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TO THE

*Spectacular*

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SEASON  
2025 - 2026

SPRING  
2026

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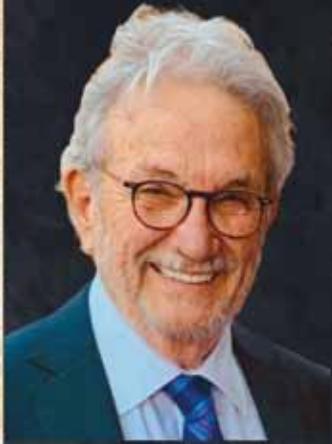


The El Paso Symphony Orchestra Association  
dedicates the

2025-2026 El Paso Symphony Season  
in memory of

*Angel Beltran, Jr.*

We are infinitely thankful and blessed to have had  
Angel in the EPSO family.



Angel served several terms on the  
EPSO Board of Trustees beginning in  
2002. He was a passionate  
advocate for the Symphony's  
Tocando Music Project, which  
provides free after-school music  
lessons in the Segundo Barrio.

Angel and his wonderful wife,  
Rosalia, shared a love for  
classical music and were  
dedicated supporters of young  
musicians. Together, they conceived "Tomatoville," a  
successful fundraiser for Tocando, which they hosted for  
many years in their beautiful garden.

He was a kind, compassionate, and generous man. His light  
shone brightly. We will miss him greatly.



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# Director's Welcome

The El Paso Symphony Orchestra is celebrating its 95th anniversary, a testament to nearly a century of musical excellence. This milestone reflects the dedication of its patrons, conductors, musicians, and staff, along with generous sponsors, all contributing to EPSO's vibrant history and ongoing success.

I want to take this opportunity to share some of the highlights of EPSO's past 95 years:

- The El Paso Symphony Orchestra's journey began in 1893, establishing itself permanently in 1931.
- On January 26, 1931, H. Arthur Brown conducted his first concert with the EPSO at the Scottish Rite Temple Auditorium.
- Local businessman and musician Dorrance D. Roderick founded the El Paso Symphony Orchestra Association after hearing Maestro Brown's final concert of his first season on the radio.
- In 1936, KTSM radio commemorated Texas' 100 years of independence by broadcasting an EPSO concert at the Plaza Theatre for a national audience through the NBC radio network.
- EPSO went on the air for the second time nationally when radio station KROD, a member of the CBS network, formally opened its station in June 1940.
- In 1941, EPSO concerts moved to Liberty Hall.
- In 1951, young Italian violinist and conductor Orlando Barera took over the podium for the next 20 seasons.
- William Kirschke took the helm in October 1972 for the next three seasons.
- In 1975, the EPSO moved to the Civic Center Theatre, now known as the Abraham Chavez Theatre.
- On March 1975, native son Abraham Chavez, Jr., was appointed as the new Music Director.
- Gürer Aykal succeeded Maestro Chavez in 1992.
- Led by Maestro Aykal, EPSO undertook its first European Tour in 1996, performing to sold-out houses in Germany, followed by a successful tour of Turkey in 2000.
- Sarah Ioannides became EPSO's first female conductor in 2005.
- El Paso Symphony Youth Orchestra was established in 2005. Since the beginning, 100% of all EPSYO seniors have graduated from high school and continue to college.
- In 2006, EPSO concerts moved to the historic Plaza Theatre.
- Following a 2-year search, Bohuslav Rattay was named EPSO's Music Director in 2013.
- EPSO launched the TOCANDO Music Project in 2013 as a free after-school program at Hart Elementary School, which now serves all elementary and middle schools in the Bowie High School feeder pattern.



As Texas's longest-running symphony, we are dedicated to preserving our legacy and proudly continue to serve the rich and diverse community of El Paso through beautiful music. Thank you for joining us tonight. Enjoy the performance by El Paso's finest musicians under the baton of our dynamic leader, Bohuslav Rattay!

Warmest regards,

*Ruth Ellen Jacobson*

Ruth Ellen Jacobson/Executive Director

A blurred background image of an orchestra conductor in a dark suit, holding a baton, with musicians playing violins in the background.

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# Contents

3	A Message from the Executive Director	40	Annual Fun Contributors
6	Season Calendar	43	Patron Information
7	Concert and Ticket Tips	44	El Paso Symphony Foundation
8	Chair's Greeting	45	Memorials/ In Honor
9	EPSOA Board of Trustees	47	Acknowledgements
10	El Paso Symphony Orchestra	48	Advertisers Index
12	Music Director		
17	January Sponsor Message		<b>FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE...</b>
18	January Guest Artist		The El Paso Symphony Theatre Box Office, located in the Plaza Theatre, is open every Friday of concert week from 5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m., and on Saturdays of concert week from 4:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. You may continue to purchase tickets by telephone on these two days through the EPSO Ticket Hotline, (915) 532-EPSO (532-3776). Ticket exchanges or purchase of additional tickets on both concert days will be handled at the theater box office. The El Paso Symphony office is located in the Abraham Chavez Theatre, One Civic Center Plaza, El Paso, Texas 79901.
19	January Program		
20	January Program Notes		
24	Armonía Symphony Collective		
28	February Sponsor Message		
29	February Program		
30	February Program Notes		Tickets are available online at <a href="http://www.epso.org">www.epso.org</a> or ticketmaster.com
33	Season Sponsors		
34	April Guest Artist		<b>Scan to Buy Tickets</b>
35	April Program		
36	April Program Notes		



# EPSO Season Calendar

## SEPTEMBER 13

7:00 p.m. 95th Anniversary Gala – El Paso Country Club  
Honoring Marlene Stewart, El Paso Patron  
of the Arts Award

## SEPTEMBER 17

11:30 a.m. Gold Medal Piano Recital – 821 Rim Road  
Aristo Sham, 2025 Cliburn Gold Medal Winner

## SEPTEMBER 19/20

6:30 p.m. “Opening Notes” – Philanthropy Theatre  
7:30 p.m. “Van Cliburn Gold” – Plaza Theatre  
Bohuslav Rattay, Conductor  
Aristo Sham, Piano

