

CHERRY HILL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA  
PRESENTS

# LEBEC AND THE EXISTENTIAL DREAM ONION



Featuring Marshunda  
and her Moody Cello!

## WHEN...

March 1st @ 3PM  
Christ Church United, UCC  
180 E. Merrimack Street, Lowell, MA

March 2nd @ 2PM  
First Baptist Church  
221 Cabot Street, Beverly, MA



# LeBec's Existential Dream Onion

Pietà Signore "Aria de Chiesa"

Alessandro Stradella  
1643-1682

Morceaux de Fantaise Op. 3,  
*No. 1, Elegie.*

Sergei Rachmaninoff  
1873-1943  
*arr. Marshunda Smith*

Theme and Variations for Viola & Piano  
*performed by Aritro Chatterjee & Grace Park*  
March 1

Alan Shulman  
1915-2002

Fanfare Overture  
for Solo Viola d'amore

Gavin Armstrong

*March 2*

Vigstamoin  
*Gudbrand Valley, Norway*

The Danish String Quartet

Pas de Deux

Lauren Bernofsky  
1967

Variations in g minor  
*on a Russian song*  
*'How have I offended Thee?'*

Aleksandr Borodin  
1833-1887

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## MARSHUNDA SMITH, CONDUCTOR & CELLIST



PHOTO BY KIM INDRESANO

Originally hailing from Tennessee, Marshunda's enchantment with music began in 6th grade when she first picked up the cello. Initially sparked by a teenage crush, her passion quickly evolved into a genuine love for the instrument. Earning her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, marked the inception of her musical odyssey.

Her journey took a significant turn while teaching at a local high school, where her enthusiasm for conducting and music education flourished. This newfound love led her to pursue a Master's degree in Orchestral Conducting with a focus on Music Education at the University of Southern Maine. Along this journey, Marshunda had the privilege of receiving mentorship from distinguished conductors such as James Fellenbaum, Victor Yampolsky, Robert Lehmann, Adrian Gnam, and others. Adrian Gnam and others have noted that Marshunda's conducting style bears a striking resemblance to the Ilyia Musin technique, a rarely taught style in American conservatories and schools of music. This expressive technique emphasizes conveying the music with minimal verbal statements, making it a unique and powerful method of communication between conductor and orchestra.

During her time in Maine, Marshunda's conducting talents shone as she led the Odeon Youth Orchestra and conducted at various music festivals. However, her musical journey ultimately led her to the Boston area, where she established herself in the North Shore community while maintaining connections in Maine and New Hampshire.

Driven by a commitment to push the boundaries of classical music, Marshunda co-founded the groundbreaking No-Name Orchestra of Boston. This innovative ensemble challenges norms by bringing soloists and orchestra members together for performances without rehearsals, fostering spontaneous and captivating musical experiences. Now in its 8th year, the No-Name Orchestra continues to captivate audiences across the Boston metro area with its unique approach. In February 2018, Marshunda made history by guest conducting the North Shore Philharmonic Orchestra, becoming the second female conductor in two decades and the first African American conductor in its 70-year history.

A pivotal year for Marshunda was 2018, where she captivated Boston audiences with her Coquettish Dances program, a chamber music sensation. This program resonated with her hometown in Tennessee when she returned to offer her first concert in Chattanooga in two decades, subsequently releasing Coquettish Dances as an album. Currently, Marshunda channels her artistic energies into "The Marshunda Project," which encompasses the Cherry Hill Chamber Orchestra and NoName Orchestra. Premiering on October 5, 2019, The Marshunda Project featured new compositions by local talents and brought lesser-known works for chamber orchestra into the spotlight.

In September 2023, Marshunda made history once again by accepting the position of Music Director & Conductor for the Lowell Philharmonic Orchestra, becoming the first black female to lead the Lowell organization. Shortly after, she accepted the role of Music Director for the opera "Post: Pardon," scheduled to be performed in Maine in June 2024 and June 2025.

Beyond her musical pursuits, Marshunda is a dedicated educator, inspiring the next generation of musicians at the Waldorf School in Beverly, MA. She also maintains a private music studio for violin, viola, and cello students. Marshunda shares her wealth of knowledge by mentoring fellow Waldorf teachers across the United States and is currently working with Mosaic Lowell on the Measure of Work project and other projects that bring different forms of art and other genres together.

