



QUEER URBAN ORCHESTRA
presents

Q.U.O. @15

Saturday October 19, 2024 **8:00p.m.**
Saint Paul & Saint Andrew **263 W 86th St.**
David Bloom, Artistic Director QueerUrbanOrchestra.org

NYC Cultural Affairs



Council on
the Arts

From Our Artistic Director

Dear friends,

Happy 15th, QUO! What a thrill to be part of such an inspired, loving, and joyful community. In 2009, Queer Urban Orchestra started as something completely unique, and fifteen years later, QUO is still the only orchestra in the Northeast dedicated to affinity with the LGBTQ+ community.

From the beginning, uplifting queer voices has been a central focus of QUO's programming. The orchestra's second ever concert in March of 2010, like tonight's program, featured Franz Schubert's *Unfinished* Symphony, the composer's most popular work. How many people who recognize the famous theme from this music never knew that its composer was queer? How many questioning or closeted kids have practiced this piece without knowing about Schubert's tight circle of adoring gay friends? Flipping this script is just part of what QUO has contributed to our community and to Classical music writ large in the last 15 years, and our work is never finished.

Tonight, we celebrate our orchestra! Longtime concert leader Phong Ta takes a tango-infused solo turn with the strings, and our principal violist Noah Green presents their work *Watercolors* for winds, brass, and percussion in the world premiere of a new version they created specifically for us. Queer composers Jessie Montgomery and Omar Thomas bookend the concert's first half. Lyrical melodies and dance rhythms glance at each other across the room for the whole evening until they finally fall for one another in Ravel's seductive *Boléro*, featuring solos from many of QUO's dazzling star musicians.

Come see us often for QUO's most ambitious season to date, and thank you for being a part of making music a little queerer!

Lots of love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David Bloom". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" and last name "Bloom" clearly distinguishable.



David Bloom (he/him) is a conductor equally at home in orchestral repertoire, opera, and new music, noted for his “dazzling precision and grace” (*San Francisco Chronicle*), “intelligence, elegance, and passion” (*Opera News*), “ferocious and focused” (*The New York Times*) performances, and “breathtaking and

inspired programming” (*Shepherd Express*). He dedicates his work to collaborating with artists and communities to inspire creativity, empathy, and joy.

In such venues as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Kennedy Center, and Park Avenue Armory, Bloom has guest conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic, American Composers Orchestra, Washington National Opera, Opera Omaha, Tri-Cities Opera, Bang on a Can All-Stars, The Crossing, Ensemble Connect, and Kronos Quartet and worked with such soloists and Dashon Burton, David Byrne, Anthony Roth Costanzo, Helga Davis, Isabel Leonard, Iarla Ó Lionáird, Courtney Love, Hila Plitmann, Dawn Upshaw, and Andrew Yee, and composers Clarice Assad, Courtney Bryan, John Corigliano, Donnacha Dennehy, Du Yun, inti figgis-vizueta, Michael Gordon, Nathalie Joachim, David Lang, Tania León, Andrew Norman, and Julia Wolfe. He conducted the opening of Lincoln Center’s 2024 Summer for the City festival with a program of operatic standards and original songs with drag artists Sapphira Cristál, Monét X Change, and Thorgy Thor.

Since 2023, he has been Artistic Director of Queer Urban Orchestra, the only orchestra in the Northeast rooted in the LGBTQ+ community. He is also Principal Conductor of the orchestras at New York University, Co-Artistic Director of Contemporaneous, and Principal Conductor of Present Music. He has conducted over 450 world premieres, including the orchestral version of Philip Glass’ *La Belle et la Bête* with Jean Cocteau’s 1946 film, Dylan Mattingly’s six-hour opera *Stranger Love*, and Raven Chacon’s *Voiceless Mass*, which went on to win the 2022 Pulitzer Prize. He has recorded for the Sony Masterworks, Cantaloupe, New Amsterdam, Innova, New Focus, Starkland, Kairos, and Navona labels.

Photo by Jiyang Chen



Musician/Educator/Wearer-of-Many-Hats
Derek J. Weagle (they/them) is a Brooklyn-based artist and healer invested in the disruption of social and academic barriers around classical music, as well as the preservation of music-making as an act of joyful humanness. With a practice rooted in syncretism, Derek can be found equally comfortable in roles ranging from conductor to composer, performer to teacher. They hold a B.M. in Music Education from UMass Lowell and an M.M. in Composition with a minor in Choral Conducting from New England Conservatory, as well as a Certificate in Sound Healing from the Sage Academy

of Sound in Woodstock, NY.

