HORIZONS 26 27
A SEASON OF DISCOVERY

PIAZZOLLA

FOUR SEASONS OF BUENOS AIRES

SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 14, 2026 | 7 PM
ST. ANDREW BAPTIST CHURCH



Conducted by
ALEX AMSEL
Finalist for
Music Director & Conductor



Featuring
DR. BENJAMIN SUNG
Guest Violinist

MUSICIANS' MEAL SPONSOR
SOMETHIN'S DOWNTOWN COOKIN' EST. 1982

Florida ARTS & CULTURE

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PANAMA CITY SYMPHONY
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THE CULTURAL HEART OF NW FLORIDA



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PANAMA CITY SYMPHONY

HORIZONS 26 27

A SEASON OF DISCOVERY

As the music continues for our second concert of the season, we invite you to experience the extraordinary with the Panama City Symphony. Today, our orchestra stands at an exciting threshold—fueled by artistic passion and a shared vision for Northwest Florida.

At the heart of our mission are our incredible musicians, whose remarkable talent brings every score to life. Surrounding them is our vibrant network of patrons, sponsors, and volunteers whose generosity fuels our stage, alongside music education initiatives that inspire young minds across our region.

A SHARED EXPLORATION

You are an essential part of this milestone chapter
in the search for a new Music Director and Conductor.
Together, our orchestra and audience will discover new sounds, embrace fresh leadership, and reach new heights of refined artistic excellence.

Thank you for your warm presence, your continued support, and your belief in the power of live music.

WELCOME TO AN ENCHANTING 31ST SEASON.

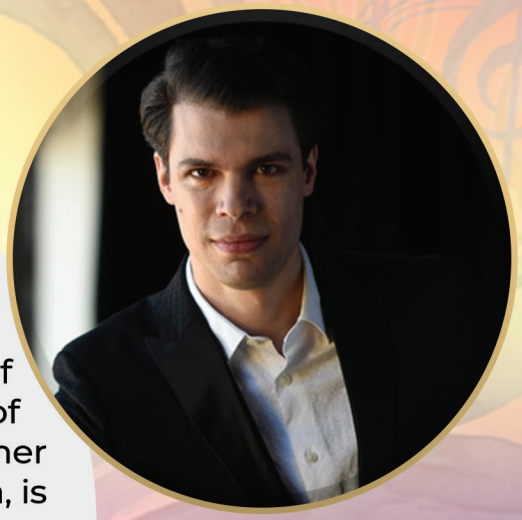


Dr. Rachel Waddell

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Doctor of Musical Arts
Orchestra Conducting

Dr. Rachel Waddell launches Season 2026-27 on September 19, 2026, conducting Dvořák's New World Symphony. Waddell currently serves as Director of Orchestras at Colorado State University and Music Director of Longmont Youth Symphony. An acclaimed conductor with a Doctor of Musical Arts from UNLV, her guest appearances include the Orchestre Métropolitain and the Rochester Philharmonic, alongside earning two American Prize awards in Orchestral Programming.

FOUR OUTSTANDING FINALISTS. A SPECTACULAR 31ST SEASON.



Alex Amsel

Peabody Conservatory
M.M. Orchestral Conducting

Alex Amsel takes the podium November 14, 2026, to lead fellow countryman Piazzolla's The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires. Amsel, Associate Conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and former Resident Conductor of Houston Grand Opera, is a dynamic Argentinian-Mexican conductor recognized for his vibrant musicality and community outreach. He has led productions at Utah and Houston Operas and conducted at major international festivals including Aspen and Romania's George Enescu Festival. He founded the Student Composition Project, commissioning six orchestral world premieres from young Arizona composers.

PANAMA CITY SYMPHONY
HORIZONS 26 27
A SEASON OF DISCOVERY

ODE TO THE MAESTROS, SPONSORS
Ray & Marlene East

Dr. Ryo Hasegawa

Peabody Conservatory
Doctor of Musical Arts
Orchestra Conducting



Dr. Ryo Hasegawa will conduct Beethoven's Eroica and Rautavaara's Cantus Arcticus on Saturday, January 30, 2027. Dr. Hasegawa serves as Assistant Conductor of the Charleston Symphony—where he led the youth orchestra to its Carnegie Hall debut—and Music Director of the Bloomington Symphony Orchestra. Holding a Doctor of Musical Arts from Johns Hopkins University's Peabody Conservatory, this rising Japanese conductor has appeared with the Hamburg Symphony and Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Learn More About Each Finalist at PanamaCitySymphony.org



David Bernard

Stony Brook University
MM in Orchestra Conducting

David Bernard closes the finalist series on February 13, 2027, leading With Love, Tchaikovsky: Symphonic Valentines. Bernard is an award-winning conductor serving as Music Director of the Park Avenue Chamber Symphony, Massapequa Philharmonic, and Eglevsky Ballet. A Juilliard and Curtis alumnus who has performed at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, Bernard was named Conductor of the Year at the 2025 European Classical Music Awards and holds a U.S. patent for the immersive InsideOut Concert format.

WINNER will conduct BEETHOVEN'S 9th Symphony April 10, 2027

THE SEARCH PROCESS FOR OUR NEXT MUSIC DIRECTOR

WHO IS ON THE SEARCH COMMITTEE?



11-member Committee:
- 3 Orchestra Principals (Co-Chairs),
- 4 Musicians (7 Total Musicians),
- 4 Board of Directors.

3 Orchestra Principals | 4 Musicians (7 Total Musicians) | 4 Board of Directors

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Role of Musicians



Identify top candidates with precise musical expertise, vision, & technical skill to conduct and lead.

Role of Board of Directors

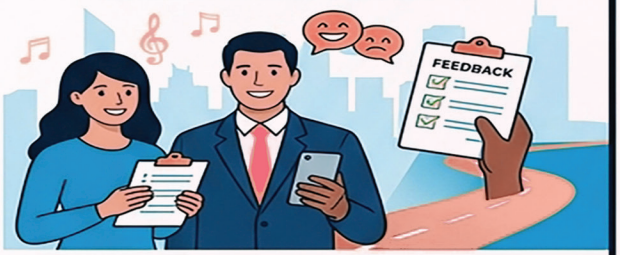
Vet administrative & leadership qualities. Validate credentials, character, collaborative spirit, & community commitment.

WHAT WILL FINALISTS DO?



Finalist guest conduct
- Guest-conduct a core concert
- Host "MOMENTS WITH THE MAESTRO"

A NEW ERA BEGINS



YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

PATRONS' ROLE



Attend Finalist Concerts & Events.

Provide feedback on Musicality, Performance Energy, Communication Skills via Rating Forms.

Multiple Virtual Meetings (needs, job desc., timeline, eval. process)

POSITION POSTED IN JULY 2026
(Open for one month)

Round 1: Application Review (5 pillars)

Artistic Mastery | Prof. Exp. | Academic Credentials | Programming Versatility | Fundraising/ Advocacy/ Comm. Imm.

Round 2: Interviews & DEEPER INTERVIEWS & SHORTLIST



Deeper Interviews and shortlist

FINALISTS SELECTED

GOAL & UPCOMING CONCERT

SELECT NEW CONDUCTOR
March 2027

DEBUT CONCERT

APRIL 10, 2027:
BEETHOVEN'S NINTH SYMPHONY



HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF PANAMA CITY SYMPHONY!

Thank you for supporting Panama City Symphony. Your voice matters. Your feedback is a vital part of securing our next Music Director. ***You'll use this same rating form throughout the season to evaluate finalists after each concert.***

How to Share Your Thoughts

SCAN THE QR CODE.

This will open a form called
Music Director Finalist Audience Evaluation

Rate the Finalist: Tell us about your experience—especially the candidate's stage presence, energy, and connection with you, our audience!

Why is my Email Address Required?