## OCTOBER 17/18

6:30 p.m. “Opening Notes” – Philanthropy Theatre  
7:30 p.m. “Space Odyssey” – Plaza Theatre  
Bohuslav Rattay, Conductor  
UTEP Concert Chorale

## NOVEMBER 2

3:00 p.m. EPSYO Fall Concert – Abraham Chavez Theatre

## NOVEMBER 8

7:00 p.m. Jurassic Park in Concert  
Plaza Theatre

## DECEMBER 5/6

6:30 p.m. “Opening Notes” – Philanthropy Theatre  
7:30 p.m. “A Christmas Fantasia” – Plaza Theatre  
Bohuslav Rattay, Conductor  
UTEP Choral Union

## JANUARY 23/24

6:30 p.m. “Opening Notes” – Philanthropy Theatre  
7:30 p.m. “Majestic Rhythms” – Plaza Theatre  
Bohuslav Rattay, Conductor  
Matthew Vera, Violin

## FEBRUARY 1

3:00 p.m. EPSYO Winter Concert – Abraham Chavez Theatre

## FEBRUARY 3/4/5

10:30 a.m. Young People’s Concerts  
12:30 p.m. Abraham Chavez Theatre

## FEBRUARY 27/28

6:30 p.m. “Opening Notes” – Philanthropy Theatre  
7:30 p.m. “The Seventh Symphonies, Classical Poetry”  
Plaza Theatre  
Bohuslav Rattay, Conductor

## MARCH 7

11:30 a.m. Peter and the Wolf – Plaza Theatre

## MARCH 29

3:00 p.m. EPSO & EPSYO  
Side by Side Concert – Abraham Chavez Theatre

## APRIL 6

 March Madness Fundraiser

11:00 a.m. Golf Tournament  
6:00 p.m. Dinner & NCAA Men’s Basketball  
Championship Game

## APRIL 24/25

6:30 p.m. “Opening Notes” – Philanthropy Theatre  
7:30 p.m. “Carmina!” – Plaza Theatre  
Bohuslav Rattay, Conductor  
UTEP Choral Union

## MAY 17

3:00 p.m. EPSYO Final Concert – Plaza Theatre

STAY TUNED

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reminders and parking alerts.

Simply text the word  
“reminder” to (915) 532-3776

or scan QR Code



# Concert & Ticket Tips

Here is some helpful information to help you understand the structure of the evening's program and make your experience at the concert even more enjoyable and satisfying.

All program pages are structured in the same manner to help you follow the music (see pages 19, 29 and 35):

- The composer's name is listed first in bold face type.
- The piece of music is listed just below the composer's name in italic.
- Movements, if any, follow in smaller regular type. Movements are like chapters in a book. They usually have a short pause between them. It isn't complete until all the chapters have been read. The conductor may keep his hands raised between movements indicating that the piece is not over.
- When the piece is over, the conductor will lower the baton completely and turn to face the audience.
- Please feel free to show your appreciation at the end of the piece.
- Interested in gaining more insight into the evening's program? Attend "Opening Notes" in the Philanthropy Theatre at 6:30 p.m. This series of pre-concert talks gives you the inside scoop on the composers, compositions and guest artists.

## TICKET TIPS & POLICIES

The Symphony Box Office is located in front of the Plaza Theatre. Hours are (concert days only) Fridays from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and Saturdays from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The Box Office phone number is (915) 231-1100. The street address is:

The Plaza Theatre  
125 Pioneer Plaza  
El Paso, Texas 79901

The Symphony Office, located at the Abraham Chavez Theatre, is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The Symphony phone number is (915) 532-3776.

**SINGLE TICKETS** go on sale two weeks prior to each concert. Tickets may be purchased over the phone at (915) 532-3776, any Ticketmaster outlet or online at [www.epso.org](http://www.epso.org).

**TICKET EXCHANGES** are offered for the convenience of season ticket holders. Tickets may be exchanged for another performance of the same program by calling the symphony office at (915) 532-3776 at least 24 hours before the concert for which they are held.

**FLEX PASSES** may be redeemed at the symphony office or the theater box office. Flex Tickets may be redeemed by mail after the pass has been received by the symphony office.

**GROUP TICKETS** are available at a substantial discount for groups of ten or more. Call (915) 532-3776 for more information. All tickets are non-refundable.

**EMPTY SEATS DON'T APPLAUD!** If you cannot attend a concert for which you have tickets, please return them to the symphony office. The value of your ticket will be acknowledged as a contribution, but more importantly, your seat can be occupied by another person. **Ticket returns are accepted until concert time by calling (915) 532-3776 or mailing your tickets to the Symphony Office, P.O. Box 180, El Paso, Texas 79942.**

## EPSO ADMINISTRATION

Ruth Ellen Jacobson, Executive Director  
Bohuslav Rattay, Music Director  
James Welsch, Associate Conductor  
Linda Fischer, Business Manager  
Rosemary Flores, Operations Manager  
Diana de la Torre, Ticket Manager  
Pamela Jean Kihnley, Director of Fund Development

# Chair's Greeting



On behalf of the El Paso Symphony Orchestra (EPSO), I am excited to welcome you to our 95th anniversary season. The El Paso Symphony Orchestra is the longest continuously running orchestra in the state of Texas. This would not be possible without the incredible management and leadership of Executive Director Ruth Ellen Jacobson and her professional staff. The EPSO is a unique gem in this binational community on the border, and we are proud of this distinction of bringing live music to the borderland for many generations of listeners.

I am honored to serve the EPSO, which greatly contributes to El Paso's cultural image and quality of life. It celebrates our region's unique multi-cultural heritage through exceptional programming and exciting talent. The EPSO enhances the diverse fabric of El Paso, making it more attractive as a growing destination in America.

The Board of Trustees and I are committed to ensuring that we have a vibrant symphony for years to come. We take our role as financial stewards very seriously. We are truly blessed to have such talented musicians in our community who come together to perform for the benefit of El Paso. Together with our extremely talented conductor, Maestro Bohuslav Rattay, and the EPSO Artistic Advisement Committee, we strive to create engaging entertainment for our community.

