



DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Wednesday, March 4, 2026 • 8:00 PM

DEPAUL CONCERT
ORCHESTRA

Michael Lewanski, conductor

Mary Patricia Gannon Concert Hall
2330 North Halsted Street • Chicago

Wednesday, March 4, 2026 • 8:00 PM
Gannon Concert Hall

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PROGRAM

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)
Circus Polka (composed for a Young Elephant) (1942)

William Grant Still (1895–1978)

Wood Notes (1948)

- I. Singing River
- II. Autumn Night
- III. Moon Dusk
- IV. Whippoorwill's Shoes

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975)

Suite from *The Age of Gold* (1930)

- I. Introduction (Allegro non troppo)
- II. Adagio
- III. Polka (Allegretto)
- IV. Danse

- Intermission -

Jean Sibelius (1865–1957)

Symphony No. 5 in E-flat major (1919)

- I. Tempo molto moderato
- II. Andante mosso, quasi allegretto
- III. Allegro molto

As a courtesy to those around you, please silence all cell phones and other electronic devices. Flash photography is not permitted.

BIOGRAPHIES

Conductor, curator, educator, and writer **Michael Lewanski** is a champion of new and old musics. He seeks to create engaged connections between audiences, musicians, composers, and the music that is part of their culture, society, and history. His work hopes to be part of collective, systemic change in the classical music industry. He is conductor of Ensemble Dal Niente and Associate Professor of instrumental ensembles at the DePaul University School of Music, where his work focuses on helping the next generation of musicians become thoughtful artistic citizens.

Michael was Curatorial Director of Ear Taxi Festival 2021, a festival of 21st century Chicago music. He was resident conductor of the 2017 and 2019 SoundSCAPE Festivals in Italy. His guest conducting engagements have been wide-ranging and stylistically diverse, working with organizations such as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's MusicNOW Series, the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, the Toledo Symphony Orchestra, the State Symphony Orchestra of Turkmenistan, Ensemble CEPROMUSIC (Mexico City), the Seattle Modern Orchestra, and many others. He has led hundreds of world premieres. He was the Conducting Assistant for the Civic Orchestra of Chicago from 2010 to 2014. At the 2012 Darmstadt Summer Courses, Ensemble Dal Niente won the prestigious Kranichstein Music Prize under his direction. Michael has an extensive discography as both a conductor and a producer on US- and Europe-based labels.

A native of Savannah, Georgia, he studied piano and violin in his youth; he made his conducting debut at age 13, leading his own composition. At 16, he was the youngest student ever accepted into the conducting class of the legendary Ilya Musin at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. Michael attended Yale University. His post-Yale education included conducting study with Cliff Colnot and Lucas Vis. He is based in Chicago, and respectfully acknowledges the Potawatomi, Ojibwe, Odawa, Ho-Chunk, Myaaamia, Menominee, Peoria, and Illinois Confederacy among other tribal nations as custodians of the traditional Native land on which he lives and works.

PROGRAM NOTES

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

Circus Polka (composed for a Young Elephant) (1942)

Duration: 4 minutes

Circus Polka: For a Young Elephant was written by the Russian composer Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971) in 1942. The piece was written for a ballet for Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, to be performed by 50 elephants and 50 ballerinas. No kidding.

The story goes like this: Stravinsky had just moved to the United States. His friend and famed choreographer, George Balanchine, the “Father of American Ballet,” and co-founder of the New York City Ballet, asked him to compose a polka for the show. When Stravinsky asked who the music would be for, Balanchine answered, “Elephants.” So, naturally, Stravinsky asked, “How old?” When Balanchine told him they were young, Stravinsky answered, “If they are very young, I will do it.”

Stravinsky composed a piece with unpredictable rhythms and unusual harmonies, something like an elephant marching out of step. Listen for the bass drum, cymbals, and brass that jerks at times within the 2/4 meter, evoking sounds of a circus. (By the way, Stravinsky was worried that older elephants would be startled by the music, explaining his preference for young ones.)

Notes from kennedy-center.org

William Grant Still (1895–1978)

Wood Notes (1948)

Duration: 16 minutes

Context

Inspired by William Grant Still’s love of nature and K. Mitchell Pilcher’s poetry, *Wood Notes* is a four-movement orchestral suite. Still’s classic American style is woven into the fabric of this suite, with warm melodies and rich textures creating a truly pleasing suite of music. The work premiered in 1948 with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and has since only been recorded once by the Fort Smith Symphony with John Jeter.