We ask for your email address to ensure that each patron submits one rating per candidate. Your email will remain private.

How will Musicians Weigh In?

Our orchestra musicians will work closely with each finalist during several rehearsals and performances. Following each concert, musicans will submit orchestra-related evaluations assessing artistic precision, rehearsal dynamics, and musical leadership.

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How Will My Input Be Used?

Choosing a Music Director is a collaborative journey, and your ratings provide essential insight to help our Search Committee and Board of Directors gauge each candidate's performance charisma, concert experience, and audience connection as part of a thorough evaluation for our organization's next chapter.

What is the Board's Role?

As the governing body of Panama City Symphony, the Board will consider all points of feedback to make the final decision. In addition to reviewing audience and musician ratings, the Board will evaluate candidates on administrative leadership, fundraising vision, community engagement, and collaboration. While ratings do not act as an automatic tally, every score and comment directly informs the Board's final choice.

Panama City Symphony
ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

GOVERNANCE: OUR WORKING BOARD

The Board is the force behind the beautiful music and educational programming: a hands-on working board versus a traditional advisory board.

- **Volunteer Hours:** 200-250 per week.
- Equivalent of 5 full-time paid staff!
- Growth in programming has outgrown current volunteer capacity.
- Strategic Goal: Gradually add paid staff as funds are raised.

ACTIVE AND ENGAGED LEADERSHIP

FINANCIAL INTEGRITY & CONTROLS

Dual-Approval Process:
2 Board Members approve every expenditure.

Rigorous Bookkeeping:
Monthly bookkeeping by the Treasurer; Reviewed by an Independent Accountant.

Independent Oversight:
Board-approved external audit by a specialized non-profit firm.

PCS is a 501c3 non-profit organization.

STRATEGIC GOALS & FUTURE GROWTH

Period of unprecedented growth.

1. Build an Endowment Fund for financial security.
2. Be a driving force for a new Performing Arts Center.
3. Grow paid staff and provide health insurance and benefits.
4. Continue steady growth & elevation in all areas.

SEASON PROGRAMMING, EDUCATION & OUTREACH

6-8 Concerts
45-70 musicians per concert

2 Fundraising Events: Bella Notte and Renaissance to Rock-n-Roll

6 Musically Up Close Events

Biennial Emerging Artists Competition

3 in-school music education programs across the region

- Masterclasses
- Mentoring Program
- String Academy
- Music Outreach
- Musicians for Hire

Executive Committee

Dr. Marlene East, President
Glass Artist; Mental Health Counselor; Non-Profit Executive Director (Retired)
Talents Contributed: Leadership, Graphic Design, Administrative Organization, Grant-Writing





Crook Stewart, Vice President
Tour Management and Accounting, Bonnie Raitt; Co-Owner of The Ghetto Palace; Co-Founder of Music Matters
Talents Contributed: Board Recruitment, Governance Oversight, Concert and Event Logistics



Denise Cox, Imm Past President
President, Storm Energy, Ltd
Talents Contributed: Development, Donor Relations, Grant-writing, Board Oversight



Danielle Streichert, Secretary
Health Agent, Peoples First Insurance; Leadership on Various Non-Profit Boards
Talents Contributed: Event Planning and Execution; Non-Profit Board Leadership

Raymond East, Jr., Treasurer
Owner, East Electrical Contractors (Retired)
Talents Contributed: Accounting, Budgeting, Financial Planning, Investment Oversight, Concert Logistics and Stage Setup, Construction Expertise



Sonya Caldwell
Broker/Community Strategist, Caldwell Broker, LLC
Talents Contributed: Development, Donor Relations, Sponsor Development





Art Kimbrough
Executive Coach, Vistage Florida CEO; Author
Talents Contributed: Leadership, Relationship-Building, Long-Range Planning, Public Relations, Retail & Administrative Expertise, Board Experience

Kathleen Collier
Healthcare CEO (Retired); Former Board Member San Diego Zoo
Talents Contributed: Finance & Sustainability; Grant-writing





David Mashburn
New Home Consultant, Holiday Builders
Talents Contributed: Leadership, Relationship-Building, Long-Range Planning, Public Relations, Retail & Administrative Expertise, Board Experience



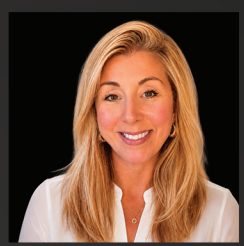
Mary Middlemas
Language and Writing Professor; Writing Center Director (Retired)
Talents Contributed: Music Education Organizational Leadership, Editing



Karen Roganov
U.S. Military Officer (Retired); Community Writer, Local Magazines
Talents Contributed: Community Engagement and Fundraising



Marta Rose-Thorpe
Marta Rose Productions: Marketing Strategist, Publisher, Event Producer; A Superior Mechanical: Business Development
Talents Contributed: Public Relations Leadership, Press Release Writer, Social Media Content Creator, Community Engagement Coordinator



Jennifer Shepard
Director of Community Engagement, Shepard Law
Talents Contributed: Non-profit Management, Performing Arts Administration, Arts Advocacy, Grant Writing, Fundraising, Programming, Marketing, Publicity



Michael Dickey, Legal Advisor
Law Offices of Michael P. Dickey
Talents Contributed: Legal Expertise

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Panama City Symphony
Season 2026-27 Sponsors & Community Partners

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Marilyn & Kenneth Gummels


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Dr. Jeffrey Portnoy & Mary Middlemas

Tier III


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Mack and Eleanor Lewis Foundation


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Tier IV


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Sponsor and Partner Details

TIER I
$20,000 and up

The St. Joe Community Foundation
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Concert Sponsor: Mentoring Program

Dr. Marlene and Ray East, Jr.
Ode to the Maestros – Music Director & Conductor Candidates

TIER II
$10,000 - $19,999

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Mary Middlemas and Dr. Jeffrey Portnoy
Concert Sponsor:
Moments with the Maestro
Sonata Sponsor
Principal Violin II – Miranda Rojas
Principal Bass – David Goldflies
Principal Piano – Ani Mouradian

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Ovation Concert Sponsor: With Love, Tchaikovsky

The Pineapple Willy's Foundation
Staccato Sponsor: PCS String Academy

TIER III
$5,000 - $9,999

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Don & Elke McCoy
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Pineapple Willy's/Wicked Wheel
Serenade Sponsor: Guest Artist Outreach and Masterclasses
ReliantSouth Construction Group
Serenade Sponsor: Music Education Partnership

TIER IV
$3,500 - $4,999

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Bass Section

SONATA – PRINCIPAL SPONSOR
$2000

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Cahall's Deli
A Grand Symphony Christmas - Main Entree
Ferrucci Ristorante
Dvorák's New World Symphony
Granny Cantrell's
A Grand Symphony Christmas - Sides
Slice House
With Love Tchaikovsky
Somethin's Cookin'
Piazzolla – Four Seasons of Buenos Aires
Texas Roadhouse
Beethoven's 9th Symphony-Ode to Joy
Yard Bar
Beethoven's Eroica & Rautavaara's Cantus Articus

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Beethoven's 9th - Ode to Joy Adult Chorus

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Your support enriches the cultural landscape of Northwest Florida through exceptional symphonic experiences, education, and community partnerships.

Baton levels are based on subscriptions to our core concerts.

With sincere thanks to our cherished patrons. While we have worked diligently to ensure this list is accurate, we apologize for any errors. Please let us know if you would like to request acorrection.



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Dvořák's New World Symphony

SEPTEMBER 19, 2026 | 7 PM

BARBARA W. NELSON FINE ARTS CENTER

Conducted by
DR. RACHEL WADDELL
Finalist for
Music Director & Conductor





Featuring
WILLIS DELONY
Guest Pianist

CONCERT PRESENTING SPONSOR
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Florida Arts & Culture

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Ferrucci Ristorante

Renaissance to Rock-n-Roll





Musicians of
PANAMA CITY SYMPHONY &
WILL THOMPSON BAND

A FRIGHTFUL FUSION OF SOUND!