Derek will complete a certification in Biosonic Sound Repatterning from the Shift Network with Dr. John Beaulieu in December 2025 and an Artist Diploma in the Gabriela Ortiz Composition Studio at the OAcademy Music Conservatory as a member of a select cohort of twelve international artists in June 2026. Current engagements include work as an independent Sound Healing Artist, House Practitioner at Official Ritual, Founding Artistic Director of Bloom Sound Collective, Founder of the Khôra Consort, Associate Conductor of the Queer Urban Orchestra, Music Director of the Adelphi Vocal Ensemble, Music Director of the Adelphi Symphony Orchestra, Core Member of The Why Collective, Resident Music Director and Composer with Lucada Mélange, and the Refugee Orchestra Project Board of Directors.

Their work as a composer has received recognition both nationally and internationally, including the American Prize in Composition, the International Horn Society, and the International Composition Competition Harelbeke. For more information on Derek's artistic practice and services offered, see their website at www.derekjweagle.com.

From Our Concertmaster



In January 2010 I walked into the cafeteria of the Gay Men's Health Crisis, and that moment marked my first rehearsal with The Queer Urban Orchestra. There were eight string players, and notably, one tuba player filling in for the entire bass section. I sat in the back of the second violin section reading through some Holst and Schubert (the same Schubert you will hear tonight!). This organization

has evolved by leaps and bounds since our rehearsals crammed between dining tables and stainless steel counters, but there has been one constant for the past fifteen years: Wednesday nights have been a source of pure joy for all of us in this musical family.

Though I'm not a founding member, I was an audience member at QUO's inaugural concert in December 2009. At that time I would have never guessed that a decade and a half later, I'd have the privilege of being concert leader for this group of thoughtful, dedicated, and hard working musicians. Getting to share the stage with all of my QUOlleagues each and every concert is something that will continue to leave an indelible mark on my psyche. It truly is an honor to be a member of this orchestra, and I can't wait to see what surprises the next fifteen years will bring!

Piazzolla's *Las Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas* as arranged by Desyatnikov between 1996-1998, is an amalgamation of the composer's original bandoneon quintet works (1965-1970) with nods to Vivaldi's Four Seasons (published in 1725). This work is truly a mash-up that embodies the fiery energy present in both its baroque and nuevo tango origins. To me, this work represents what it means to be in QUO. Take a little bit of this, a little bit of that, add in a generous amount of passion, and the results are nothing short of extraordinary.

— Phong Ta
Photo by Heidi Sigler



QUEER URBAN ORCHESTRA

David Bloom, Artistic Director
Derek Weagle, Associate Conductor

Saturday, October 19th, 2024 - 8:00pm
Church of St. Paul & St. Andrew, NYC

QUO @ 15

Starburst (2012, arr. 2020) Jessie Montgomery, arr. Jannina Norpoth
Derek Weagle — conductor

from *Cuatro estaciones porteñas* (1969, arr. 1998) Astor Piazzolla,
Invierno porteño arr. Leonid Desyatnikov
Primavera porteña
Phong Ta — violin

Watercolors (2021, rev. 2024) Noah Green
world premiere, revised version
Derek Weagle — conductor

Caribana (2021) Omar Thomas



Symphony No. 8 in B minor, D. 759, *Unfinished* (1822) Franz Schubert
I. Allegro moderato
II. Andante con moto

Boléro (1928) Maurice Ravel

Please take a moment to silence mobile phones.
As a reminder, recording of any type of tonight's program is strictly prohibited.

About QUO: The Queer Urban Orchestra

Queer Urban Orchestra (QUO) is the Northeast's only orchestra rooted in the LGBTQ+ community. Celebrating queer artistry from its membership to featured composers and performers, the orchestra promotes equity and empathy. QUO was founded in 2009 as New York City's first orchestra specifically serving the LGBTQ+ community. Since its inaugural concert, the orchestra's membership has grown to 100 musicians, and the group's collaborations with the Danspace Project have resulted in praise from *The New York Times*.