The Music

Scored for full orchestra, *Wood Notes* utilises many different voices within the ensemble to create both a pastoral and impressionistic atmosphere.

Movement I – Singing River

The longest movement of the four, the opening movement is entitled *Singing River*. The ebb and flow of the string part is said to represent the flow of water as the river passes through the scene. The warm timbre created by the orchestra is decorated by the flute and other woodwind instruments. Perhaps the most quintessential in the American style, this opening movement is lyrical and plays into the pastoral theme. Still uses muted trumpets to create interjections that soon melt back into the rich string theme.

As the music grows into the climax of the movement, Still utilises the brass and percussion to bolster the sound and add to the growing dynamics of this section. As the music dies away back into the opening theme, the movement comes to its conclusion after the woodwinds have one last play through the principal theme of the movement. The horns play their call theme once more before the strings slowly die away.

Movement II – Autumn Night

The swirling second movement opens with a solo flute accompanied by pizzicato strings. The light style of this movement adds more to Still's impressionistic style that sees a number of voices all speaking at once. The lightness in the texture is evident even when lots of voices are singing, with Still using mutes in the brass once more to create a crisp sound. The jollity of the music comes out in sections of this movement, with the rest of the music staying rather mysterious.

Movement III – Moon Dusk

Moon Dusk is the slowest movement of the four, with the elongated woodwind opening staying at the core of this movement. Swirling strings accompany, as the woodwinds explore this intriguing theme. Once again Still relies on his impressionism rules to create a whirlpool of sound as soloists begin to rear their heads. An oboe solo brings the music into the pastoral side, which is soon followed by a soft violin solo. As the music grows into the climax, the themes fluctuate between voices. This movement ends quietly.

Movement IV – Whippoorwill's Shoes

The playful and humorous finale movement is light on its feet and quick-witted at every turn. Quick and intricate melodies interweave between sections, as Still uses the brass and percussion for bold interjections. The youthful theme is excitingly paired with Still's very fast changes between dynamics, character and textures. Similarly

to the opening movement, the finale also represents the classic American style from this time, with warm colours from the ensemble and perky melodies taking the lead. The movement ends suddenly and with lots of energy.

Note by Alex Burns

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975)

Suite from *The Age of Gold* (1930)

Duration: 20 minutes

Although the music spanning the decade between his First and Fourth Symphonies (1925–1935) was beginning to be explored in his lifetime, the three full-length ballet scores that Dmitri Shostakovich wrote during this period remain among his least known works: as much the victim of cultural conflicts in their own time as of today. In the case of *The Golden Age*, which ran for twenty performances after its première at the State Academic Theatre in Leningrad on 26th October 1930, matters cannot have been helped by the failure of the composer and the choreographer Vasily Vainonen to agree on the correlation between music and dance; so clearing the way for the reactionary (as well as avowedly anti-Shostakovich) Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians effectively to shoot the whole production down in flames.

Even before the première Shostakovich had prepared a suite from the ballet: comprising items 1–2, 9, 11 and 30 of the complete score. First performed on 19th March, it soon found its way into the international repertoire, thus keeping the ballet's name alive during the remaining 45 years of its composer's lifetime. Numerous items were re-deployed in his subsequent two ballets, *The Bolt* (1931) and *The Limpid Stream* (1934), and then in the Ballet Suites Shostakovich co-compiled at the beginning of the 1950s. One item, the *Polka* (No. 30), is probably the most transcribed piece in his output.

Based on a scenario entitled *Dynamiada* by the film-maker Alexander Ivanovsky, *The Golden Age* is typical fare from a brief but vital period in Soviet culture when provocation was the norm. It revolves around the visit of a Soviet football team to a Western city (referred to just as 'U-town') at the time of an industrial exhibition; only for its heroic sporting and social endeavours constantly to be undermined by hostile administrators, decadent artistes and corrupt officials. While the theme of Soviet citizens upholding their integrity in the face of the capitalist West was hardly to be objected to, the disparity between

Vainonen's and Shostakovich's intentions proved irresolvable. Yuri Grigorovich's early 1980s choreography for the Bolshoy Theatre attempted a different, non-football approach, while that by Noah D. Gelber created for the Mariinsky Theatre in Shostakovich's centenary year was even more radical in its being set variously during 1930, 1945 and 'the present'.