Her approachability and genuine love for music are evident in every note she conducts, sometimes even dancing on the podium as she brings together the orchestra and the audience. Marshunda's future aspirations include guest conducting up and down the East Coast, continuing to share her unique approach to music and fostering the growth of classical music appreciation. To experience the vibrant new programs Marshunda is building in the New England area, reach out, connect, and become a part of her musical community [Marshunda.com](https://Marshunda.com)

# MEET THE MUSICIANS

(L) = LOWELL MUSICIANS

(B) = BEVERLY MUSICIANS

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## ARITRO CHATTERJEE, VIOLA (L)

Aritro started in music with Ms. Judean Feldman learning the piano at age 5 when his feet didn't reach the pedals and he was excited to play and listen to only certain keys. As his musical interests grew, he realized dragging his piano to play with the school orchestra would not be practical. He really loved the sound of the cello, but being shorter than the average kid, decided to take up the viola instead at age 10. As a student of Ms. Dorcas McCall at the Groton Hill Music School he has progressed rapidly over the last few years and became the principal violist at the New England Conservatory Prep Youth Symphony while also qualifying for the Massachusetts All-State Orchestra in the last two years. He still loves the piano and is a member of the Hopkinton High School Jazz Ensemble and learns both classical and jazz piano with Ms. Grace Park.





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## GAVIN ARMSTRONG, VIOLA D'AMORE (B)



Hello! I am a 16 (nearly 17) -year old composer, and a current junior at Waltham High School. In addition to composition (which I've been doing for about three years), I've been playing violin for roughly seven years, viola for about three, and most recently the viola d'amore for almost two years. Through my compositions, one of my primary focuses is the resurrection of "dead" or obscure instruments into a modern context - such as the viola d'amore, the onde martenot, the harpsichord, the viola da gamba and the theorbo. While the piece you will hear today is a solo piece for viola d'amore, one of my main goals is to introduce these instruments to the orchestra, to prove that the symphony itself does not have to be set-in-stone, and can change even in the modern era.

Today, you will hear my Fanfare-Overture to a New Year for Solo Viola d'Amore, Op. 8. I wrote this piece at the beginning of this year and much of it is a note-for-note transcription of my very first improvisation on viola d'amore this year. I've dedicated it to my family, as I could not have gotten a viola

d'amore so soon in my musical career without their tremendous support. The piece itself is a rather eccentric and dramatic one, which highlights the technical and emotional range of the instrument while also alluding to a sense of hope and mystery as the new year sets in. As I've begun my composition path by attempting to bring back an old instrument, I've decided it's only fitting that I should write this piece specifically for the new year, as much of its repertoire was written at least a hundred years ago and this may serve as a moment of relevance for the viola d'amore.

While composing and performing are my two favorite pastimes (and are likely to be my career choice), on the side I also occasionally enjoy drawing, writing, hanging out with friends, and spending time with my four pets. I am extremely grateful to Marshunda Smith and the Cherry Hill Chamber Orchestra for welcoming me here as a special guest, as today's performance will be my second premiere ever, and my first premiere of a finished piece. I hope you enjoy it! Feel free to ask me questions after the performance, or otherwise, you can email me at [gavinarmstrong25@gmail.com](mailto:gavinarmstrong25@gmail.com).

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# MEET THE MUSICIANS

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## JILL GOOD, VIOLIN (L & B)

Jill's been making her living making music for 40 years. She's made Boston / North Shore home since earning her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Violin Performance, with a concentration in string quartets and chamber music.

And she owned Diggitydogz!, a dog walking and boarding business, to have an outlet for her other love, dogs! Last year she moved onto land after living for 6 years full time aboard her 38' boat, Serenade. But she can still be found seaside, skipping stones and inhaling the salt air!