The orchestra has premiered numerous works and has collaborated with Anthony Roth-Costanzo, Ariadne Greif, Ryan Roberts, Andrew Yee, Jasmine Rice LaBeija, Empire City Men's Chorus, Youth Pride Chorus, and Stonewall Chorale. Since 2023, QUO has been led by Artistic Director David Bloom and Associate Conductor Derek Weagle. Previous Artistic Directors have included Ian Shafer, Julie Desbordes, Nolan N Dresden, and Brandyn Metzko.

QUO Board of Directors & Staff

David Lohman, President

James DiMeglio, Vice-President

Bob Wei, Secretary

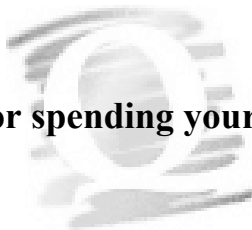
Scott Oaks, Treasurer

Lynn Caron, Julia Case, Navin Manglani, Hilton Marcus, Dustin Zuelke -
Members at Large

Brian Shaw, Orchestra Manager

Nick Johnson, Orchestra Librarian

Thank you for spending your night with us.



Violin I

Phong Ta †
Rafael Albertini
Maia Gumnit
Brian Harrington
Andy Holland
Arielle Lubin
Johann Palo
Thomas Purcell
Nic Salas
Nick Sharpsky
Dane Stalcup
Navida Stein
Roi Trawon

Violin II

Tank Tan *+
Jonathan Balsano
alva bostick
Julia Case
Wiqar Farooqi
Peter Fifield
Andre Gillard
mel martini
Liam O'Brien
CoryAnn Pitts
Ligia Sakurai
Holly Melissa-
Seefeldt
Jessica Waddell
Bob Wei

† **Concertmaster**

* **Principal**

** **Co-Principal**

+ **Section Leader**

^ **Not Performing**

Viola

Noah Green*
James Di Meglio +
Sawyer Goldsmith
Karishma Gottfried
Marion Lederer
Hali Linn
Bennett Mahler
Hilton Marcus
JohnMark Ofrasio
Haley Pearson
Mason Pilevsky
Nicholas Singletary
Jacob Szilagi
Nathan Threlkeld
Dustin Zuelke

Cello

Bjorn Berkhout*
Alex Humesky
Nick Johnson
Michelle Leidecker
Steve McLure
Kate Penrose
Nick Saunders
michael shattner
Michael Viljoen
Luis Villalona
Penglong Zhu
Navin Manglani +^

Bass

Jared Chamoff +
George Nicholson
Andrew Op't Hof
Hirokazu Yokoyama

Flute

Justin Lee*
Scott Oaks**
Craig Devereaux +
Jenn Forese

Piccolo

Craig Devereaux
Scott Oaks

Oboe

Brian Shaw*
Alan Hyde
Christian Smythe
Matthew Hadley+^

English Horn

Alan Hyde
Heath Koch

Oboe d'Amore

Christian Smythe

Clarinet

Francis Novak*
Daniel Olson+
Johann Palo

E♭ Clarinet

Daniel Olson

Bass Clarinet

Alice Petre

Bassoon

David Lohman +
Kevin O'Brien

French Horn

Kyle Walker *+
Lynn Caron +
Bryan Jacobowitz
Lance Lucas
Emma Reber

Trumpet

Julia Cohen*+
Kim Bonsanti
Ron Nahass
Ryan Yacos

Piccolo Trumpet

Ryan Yacos

Trombone

Ryan Gochee*
Nick Denton
Ryan McTernan**

Bass Trombone

Alex Arellano +

Euphonium

Nick Denton

Tuba

Adam Rosenberg

Soprano Saxophone

Kyle Quirion

Alto Saxophone

Brett Dolotina
Kyle Quirion

Tenor Saxophone

Matthew Hadley*+

Baritone Saxophone

Ricky Allson

Percussion

Andrew Berman +
alva bostick
Noah Green
Michaela Kiberstis
Heath Koch
Alvaro Rodas
Eva Smith
Hannah Webster

Piano/Celesta

Nolan N Dresden

Harp

Sophia Shedd



About the Music

Jessie Montgomery, arr. Jannina Norpoth: *Starburst* (2012, arr. 2020)

This brief one-movement work, originally for string orchestra and arranged for orchestra by Jannina Norpoth, is a play on imagery of rapidly changing musical colors. Exploding gestures are juxtaposed with gentle fleeting melodies in an attempt to create a multidimensional soundscape. A common definition of a starburst: “The rapid formation of large numbers of new stars in a galaxy at a rate high enough to alter the structure of the galaxy significantly.”