Note by Richard Whitehouse, edited by Michael Lewanski

Jean Sibelius (1865–1957)
Symphony No. 5 in E-flat major (1919)

Duration: 35 minutes

On April 21, 1915, Sibelius wrote the following in his diary while at work on the Fifth Symphony:

Today at ten to eleven I saw 16 swans. One of my greatest experiences! God, how beautiful! They circled above me for a long time. They disappeared into the haze of the sun like a shining silver ribbon. The sounds are like a kind of woodwind, the same as the sound of the cranes, but without the tremolo. The sound of the swans is closer to the trumpet, even if it clearly recalls the timbre of the sarrusophone. A low refrain, which is like the crying of a small child. Nature mysticism and the pain of life! The finale of the fifth symphony. Legato in the trumpets!!

A few days later:

The swans are constantly in my thoughts and add glory to life. Strangely enough nothing else in this world, not in art, literature or music has the same effect on me as these swans + cranes + geese. Their sounds and essence.

Then, towards the end of his life, in a letter to Jussi Jalas, June 13 1943:

I am related to the wading birds; they too live without a clock as I have done during long periods of my life.

Much of Sibelius's music, in spite of its rigorously logical construction and relative compactness, has a "clock-less" quality to it, and the Fifth Symphony is one of the most prominent examples. A consistent trope in the reception and interpretation of this composer's work involves the invocation of the word "natural," for instance, Adorno's

famously dismissive remark that “Sibelius’s music is all Nature.” As musicologist Zachary Wallmark writes:

Moving now to another feature of Sibelius’s musical representation of nature, much of the [fifth] symphony demonstrates an easily cognizable sense of thwarted teleology, of musical progression that is frustrated and frozen. In many accounts of musical nature, the rejection of teleology symbolizes the deep stillness of the natural world, its sense of Being rather than Becoming. To many observers, musical teleology—the logical thematic progression of material towards a telos, the climactic goal—is expressive of striving human passions and heroic narratives, not the vast timescale of nature. Nature has no anthropomorphized form to serve as subject of a bounded story, no tension and release, no ups and downs—it simply is. It is this quality of “is-ness” that Sibelius’s anti-teleological structures work to conjure.

Sibelius accomplishes this in many ways: thematically, texturally, harmonically, and formally.

The first movement is actually a combination of two different symphonic genres—a sonata form and a scherzo—that was, in the original version, two separated movements. Musicologist James Hepokoski calls this technique a “sonata deformation,” which is to say, a commentary on the genre of sonata form that both uses its conventions and breaks its rules for greater expressive freedom. The deformation, in this case, involves what Hepokoski calls “rotations,” rather than traditional sections and developments. In 19th century sonatas, the form is imposed on the musical material, which is put into a mold then subjected to development. Here, however, the musical material seems free to determine the form of the work, rather than vice versa. From the opening horn call, the music seems to unfold “naturally.” The formal blocks are not strongly delineated; instead, material is repeated and recalled in a recursive manner. The music ruminates rather than develops. This leaves the listener with the (correct) sense that they’ve heard it all before, but are not sure where. Three separate rotations of the opening material leads to an outpouring of sound, which in turn makes way for an ever-accelerating scherzo that begins with playful woodwind melodies. The music moves forward at a pace so gradual that one wonders how the blazing conclusion was ever anything else.

The second movement is a subdued, unassuming set of variations but one with Sibelius's clear fingerprint. The theme, first heard in the woodwinds, is structured to sound aimless, like it could, itself, mutter on forever with no particular resting place. The movement is a series of gestures that gain and lose momentum, while never achieving a satisfactory sense of closure. Towards its end, a strangely harmonized rising 5th in the trumpets prefigures the *Finale* to come. The movement closes as its material seems to require, by fading out abruptly.