## WHEELER JARVIS, CELLO (L & B)



Wheeler Jarvis is a graduate of the Baltimore School for the Arts, where he spent his formative years as a musician under the tutelage of Troy Stuart. Setting a course northward after high school, he studied music and geography at Middlebury College in Vermont. Undeterred by the cold of New England, Wheeler is establishing roots as a musician on the North Shore of Massachusetts. He has recently made appearances with the Cape Ann Symphony, the North Shore Chamber Music Society, and teaches a studio of aspiring cellists and violinists at the Brookwood School. Over the years, Wheeler has performed with ensembles such as the Esker Festival Orchestra in Ireland, London's Audentia Ensemble, and the InSeries Opera Company in Washington, DC.

## LOUIS STEPTOE, VIOLIN (L & B)



Louie Steptoe has been playing violin since the age of six, and thanks his mom for nudging him in that direction. He attended New Trier High School in Winnetka, IL, where he elected to take a third orchestra class instead of a lunch period. He went on to earn his Bachelor's degree at Lawrence University in Appleton, WI and later would complete his Master's at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY, where he became interested in the particular challenge of exploring music with adult beginners. Louie currently works with the Sudbury Valley New Horizons program, a local band and orchestra program for adult beginners. He would recommend that anyone with a secret wish to play an instrument should give it a try! Music is for everybody. (In case you don't believe him, he just started learning to play the hurdy-gurdy and is having a great time, so there.) You can learn by yourself or alongside others, however you choose - though Louie has always felt that the orchestra is where he belongs.



**JUDY TAKATA**  
**VIOLIN (B & L)**

Judy Takata and have been playing the violin for 70 years!! A retired nurse, but in her retirement she has stayed very active. Judy tap dances, exercises daily, quilts, knits, works part time and does some volunteer work.

Judy loves to travel and have visited all but 2 continents. She lived in Japan for 13 years where sh got married, had 4 children and learned to speak Japanese. She now has 8 grandchildren.

**MARYJANE FEBONIO,**  
**CELLO (B)**



MaryJane grew up in Ohio where she studied cello at the Baldwin-Wallace College preparatory division and the University of Mount Union where she received her Bachelor of Music degree. After teaching in the public schools for 2 years, MaryJane left Ohio for the promised land of Massachusetts and never looked back! She loves playing chamber music as well as playing in Cape Ann Symphony, North Shore Philharmonic, Salem Philharmonic and of course, the Cherry Hill Chamber Orchestra.

In her spare time MaryJane loves to go hiking, quilting and travelling - especially to the National Parks of the west. She lives in Rockport with her husband and have 2 children and 4 grandchildren. Her most unusual travel experience was in 2022 when she went to Montreal to get 100 boxes of Krispy Kreme donuts for her granddaughter's school fundraiser.



**TODD SANDERS,**  
**BASSOON (L)**

Born in Ketchikan, Alaska, Todd Sanders fell in love with the bassoon at the age of 16. A former student of Martin Mangrum of the Montreal Symphony and Adrian Jojatu of the Boston Philharmonic, Todd toured extensively with the New England Youth Ensemble in high school and college. Todd has been privileged to perform in major venues throughout the world, including St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice, Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, The Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., and Carnegie Hall in New York City. In recent years Todd has freelanced in the New England area, and has performed with the Lowell Philharmonic Orchestra since 2016.

In his spare time Todd enjoys hiking, sailing, photography and hand-crafting custom guitars.

## **Pietà Signore “Aria de Chiesa” (or, LeBec’s Existential Crisis in Aria Form)**

Ah, Pietà Signore—a heartfelt church aria from the middle Baroque, most often credited to Alessandro Stradella. Like many sacred works of the time, its text is drenched in themes of repentance and forgiveness. It’s essentially a grand, operatic plea to the heavens: “Please don’t smite me, Lord. I know I’ve made some questionable choices, but eternal flames feel a bit excessive.”

But this afternoon, we’re bending time and intention. Rather than picturing a 17th-century penitent trembling in candlelight, imagine LeBec—our ever-contemplative, slightly melodramatic protagonist—standing in the dim glow of self-reflection, peering deep into his own soul. Is he repenting? Searching for meaning?

Frustrated that he can’t find the right words to explain his emotions? (Or maybe just realizing he left the stove on?)

Regardless, the music captures the weight of his journey—the turmoil, the longing, and that tiny glimmer of hope that keeps him moving forward. Because, let’s be honest, whether pleading to the heavens or just trying to figure out life, we’ve all had a Pietà Signore moment.