— *Jessie Montgomery*



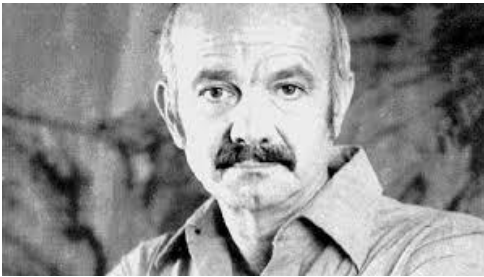
Jessie Montgomery (b. 1981), Musical America’s 2023 Composer of the Year, is a GRAMMY-winning, acclaimed composer, violinist, and educator whose music interweaves classical music with elements of vernacular music, improvisation, poetry, and social consciousness, making her an acute interpreter of twenty-first century American sound

and experience. Her profoundly felt works have been described as “turbulent, wildly colorful and exploding with life” (*The Washington Post*) and are performed regularly by leading orchestras and ensembles around the world. She was the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s Mead Composer-in-Residence 2021-2024.

Her growing body of work includes solo, chamber, vocal, and orchestral works, as well as collaborations with distinguished choreographers. Recent premieres include *Hymn for Everyone* (2021); *Five Freedom Songs* (2021), a song cycle for Soprano Julia Bullock; a set of concerti – *DIVIDED* (2022), *Rounds* (2021), and *L.E.S. Characters* (2020); and a site-specific collaboration for Bard SummerScape and Pam Tanowitz Dance (2021). Future projects include Alisa Weilerstein’s *FRAGMENTS*, a work for the New York Philharmonic.

Montgomery has been recognized with many prestigious awards and fellowships, including the Civitella Ranieri Fellowship, the Sphinx Medal of Excellence, and the Leonard Bernstein Award from the ASCAP Foundation. She is currently visiting faculty at the Vanderbilt University Blair School of Music, Bard College, and The New School, and has been affiliated with the Sphinx Organization since 1999. Montgomery holds degrees from the Juilliard School and New York University and is currently a doctoral candidate in music composition at Princeton University.

Astor Piazzolla, arr. Leonid Desyatnikov: *Cuatro estaciones porteñas* (1969, arr. 1998)



Like the tango, **Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)** was born in Buenos Aires, making him *porteño*, which refers in Spanish specifically to the port city capital of Argentina. He spent formative childhood years in New York, returning to Argentina in his teenage years to study with

Alberto Ginastera. He supported himself by playing in tango orchestras on the bandoneón, an accordion with buttons instead of keys and Argentine and Uruguayan roots.

His own compositions began to push beyond the boundaries of traditional tango, welcoming harmonic and rhythmic influences from jazz and classical music and finding audiences in concert halls instead of dance halls. Purists made their displeasure known, including one who threatened the young composer with a gun. “I have had enough of people telling me that what I am playing is not tango,” he said. In 1954, he traveled to Paris to study with eminent pedagogue Nadia Boulanger, who encouraged him to continue his revolutionary work with the tango. When he returned to Buenos Aires, he formed a quintet in which he played badoneón with violin, piano, electric guitar, double bass. It was with this group that he created much of his most iconic work, including *Cuatro estaciones porteñas*, or *Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*.

Nearly 250 years prior, a port city of a very different flavor had an insatiable appetite for Antonio Vivaldi’s concertos, or works for solo instrument with orchestra. Out of the almost 500 concertos he wrote in Venice, a collection of

four from 1723 struck gold, remaining some of the most instantly recognizable classical music into the 21st century: his own *Four Seasons*. For each season he painted a musical picture for violin and string orchestra. Teeth chatter with fiendishly fast notes in the *Winter* concerto, verdant landscapes unfurl with florid melodies in *Spring*, and so on. Piazzolla's *Seasons* are inspired by Vivaldi's example and refracted through his own musical biography.

In the late 1990's violinist Gidon Kremer commissioned Russian composer Leonid Desyatnikov to create arrangements of Piazzolla's compositions for solo violin and string orchestra, the medium of Vivaldi's originals. They feature quotations from Vivaldi's originals from Desyatnikov's pen, not Piazzolla's, though their inclusion is in the improvisational spirit of Piazzolla's quintet. They swing and pulse with the composer's signature *tango nuevo* and include several unusual sounds, cricket-like scratching in the opening of spring. Eventually the orthodox tango came around to Piazzolla's work, and he became a national hero.

