

An abstract painting featuring a stylized face in profile, rendered in warm tones of brown, orange, and pink. The face is partially obscured by a large, dark, swirling shape. Below the face, a violin is depicted in shades of green, blue, and brown. The background is composed of various geometric and organic shapes in muted colors like yellow, green, and grey. The overall style is expressive and modern.

BARD COLLEGE CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

BARD CONSERVATORY ORCHESTRA

WITH VIOLINIST GIL SHAHAM

Conducted by Leon Botstein

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**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2025 AT 7 PM
SOSNOFF THEATER**

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WITH VIOLINIST GIL SHAHAM

Conducted by Leon Botstein, *Music Director*

Johannes Brahms (1833–97)

Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 77

1. Allegro non troppo
2. Adagio
3. Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace

Intermission

Aaron Copland (1900–90)

Symphony No. 3

1. Molto moderato
2. Allegro molto
3. Andantino quasi allegretto
4. Molto deliberato—Allegro risoluto

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Saturday, December 13, 2025 at 7 pm

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 77

Johannes Brahms

Born May 7, 1833, in Hamburg, Germany

Died April 3, 1897, in Vienna, Austria

Johannes Brahms was not a child prodigy, but he nonetheless faced youthful challenges due to extravagant expectations. Robert Schumann wrote a prophetic review in October 1853 that hailed the 20-year-old composer as the savior of Western music, basing his claim on just a few piano and chamber pieces; meanwhile, the public wondered when Brahms would begin writing grander works, such as concertos, symphonies, and operas.

Brahms started a symphony soon after receiving Schumann's benediction, but he ultimately diverted that music to other pieces. Two orchestral serenades neared the mark, and higher aspirations are evident in both his unusually symphonic Piano Concerto No. 1 in D Minor and "Haydn" Variations, but it was almost a quarter century later, in 1876, when the composer finally finished his magnificent Symphony No. 1 in C Minor—a work immediately celebrated as "Beethoven's Tenth" by the renowned conductor Hans von Bülow.

After all his struggles producing that work, Brahms wrote his Second Symphony in D Major the following year without any protracted birth pangs; its labor was relatively quick amid the beauty of the Wörthersee, a lake nestled in the Carinthian Alps of southern Austria. The next summer, in the same place, Brahms composed his Violin Concerto, also in D major. The physical surroundings apparently inspired him, as he described the mountain air being "so rich in melodies that you have to be careful not to step on them."

Unlike Wolfgang Amadè Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven, both virtuoso pianists who also played the violin, Brahms had no background as a string player. His close friend, the consummate musician Joseph Joachim (1831–1907), came to the rescue. Although Joachim is most remembered today as the brilliant Austro-Hungarian violinist for whom Brahms, Schumann, Antonín Dvořák, and other composers wrote acclaimed concertos and other pieces, his career and influence extended much farther as a composer, conductor, chamber musician, and teacher.

Born in Hungary and given early training in Vienna, the 11-year-old Joachim began studying with Felix Mendelssohn (who understood from personal experience what it meant to be a prodigy). The following year, the two traveled to London, where Joachim played Beethoven's Violin Concerto—a work that he more or less introduced into the standard repertoire and for which he wrote the cadenza that is still the most often used. In 1848, 15-year-old Brahms heard 17-year-old Joachim play the work in Hanover and was overwhelmed by the performance.

Five years later, in May 1853, Joachim met Brahms and soon introduced his new friend to Robert and Clara Schumann. The close friendship and professional alliance between Joachim and Brahms lasted for decades. Joachim often advised Brahms on the composition of his instrumental music, including that of his Violin Concerto (1878) and Double Concerto (1887), which Joachim premiered with Brahms conducting.

For his part, Brahms supported and encouraged Joachim's own compositions, including orchestral overtures, chamber music, and three violin concertos. (Joachim gave up composing in the late 1870s, perhaps feeling that he could not match what Mendelssohn, Schumann, Dvořák, and Brahms accomplished.) One of the most tangible—and audible—indications of the esteem in which Brahms held Joachim's music can be heard when comparing his own Violin Concerto with Joachim's "Hungarian" Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 11, from the mid-1850s. The striking similarities extend from structure to orchestration to mood—most notably the Hungarian style used in the finales of both works.