CAPTAIN ANDERSON'S EVENT CENTER

OCTOBER 30, 2026, 6-9 PM

CARRABBA'S ITALIAN GRILL



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Connie Gittard and Friends

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PIAZZOLLA

FOUR SEASONS OF BUENOS AIRES

SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 14, 2026 | 7 PM

Conducted by
ALEX AMSEL
Finalist for
Music Director & Conductor





Featuring
DR. BENJAMIN SUNG
Guest Violinist

BUY TICKETS

MUSICIANS' MEAL SPONSOR
Somethin' Downtown Cookin'

Florida Arts & Culture

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Beach Home for the Holidays

PANAMA CITY SYMPHONY

with the
Panama City Ballet



Nathaniel Efthimiou
GUEST CONDUCTOR

NOVEMBER 28, 2026 | 6 PM

AARON BESSANT PARK PANAMA CITY BEACH

FREE Concert Presented by
Visit Panama City Beach

Bringing the Sounds of the Season
to Panama City Beach since 2015

A Grand Symphony Christmas

Panama City Symphony
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Christina Burroughs
Director
PCS Adult Chorus



Kenny Kirkland
Director
PCS Children's Chorus



Dana Langford
Choral Director
Bay Area Choral Society

With Adult & Children's Choruses

Saturday, December 5, 2026 | 7 pm
Barbara W. Nelson Fine Arts Center



Nathaniel Efthimiou
GUEST CONDUCTOR

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Don & Elke McCoy

Musicians Meals Sponsors
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Bakery Italia

Buy Tickets

Beethoven's EROICA & Rautavaara's CANTUS ARCTICUS

Saturday
January 30, 2027
7 PM

St. Andrew
Baptist
Church

Conducted by
Dr. Ryo Hasegawa
Finalist for
Music Director & Conductor



Panama City Symphony



Featuring
Mana Takahashi
Guest Violinist
2026 PCS Emerging Artists Winner
High School Division

Emerging Artist Sponsor
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Musicians' Meal Sponsor
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Florida Arts & Culture

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Panama City

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Bella Notte '27

Midnight in Manhattan

Timeless Melodies of the Crooner Era

Featuring Didi Stone, Violinist & Vocalist
PCS 2024 Emerging Artist Winner



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Panama City Symphony
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A Fundraising Gala
February 3, 2027
6 - 9 PM
FSU-PC Holley Center
Panama City, Florida
Formal Attire / Black Tie Preferred

With love, Tchaikovsky

Symphonic Valentines

Panama City Symphony
Vibrant. Refined. Enchanting.
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Saturday, February 13, 2027 | 7 PM
Helen Blackburn Auditorium, Arnold High School
550 N Alf Coleman Road, Panama City Beach

Conducted by
David Bernard
Finalist for
Music Director & Conductor





Featuring
Joshua Thai
Guest Violinist
2026 PCS Emerging Artists
Winner College Division

Concert Presenting Sponsor
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Buy Tickets

A Grand Finale
Beethoven's 9th Symphony *Ode to Joy*



PANAMA CITY SYMPHONY
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With Choruses & Guest Vocalists

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Kristin Wendland
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Christina Burroughs
Soprano
Director
PCS Adult Chorus



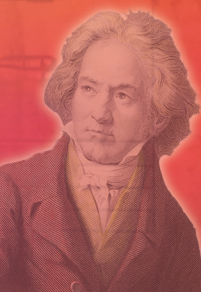
Mabs Nolen
Mezzo Soprano



Christian Sanders
Tenor



Lloyd Reshard
Bass Baritone



Saturday, April 10, 2027 | 7 pm
Helen Blackburn Auditorium,
Arnold High School
550 N. Alf Coleman Road, Panama City Beach

Buy Tickets

Musician Meal Sponsor
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Florida Arts & Culture

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Our **30th Anniversary Cruise** was a sensational success! We were so inspired by the unforgettable memories, breathtaking views, & joyful camaraderie, and we are thrilled to announce we plan to do it again!

Coming Again in 2029! Stay tuned for details.

Musically Up Close

A Partnership Between

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Ryan W. Stone
Six Strings to Sunday



Fri., Jan 22, 2027
3:30 pm
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Free Admission

Wesley Saunders
Tenor, with String Quartet



Fri., Feb. 19, 2027
7:00 pm
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Garden Club
VIP $50 for 2
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Tickets on EventBrite

Carter Doolittle
Reimagining the Saxophone

Fri., March 19, 2027
3:30 pm
Martin Luther
King Jr Rec Center
Free Admission



Joshua Thai
Rhapsody & Reverie

Fri., April 16, 2027
7:00 pm
Panama City
City Hall Rotunda
VIP $50 for 2
$10 General
Tickets on EventBrite



Panama City Symphony String Academy
Spring Concert



Fri., May 14, 2027
5:00 pm
Martin Luther
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Center
Free Admission





Ashley Overby & Leonard Ligon
The Low and the Overlooked

Fri., June 11, 2027
3:30 pm
Panama City
City Hall Rotunda
Free Admission

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Musically Up Close

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Rachel Waddell
September 18, 2026
Conducting
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New World
Symphony
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Alex Amsel
November 13, 2026
Conducting
Piazzolla's
Four Seasons
of Buenos Aires
(11/14/26)

Ryo Hasegawa
January 29, 2027
Conducting
Beethoven's
Eroica and
Rautavaara's
Cantus Arcticus
(01/30/27)



David Bernard
February 12, 2027
Conducting
With love,
Tchaikovsky,
Symphonic
Valentines
(02/13/27)





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April 9, 2027
Conducting
A Grand Finale:
Beethoven's 9th Symphony,
Ode to Joy
(04/10/27)

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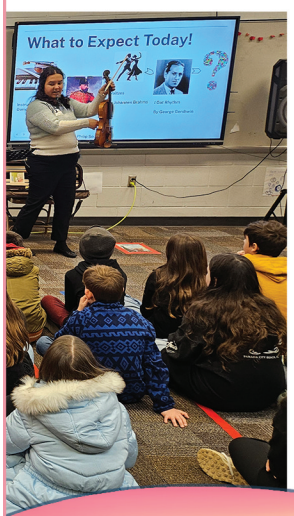
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ST JOE Community Foundation

CENTER FOR THE ARTS

MAKE MUSIC MAGIC

Designed for our youngest K-2 audiences, our Make Music Magic program helps children develop an awareness and appreciation for music. Through interactive singing, exercises that use motor skills, and imaginative activities, students are guided to listen, react, and share their thoughts about different musical genres. The program helps children understand how music can express emotion and connect them to others.







