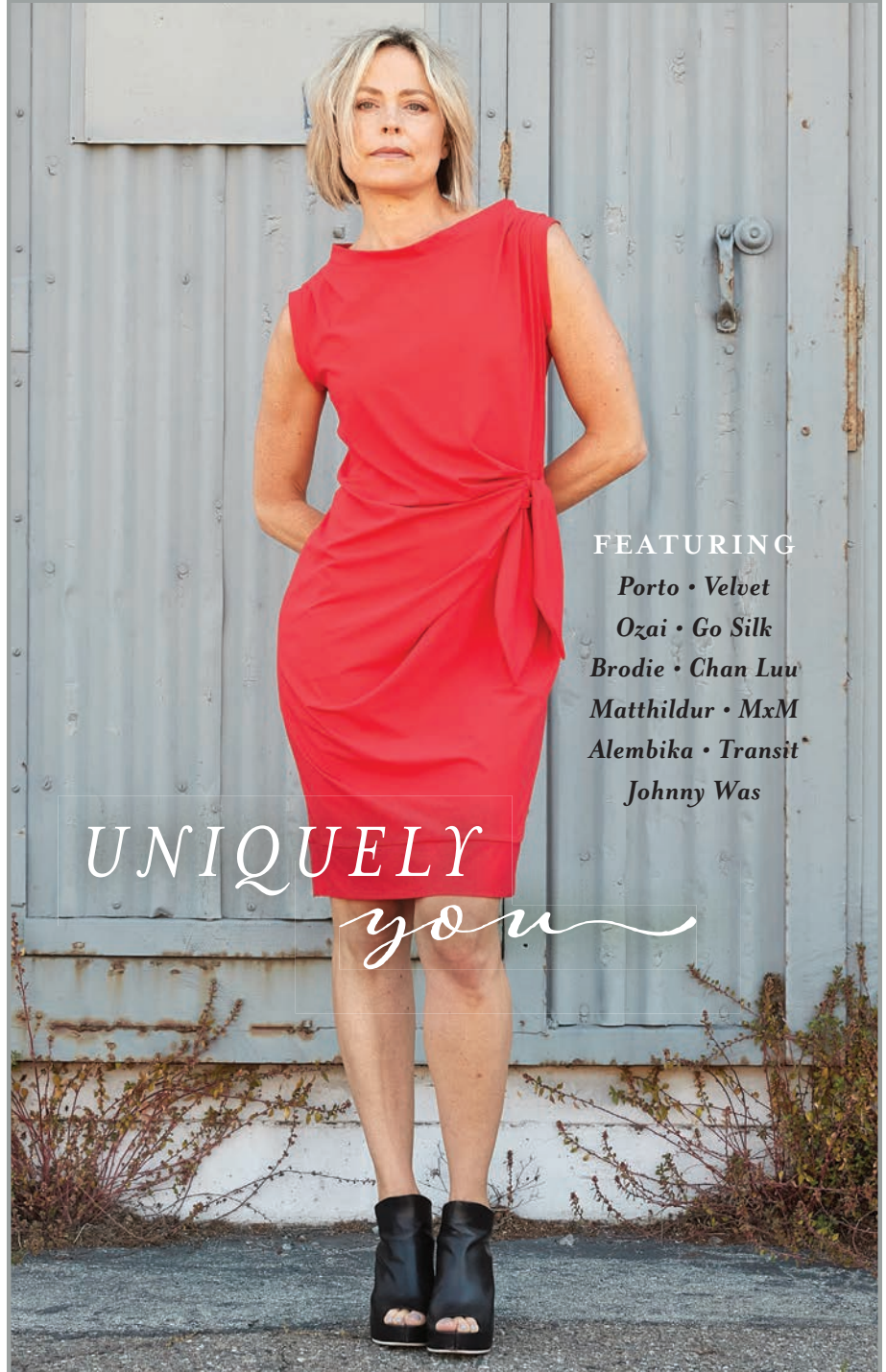
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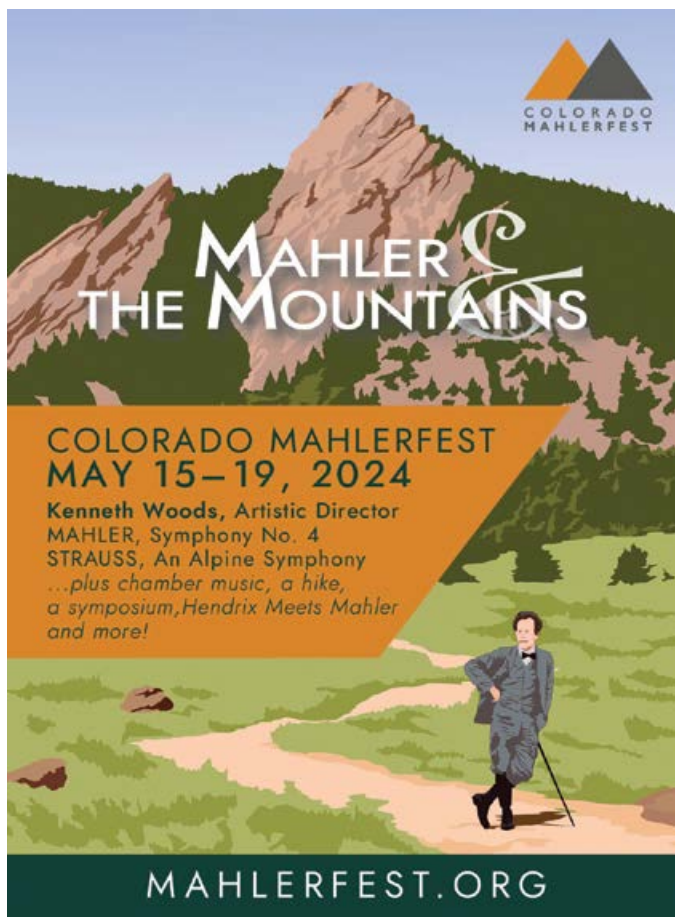
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Celebrating the legacy and impact of Anna Sie, lifelong supporter of the arts and humanity