Additionally, EPSO fulfills a vital educational role throughout our many outreach programs, which reach over 90,000 adults, students and seniors each year. I am proud to have chaired the board of one of EPSO's two signature educational programs, Tocando Music Project, for a few years. Tocando provides free after-school music instruction in the heart of the Segundo Barrio. The other vibrant and largest EPSO youth component is the El Paso Symphony Youth Orchestras, which serves over 300 students annually. The students in both programs receive daily or weekly instruction and perform in various venues throughout the city.

On behalf of the EPSO Association Board of Trustees, thank you for your support of our incredible symphony. It is because of YOU that we continue to introduce new audiences to powerful live performances of the classics and more. We hope you enjoy this season, which promises to offer a rich cultural experience and bring you joy through the music of the El Paso Symphony Orchestra!

Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Max Villaronga".

Max Villaronga  
Chairman, EPSOA Board of Trustees

# EPSOA Board of Trustees

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Max Villaronga

**CHAIR-ELECT**  
Gary McCroy

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# EPSO Musicians

## BOHUSLAV RATTAY

Music Director

**Sue & Dr. Doug Woo Director's Chair**

## JAMES WELSCH

Associate Conductor

## FIRST VIOLINS

Matthew Vera

*Concertmaster*

Stephanie Meyers

*Associate Concertmaster*

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*Assistant Concertmaster*

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Erin Eyles Espinoza

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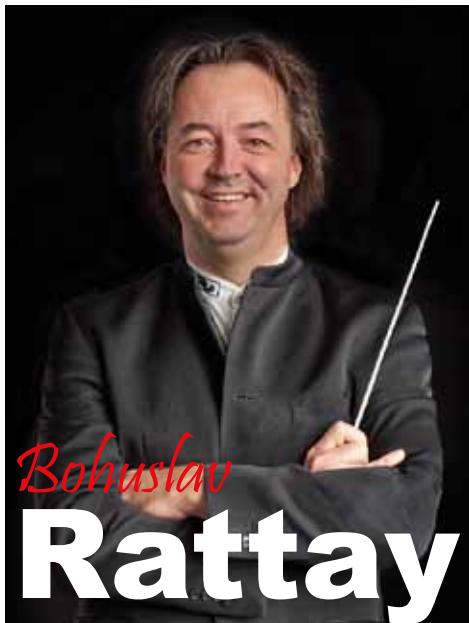
**STAGE MANAGER**

Steve Ligorio

Lu Padula

\*October Concert

# Music Director



## Bohuslav Rattay

Celebrated Czech-American conductor Bohuslav Rattay emerges as a vibrant global envoy for classical music, enchanting audiences across the world with his masterful and inspired leadership of symphonic works. Presently holding the esteemed positions of Music Director for both the El Paso Symphony Orchestra and the Midland Symphony Orchestra of Michigan, he is widely regarded as a prodigious talent of his era. Mr. Rattay fuses passionate, virtuosic artistry with an unyielding dedication to bringing the beauty of music to every corner of society.

With an innovative vision, Mr. Rattay seamlessly weaves together the timeless traditions and bold innovations of classical music,

creating performances that are both electrifying and refreshingly original. He crafts imaginative concert programs, enhanced with interactive audience dialogues and cutting-edge multimedia, offering a captivating and immersive experience. His profound connection to the classics, especially the evocative musical legacy of his Bohemian roots, has earned him widespread acclaim. Critics have hailed his work with phrases like "Rattay is the quintessential guide for Tchaikovsky's Fourth" (*Charleston Today*) and the poetic tribute, "Observing him conduct is akin to watching an artist paint vivid scenes in sync with living music on a vast canvas" (*El Paso Times*). His thoughtfully diverse programming strikes a chord with a wide array of listeners, delighting devoted fans while cultivating a new wave of symphony enthusiasts.

Globally revered, Mr. Rattay is acclaimed for his inventive and deeply moving interpretations, earning praise for his "vibrant" performances and "refined flair" (*Charleston City Paper*), his orchestra-directing "contagious enthusiasm and dynamism" (*Midland Daily News*), and his distinctive artistry that imparts a "personal vision... destined to resonate for generations" (*Duluth News Tribune*). His commanding presence has graced renowned

stages as a guest conductor, including the Colorado Symphony, Duluth-Superior Symphony, Lubbock Symphony Orchestra, Bogotá Sinfónica de Colombia, Antalya Symphony in Turkey, Teplice Philharmonic, and Karlovy Vary Symphony in his native Czech Republic. Recent highlights feature collaborations with the Virginia Symphony, West Michigan Symphony, Irving Symphony Orchestra, Prague's Dvořák Symphony Orchestra, and the Charleston (SC) Symphony, where he received resounding critical acclaim. He has also led the National Symphony Orchestra through the National Conducting Institute and was selected for the prestigious Conducting Fellowship by the American Symphony Orchestra League.

A passionate advocate for education, Mr. Rattay inspires young musicians as a dedicated educator. Appointed to the music faculty at the University of Texas at El Paso, he has previously enriched the academic communities of the College of William and Mary, Ball State University, and numerous youth orchestras throughout the United States. His youthful vigor, combined with his extraordinary conducting expertise, positions him as a highly influential and motivating mentor.

Mr. Rattay's impressive educational background includes degrees from the Prague Conservatory, Rice University, and the Peabody Institute of Music. He attributes his remarkable growth to the profound influence of mentors Gustav Meier, Larry Rachleff, Benjamin Kamins, and Neeme Järvi.

**Have you noticed the red bands around the conductor's podium and some orchestra chairs?**

**These represent a Chair Sponsorship by an individual or corporation.**

**Chair sponsorships not only support the EPSO operating budget, but helps our musicians feel valued and appreciated.**

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EPSYO members perform exciting symphonic music in El Paso's finest concert halls and get the opportunity to learn from EPSO musicians in small and large group settings. The EPSYO accepts students between the ages of 8 and 22 with at least one year of musical study.