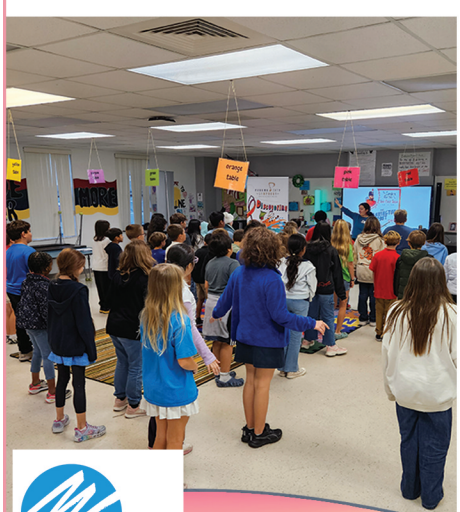


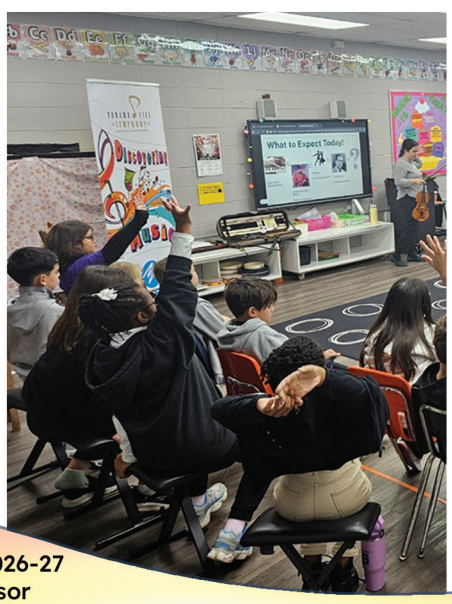
With Gratitude to our 2026-27 Make Music Magic Sponsors Dr. David and Colleen Dietrich

Grades K - 2nd

DISCOVERING MUSIC

Symphony organizations have long recognized the need for early music education, which has been shown to improve academic skills, including math, language, and test scores, while also heightening listening abilities and increasing creativity. The Discovering Music program for students in grades 3-5 helps them explore the fundamental ingredients of music. In this program, musicians engage young minds by demonstrating their instruments' unique qualities and showing how they are used to create a full musical performance through active listening, individual instrument demonstrations, and interactive learning.







With Gratitude to our 2026-27 Discovering Music Sponsor

Grades 3rd - 5th

SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

In 2025-26, Panama City Symphony established Music Education School Partnerships, creating vibrant collaborations with area schools. This season, we welcome new Partners: Hiland Park Elementary, Kate Smith Elementary, and Girls Inc. of Bay County. Unlike traditional single school visits, the core mission of this program is sustained engagement. By returning to the same classrooms multiple times throughout the season, Symphony musicians build meaningful relationships with students and deliver a deeper, sequential music education curriculum. Special thanks to Principal Second Violinist Miranda Rojas for her exceptional work in curriculum development and presentation, and Pianist Ani Mouradian for her vital artistic collaboration.









With gratitude to our 2026-27
Music Ed School Partnerships Sponsors
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Scott Clemons in honor of Barbara Clemons

Grades K - 5th

GUEST ARTIST OUTREACH & MASTERCLASSES

The Symphony's guest artists serve as dedicated educators and community builders who bring music directly into local venues like schools and retirement communities, sharpening their own performance and communication skills while enriching the community. In addition, Masterclasses present high school and college students the opportunity to engage with professional vocalists and musicians. Through group lectures, one-on-one guidance, and direct instruction, students refine their technical and presentation skills while gaining valuable insight into pursuing a career in music.





With gratitude to our 2026-27
Guest Artist Outreach & Masterclasses
Sponsors

MENTORING PROGRAM

The Panama City Symphony Mentoring Program offers advanced high school musicians in grades 9–12 a pre-college orchestral experience. Mentees rehearse alongside Symphony professionals, take private lessons, and perform in assigned concerts and a student recital. Through this immersive training, participants build key technical skills and discipline to prepare for college-level music study.

Elisabeth Courtney
Violin, 12th
Homeschool

Elisabeth wants to gain experience playing advanced repertoire with professional musicians in an orchestral setting as she prepares to pursue a degree and career in violin performance.

Gabriella Kinsey
Clarinet, 12th
Bay High School

Gabriella values the collaborative teamwork of ensemble playing and wants to grow as a performer so she can help others succeed while working toward her long-term goal of earning a doctorate in music.

Conner Long
Trombone, 12th
Bay High School

Conner hopes to refine his musicianship and sight-reading skills in a professional ensemble setting as he works toward earning a degree in music education and pursuing a career as a band director or orchestral musician.

Leda Anaya Marques
Horn, 11th
Bay High School

Driven by a passion for music performance and education, Leda Anaya aims to challenge herself, expand her musical range, and experience the supportive community of playing alongside talented professionals.

Hannah Mitchell
Violin, 10th
Homeschool

Hannah seeks to deepen her knowledge of orchestral music and gain valuable ensemble experience to lay the groundwork for a future career in college-level violin instruction or professional performance.

With gratitude to our Mentoring Sponsors



Marilyn & Kenneth Gummels
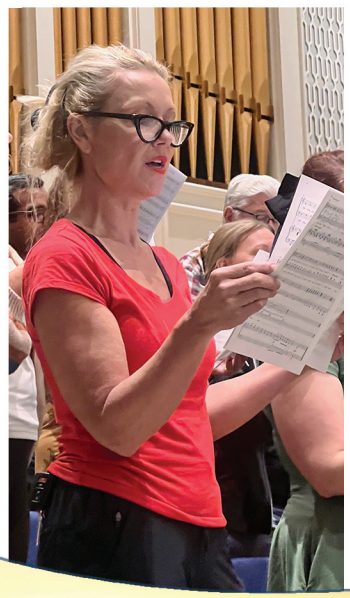


Art & Michele Kimbrough

ADULT & CHILDREN'S CHORUSES

Following a successful debut last season, Panama City Symphony's Adult and Children's Choruses are back for two major concert performances. These dedicated ensembles bring together adult singers and children to perform with our orchestra. Under the leadership of skilled area directors, the choruses will anchor two signature events this season: A Grand Symphony Christmas in December and Beethoven's monumental Symphony No. 9 in April.







With gratitude to our Adult Chorus Sponsors, Don & Elke McCoy

PANAMA CITY SYMPHONY STRING ACADEMY

Panama City Symphony String Academy develops the next generation of orchestral musicians through structured ensemble training. Launched in January 2026 under the direction of educator Rachel Cole—with rehearsals hosted at Palm Bay Elementary School—the program guides 4th–8th graders from foundational technique to the concert stage.

After just four months of instruction, the inaugural beginner cohort made their historic debut, performing “Brio,” composed by Doug Spata and arranged by Ethan G. Kimbrough, side by side with the Panama City Symphony. Just weeks later, the students took the stage again for their first solo recital.

Now in its second semester with roughly 20 new beginners joining the roster, the Academy instills the technical discipline, ensemble skills, and performance experience required for long-term musical growth. Direct exposure to and active support from the Panama City Symphony organization lend unique credibility to the program, offering students rich opportunities to develop their skills, eventually feed into our mentorship program, and hopefully, one day become members of our orchestra.

See these rising musicians at Martin Luther King Recreation Center on May 14, 2027, at 5:00 PM as part of the **Musically Up Close** series.











With gratitude to our
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Proud Sponsor of Panama City Symphony String Academy

2ND BIENNIEL EMERGING ARTISTS COMPETITION

Panama City Symphony's biennial Emerging Artists Competition celebrates exceptional high school and college classical musicians. In the June 2026 competition, 11 elite finalists participated in a live adjudication. They were evaluated on technical precision, musicality, and stage presence. College Division winner Joshua Thai (violin) and High School Division winner Mana Takahashi (violin) earned cash prizes along with featured solo guest performances with the orchestra during the 2026-27 season. More than $10,000 in prizes was given to the young artists, courtesy of generous sponsors.

During our January 30, 2027 concert, Mana Takahashi will present Movement I of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's "Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 35." Joshua Thai will perform Erich Wolfgang Korngold's "Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 35," during our Februay 13, 2027 concert. Each artist will also debut a newly commissioned world premiere piece. Our Musically Up Close series will highlight College Division second-place winner, Carter Doolittle, performing "Reimagining the Saxophone", at the Martin Luther King Jr. Recreation Center on Friday, March 19, 2027. Joshua Thai will present his recital, "Rhapsody & Reverie", at the Panama City City Hall Rotunda on Friday, April 16, 2027.