By Allison Nitch

Known for her heartfelt philanthropy on both local and national levels, Anna Sie dedicated her life to supporting causes she felt passionate about, including students and faculty at the University of Colorado Boulder.

“She was really the most generous human being that I’ve ever met,” said CU Boulder alumna Michele Ritter (Anth’81) and University of Colorado Foundation trustee. “She really cared about people and issues, and if something came her way and she was able to make an impact—to make someone’s life better or to help in a broader way—she never missed an opportunity. She had this spirit about her that was open, generous, heartfelt and authentic.”

Sie left a powerful legacy of impact at CU Boulder, establishing a transformational student scholarship in the College of Music with her husband, John, and endowing several faculty chairs.

“At the College of Music, we aim to offer our students diverse opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration,” said John Davis, the college’s dean. “Such broad-based opportunities rely in no small part on the active, consistent engagement of our community of supporters. Anna Sie’s dedication to our college both indelibly impacted our students, programs and activities, and influenced others’ giving.”

“Anna Sie was extraordinarily committed to giving back, and in countless arenas, that is exactly what she and John accomplished for many years,” agreed Daniel Sher, College of Music dean emeritus.

“Anna was a superb partner with John, and she will be remembered for her generosity of spirit as much as philanthropic generosity.”

Changing lives through scholarships

Sie’s love of music led to the sponsorship of a student scholarship program at CU Boulder’s College of Music, which changed the lives of more than a dozen former students, including the accomplished opera singer Wei Wu (MMus’13).

After hearing then-student Wu perform at Central City Opera in 2007, the Sies were struck by the raw talent of this young man, explained Ritter. His performance inspired the couple to generously contribute to CU Boulder’s Eklund Opera Fund—specifically to support two Chinese opera singers, Wu and Yang Bo, beginning in the 2008-09 academic year.

Now a Grammy Award-winning bass, Wu trained at the People University of China, Beijing, before continuing his education at CU Boulder.

“Auntie Anna, also known as Mrs. Sie, always humbly said, ‘I am only a small part of your success,’” shared Wu. “However, I know deep down that her and Uncle John’s kindness and generosity played a significant role in my achievements.”

He continued, “She never expected anything in return, always welcoming me into her family with open arms. We cooked, laughed and shared countless memories together. She made me feel like I had a true family in the U.S. “Now, I proudly make my Metropolitan Opera debut dedicated to Auntie Anna—a new production of Carmen opening on New Year’s Eve, one of the important performance events of the whole season. I hope to keep carrying her spirit of philanthropy forward and make her proud.”

Cultivating culture in higher education and beyond

Sie also established several faculty chairs at Front Range universities, including the Anna Maglione-Sie Chair in Italian Language & Literature at the University of Denver; and the Dan & Boyce Sher Chair at CU Boulder’s College of Music. Faculty chair positions are important opportunities on campus, as they help provide talented faculty with the flexibility and resources to pursue their creative work in a university setting.

Sie received recognition through many awards for her philanthropic work and holds an honorary doctorate in higher education at the University of Denver, an honorary doctorate in humane letters from the University of Colorado and an honorary doctorate from Regis University.

Beyond higher education, Sie helped enrich Denver’s cultural offerings. As the home of Denver Film, the Sie FilmCenter was established in 2010 and features the finest in independent and world cinema. The Sie FilmCenter also regularly hosts festivals, program series and other special events that bring filmgoers and filmmakers together to celebrate the art of film. Sie also established the prestigious annual Italian Filmmaker Award at the Denver Film Festival.

“She was an immigrant child from southern Italy and she said she learned her English by watching movies,” noted Ritter. “She loved American movies. Everything she did was about giving back and about drawing on her own personal experiences—sometimes challenges and struggles—to make it easier for other people that might be also experiencing those [same] challenges and struggles.”

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