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS ACCEPTED  
ON A YEAR-ROUND BASIS. JOIN US ON STAGE!**

## **EPSYO 2025-2026 CONCERT SERIES**

**NOVEMBER 2, 2025**

**FALL CONCERT**

3:00pm Abraham Chavez Theatre

**MARCH 29, 2026**

**SIDE BY SIDE CONCERT**

3:00pm Abraham Chavez Theatre  
featuring EPSO, EPSYO and TOCANDO

**FEBRUARY 1, 2026**

**WINTER CONCERT**

3:00pm Abraham Theatre

**MAY 17, 2026**

**FINAL CONCERT**

3:00pm Plaza Theatre

THE EL PASO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

is pleased to honor

*Marlene Stewart*

**El Paso Patron of the Arts  
Award**



In appreciation of her 40+ years of exemplary leadership, devotion and unwavering support of the arts in our community. We honor her contributions and celebrate her legacy.

*Thank you!*

**EPSO**

# JANUARY CONCERT SPONSOR

*“Music is the universal language of the world.”*

*- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*



Kemp Smith is proud to support the El Paso Symphony Orchestra and to sponsor this month's performance. The Symphony's music bridges generations and cultures and brings us together to share a collective experience beyond mere entertainment. EPSO is an essential element of the quality of life in El Paso and we are honored to be a part of it. We are delighted to continue to support EPSO through the participation on the Board of Directors and through sponsorships for many years to come.

***Here's to another great season!***



# January Guest Artist



**MATTHEW VERA, Violin**

Mexican-American violinist Matthew Vera is known for his versatility as a soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral leader. As an orchestral musician, Matthew can be heard all over the country. He is currently a member of the Boston Philharmonic's first violin section, where he has also served as guest concertmaster. Matthew began his tenure as concertmaster of the El Paso Symphony Orchestra in the fall of 2024, where he has been serving as guest concertmaster since 2022. Matthew frequents the stages of the Boston Ballet Orchestra, the Portland Symphony Orchestra, the Rhode Island Philharmonic, and the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, among others.

Chamber music holds a special place in Matthew's life. He is a violinist with Castle of our Skins, a concert and educational

series dedicated to celebrating Black artistry through music. He can also be heard with Aurea Ensemble, Radius Ensemble, Juventas New Music Ensemble, and Monadnock Music. Matthew is the founder and artistic director of Jewel Box Ensemble, a concert series celebrating queer musicians and composers.

Matthew made his solo debut on the viola with the Tucson Philharmonia at age 14. He has appeared as a soloist with the Buffalo Philharmonic, the Tucson Philharmonia, the Tucson Symphony, the World Youth Symphony Orchestra, and the New England Conservatory Symphony. Most recently, Matthew was the featured soloist in Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* with the El Paso Symphony Orchestra, where he led the orchestra conductorless. He has attended numerous festivals, including Tanglewood, the Heifetz Institute, Brevard Music Center, Green Mountain Chamber Music Festival, and more.

A native of Tucson, Arizona, Matthew's early musical training was fostered through the Tucson Unified Public Schools and Tucson Junior Strings, a unique conductorless orchestra training program for young people. He is a graduate of the New England Conservatory, where he studied with James Buswell, Lucy Chapman, and Donald Weilerstein. His close mentors have included the Borromeo String Quartet, Roger Tapping, Martha Katz, and John Heiss.

# January Program

**Friday, January 23, 2026**

**Saturday, January 24, 2026**

7:30 p.m., Plaza Theatre

BOHUSLAV RATTAY, Conductor

MATTHEW VERA, Violin

## **GINASTERA**

Four Dances from *Estancia*

Los trabajadores agrícolas (The Land Workers)

Danza del trigo (Wheat Dance)

Los peones de hacienda (The Cattlemen)

Danza Finale (Malambo - Final Dance)

## **LALO**

*Symphonie espagnole, D minor, op. 21*

Allegro non troppo

Scherzando: Allegro molto

Intermezzo: Allegretto non troppo

Andante

Rondo: Allegro

*INTERMISSION*

## **GROFÉ**

*Grand Canyon Suite*

Sunrise

Painted Desert

On the Trail

Sunset

Cloudburst

Generously sponsored by



*With the support of the Museums & Cultural Affairs Department,  
the Texas Commission on the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts.*

# January Program Notes

## Alberto Ginastera

Born April 11, 1916 — Buenos Aires, Argentina  
Died June 25, 1983 — Geneva, Switzerland

### ***Four Dances from Estancia***

The modernists from the Americas were a tightly knit group. While the titanic 20th-century composers of Europe were traveling the globe, dazzling and shocking audiences wherever they went, composers born in the West were creating music just as extraordinary.

While American 20th-century composers such as George Gershwin, William Grant Still, Aaron Copland, Charles Ives, and Samuel Barber are frequently explored, their contemporaries south of the border are often overlooked. This is a shameful sin, for modernists like Carlos Chavez, Silvestre Revueltas, and Alberto Ginastera were creating unique orchestral masterpieces that were nothing short of breathtaking.

Alberto Ginastera hailed from Buenos Aires. Although he would study and live in the United States on more than one occasion, his music would maintain a sonic signature unique to him, a trademark of the great Latin American modernists. Lincoln Kirstein, an American author and co-founder of the American Ballet, approached Ginastera in 1941 for a western-inspired ballet. The commission would result in *Estancia*, a thirty-minute love story about the daughter of a farmer and an urban boy. The American Ballet, which at that point was touring North and South America under the name American Ballet Caravan, was attempting to showcase works composed by artists living in the western hemisphere. However, the company dissolved in 1942 due to financial strains brought on by the Second World War. This left *Estancia* un-staged for a decade. To combat this, Ginastera transformed the ballet into a four-

movement work for symphony orchestra, which premiered in Buenos Aires in 1943.

*Estancia*, in its original form, eventually would be staged and premiered in 1952. However, *Four Dances from Estancia* is the dominant form the music takes today, seeing regular performance and recording.