— *David Bloom*

Noah Green: *Watercolors* (2021, 2024)

I initially wrote this piece as a reed quintet in 2019, inspired by watching my sister paint with watercolors. It was hypnotizing watching the colors mix and swirl on the page as she blended them together. I wanted to replicate this idea by layering two musical motifs in different orientations and intensities, creating the illusion of foreground and background. In 2021, I was given the opportunity to orchestrate the piece, expanding my color palette into the vibrant and expressive timbres of the wind ensemble.

Five years after I started writing it, I revisited this piece and realized I had so much more to explore with the content and what this entire piece means to me. The idea of color mixing very much relates to my experience with my own queerness and gender identity; combining elements of masculinity and femininity in many complex and beautiful variations to craft the unique person that I've become, so this piece is more of a self portrait than I could have possibly imagined.

During the entire revision process I've really reflected on my own growth both as a musician and a young queer person, and The Queer Urban Orchestra has been such an integral part of both of those journeys for me. Thank you to everyone

who has been a part of this process; I'm so elated that I've been able to share the journey of bringing this work to life with my chosen family at QUO, and all of you listening.

— Noah Green



Noah Green (b. 1999) is a composer, sound designer, and violist based in Queens, NY. Their work spans many topics from everyday occurrences like rain and birdsong, to more personal subjects like queerness and mental health. Noah writes on the principle that making music should be joyful and meaningful to themselves, the musicians playing it, and the audience listening to it. They love taking modern techniques and infusing them with the nostalgic harmonies and textures from the video games they grew up playing. Having received their undergraduate degree from Ohio Wesleyan University, Noah has studied with Jennifer Jolley, EunSeok Park, Eric Hachikian, and JoAnne Harris. Noah is also currently the

principal violist of the Queer Urban Orchestra.

Omar Thomas: *Caribana* (2021)

Named after the largest Caribbean carnival in North America outside of the Caribbean (held annually in Toronto and now called “Toronto Caribbean Carnival”), *Caribana* is my attempt to bring the Calypso and Soca music of Trinidad and Tobago to the large ensemble symphonic music stage. Though this music originated on the islands of Trinidad and Tobago, they have become cultural staples of all Caribbean nations, with singers and songwriters from various countries adding to the rich tapestry of the tradition. Driven by layers of rhythmic percussion (known as “the engine room”), *Caribana* seeks to recreate the experience of immersion in the carnival experience – from the elaborate beaded, feathered, and shimmering costumes, to the flatbed 18-wheeler trucks

blasting Soca and Calypso through their massive speaker systems, followed by people dancing shoulder-to-shoulder to the driving and infectious music, waving flags of their respective Caribbean nations in perfect rhythm to the driving and infectious music. This piece gives you a bird's eye view of the festivities, swoops in and darts about, taking in individual scenes and sights, immersing you in the pulsing chaos of the moment, and finally making you one with the electrified crowd of revelers as you follow the music down the parade route.

As a proud son of parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and ancestors born in the Caribbean nation of Guyana, South America, Calypso and Soca form many of my earliest and most endearing musical memories. There is not a family gathering I can recall that wasn't (loudly) underscored by this music, be it a cookout, a holiday, a wedding, a repast, Saturday morning house cleaning, or car rides to and from Brooklyn. The creation of this work is the realization of a years-long dream to hear this music brought to the symphonic concert stage in a way that is authentic, and that integrates our musical cultural language with the idioms of the symphonic concert genre.

This piece is lovingly dedicated to my family and to the ancestors. Wave yuh flag!

— *Omar Thomas*



Described as “elegant, beautiful, sophisticated, intense, and crystal clear in emotional intent,” the music of **Omar Thomas (b. 1984)** continues to move listeners everywhere it is performed. Born to Guyanese parents in Brooklyn in 1984, Omar studied Music Education at James Madison University and received a Master of Music in Jazz Composition from the

New England Conservatory. He is the protégé of lauded composers and educators Ken Schaphorst and Frank Carlberg, and has studied under multiple Grammy-winning composer and bandleader Maria Schneider.

He was appointed Assistant Professor of Harmony at Berklee College of Music at the age of 23, then served on the music theory faculty at the Peabody Institute.