## **Rachmaninoff’s Élégie (or, LeBec’s Brooding Playlist)**

Rachmaninoff was a master of all the feels, and Élégie, the first movement from his *Morceaux de fantaisie*, Op. 3, is no exception. Originally composed for solo piano in 1892, this piece drips with dark, brooding intensity—melancholy wrapped in lush harmonies, soaring melodies, and sweeping arpeggios. It’s the kind of music you’d play while staring wistfully out of a rain-streaked window, contemplating your life choices.

This afternoon, however, Élégie takes on a new form. In this special arrangement for string trio, the original piano lines unfold through the warm, resonant voices of the violins and cello. The suspensions and dissonances—hallmarks of Rachmaninoff’s expressive genius—are still there, but now they sing with the richness of strings, bringing new depth to every sigh and phrase.

For LeBec, this piece becomes a mirror to his soul—a soundtrack to his uncertainty, his longing, his hesitant hope. As he wanders through his existential crisis, we invite you to hear his story in every note. Will he find his way? Or will he get lost in the lush, sweeping turmoil of Rachmaninoff’s music? Stay tuned...

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Alan Shulman's ***Theme and Variations for Viola and Orchestra*** was first sketched on a bustling subway commute between Brooklyn and Manhattan in 1940. The viola, gaining prominence as a solo instrument, found an advocate in Shulman, who frequently composed for viola and chamber orchestra due to the balance and textural difficulties that often accompanied viola in front of a full orchestra.

Encouraged by his friend and colleague Emanuel Vardi, Shulman completed the composition first for viola and piano. With Vardi as the soloist and the eminent Toscanini in attendance, the piece immediately captured the attention of Dr. Frank Black, the music director of the NBC radio network.

NBC's interest prompted a full orchestration of the work, and its orchestral debut occurred in March 1941 on a radio series spotlighting emerging American composers. The audience's enthusiastic response led to multiple broadcasts, establishing the work's success. Vardi's numerous performances, and positive reviews, further propelled the composition into the limelight.

In 1943, principal violist Milton Preves of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra requested the music, resulting in performances that extended beyond Chicago. The enduring friendship between Shulman and Preves was commemorated when Shulman dedicated his 1953 composition, "Suite for Solo Viola," to Preves.

Shulman's creative journey continued as he re-orchestrated the piece for viola and chamber orchestra - the version you will hear today - with the Zimble Sinfonietta in 1954.

The theme in Theme & Variations takes an AA'BA' form - that is to say, a four-measure phrase (A), which gets repeated (A'), is followed by a middle B-section in a different time signature, then goes back to the repeated section (A' again). Shulman presents seven variations on this theme, which stick closely to the original in terms of harmony and overall contour, but which play with the rhythms and phrasing in increasingly virtuosic ways. The tell-tale sign of the end of a variation is the Picardy third chord - a compositional practice in which a phrase in a minor key finishes on a sudden major chord. The name "Picardy third" comes from how the third of the chord must be raised up one note (e.g. - turning an A-flat into an A-natural) in order to achieve this major harmony.

## **Vigstamoin – A Nordic Noir Soundscape**

Vigstamoin comes to us from the Danish String Quartet's collection of folk tunes, but its origins trace back to Norway's Gudbrand Valley. Named after a man who once lived on a small farm in the region, this melody is a springleik—a Norwegian dance akin to what the Danes call a polsk. Traditionally, it would have been played at village gatherings, its rhythms swirling as dancers moved in tight, intricate patterns.

This afternoon, however, Vigstamoin takes on a new role. Imagine a Russian film-noir scene unfolding: the rain slicks the cobblestone streets, neon signs flicker in dim alleyways, and a mysterious figure moves through the mist. Perched atop a garbage lid, an unnervingly perceptive cat watches every move. The melody drifts in like a half-remembered dream, shadowy yet hypnotic, setting the stage for something unknown. What happens next? That's for you—and the music—to decide.

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## **Lauren Bernofsky's Pas de Deux – A Dance of Two**

Our final piece, *Pas de Deux*, is a lyrical duet for violin and cello by composer Lauren Bernofsky. Originally commissioned by Roberta Bronecki and premiered on a boat drifting across Lake Winnepesaukee, this work captures the delicate balance of partnership, much like its ballet namesake—a dance between two.