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ABOUT OUR ORCHESTRA



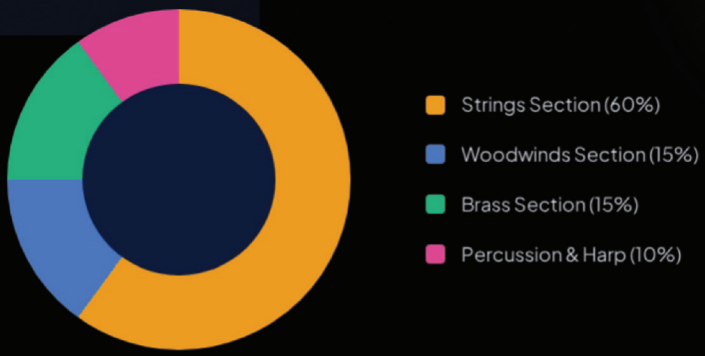
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www.panamacityyouthorchestra.com

The Panama City Youth Orchestra is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Angel Stanislav Wang
Tuesday, October 6



Evil Woman, The American ELO
Sunday, February 7



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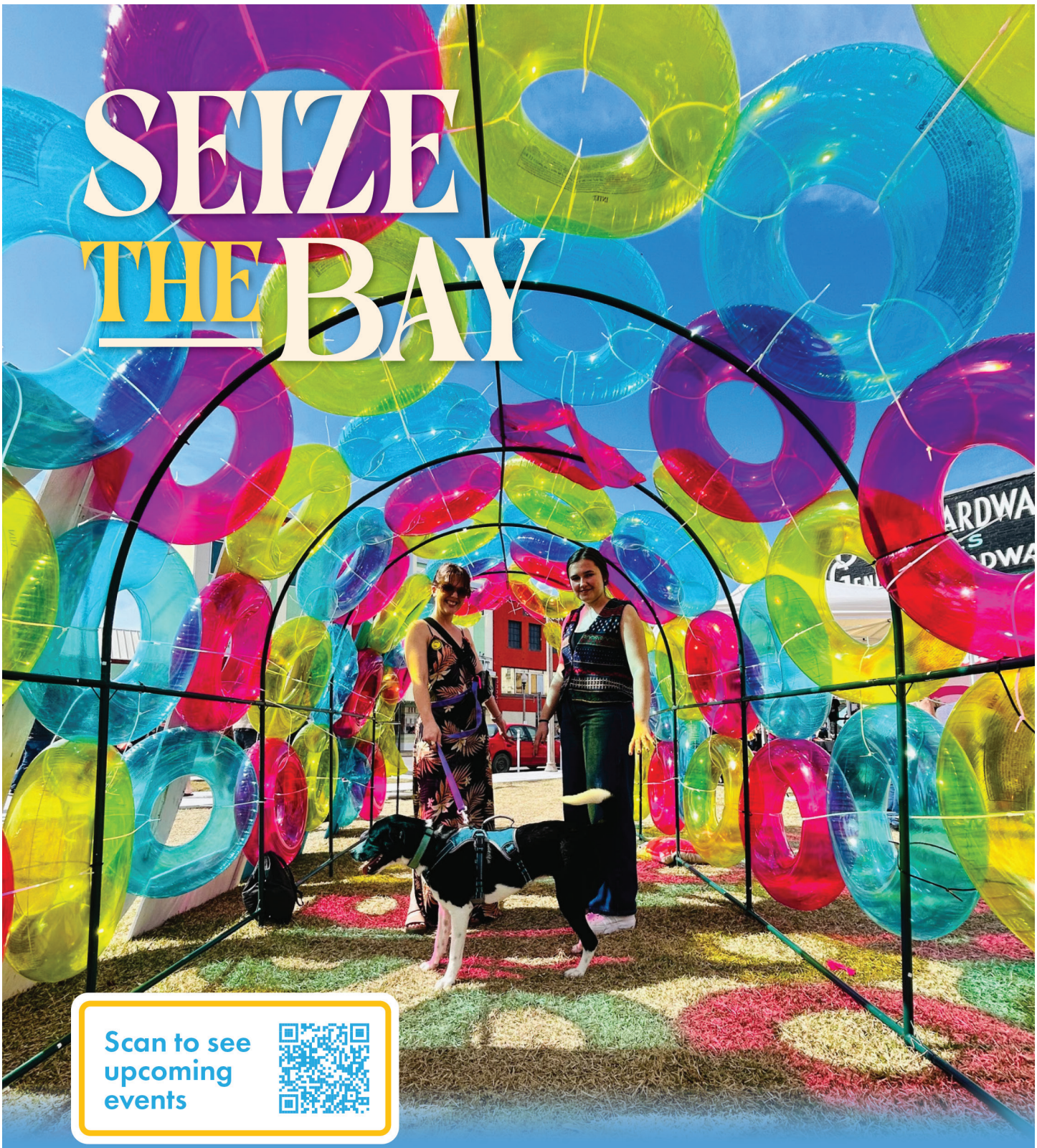
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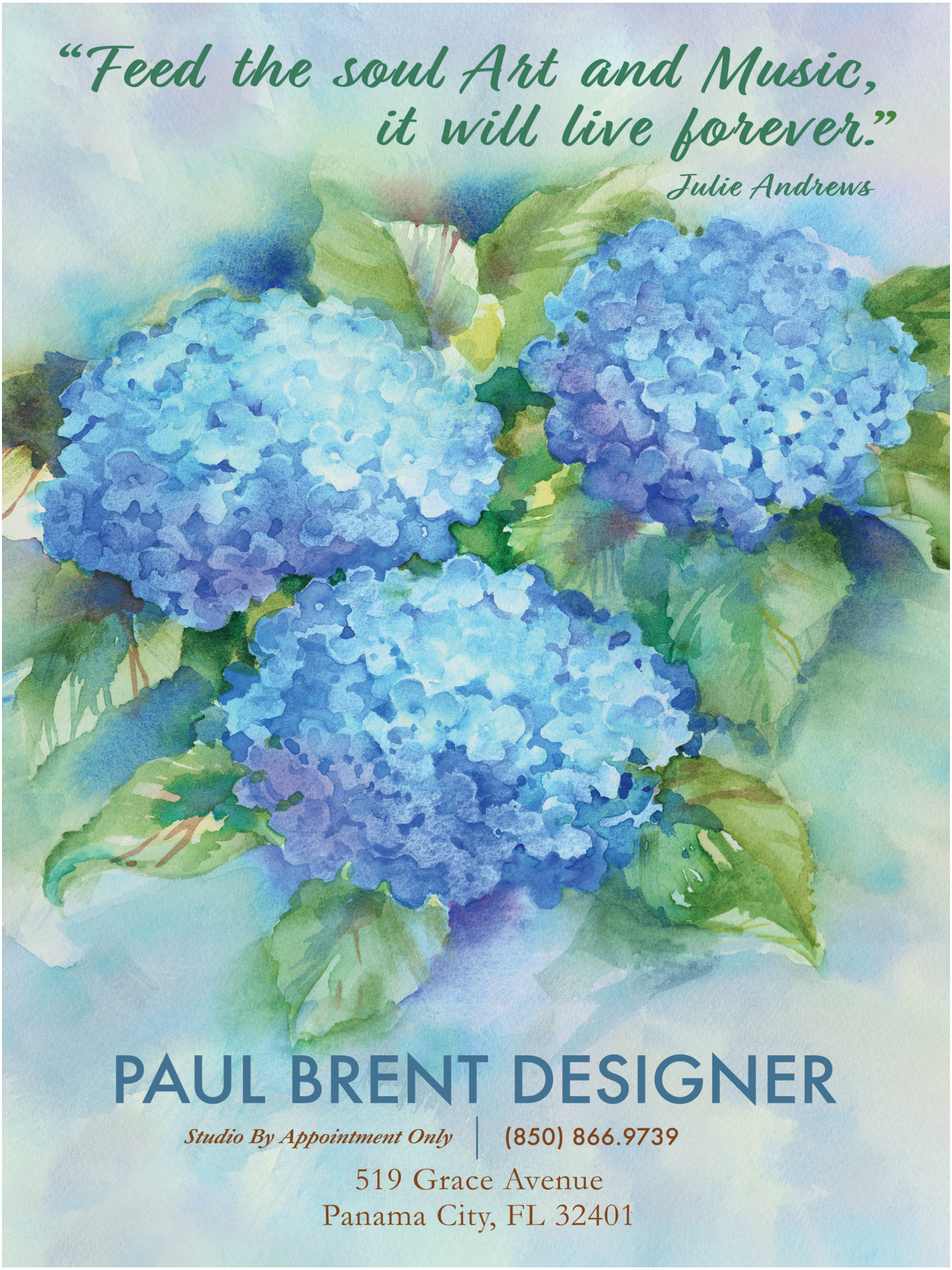
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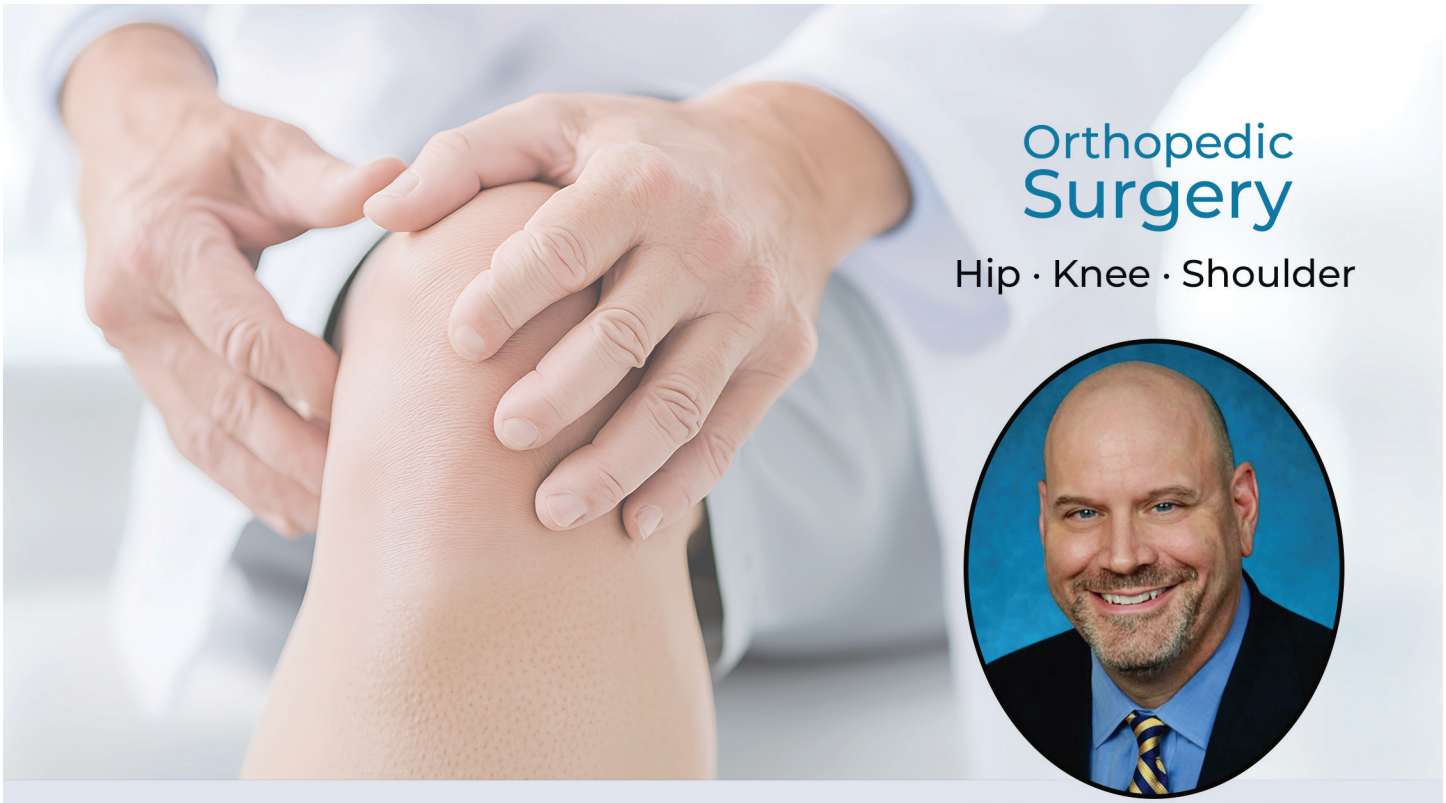