Now a Yamaha Master Educator, he is currently Associate Professor of Composition and Jazz Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. He was awarded the 2008 ASCAP Young Jazz Composers Award in 2008, the 2012 Boston Music Awards Jazz Artist of the Year, and the 2019 winner of the National Bandmasters Association/Revelli Award for his wind composition *Come Sunday*, becoming the first Black composer awarded the honor in the contest's 42-year history.

His work has been performed by such ensembles as the San Francisco and Boston Gay Mens' Choruses, the United States Marine Band, the Colorado and Houston Symphony Orchestras, and the country's top collegiate music ensembles. His arrangements have been performed by such celebrated singers as Stephanie Mills, Yolanda Adams, Nona Hendryx, BeBe Winans, Kenny Lattimore, Marsha Ambrosius, Sheila E., Raul Midon, Leela James, Dionne Warwick, and Chaka Khan. His work is featured on Dianne Reeves's Grammy Award-winning album, *Beautiful Life*.

Omar's first album, *I AM*, debuted at #1 on iTunes Jazz Charts and peaked at #13 on the Billboard Traditional Jazz Albums Chart. His second release, *We Will Know: An LGBT Civil Rights Piece in Four Movements* was awarded two OUTMusic Awards, including Album of the Year, and a Lavender Rhino Award.

Franz Schubert: Symphony No. 8 in B minor, *Unfinished* (1822)



As a teenager, **Franz Schubert's (1797-1828)** music, and particularly his charming and emotionally deft songs for voice and piano, had already made him a darling of Viennese parlors. Prominent arts patrons hosted informal events known as Schubertiades, which featured performances of the composer's

works and were attended by the denizens of high society, including the likes of Ludwig van Beethoven.

In early 1992, the 92nd Street Y on New York's Upper East Side hosted its own fourth annual Schubertiade, which included a panel discussion on Schubert's sexuality, entitled "Schubert the Man: Myth vs. Reality." The panel featured four

renowned musicologists, all of whom were straight, and two of whom (Maynard Solomon and Susan McClary) had written peer-reviewed articles demonstrating convincing evidence that Schubert was homosexual. By all accounts, the audience was hostile to the premise of the conversation. One listener shouted, “heterosexuals are more repressed than homosexuals,” while another called Solomon “a pornographer,” to the obvious approval of the crowd.

In the aftermath of this infamous Schubertiade, writers and music fans attacked Solomon and McClary, including *The New York Times*, which published three articles over the course of the next week parodying their work. After nearly two decades of vociferous rebuttals to her work McClary wrote, “Whatever the scholarly merit of their research, they are expressly motivated by the need to rescue Schubert from any affiliation with homosexuality... it indicates that many scholars still regard same-sex erotic activities as pathological.” Meanwhile, outside the Y, 1992 was the year when AIDS became the leading cause of death for US men between the ages of 25 and 44. (There is no typo here, by the way: *all* men, not just gay men.)

So — was he, or wasn’t he? In short, no absolutely conclusive evidence of Schubert’s sexuality has survived (he never put a rainbow in his Insta bio), but there is at least enough to inform an opinion. In his teenage years, he seems to have crafted a story that he was courting Therese Grob, the daughter of a family friend, as subterfuge to appease his father. (In an interview after Schubert’s death, she made no mention of any romance with the young composer.) At the same time, he wrote of his dread of marriage, a contract he never entered with anyone. As an adult, he would cite his broken heart from a three-year relationship with Grob as a bachelor’s excuse when he was asked about matters of love.

At age 19, when Schubert had endured enough of his daddy issues, he moved in with the poet and philosopher Franz von Schober, a confirmed homosexual, at which point Schubert’s friends started to worry about Schober’s “bad influence,” alleging that he had “lured several of his friends, Schubert included, into loose living.” Schubert had a well-documented affection for several of the men in Schober’s circle, but it was the composer and the poet who shared the original couple name: Schobert. “What you meant to me,” wrote Schubert to Schober, “no one else can mean, alas!” Though he had friendships with glamorous, artistic women as well, his only letters to them are quite formal. Schubert was also a close friend and roommate of poet Johann Mayrhofer, who scholars agree was

homosexual. When Schubert moved out of Mayrhofer's flat, Mayrhofer lamented the separation in his poem *An Franz*:

You love me! Deeply I have felt it,
You faithful boy, so tender and fair;
So steel yourself, beautifully bound,
The noble, youthful courage!
However life presses on,
We hear the kindred sounds.