The *Finale* begins immediately with energetic and excited figures in the strings, its direction no less clear than previous movements'. This texture is interrupted, as it were, by the melody in the horns that was inspired by Sibelius's encounter with the swans. This interruption, however, is not of the kind that prompts a sudden character change; rather, it creates the sense that this music has been here all along, waiting to be revealed. Its rising and falling 5th, its swinging character, its unvarying tempo, all give it a "clock-less," non-teleological character. The remainder of the symphony continues the ruminative rethinking of this material that has been characteristic of the piece so far. This procedure culminates in violent, jagged orchestral cacophony of syncopated harmonies, unobvious in its goal, unsettling in its affect. The brilliant home key of E-flat major that breaks through is all the more satisfying because it is unexpected. The work closes with a series of widely spaced, isolated chords, as if a swan's flight between them, the final falling 5th the definitively earned end to a long process that began in the symphony's first bar.

Note by Michael Lewanski

PERSONNEL

FLUTE	PIANO	CELLO
Noam Niv	Julia Chmiel	Daniel Hotchkiss, <i>principal</i>
Sho Roash		Grace Raper, <i>principal</i>
Emma Tomita	PERCUSSION	Clara Dodge
	Pou I Chao	Xavier Ip
OBOE	Adriana Harrison	Addison Swan
Charlie Janka	Tae McLoughlin	Audrey Chen
Ana Martinez	Mason Gilbertson	Jesus Avila
	Toby Elliott	Yejeong Lee
CLARINET		Alina Ying
Finley Jones	VIOLIN	Alona Sella
Alainna Pack	Olha Tytarenko, <i>concertmaster</i>	Aurian Kutner
Megan Rideout Redeker	Alirio Chacin-Guerra	Brendan Stock
Danny Sanders	Jenna Krause	Marc Vredenburg
	Ashley Gomez	Jackson Arnold
BASSOON	Airi Ito	Milo Klise
Peter Breyer	Ella Dodge	Nathaniel Ealum
Angela Hernandez	Benjamin Mora Neira	Emma Foreman
Finn McCune	Alyssa Goh	
Chet Rhodes	Sean Hsi	BASS
	Angela Rojas	Yuyan Wang, <i>principal</i>
SAXOPHONE	Ben Koenig	Mateo Estanislao
Nickoli Kumm	Joshua Sukhdeo	Walker Dean
	Tsz Shan Ma, <i>principal 2nd violin</i>	Adam Blendermann
HORN	Juan Angulo	Adam Wang
Henry Dix	Cecilia McIntyre	Stephen Kilpatrick
Darlyne Hidalgo	Chien Chien Wu	
Eli Hoffmann	Yu-Chia Chiu	
Olivia Owen	Sofia Concha Pinto	
Leah Robin	Madelyne Garnot	
Brooks Wallace	Zachary Green	
	Corinne McLeod	
TRUMPET	Ender Miranda-Estrada	
Erin Dangerfield	Carlysta Tran	
Ethan Dunk	Iwona Augustyn	
Jhoan Garcia		
Julian Ramcharan	VIOLA	
	Alejandra Contreras, <i>principal</i>	
TROMBONE	Catherine Wicker	
Rix Barlow	Ulzhan Ydyryssova	
Kevin Bressanelli	David Phetmanysay	
Noah Ochander	Mallory Welsch	
Ashley Rands	Elina Kim	
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Allen Recital Hall
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March 8 • 3:00 P.M.
Allen Recital Hall
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March 8 • 3:00 P.M.
Dempsey Corboy Jazz Hall
DePaul Jazz Ensemble

March 9 • 7:00 P.M.
Dempsey Corboy Jazz Hall
DePaul Jazz Combos II

March 10 • 7:00 P.M.
Dempsey Corboy Jazz Hall
DePaul Jazz Workshop

March 10 • 7:00 P.M.
Allen Recital Hall
Wind/Mixed Chamber Showcase II

March 11 • 7:00 P.M.
Dempsey Corboy Jazz Hall
DePaul Jazz Combos III

March 11 • 7:30 P.M.
Jarvis Opera Hall
DePaul Opera Theatre presents:
Humperdinck's Hansel and Gretel

March 12 • 7:00 P.M.
Allen Recital Hall
String Chamber Showcase II

March 12 • 8:00 P.M.
Gannon Concert Hall
DePaul Vocal Jazz Ensemble

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