Brahms conducted Joachim's concerto in Vienna in 1875 and, a few years later, started composing his own. He had not written a concerto since his first, the D Minor Piano Concerto, the 1859 premiere of which was a notorious failure with Brahms as soloist and Joachim conducting. The subsequent success of Brahms's first two symphonies was encouraging, and he wrote his Violin Concerto in the summer and fall of 1878. In late August, Brahms sent Joachim the violin part only, asking him "to make corrections," and adding,

though you should have no excuse either way—neither respect for the music that is too good [to alter], nor that the score isn't worth the trouble. Now I'll be satisfied if you say a word, and maybe write in a few: "difficult," "awkward," "impossible," and so forth.

Joachim responded, "It is a great joy that you are writing a violin concerto (in four movements, no less!)." He made some suggestions that Brahms all but ignored, and the extra middle movement was eventually cut. The two premiered the concerto on New Year's Day, 1879, in Leipzig at the Gewandhaus. A week later, they took the work to Budapest and then to Vienna. The performance there apparently went well, although Brahms later told Joachim that the orchestral players "wanted rather to hear you than to play their own notes. At their desks, they [were] always looking sideways—quite fatal, although understandable." Joachim's cadenza—a task Brahms delegated for him to write—elicited spontaneous applause before the movement ended. Brahms informed a friend that "the cadenza went so magnificently at our concert here that the people clapped right on into my coda."

Given the current beloved status of the concerto, it is surprising that it took quite some time for the work to become widely beloved. Von Bülow famously quipped that while Max Bruch's more popular violin concerto was written *for* the instrument, Brahms's was written *against* it. Fritz Kreisler, who made the first recording of the piece in 1926 (and recorded it again in 1936), deserves much of the credit for bringing the piece into the standard repertoire, as Joachim did for Beethoven's.

Symphony No. 3

Aaron Copland

Born November 14, 1900, in Brooklyn, New York

Died December 2, 1990, in Sleepy Hollow, New York

Aaron Copland enjoyed a long and distinguished career not only as a composer but also as a conductor, writer, concert organizer, and teacher. He was justly considered the “dean of American composers” and always seemed to be at the center of things as well as a generous colleague and inspiring role model. Copland’s compositional style changed notably over the decades. In his early 20s, he studied with Nadia Boulanger in Paris—where the music of Igor Stravinsky exerted an enormous impact before jazz emerged as another potent influence. By his late 20s, he was writing quite challenging Modernist pieces that were both angular and dissonant, even if never as extreme as those of Arnold Schoenberg and his colleagues in Vienna.

Copland wrote his most popular and enduring compositions in the late 1930s and throughout the 1940s. These listener-friendly pieces often drew upon American folklore. Between 1938 and 1944, he created three ballets: *Billy the Kid*, about the notorious New Mexico cattle rustler and murderer; *Rodeo*, another Western, commissioned by choreographer Agnes de Mille; and *Appalachian Spring*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for music in 1945 and was composed for the eminent choreographer Martha Graham. Copland also engaged with his leftist politics in some pieces, including *Fanfare for the Common Man* (1942)—which he later incorporated into the symphony you’ll hear tonight—and *Lincoln Portrait* (1942). He became a spokesman for classical music as he increasingly addressed general audiences, and his book *What to Listen for in Music* (1939) was a best seller.

In addition to his incorporation of *Fanfare*, Copland’s shifting styles converge in his magnificent Third Symphony. For decades, writers in this country had sought to produce the “Great American Novel,” and composers began to harbor similar aspirations for the symphonic genre. As a result, a distinctive school of symphonists emerged—listed here with their birth years: Florence Price (1887), Walter Piston (1894), William Grant Still (1895), Roger Sessions (1896), Virgil Thomson (1896), Howard Hanson (1896), Roy Harris (1898), William Dawson (1899), William Schuman (1910), Samuel Barber (1910), David Diamond (1915), and Leonard Bernstein (1918). Copland—the aforementioned “dean”—was under particular pressure to produce the “Great American Symphony.” Barber, for example, wrote to him: “I hope you will knuckle down to a good symphony. We deserve it of you, and your career is all set for it.” Copland later remarked that his well-meaning friends “had no way of knowing that I had been working on such a composition for some time. I did not want to announce my intentions until I was clear in my own mind what the piece would become.”