The manuscript for the Symphony in B minor that we hear tonight is dated October 30, 1822, by which time, Schubert had written hundreds of songs, stunning piano and chamber works, and even several operas (with libretti by Mayrhofer and Schober, among others). His previous three symphonic attempts were false starts, so he was ready to bring something new to the genre. Whereas the canonical symphonic structure in Schubert's time dictates that a symphony should comprise four movements, Schubert only completed two for this one, plus an abandoned 20 measures of a third. It remains a mystery why he never finished the work. Perhaps he began to feel anxious about stacking his music up against Beethoven, the reigning king of the symphony; perhaps he had already begun to feel symptoms of syphilis, which would claim his life only a few years later at age 31; perhaps he became more interested in other projects and simply never got around to writing more of this one.

What is certain about the symphony is its striking innovations. Today, almost exactly 202 years after its composition, this music sounds very familiar, but in its time it was as unusual—as Nikolaus Harnoncourt puts it—as a “stone from the moon.” Only a few symphonies had started quietly, and none as quietly as the stark cello and bass theme that open this work. The first movement continues with a brooding theme in the solo oboe and clarinet before the music magics into a completely different realm, and the cellos introduce a simple, lyrical tune. Schubert barely develops either of these themes, instead preserving them like a refuge from the threatening music of the opening, which returns often with obsessive menace.

The second movement has the paradoxical quality of smiling through tears, with heavenly tunes and time-stopping, almost hallucinatory harmonic shifts. The first movement is felt in a meter of three beats, which is unusual for a symphonic opening. The second is also in three, which is more typical, but its similarity with

the first movement in meter and tempo is unique in the repertoire. The second movement is a kind of negative image of the first, expressing contrasting emotions while moving along at more or less the same pace. McClary argues that Schubert's reliance on unconventional harmonic progressions and avoidance of traditional thematic development make his music, and this second movement especially, sound distinctly queer.

The headline of the first of *The New York Times*' screeds following the 1992 Schubertiade reads "Was Schubert Gay? If He Was, So What?" Said no queer person ever. To expound just one justification is the importance of seeing the deep roots of queerness. Long before what we know today as queer identities were a visible element of society, Schubert and his circle made their own kind of queer utopia, loving one another as deeply as anybody. While his music need not reveal anything personal about him, it is clear that Schubert's affections were important enough to him that ignoring them limits our understanding of this phenomenal artist.

— *David Bloom*

Maurice Ravel: *Boléro* (1928)



Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) is about as enigmatic as 20th Century historical figures come, but we do know he was a mama's boy. With no trace of a single romantic affair in his life, his relationship with his mother appears to have been the only significant emotional relationship of his life. If Maurice is a mystery, Marie Ravel (née Delouart) is a closed book. It is supposed that she, like her famous son, was born in the Basque region of France. She spent time in Spain, where she met and married Maurice's father, and she sang Spanish folk songs to Maurice, who doted on her until her death. Ravel's

father was an engineer and manufacturer who enjoyed taking his sons to the factories where he worked.

Though Ravel discounts his orchestral work *Boléro* as “a piece wholly of orchestral texture without music,” going so far as to call the themes “impersonal,” the work draws on significant experiences from his childhood. The melody that we hear many times over the course of the piece draws on tropes and contours of Spanish folk music of the kind he heard on his mother’s knee. Additionally, he thought of the relentless rhythm of the work as the sound of a factory, sounds that made their first impression on the composer’s wildly imaginative ears while he held his father’s hand.

Ravel would be shocked to learn that *Boléro* has become his most popular work. He dashed it off as a rush job for dancer Ida Rubinstein, which he almost turned down for lack of time. Only an ingeniously simple idea came to him that he could accomplish quickly. He wrote a single tune that would be repeated several times with no development (reminiscent of Schubert’s technique). The only variation is that it was to be played on different instruments each time. Meanwhile, a two-bar snare drum pattern is repeated 169 times in the triple meter (like the Schubert) typical of the titular Spanish dance tradition. Together, the rhythm and the melody drive a crescendo from the quietest to the loudest possible sound.