Traditionally, in ballet, the strong yet lean male dancer lifts the tiny female with the ease of breathing. But this afternoon, the tables have turned. Marshunda and her cello will be lifting Louie and his violin! Together, they will weave a musical dialogue, equal parts elegance and playful resilience. This dance of two closes our program on a note of hope—hope for LeBec, for his newfound sense of self, and for the unexpected yet deeply familiar connections that make life a little less ornery and a lot more meaningful.

## **Borodin's String Trio in G minor (or, The Soundtrack of 'The Pink Guy')**

Ah, Borodin—the chemist who dabbled in music (or, as Tchaikovsky once joked, “a good chemist, but he can’t write a proper measure without Rimsky-Korsakov helping him”). A little harsh? Perhaps. But tonight, we get to decide for ourselves.

Unlike Borodin’s sweeping orchestral works, which have earned him a solid place in the concert hall, his chamber music remains relatively unknown. Most people wouldn’t recognize his name, yet many would hum along to the famous theme from *Kismet*, not realizing it came from his Second String Quartet. And even fewer would know about his String Trio in G minor—a single-movement piece from 1855, composed while he was knee-deep in chemical experiments in Germany.

At its heart, the piece is a theme and eight variations based on a Russian folk song, *What Have I Done to Hurt You?* (A title that feels eerily appropriate for our protagonist, LeBec, and his existential unraveling). It begins with a single violin singing out the plaintive tune, soon joined in canon by the other instruments, like echoes of regret. The variations take us through a shifting landscape of moods—flowing melodies, reverberant pizzicati, bagpipe drones—each adding new layers of intrigue. And just as quietly as it began, the piece ends in the same haunting lament.

This afternoon, this work serves as the musical embodiment of *The Pink Guy*—that elusive, mysterious figure who haunts LeBec’s journey. Is he real? A figment of LeBec’s imagination? The embodiment of his deepest fears and desires? As Borodin’s music weaves its spell, we invite you to step into LeBec’s world and decide for yourself.

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## ***Epilogue***

LeBec is obviously satire, parody, and absurdist - and certainly isn't to be taken as anyone's life story...we were certainly trying to make sure it was experimental enough to avoid such an accusation. But while it's a parody, good art does imitate life and vice versa, correct?

We're kind of having an existential crisis as a nation right now, aren't we? LeBec brings up, in his own wacky odd little Frenchman way, the cost of having too much of a specific thing. It is certainly possible to key into one perspective too much, especially when it abandons all others.

What things do we do to reject the greater world around us, like our pompous Parisian waiter? Is it wise for us to wholesale reject everything and anything we don't like...or maybe even it's just something we don't prefer? And if we do this to an extreme, in the end, will that rejection invert on us like an unintended existential dream-onion where the very people we sought to reject...become our guides?

My husband and I are trying to lean in to a heterophilic social context, a social and emotional strategy where you seek out those things that are different from you and what you know...and part of that acceptance is knowing that there will be dream-onions and odd experiences and perhaps even some weird existential ice cream flavors we try out...because that's part of growth, right?

You can manage the relationship with classical music as the same relationship it's been for hundreds of years...or you can lean in and experiment. The same can be said of our own lifestyles...do we all expect to interpret life the same way for generation after generation...or do we look to breathe some new life into the world we live in so it doesn't get too...stale?

We hope that you enjoyed this experiment - we certainly did. I know Ryan really really loved butchering Franky LeBeak's English. Please don't assume that any of the characters here represent someone you actually know...unless you have a friend who reminds you of any of the characters, please give us a call because we'd love to meet them!