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Panama City Symphony
presents

Piazzolla
Four Seasons of Buenos Aires

Conducted by
Alex Amsel, Finalist for Music Director & Conductor

Featuring
Dr. Benjamin Sung, Guest Violinist

Joaquín Turina —
La oración del torero, Op. 34

Astor Piazzolla —
Las cuatro estaciones porteñas
(The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires)
arr. Leonid Desyatnikov

I. Primavera porteña (Spring)
II. Verano porteño (Summer)
III. Otoño porteño (Autumn)
IV. Invierno porteño (Winter)

Intermission

Rodion Shchedrin —
Carmen Suite (after Bizet)
I. Introduction
II. Dance
III. First Intermezzo
IV. Changing of the Guard
V. Carmen's Entrance and Habanera
VI. Scene
VII. Second Intermezzo
VIII. Bolero
IX. Torero
X. Torero and Carmen
XI. Adagio
XII. Fortune-Telling
XIII. Finale



Dr. Benjamin Sung

Professor of Violin at Florida State University, violinist Benjamin Sung is also a Faculty Artist at the Brevard Music Center, where he acts as Violin Coordinator and Concertmaster of the Brevard Opera Orchestra. Recent concert highlights include the 2026 Brevard Music Festival; recital appearances in Seoul, Munich, Prague, Chicago, and New York; performances of the 24 Caprices by Paganini; and a TED talk for TEDx Fargo.

An enthusiastic advocate of contemporary music, Sung's most recent album, Ommagi(o), will be released on PARMA Records in spring 2027, and features solo violin works by Salvatore Sciarrino, Alfred Schnittke, Bruno Maderna, and Luciano Berio. Along with pianist David Kalhous, Sung has recently commissioned six new works for violin and piano in a project entitled extension, to be recorded and released in fall 2027.

Sung holds a Bachelor's degree from the Eastman School of Music, where he studied with Oleh Krysa, and Master's and Doctorate degrees from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, from the studio of Nelli Shkolnikova.

Program Notes
By Alex Amsel

Tonight, every piece is a dance. A matador dances with a bull. Two people dance the tango, with melancholy always cutting in. And Carmen dances with life itself, right to the very end. Three stories of the heart, told by strings, and every one of them aches.

JOAQUÍN TURINA (1882-1949)

La oración del torero (The Bullfighter's Prayer)

Imagine the moment before. The crowd roars, the band blares, the sun beats down on the sand. Out on the sand waits the most dangerous dance there is: a man and a bull, circling each other. But just behind a wall, in a tiny candlelit chapel, the matador kneels alone. Turina glimpsed that chapel one afternoon at the Madrid bullring, and this music is what he felt there.

It's a piece with two hearts beating at once. Bright, strummed rhythms burst in from the arena - pride, swagger, the thrill of the spectacle. Then everything hushes into a prayer full of fear, faith, and tenderness. The music swings back and forth, as if the chapel door keeps blowing open. Listen for the final quiet moments: a man gathering his courage before stepping into the light.

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA (1921-1992)

Las Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas (The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires)
Arranged by Leonid Desyatnikov

For me, this music is family. I'm Argentine, and my grandparents met dancing tango. So when I hear these melodies, I hear a crowded dance floor, an embrace, and the beginning of my own story.