## Édouard Lalo

Born January 27, 1823 — Lille, France  
Died April 22, 1892 — Paris, France

### ***Symphonie espagnole in D minor, Op. 21***

Perhaps the busiest time in music history was the Romantic era, with many dozens of notable figures all following in the creative footsteps of Beethoven's later years. Legendary talent was prevalent all over Europe, and many of today's stalwart classics were born.

A fascinating (and sometimes unfortunate) result of romanticism was the shift of focus away from people and towards their individual compositions. Audiences today are more likely to remember a great "contribution" from the 19th century rather than its "contributor." This has led to more and more composers being recognized for less of their work, no matter how prolific they were.

An example here is Edouard Lalo, one of a healthy number of great French romanticists (Berlioz, Bizet, Debussy, etc.). Although in good company, Lalo stood out via his signature sound, a Spanish-inspired take backed by traditional German orchestration. All of this, combined with a broad catalogue of works, would lead to a composer often programmed and celebrated in the concert hall...or would it? Sadly, no. Lalo would fall victim to romanticism's popularity conundrum. Today, you will most likely hear only two of his works performed live. One is *Symphonie espagnole in D Minor, Op. 21*.

# January Program Notes

*Symphonie espagnole* is a five-movement violin concerto written in 1874 for Pablo Sarasate, a celebrated violinist of the time and famous today for contributions to the violin repertoire. Apart from seeing regular performance, the work is a frequent choice for competitions due to its combination of technical challenges and lyricism.

## **Ferde Grofé**

Born March 27, 1892 – New York, NY  
Died April 3, 1972 – Santa Monica, CA

## **Grand Canyon Suite**

It is easy to be ignorant of the fact that the performance arts require manpower — and not just the kind you may think. Of course, when you see a symphony orchestra perform, you notice dozens upon dozens of musicians working towards a common goal. Are there other efforts that may not be immediately visible? The answer is a resounding yes—more than you can imagine.

There are personnel backstage in charge of ensuring that the orchestra's setup is exactly right. These are the people who arrive first and leave last. There are the front-of-house attendants who ensure you find your seat and that you are comfortable and safe throughout your visit to the concert hall. These are all examples of people at the show. What about what goes on before concert night arrives?

There's upper-level management; administrators who ensure the money is there to keep the orchestra open. There's the librarian, the hardest-working person in the orchestra, who ensures the musicians have all the music they need for every show. Look deeper, and you'll find someone almost no one sees, a musician who sets the final piece of the puzzle. Without them, you wouldn't be at the concert hall at all. They could be living or dead. No. It's not the composer.

New Yorker Ferdinand Rudolph von Grofé was an orchestral arranger. A pianist from a musical family, Grofé's full-time music career began in 1920 as the pianist for the Paul Whiteman Orchestra. Around that same time, he became the ensemble's arranger, turning Whiteman's melodic ideas into pieces audiences would actually be able to listen to. In short, a composer may have the ideas, but the arranger makes them work.

Ferde Grofé's connections didn't end there. George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* is performed regularly today thanks to Grofé's orchestration. Contrary to popular belief, Gershwin first composed the piece for two pianos, *not* piano and orchestra. The orchestra accompaniment we're all familiar with was completed by Grofé.

Although his career at the time was defined by orchestration, Grofé did contribute original compositions. *Grand Canyon Suite*, a five-movement orchestral tone poem, secures his legacy today. Completed and premiered in 1931, the Paul Whiteman Orchestra gave the work's first performance. The piece depicts five scenes relating to visiting the Grand Canyon: *Sunrise*, *Painted Desert*, *On the Trail*, *Sunset*, and *Cloudburst*.

To listen to the *Grand Canyon Suite* is to pay respect to what it is to enjoy orchestral music. There is more involved than meets the eye, and they often shine brightly.

**Nathan Black** is the general manager of the El Paso Symphony Youth Orchestras and a section cellist in the El Paso Symphony Orchestra. In addition, he produces and hosts 88.5 FM KTEP's *El Paso Symphony Orchestra Broadcast*, and as of 2022 is the resident lecturer of EPSO's "Opening Notes" series.



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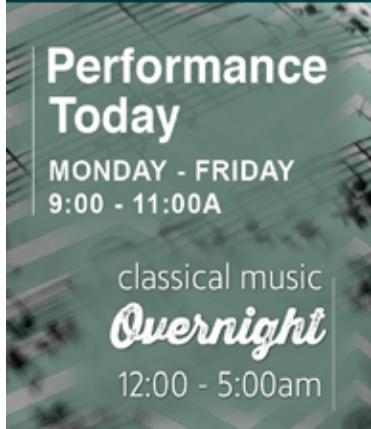


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The El Paso Community Foundation's Dorrance D. and Olga B. Roderick Fund is pleased to sponsor the February 2026 symphony concerts in honor of Dorrance D. Roderick and Olga B. Roderick.

Dorrance Roderick began his career in El Paso as publisher of the *El Paso Times*, and later became president of the Newspaper Printing Corporation, which included the *El Paso Times* and the *El Paso Herald-Post*. In 1940, he expanded into broadcasting, founding KROD radio. In 1952, he established KROD (now KDBC) television.

An astute businessman, Mr. Roderick had a lifetime love of the arts. In April 1928, he heard the El Paso Symphony Orchestra on his car radio and drove immediately to the Scottish Rite Auditorium to meet the conductor. Several years later, Dorrance Roderick became the first president of the El Paso Symphony Orchestra Association, a position he held for 37 years. He had aspired to be an opera singer, and on several occasions, sang with the El Paso Symphony.

Olga Roderick shared her husband's love of the symphony. She encouraged several of her dear friends to join with her to establish the Women's Committee of the Symphony.

Their daughter, Frances Roderick Axelson, continued their philanthropic traditions through the El Paso Community Foundation, both as a 37-year board member and donor. "Frannie" passed away in 2014. Through her ongoing generosity, she has left a lasting legacy with the El Paso Symphony Orchestra and the city she loved. The Plaza Theatre's lobby is named for her. The Roderick Artspace Lofts downtown is named for Frannie and her parents.