Copland had already written two symphonies—his Symphony for Organ and Orchestra (1924) and Short Symphony (1931–33)—but neither attempted a grand statement. As the Second World War was ending, and then in its victorious aftermath, the time was ripe for him to rise to the challenge. He was perhaps further spurred by the enormous attention given to Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich in 1942 for his Symphony No. 7 (“Leningrad”), the success of which put Shostakovich on the cover of *Time* magazine. Beginning in the summer of 1944, just after the American landing in Normandy (D-Day), and through the summer of 1946, Copland composed his Third Symphony, commissioned by the Koussevitzky Music Foundation. It proved to be what so many composers had been attempting for years, scored for an enormous orchestra and lasting over 40 minutes.

The first three movements of Symphony No. 3 subtly reference *Fanfare for the Common Man* through various motifs before the introduction to the symphony’s final movement incorporates it directly. Copland had written *Fanfare* at the behest of Eugene Goossens, conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, who commissioned 18 prominent American composers to write fanfares that would serve as concert openers during the war. Copland’s contribution is the only one to survive the circumstances of its time and join the repertory. The impressive four-minute piece is scored for 11 brass instruments and percussion, and Copland welcomed the “opportunity to carry the fanfare material further and to satisfy [his] desire to give the Third Symphony an affirmative tone. After all, it was a wartime piece—or more accurately, an end-of-war piece—intended to reflect the euphoric spirit of the country at the time.”

Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra gave the symphony’s premiere on October 18, 1946, with a slightly different, longer, more triumphant ending than was later published. The last movement is the longest. It begins with *Fanfare* and eventually builds to a thrilling conclusion in which the principal theme is stated in augmentation—a sort of slow motion—together with the fanfare. Copland revised the final measures of the symphony at the suggestion of Bernstein, his close friend and former lover, who wrote in a letter, “Sweetie, the end is a sin.” Perhaps reluctantly, Copland shortened it by 10 measures, explaining that as “a slow and careful worker, [he] rarely felt it necessary to revise a composition after it was finished, and even more rarely after it was published.” He performed the work in both versions (although his commercial recording uses the shorter one). In tonight’s performance, we present the original uncut version—which is slowly becoming more common, deservedly so.

—Christopher H. Gibbs, *James H. Ottaway Jr. Professor of Music*

BIOGRAPHIES

In addition to serving as music director of the Bard Conservatory Orchestra, **Leon Botstein** is music director and principal conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra (ASO), founder and music director of The Orchestra Now (TÖN), coartistic director of Bard SummerScape and the Bard Music Festival, and principal guest conductor of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, where he served as music director from 2003 to 2011. He has been guest conductor with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Aspen Music Festival, Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Mariinsky Theatre, Russian National Orchestra in Moscow, Bamberg Symphony, Taipei Symphony, and Sinfónica Juvenil de Caracas in Venezuela, among others. Recordings include a Grammy-nominated recording of Gavriil Popov's First Symphony with the London Symphony Orchestra, acclaimed recordings of Paul Hindemith's *The Long Christmas Dinner* with the ASO, and Othmar Schoeck's *Lebendig begraben* with TÖN, as well as recordings with the NDR Orchestra Hamburg and the BBC Orchestra. Additional recordings with TÖN feature *Ries: Piano Concertos Nos. 8 and 9* and *Rubbra and Bliss: Piano Concertos* on Hyperion Records; *Piano Protagonists: Music for Piano and Orchestra* and *Classics of American Romanticism* on Bridge Records; and *The Lost Generation: Apostel • Kauder • Busch and Exodus: Kaufmann • Rubin • Tal* on AVIE Records. He is editor of *The Musical Quarterly* and *The Compleat Brahms* (Norton). At the invitation of the City of Nuremberg, TÖN traveled to Germany with an all-Mendelssohn program for a commemorative concert on May 8, 2025, marking the 80th anniversary of the Allied victories in Europe in 1945.

Gil Shaham is one of the foremost violinists of our time. A multiple Grammy Award winner, he also was named *Musical America's* 2012 Instrumentalist of the Year. Recent highlights include J. S. Bach's complete sonatas and partitas for solo violin. He regularly appears with the Berlin Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Israel Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris, and San Francisco Symphony, and has multiyear residencies with the symphony orchestras of Montreal, Stuttgart, and Singapore. Shaham has more than two dozen CDs to his name, many of them on Canary Classics, the label he founded in 2004. They include 1930s *Violin Concertos*, *Nigunim: Hebrew Melodies* (with sister Orli Shaham), *The Butterfly Lovers*, and many more. Born in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, Shaham moved with his parents to Israel. In 1981, he made debuts with the Jerusalem Symphony and Israel Philharmonic, and became a scholarship student at Juilliard. He also studied at Columbia University. Shaham received an Avery Fisher Career Grant in 1990, and the coveted Avery Fisher Prize in 2008. He plays the 1699 "Countess Polignac" Stradivarius and performs on an Antonio Stradivari violin, Cremona c. 1719, with the assistance of Rare Violins in Consortium, Artists and Benefactors Collaborative. He lives in New York City with his wife, violinist Adele Anthony, and their three children.