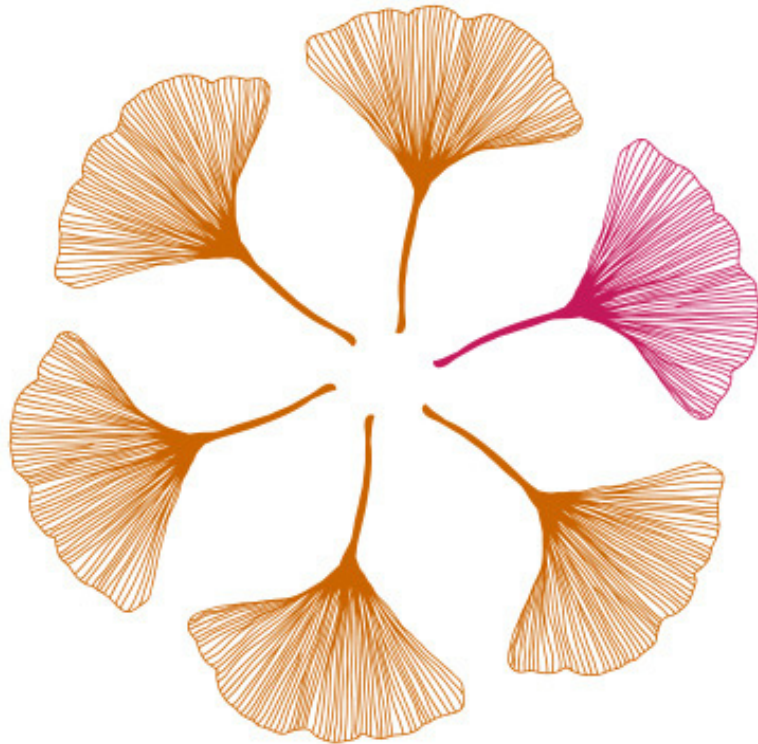
# *The End*



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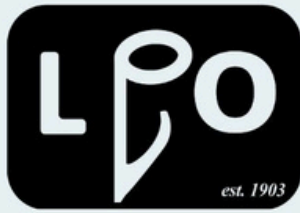
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# Marshunda's Favorites



Kim Indresano  
P H O T O G R A P H Y

Photos by [@KimIndresanoPhotography](https://www.instagram.com/KimIndresanoPhotography)



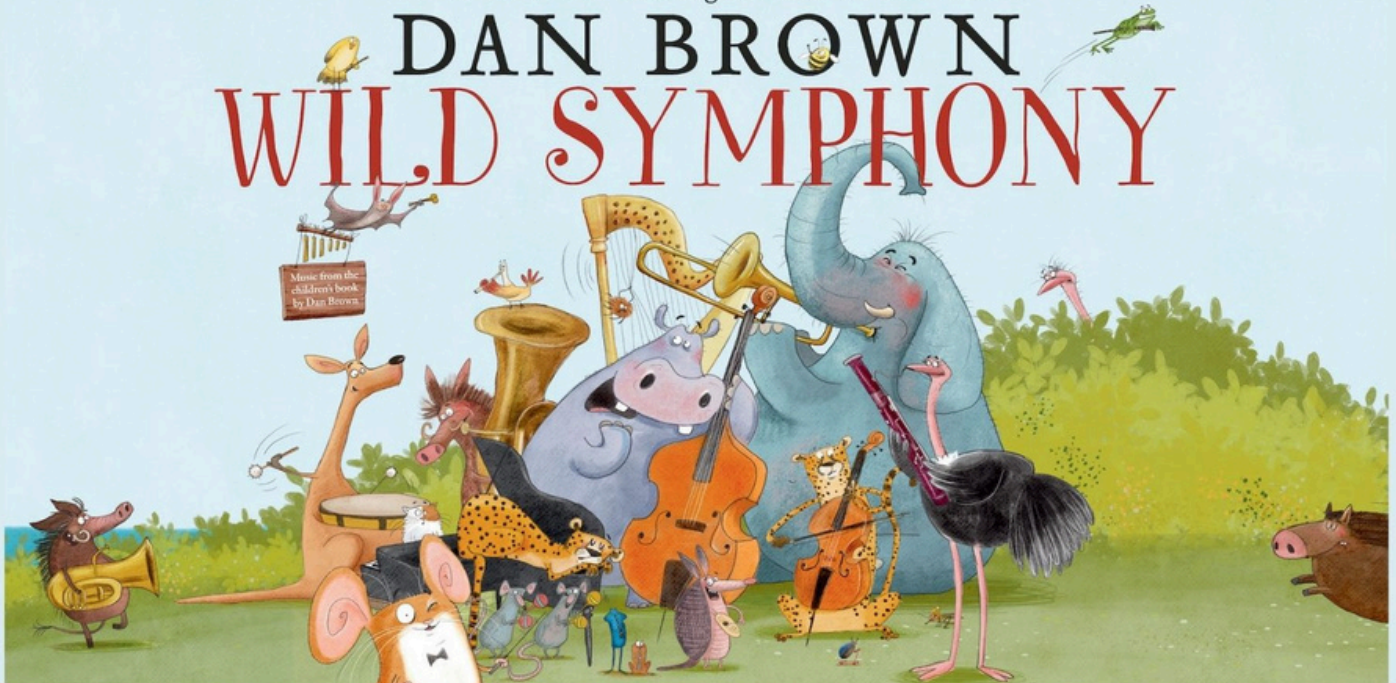
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*#1 New York Times Bestselling Author of The Da Vinci Code*