Mr. and Mrs. Roderick left a large family of grandchildren and great-grandchildren, some who live in El Paso and contribute generously to projects enriching all of our lives. They also left a philanthropic legacy, with a family of a dozen funds in the El Paso Community Foundation, which support a variety of endeavors. They are a tribute to the loving and compassionate personalities of Dorrance and Olga Roderick.

# February Program

**Friday, February 27, 2026**  
**Saturday, February 28, 2026**  
7:30 p.m., Plaza Theatre

BOHUSLAV RATTAY, Conductor

## **PROKOFIEV**

*Symphony No. 7, C-Sharp minor, Op. 131*  
Moderato  
Allegretto  
Andante espressivo  
Vivace

*INTERMISSION*

## **BEETHOVEN**

*Symphony No. 7, A major, Op. 92*  
Poco sostenuto - Vivace  
Allegretto  
Presto  
Allegro con brio

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# February Program Notes

## Sergei Prokofiev

Born April 23, 1891 – Sontsivka, Ukraine  
Died March 5, 1953 – Moscow, Russia

## **Symphony No. 7, C-sharp minor, Op. 131**

Sergei Prokofiev seemed to have traveled in reverse. A staunch modernist by nature, Prokofiev both shocked and enraged his teachers and listeners alike with compositions that were poignant in harmonic and rhythmic complexity, a style that would land him in hot water after the formation of the Soviet state.

Prokofiev's first shift in style came with his travels to the United States from 1918 to 1922. It is here that Prokofiev's catalogue is marked with perhaps his most successful work, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26*, which sees regular performance today. *Piano Concerto No. 3* is a toned-down approach when compared to Prokofiev's earliest works, a charming blend of romantic music and modernist ideas.

Prokofiev's style takes a fascinating twist at the end of his life. The mid-1940s saw his two largest symphonies, numbers five and six, which are used today to showcase the high point of Prokofiev's creative abilities on a larger scale. His symphony output, however, was not finished. One more was to come, just one year before his untimely death.

*Symphony No. 7, Op. 131* came in 1952. Being in his sixties, one would expect Prokofiev to produce yet another titanic piece that showcased his complete potential. However, the final product surprises listeners even to this day. *Symphony No. 7* is Prokofiev's

salute to the lush romanticism of the late 19th century – a time he was born into but had never contributed to musically. At approximately half an hour long, it is shorter than the majority of Prokofiev's other symphonies, and with the exception of the uncharacteristically classical *Symphony No. 1* (1917), it is the most palatable. Memorable melodies paired with Prokofiev's talent for orchestration make the listener wonder what further evolutions, or "de-evolutions," the composer's music would have taken if he had only lived longer. *Symphony No. 7*'s ending is perhaps its most charming aspect. After a fast finale (the symphony's most eclectic movement), Prokofiev ends the piece softly with a melancholy coda and a subtle chord at the very end. A fascinating conclusion to the mighty composer's catalogue of symphonies.

An alternate ending to the symphony exists as well. Prokofiev wrote a second coda to be added on when he submitted the work for the Stalin Prize, an artistic contest with large prize purses. The extra coda allows the symphony to end "loudly" with a fast final cadence; a characteristic Prokofiev thought would increase his winning chances. It did not. Alas, both endings are performed and recorded today.

Sergei Prokofiev died at the age of 61 on March 5, 1953, the same day as Joseph Stalin.

# February Program Notes

## Ludwig van Beethoven

Born December 17, 1770, Bonn, Germany  
Died March 26, 1827, Vienna, Austria

### **Symphony No. 7, A major, Op. 92**

Studying the compositional phases of Beethoven's career, while essential when trying to understand how the greatest artist influenced music over the next 100 years, can come with challenges. The composer's nine symphonies are often used as a timeline to hear his changes in complexity and scale, but this becomes more difficult the more you listen. The consensus is that Beethoven's illustrious "middle period" is marked by pieces such as *Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major (Eroica)* and *Piano Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp Minor (Moonlight)*. However, marking Beethoven's "late period" using his symphonies alone is much more difficult.

All agree that the towering example of Beethoven's end phase is the great *Symphony No. 9 in D Minor*. While not outlandish compared to the titanic symphonies found later in the century, an hour-long symphony with a choir at the end was astonishing in 1824. But when did this phase of unparalleled creativity begin?

Whatever your opinion might be, *Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92* is Beethoven at the height of his powers. Premiered in 1813, five years after the appearance of the fifth and sixth symphonies, the seventh is relatively straightforward, following the structure of the majority of the composer's symphonies. This is important given that Beethoven's most outlandish symphony up to that point had been his

sixth, which contained five movements and a programmatic theme of the outdoors. Rather than continue down that path of creativity immediately, Beethoven returned to the traditional four-movement "absolute music" structure for the Seventh Symphony. Beethoven was proud of the piece. It was composed starting in 1811, with Beethoven suffering nearly complete hearing loss. Throughout his adult life, Beethoven had pursued numerous medical ideas to possibly restore his hearing, and the construction of the seventh symphony took place while Beethoven was visiting the Czech town of Teplice, known for its mineral spas.

Beethoven conducted the premiere himself in 1813 in Vienna. The piece was well received, and the slow movement was performed twice, as requested by the audience. Today, *Symphony No. 7* is a stalwart repertoire for symphony orchestras and a highly collectable piece of music for recording aficionados.

**Nathan Black** is the general manager of the El Paso Symphony Youth Orchestras and a section cellist in the El Paso Symphony Orchestra. In addition, he produces and hosts 88.5 FM KTEP's *El Paso Symphony Orchestra Broadcast*, and as of 2022 is the resident lecturer of EPSO's "Opening Notes" series.



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# April Guest Artists



## Puerto Rican **Soprano**

### **Meehot Marrero**

recently sang the title role in the world premiere of Nico Muhly's *Aphrodite* with Australia's Sydney Chamber Opera and Carriageworks. Her 2025-2026 season includes a return to the Deutsche Oper Berlin as Biancofiore in *Francesca da Rimini*, a company with whom she has sung for ten seasons.