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Piano

Reiko Aizawa
Benjamin Hochman *
Blair McMillen
Terrence Wilson

Composition

Mark Baechle, *Film*
Da Capo Chamber Players
Missy Mazzoli
Jessie Montgomery
James Sizemore, *Film*
Joan Tower
George Tsontakis

Undergraduate Voice

Lucy Fitz Gibbon '15
Claire Galloway
Rufus Müller
Teresa Buchholz
Erika Switzer
David Sytkowski

Chamber Music

Marka Gustavsson, *Director*
Frank Corliss
Raymond Erickson
Keisuke Ikuma
Nicholas Alton Lewis
Raman Ramakrishnan
Melissa Reardon

Music Theory and History

Christopher H. Gibbs
David Sytkowski
Ryan McCullough

Orchestral Studies

Leon Botstein
Erica Kiesewetter

Alexander Technique

Alex Farkas

US-China Music Institute

Jindong Cai, *Director*
Shutong Li, *Chinese Ensemble*
Xinyan Li, *Chinese Music History*
Qiao Jia, *Chinese Percussion*
Chen Yan, *Erhu*
Xu Yang, *Ruan*
Mingmei Yip, *Chinese Music History*
Yu Hongmei, *Erhu*
Zhang Hongyan, *Pipa*
Zhao Jiazhen, *Guqin*
Cui Junzhi, *Konghou*
Yazhi Guo, *Suona*

Graduate Conducting

James Bagwell, *Codirector*
Leon Botstein, *Codirector*
Kyle Gann
Christopher H. Gibbs
Zachary Schwartzman
Joan Tower

Graduate Vocal Arts

Stephanie Blythe, *Artistic Director*
Kayo Iwama, *Associate Director*
Edith Bers
Richard Cox
Elaine Fitz Gibbon
Lucy Fitz Gibbon '15
Lorraine Nubar
Joan Patenaude-Yarnell
Elizabeth Reese
Erika Switzer
Howard Watkins

Baroque Ensemble

Renée Anne Louprette GCP '19

Postgraduate Collaborative Piano Fellowship

Erika Switzer, *Director*

* Master classes

FISHER CENTER

The Fisher Center is a premier professional performing arts center and a hub for research and education that demonstrates Bard College's commitment to the performing arts as a cultural and educational necessity. To support artists, students, and audiences in the examination of artistic ideas, the Fisher Center develops, produces, and presents performing arts across disciplines through new productions and context-rich programs that challenge and inspire.

Home is the Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, designed by Frank Gehry and located on the campus of Bard College in New York's Hudson Valley. This world-class theater building will be complemented by a new studio building designed by Maya Lin, scheduled to open in 2026. More than 200 events and 50,000 visitors are hosted at the Fisher Center each year, and over 300 professional artists are employed annually. As a powerful catalyst of art-making regionally, nationally, and worldwide, the Fisher Center produces 8 to 10 major new works in various disciplines every year. The Fisher Center offers outstanding programs to many communities, including the students and faculty of Bard College, and audiences in the Hudson Valley, New York City, across the country, and around the world. Building on a 165-year history as a competitive and innovative undergraduate institution, Bard is committed to enriching culture, public life, and democratic discourse by training tomorrow's thought leaders.

The Fisher Center was born from the Bard Music Festival, founded in 1990, which, for the first 13 years of its existence, occupied several spaces on campus, including a large tent. Each summer, the Music Festival focuses on the life, work, and influences of one composer, promoting new ways of understanding and presenting the history of music to a contemporary audience. When the Fisher Center and its two theaters opened in 2003, the summer festival expanded to include a fully staged opera, as well as theater and dance performances. The highly acclaimed opera program brings unjustly neglected works to the stage in major productions—often making their US debuts.