“I am particularly anxious that there should be no misunderstanding as to my *Boléro*,” wrote Ravel. “It is an experiment in a very special and limited direction... There are no contrasts and there is practically no invention, except in plan and the manner of the execution.” It is exactly this elemental quality of this music that makes it so unique and brilliant. The thrilling 15-minute crescendo is decorated with bespoke instrumental combinations, such as one with two piccolos, French horn, and a tinkly keyboard instrument called a celeste. The singular key change is objectively simple, but in the context of the work’s limited harmonic vocabulary, it is positively riotous. (The key change is a mediant relationship, by the way, Schubert’s favorite progression, as evidenced many times over in his *Unfinished* Symphony.)

Speaking of similarities with Schubert, some scholars have theorized that Ravel was a deeply closeted homosexual. Whereas Schubert’s diaries and letters demonstrate genuine passion for men (even if never expressly physical), Ravel’s writings bear no such fruit. He was reclusive, living in the forested outskirts of Paris, never marrying, and keeping a secretive personal life.

The anecdotal evidence for any sexuality that Ravel possessed is thin, secondhand, and confusing. He was often teased for his dandyish dress, though this was not uncommon for French gentlemen in the 1920's. Slightly more unusual are stories of Ravel dressed as a ballerina, complete with tutu and falsies, and performing on *pointe* for his closest friends. One of Ravel's students said that the composer proposed marriage to a woman who turned him down. On the other hand, he spent time at a Parisian music hall called *Le Bœuf sur le toit*, where he carefully observed men dancing together, never joining in. Ralph Vaughan Williams said that Ravel took him to a brothel where the Frenchman was familiar with the women, though he said they were "guaranteed not to tempt any man to lose his virtue." Friends have also alluded to a prized collection of gay pornography that he amassed after serving in World War I.

Short of turning back the clock and asking a very private person some personal questions, we are not likely to find a definitive answer to the question of his sexuality. Even then, labels may fall short of illuminating a nuanced understanding of this extraordinary artist. Ravel remains in his legacy as he lived his life: very much his own person.

— *David Bloom*

About The Church of St. Paul & St. Andrew

Welcome to St. Paul & St. Andrew, your progressive United Methodist Church in NYC. Located in the heart of New York City, our church is dedicated to inclusivity, social justice, and spiritual growth. We embrace people from all walks of life, offering a welcoming space for worship, reflection, and service. Our commitment to progressive values is reflected in our advocacy for LGBTQ+ inclusion, racial equality, and environmental stewardship. Join us for inspiring sermons, dynamic worship services, and impactful community outreach programs. Discover a United Methodist Church in NYC where your faith and values align, and where you can truly make a difference.

Our Purpose includes love-inspired action and social justice, building relationships throughout New York City and beyond, teaching and following progressive values, and helping raise up future generations through the congregation that value leadership and love.

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Highlights of the 2024- 2025 Season

Please mark your calendars for our next concert *Ballet, You Stay* on **December 15th, 2024** at **Peter Norton Symphony Space**. We will be featuring works by **Prokofiev, Mackey, and Chaminade**, and will be joined on stage by The Metropolitan's Opera's **Sasha Romero**, Principal Trombone.

On **January 25th, 2025** will be the return of **QUOtets**, our member driven chamber concert, back in our home venue, **Church of the Holy Apostles**.

March 14th-16th, 2025, we will launch the first-ever *QUOfest*, headlined by a concert celebrating 10 years of marriage equality in the US, including a return to the podium by former Artistic Director **Nolan N Dresden**, and music by **Yaz Lancaster** and **Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue**.

The festival also includes a chamber concert with works by **Julius Eastman, Enescu, and Debussy**, a tuning meditation lead by QUO's own **Derek Weagle** with works by **Ruth Anderson** and **Pauline Oliveros**. Finally, our family programming will include excerpts from **Mozart's** Symphony No. 35 and Sigur Rós' *Gobbledigook*.

May 10th, 2025 will mark a first for QUO, as **David Bloom** leads us through our first adventure into the work of one of the 20th Century greats with **Gustav Mahler's** Symphony No. 1 in our concert titled *Titans* along with works by **Boulanger** and **Swaminathan**.

We will close out our 24/25 season as we always do, with QUO's *Pride Gala* with music by **Michael Torke, Manuel de Falla**, and the world premier of our **Vanguard Composer Competition** winner, all happening on **June 21st, 2025**.

Concert Program Assembled by Nolan N Dresden
Cover Art by Nathan Threlkeld



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646.408.4008

leonard.gottlieb@compass.com



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