Recent highlights include Musetta in *La Bohème*, *Carmina Burana*, Maria in *West Side Story*, and Papagena in *Die Zauberflöte* with Grand Teton Music Festival; the Young Shepherd in *Tannhäuser* at the Edinburgh International Festival and *Carmina Burana* alongside the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra (the latter also with The Oakland Symphony and Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra); Gretel in *Hänsel und Gretel* with Deutsche Oper Berlin, Opera San Antonio and New Orleans Opera; Nuria in Golijov's *Ainadamar* with the Casals Festival in Puerto Rico; and Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette* and Lucy England in Menotti's *The Telephone* with Savannah Voice Festival.



## **Brian Downen, Tenor**

and Associate Professor of Voice at the University of Texas at El Paso, has sung leading roles in more than 85 productions for opera houses worldwide. Mr. Downen is known for his portrayals of leading men in the *bel canto* operas of Mozart and Rossini, including numerous productions of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *La Cenerentola*, *L'Italiana in Algeri*, *Don Giovanni* and *Die Zauberflöte*. He debuted at the Metropolitan Opera in 2016 in *Roberto Devereux* and has since returned as Triquet in *Eugene Onegin*, and as an understudy for the four servants in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. Recent engagements include the role of Philemon in the Haydn marionette opera *Jupiter's Journey to the Earth* with the Little Opera Theatre of New York; Gastone in *La Traviata*, with El Paso Opera, and "Great Italian Arias" with El Paso Symphony Orchestra. Upcoming engagements include the role of Goro in *Madama Butterfly* with Opera Louisiane and the tenor soloist for "Opera Uncorked" with El Paso Opera. Brian Downen is the winner of the 2024 American Prize in Voice in the Men's Professional Art Song Division.



## **Ricardo Herrera – Bass-Baritone**

performer, teacher, stage director – has sung more than 50 operatic roles around the USA, Mexico, and Europe. He has sung with San Francisco Opera, Gotham Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Michigan Opera Theater, El Paso Opera, Oldenburgisches Staatstheater, Cincinnati Opera, Caramoor Festival, and Atlanta Opera, among others. Ricardo was honored as the First Prize Award Winner of the Licia Albanese-Puccini Foundation Competition in NYC and was invited to participate in Plácido Domingo's Operalia World Opera Contest. Among his signature roles are Diego Rivera in the opera *Frida* around the country, including Detroit, Cincinnati, Miami, Atlanta, and El Paso, and the title role in *Don Giovanni* in a USA national tour with Western Opera Theater. He has been chair of the voice faculty of the University of Illinois and continues to give masterclasses around the USA, Mexico, Europe, and Asia. He is the founder of the *Ricardo Herrera International Singing Competition* and of HerrVocalis training program.

# April Program

**Friday, April 24, 2026**

**Saturday, April 25, 2026**

7:30 p.m., Plaza Theatre

BOHUSLAV RATTAY, Conductor

MEECHOT MARRERO, Soprano

RICARDO HERRERA, Baritone

BRIAN DOWNEN, Tenor

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## **MOZART**

*Symphony No. 39, K.543, E-flat major*

Adagio – Allegro

Andante con moto

Menuetto: Allegretto

Alegro

*INTERMISSION*

## **ORFF**

*Carmina Burana*

Fortuna Imperatrix Mundi (Fortune, Empress of the World)

Primo Vere (In Springtime)

Uf Dem Anger (On the Green)

In Taberna (In the Tavern)

Cour D'Amours (The Court of Love)

Blanziflor et Helena (Blanziflor and Helena)

Fortuna Imperatrix Mundi (Fortune, Empress of the World)

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# April Program Notes

## **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

Born January 27, 1756 – Salzburg, Austria  
Died December 5, 1791 – Vienna, Austria

### ***Symphony No. 29, K.543 in E-flat major***

Most associate Mozart with musical perfection. An astonishing natural talent, the extent of which rarely has been seen in human history. However, if we move past the grandeur and analyze Mozart's output as if he were anyone else, we can find that the iconic Austrian displayed the same patterns and struggles as other composers.

As is the case with most composers, Mozart's modern popularity revolves around his works that are now regarded as classics: *The Requiem*, several of the piano concertos, the later operas, and *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, among others. Of course, Mozart's contributions far outstretch these selected works, and looking at the broad spectrum of his catalogue reveals some curious things.

One of Mozart's most interesting genres is the symphony. Although the symphony as we know it today was invented during the time of Bach, it was still very new by the time Mozart made his first attempt in 1764 at the age of 8. Mozart's mentor and friend, Joseph Haydn, began tackling the symphony genre in 1759 and would become its most crucial advocate, completing 104 of them and carrying the genre into early 19th-century popularity. Later, a German from Bonn named Ludwig van Beethoven would spend over two decades redefining the symphony as the most powerful form of "absolute music."

Mozart, on the other hand, while prolific within the symphony genre, would not capture the same glamour long-term. While some of Mozart's symphonies are powerful pieces of standard orchestral repertoire from the classical era, those take us once again to the composer's "classics."

*Symphony No. 39, K. 543 in E-flat major* is one of those "classics" and towards the very center of Mozart's well-known symphonies. It is the first of the composer's final three, all written back-to-back in the summer months of 1788. *Symphonies 39, 40, and 41* all share the same conundrum of unknown exact premiere dates, or whether Mozart ever heard them played at all. Regardless, they are recorded and programmed frequently and represent the genre in full force before the composers of the 19th century brought it to new heights.

## **Carl Orff**

Born July 10, 1895 – Munich, Germany  
Died March 29, 1982 – Munich, Germany

### ***Carmina Burana***

The 20th century was a time of musical redefinition and new beginnings. The traditions of the past millennium were both kept in place and cast aside, all in search of the same goal: to re-explore boundaries in search of new beauty. Perhaps the greatest side effect of such thought was the emergence of some pieces that escape traditional categorization; music that embraced a fresh idea as its identity. This formula was captured to a "T" by German composer Carl Orff in 1937. *Carmina Burana: Secular songs for singers and chorus to be sung together with instruments and magical*

# April Program Notes

*images* remains one of the 20th century's most iconic and unique large-scale works.