# DAN BROWN WILD SYMPHONY



PERFORMED BY THE LOWELL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

**INCLUDING THE ANNUAL YOUTH STRING PLAY-IN**

**SATURDAY MARCH 15, 2025 AT 2 PM**

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\$20 FOR ADULTS - \$10 FOR SENIORS  
FREE ADMISSION FOR 17 AND UNDER







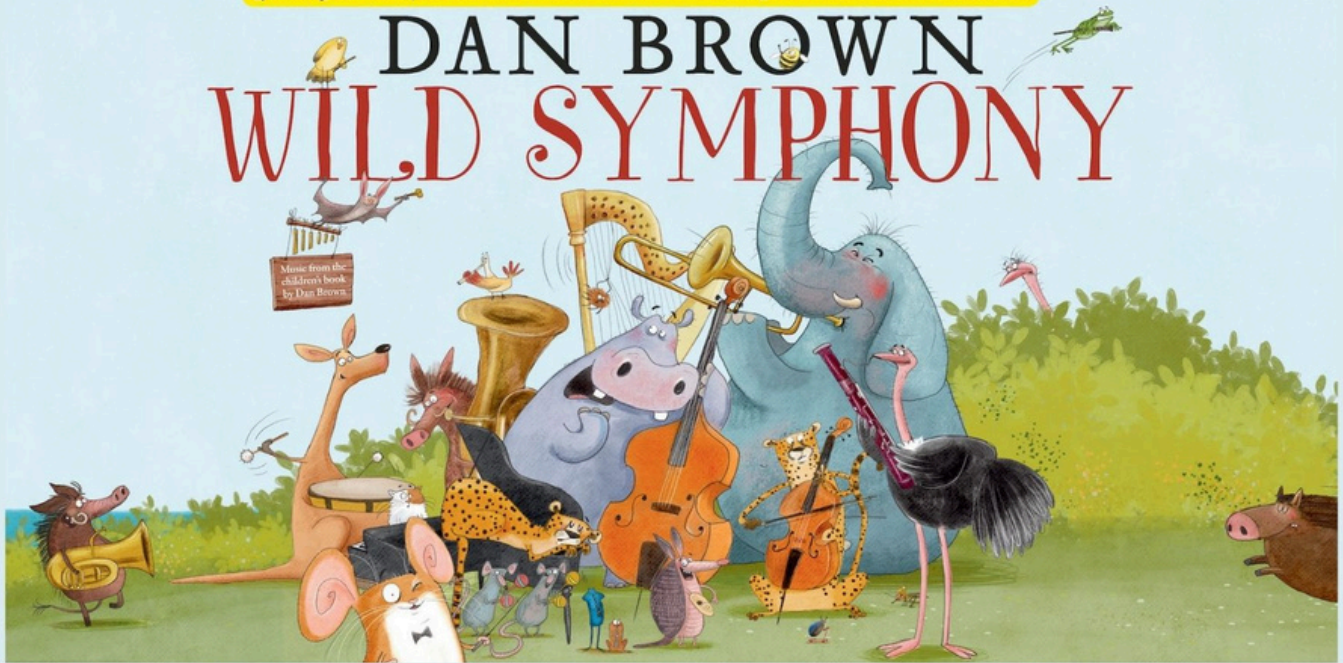
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MARSHUNDA SMITH | MUSIC DIRECTOR