Through Fisher Center LAB, the Center's acclaimed residency and commissioning program, artists are provided with custom-made support toward their innovative projects and their work has been seen in over 100 communities around the world. Resident choreographer Pam Tanowitz's 2018 *Four Quartets* was recognized as "the greatest creation of dance theater so far this century" by *The New York Times*. In 2019, the Fisher Center won the Tony Award for Best Revival of a Musical for Daniel Fish's production of *Oklahoma!*, which began life in 2007 as an undergraduate production at Bard and was produced professionally by the Fisher Center in 2015 before transferring to New York City. *Illinoise*, a 2023 Fisher Center world premiere from artists Sufjan Stevens, Justin Peck, and Jackie Sibblies Drury, was recognized with a Tony Award for Best Choreography following its tour and transfer to Broadway.

The Fisher Center is home to several of Bard's academic programs in the performing arts. Year-round, it hosts performances by the undergraduate Dance Program and Theater and Performance Program; the US-China Music Institute of the Bard College Conservatory of

Music; The Orchestra Now (TÖN), a Bard graduate program that is training the next generation of classical-music ambassadors; and students at the Bard Conservatory, the first (and so far only) conservatory to require all its students to pursue a bachelor of arts degree in a field other than music in addition to their specialized music studies. As a hybrid institution, the Fisher Center brings together professional and academic art-making of the highest caliber, where student and professional artists work side by side, learning from each other and informing one another's practices.

BARD COLLEGE

Founded in 1860, Bard College is a four-year residential college of the liberal arts and sciences located 90 miles north of New York City. With the addition of the Montgomery Place and Massena properties, Bard's campus consists of more than 1,200 parklike acres in the Hudson River Valley. It offers bachelor of arts, bachelor of science, and bachelor of music degrees, with majors in nearly 40 academic programs; advanced degrees through 14 graduate programs; 10 early colleges; and numerous dual-degree programs nationally and internationally. Building on its 165-year history as a competitive and innovative undergraduate institution, Bard College has expanded its mission as a private institution acting in the public interest across the country and around the world to meet broader student needs and increase access to liberal arts education. The undergraduate program at the main campus in upstate New York has a reputation for scholarly excellence, a focus on the arts, and civic engagement. Bard is committed to enriching culture, public life, and democratic discourse by training tomorrow's thought leaders. For more information about Bard College, visit bard.edu.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT FOR BARD COLLEGE IN ANNANDALE-ON-HUDSON Developed in Cooperation with the Stockbridge-Munsee Community

In the spirit of truth and equity, it is with gratitude and humility that we acknowledge that we are gathered on the sacred homelands of the Munsee and Muhheaconneok people, who are the original stewards of this land. Today, due to forced removal, the community resides in Northeast Wisconsin and is known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. We honor and pay respect to their ancestors, past and present, as well as to future generations, and we recognize their continuing presence in their homelands. We understand that our acknowledgment requires those of us who are settlers to recognize our own place in and responsibilities toward addressing inequity, and that this ongoing and challenging work requires that we commit to real engagement with the Munsee and Mohican communities to build an inclusive and equitable space for all. For more information about the Stockbridge-Munsee Community, please visit mohican.com.

SAVE THE DATES

SIGNS GAMES & MESSAGES A Kurtág Festival

March 11, 27–29 and April 4, 2026

Benjamin Hochman, Artistic Director

Performers include Benjamin Appl, James Baillieu, András Szalai, András Kemenes, and Bard Conservatory students and faculty.

The 2026 Kurtág Festival is a special tribute to György Kurtág in his centennial year. This festival has been permanently endowed through the generous support of László Z. Bitó '60 and Olivia Cariño.

For festival locations and updates, please visit www.bard.edu/conservatory/events. All on-campus Kurtág Festival performances are free and open to the public.

**Bard Conservatory Graduate Vocal Arts Program
presents**

AMELIA GOES TO THE BALL AND GIANNI SCHICCHI

March 6 and 8, 2026

Sosnoff Theater, Fisher Center

Operas by Giacomo Puccini and Gian Carlo Menotti

Directed by Doug Fitch

Bard Conservatory Orchestra

James Bagwell, Conductor

Vocalists from the Graduate Vocal Arts program

fishercenter.bard.edu

845-758-7900

**Be the first in line for news of upcoming events, discounts, and special offers.
Join the Fisher Center's e-newsletter at fishercenter.bard.edu.**

Cover: *The Violinist* (detail), Antonín Procházka, 1917