Tango is a dance for two, but there's always a third partner: melancholy. Piazzolla grew up playing it, tried to leave it behind for "serious" music, and was told by his teacher in Paris that tango was his true voice. Thank goodness he listened. His four seasons aren't about weather; they're about the moods of Buenos Aires. Summer sweats and swaggers. Autumn sighs. Winter aches with loneliness. Spring bursts back to life.

Listen for the strings pretending to be a tango band while imitating the melancholic and tango-famous bandoneon, and raspy scratches and percussive slaps, all with that forward-leaning rhythm that makes you want to get up and dance. You may even catch Vivaldi's Four Seasons sneaking in, flipped upside down, since summer in Buenos Aires arrives in January. And in the slow, singing melodies between, you'll hear nostalgia, the feeling at the very heart of tango.

RODION SHCHEDRIN (1932-2025)

Carmen Suite, after Georges Bizet

We end with the most dangerous woman in opera. Carmen dances with life itself - fiery, free, and fearless - and she will not be owned, not even if it costs her life.



In 1967, the legendary Bolshoi ballerina Maya Plisetskaya longed to dance, and her husband, Rodion Shchedrin, gave her an unforgettable gift: Bizet's beloved tunes reborn for strings and a dazzling array of percussion. Carmen became a ballet, so the whole story is told through the body: every swirl of a skirt, every step toward fate. Soviet officials found it far too sensual. Audiences couldn't get enough.

Shchedrin plays with Bizet like a cat with a ball of yarn. The Habanera slinks and teases. The Toreador Song struts in with a wink, bringing us back to the bullring where our evening began. Bells ring out like a warning. And as passion turns to jealousy, the music grows darker and more urgent until the tragic end. Seductive, thrilling, and heartbreaking, it's the perfect finale to an evening of love, longing, and courage.



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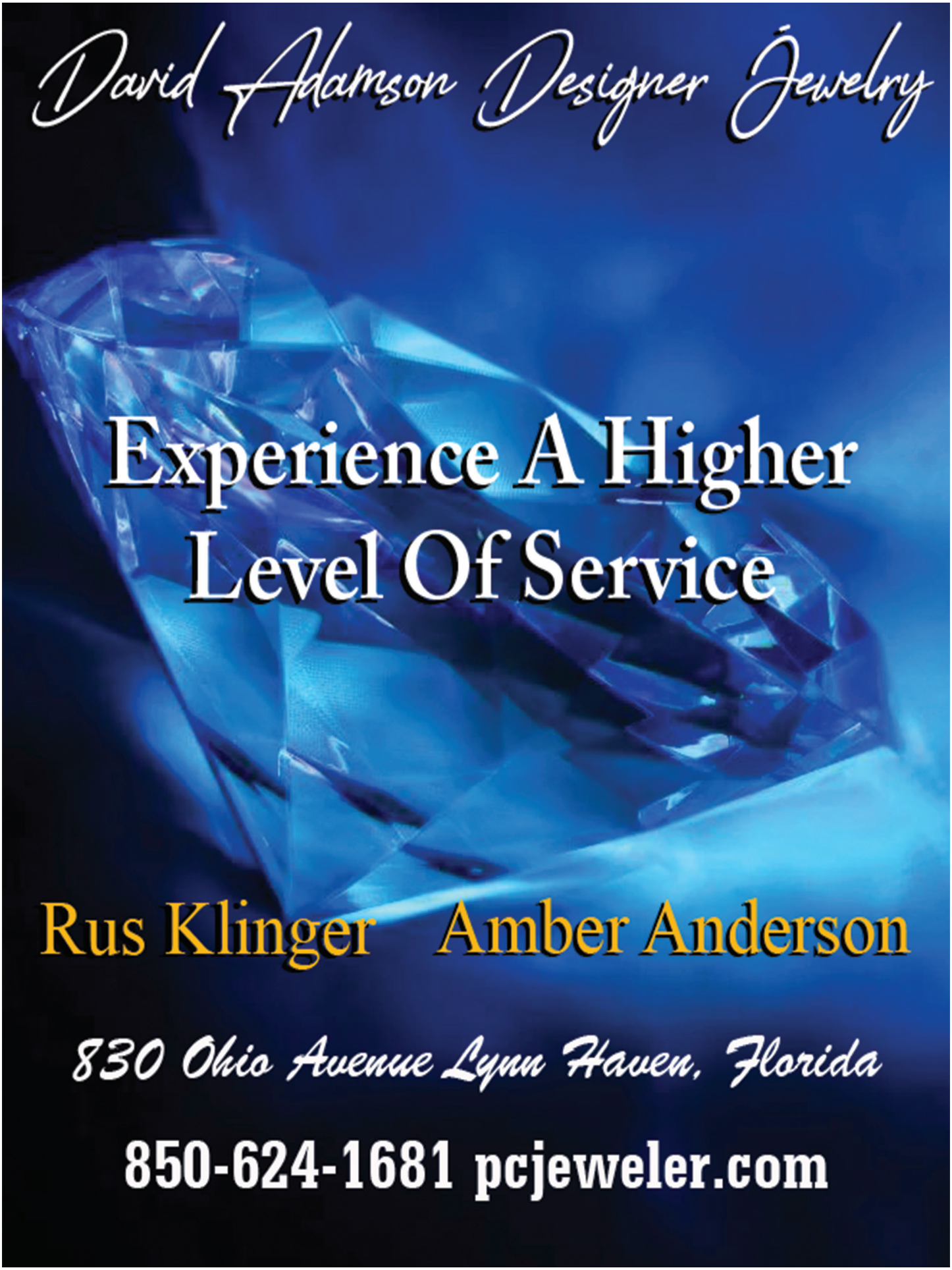
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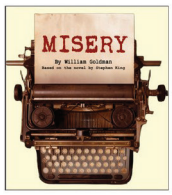
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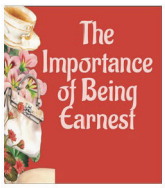
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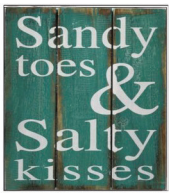
Oct. 9 -18



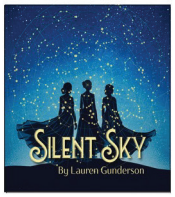
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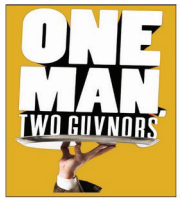
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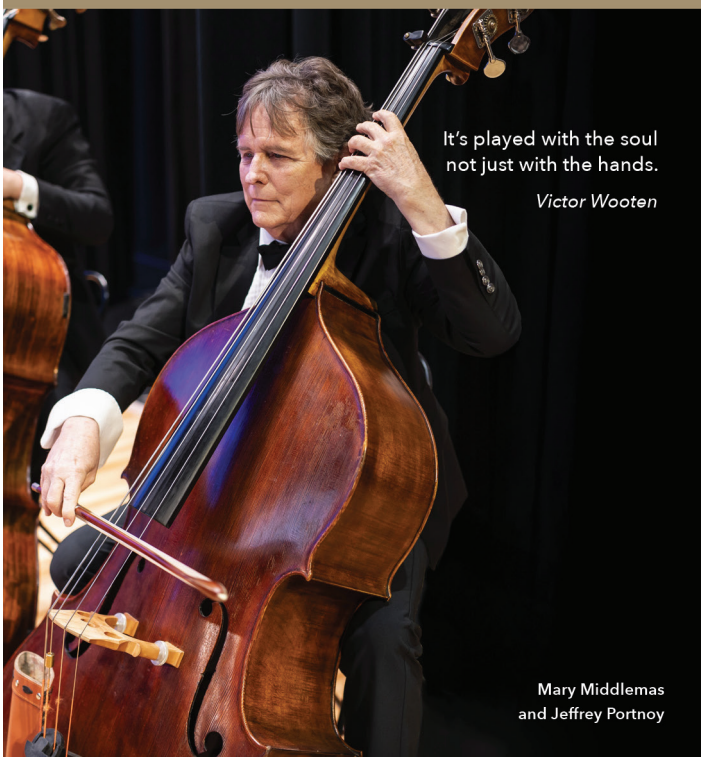
Ani Mouradian