អ្នកនិពន្ធលក់កំរើតលេខ ១ នៃ New York Times សៀវភៅ The DaVinci Code

# DAN BROWN WILD SYMPHONY



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រួមទាំងការលេងខ្សែអក្សរយុវជនប្រចាំឆ្នាំ

**ថ្ងៃសៅរ៍ ទី 15 ខែមីនា ឆ្នាំ 2025 វេលាម៉ោង 2 រសៀល**

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20 ដុល្លារសម្រាប់មនុស្សពេញវ័យ -

10 ដុល្លារសម្រាប់មនុស្សចាស់

ចូលរៀនដោយឥតគិតថ្លៃសម្រាប់អាយុ 17 ឆ្នាំឡើងទៅ





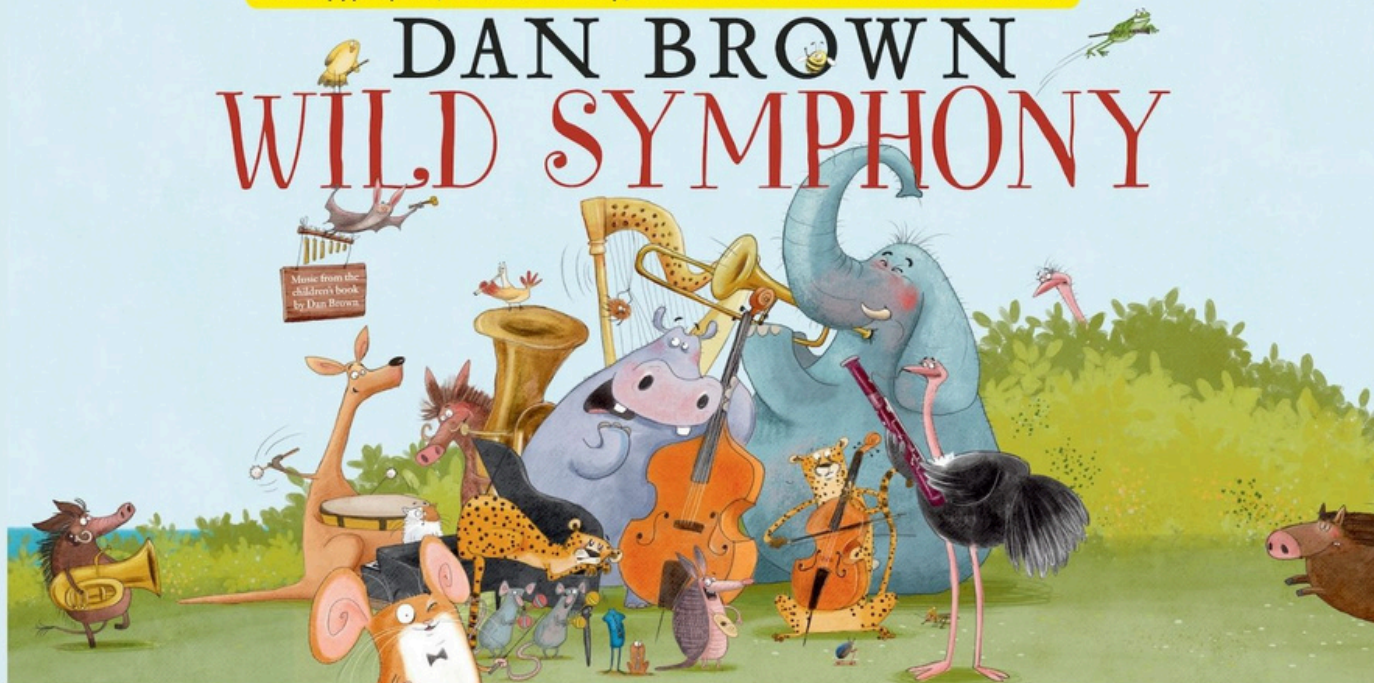
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# DAN BROWN WILD SYMPHONY



PERFORMED BY THE LOWELL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

**ΣΥΜΠΕΡΙΛΑΜΒΑΝΟΜΕΝΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΕΤΗΣΙΑΣ ΠΑΙΔΙΚΗΣ ΕΚΤΕΛΕΣΗΣ ΜΕ ΉΓΧΟΡΑ ΟΡΓΑΝΑ**

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