*Carmina Burana*'s first area of curiosity comes from its proposed "genre." Today it is labeled a cantata, a genre that saw its heyday during the Baroque era. Cantatas are vocal compositions with orchestral accompaniment, free from staging. Although they don't need to be secular or liturgical in nature, the vast majority of the cantata's popularity today lies in the church cantata output of Johann Sebastian Bach. A devout Lutheran, Bach composed 250 liturgical cantatas that represent some of his most impressive musical contributions.

Although the cantata has been closely tied with liturgy for centuries, secular examples are not unheard of. Bach himself composed roughly 50 cantatas that were free of liturgical subject matter, and the genre would be periodically explored throughout both the classical and romantic eras. By the time of modernism, the cantata had mostly shifted away from faith-based themes and into highly personal, historical, and political topics. *Alexander Nevsky*, Sergei Prokofiev's cantata about the 13th-century war hero, and Arnold Schoenberg's *A Survivor from Warsaw* are perfect examples. However, the work along these lines that has withstood the test of time, seeing performances regularly all around the world, is *Carmina Burana*.

The *Carmina Burana* is a book of Latin poems compiled in the early 19th century. The poems themselves are secular, dating from the 11th and 12th centuries. Starting in 1934, Carl Orff chose 24 of the poems to set to music,

creating the five-part cantata sharing the name *Carmina Burana*. The piece premiered in Frankfurt in 1937 and has enjoyed success ever since.

**Nathan Black** is the general manager of the El Paso Symphony Youth Orchestras and a section cellist in the El Paso Symphony Orchestra. In addition, he produces and hosts 88.5 FM KTEP's *El Paso Symphony Orchestra Broadcast*, and as of 2022 is the resident lecturer of EPSO's "Opening Notes" series.

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The El Paso Music Teachers Association, an affiliate of Texas Music Teachers Association and Music Teachers National Association, is a professional organization composed of local music teachers. The following activities are available to member teachers and their students:

- Solo Festival
- Boys Recital
- Baroque Contest and Recital
- Sonata/Sonatina Festival
- Local Annual Recitals (many themes: Zoo, Halloween, and Around the World)



www.epmta.org

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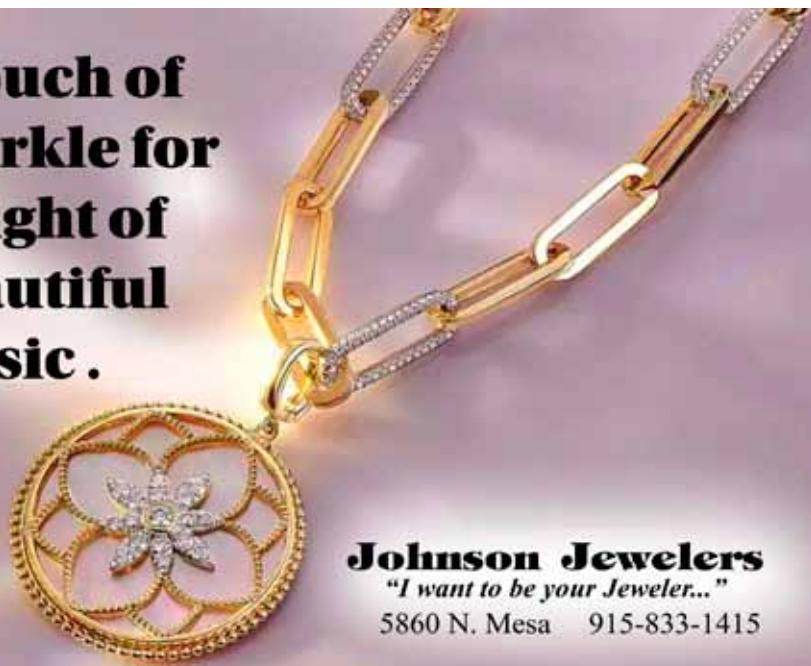
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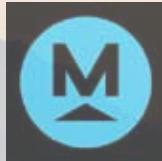
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# Advertisers Index

Airport Printing Service.....	27	Lisa Elbjorn.....	39
Borderland Chopin Festival .....	25	March Madness Fundraiser.....	42
Christopher Woo/Jennifer Woo/Sue Woo....	25	Mithoff Burton Partners.....	46
Debbie Hand.....	14	Peña, Briones, McDaniel & Co.....	14
Designs by Dov E.....	32	Peter and the Wolf.....	24
El Paso Live - Broadway.....Back Cover		Populus Capital Management.....	22
El Paso Music Teachers Association.....	38	Raiz Federal Credit Union.....	2
El Paso Symphony Youth Orchestra.....	15	Spectrum Technologies.....	32
Flickenger Center for Performing Arts....	45	Strategic Wealth.....	27
HUB International Insurance.....	4	Supreme Laundry & Cleaners.....	39
Hunt Companies.....Inside Front Cover		Sylvia Davidson.....	22
John M. Purdy, DDS, Inc.....	22	Symphony Strings Music Co.....	23
Johnson Jewelers.....	39	Tocando.....	49
KempSmith.....	23	University Vision Centre.....	39
KRWG.....	27	Vanities.....	13
KTEP.....	14	Young People's Concert.....	26



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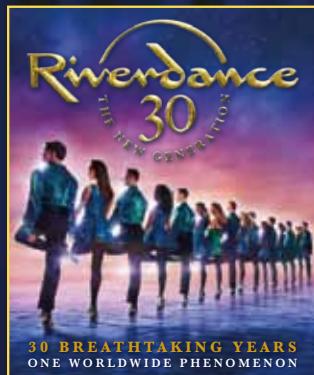
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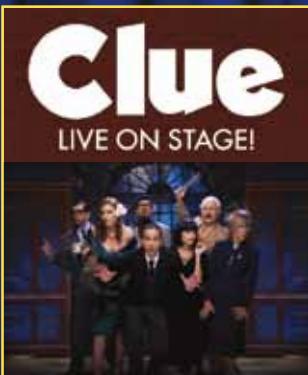
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