Piano



In Appreciation of the Principal Bass

David Goldflies





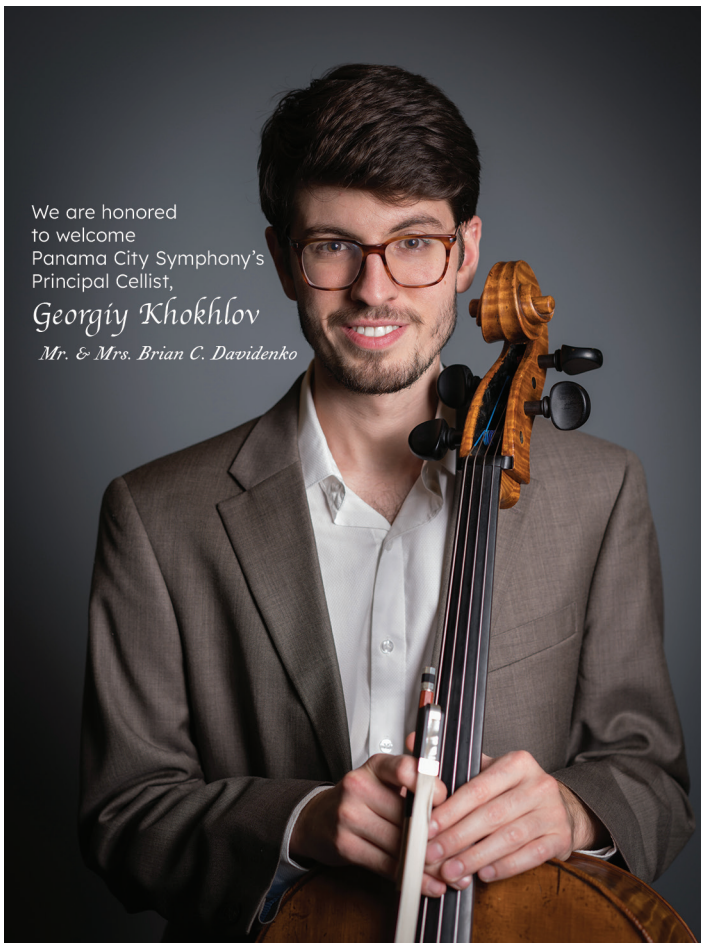
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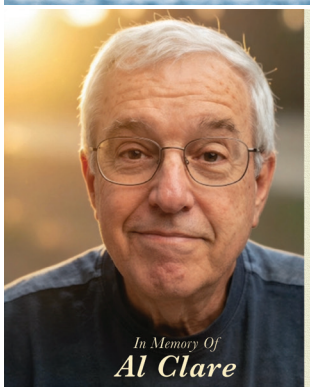


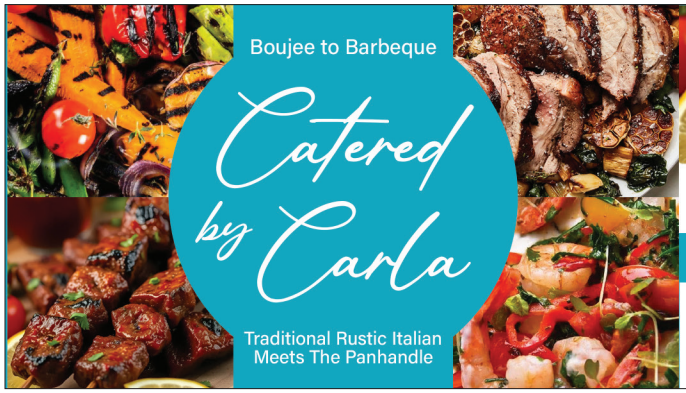
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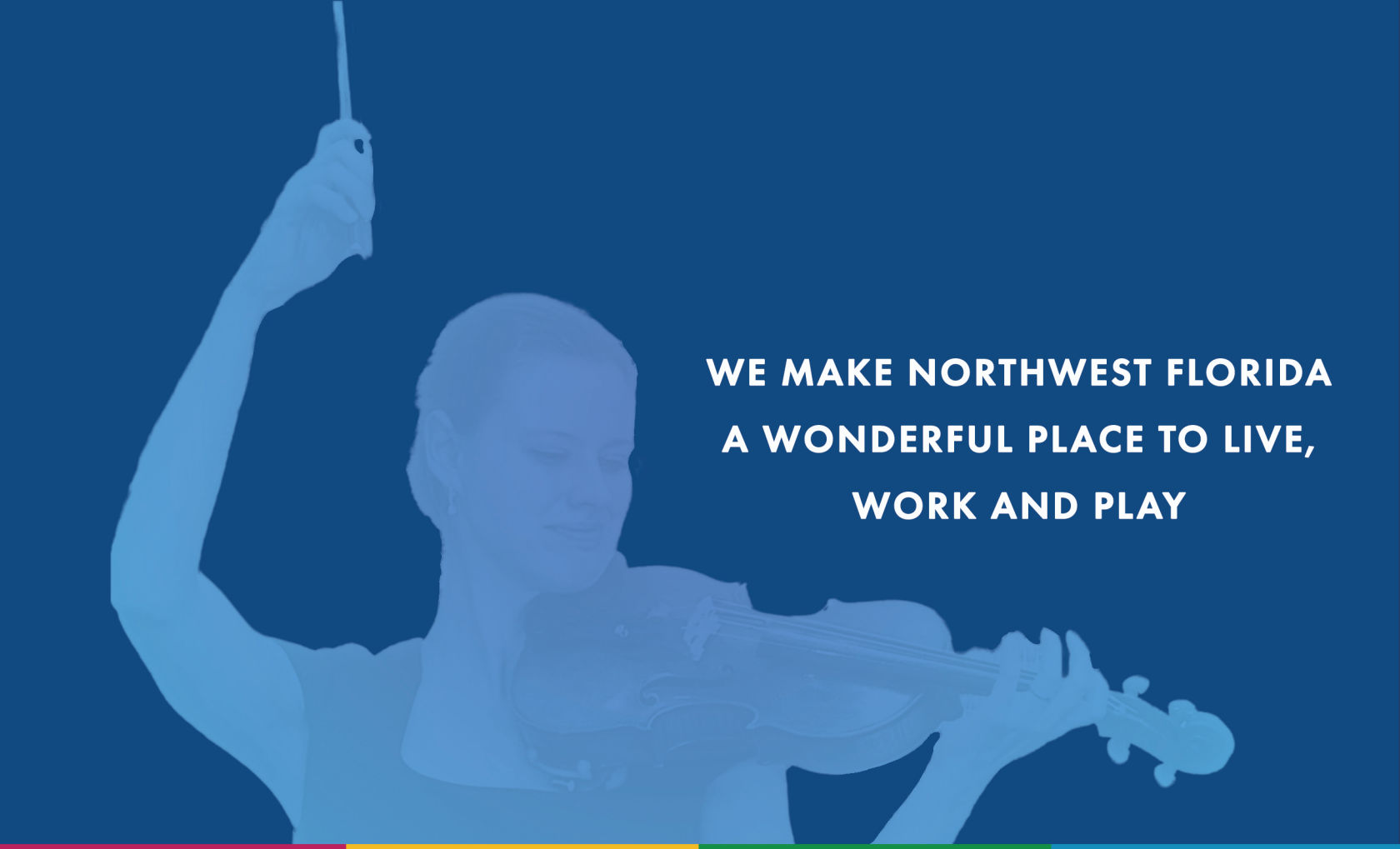
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