

Spring Concert



Presented by Hart House Orchestra
Henry Janzen, Principal Conductor & Music Director

Thurs. Mar. 26, 2026

8 pm

Great Hall

<https://www.harthouseorchestra.ca/>

[@HartHouseOrchestraUofT](#)

PROGRAMME

Central Park in the Dark

Charles Ives
(1874–1954)

Violin Concerto in E minor, op.64

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809-1847)

I. Allegro molto appassionato

II. Andante

II. Allegretto non troppo – Allegro
molto vivace

Joey Machin - **Violin**

Intermission

Symphony No. 2 in G minor, op. 7

Kurt Weill
(1900-1950)

I. Sostenuto – Allegro molto

II. Largo

III. Allegro vivace - Presto

ABOUT THE PIECES

Charles Ives: Central Park in the Dark



Instrumentation: piccolo, flute, oboe, E♭ (B♭) clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, trombone, percussion, two pianos and strings.

Approximate duration - 8 minutes.

Charles Ives, a successful actuary and businessman, was one of the earliest American composers to achieve universal recognition. He was a modernist composer who, at the turn of the 20th century, experimented with

with a variety of compositional techniques such as polytonality, polyrhythm, tone clusters, aleatory elements and quarter tones. His musical experiments foreshadowed innovations that were more widely adopted towards the mid- 20th century. His musical imagery is inspired by church hymns, marching band music, pub fiddlers, traditional songs and sentimental parlour ballads.

Central Park in the Dark is an early example of Ives's revolutionary style, and it still sounds remarkably modern despite being composed in 1906. The full title is *A Contemplation of Nothing Serious or Central Park* and it was first conceived as the second of two companion pieces, the other being *A Contemplation of a Serious Matter or The Unanswered Perennial Question*.

In his program notes for the piece, Ives wrote:

“This piece purports to be a picture-in-sounds of the sounds of nature and of happenings that men would hear some thirty or so years ago (i.e. in 1875, before the combustion engine and radio monopolized the earth and air), when sitting on a bench in Central Park on a hot summer night.”

[One may assume that in 1875, Central Park, even in the dark, was a safer place than it was in the late 20th century in broad daylight. N.Ed.]

One should keep in mind that Central Park was conceived in 1858 and the construction took 15 years to complete – at triple the initial cost estimate. When Ives refers to Central Park, he is commenting on a relatively new and novel element in the city of New York.

Central Park in the Dark is a sonic collage, in which the instruments are placed in three different and independent groups, all with their own keys, tempi and musical content.

Ives himself indicated the role of the instrument groups in the description of the composition's programme:

“The strings represent the night sounds and silent darkness – interrupted by sounds from the Casino over the pond – of street singers coming up from the Circle singing, in spots, the tunes of those days – of some "night owls" from Healy's whistling the latest of the Freshman March – the "occasional elevated", a street parade, or a "break-down" in the distance – of newsboys crying "uxtries" – of pianolas having a ragtime war in the apartment house "over the garden wall", a street car and a street band join in the chorus – a fire engine, a cab horse runs away, lands "over the fence and out", the wayfarers shout – again the darkness is heard – an echo over the pond – and we walk home.”

Felix Mendelssohn – Violin Concerto in E minor, op.64



Instrumentation: solo violin, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets in A, 2 bassoons, 2 natural horns, 2 natural trumpets, timpani, and strings. Approximate duration - 27 minutes.

In the summer of 1838 Mendelssohn wrote to his friend, the respected German violin virtuoso and pedagogue Ferdinand David, “I should like to write a violin concerto for you next winter. One in E minor runs through my head the beginning of which gives me no peace.” Mendelssohn and Ferdinand David knew each other very well since childhood (they were born a year apart in the same house in Hamburg). Upon taking up the position of music director of the Gewandhaus orchestra in Leipzig one of the first steps Mendelssohn took, was to appoint David as its concertmaster. Not only was he the dedicatee of this concerto, but David was also Mendelssohn's consultant on the technical aspects of the concert.

While not his first (1822) violin concerto (a product his earliest teenage endeavours) this is Mendelssohn's final concerto composition of any kind. Completing the work took a long time in terms relative to his lifespan, with conception to premier spanning six years. Mendelssohn drafted portions of it in at least two distinct stages and his correspondence with David is filled with discussions of specific points of technique. The correspondence also contains the violinist's urgent pleas to the composer that he finish the work. In July 1839, Mendelssohn wrote to David commenting that he needed only “a few days in a good mood” in order to come up with a draft. Mendelssohn didn't find those few days for several years! There were many reasons for the delay; self-doubt, completion of his Third symphony (“Scottish”) and his commitment as head of the Royal Academy of Music in Berlin. This appointment, which Mendelssohn reluctantly accepted at the

insistence of King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia, caused him immense frustration as the funding promised to realize the king's ambitious plans never materialized. It wasn't until the summer of 1844 that Mendelssohn finally managed to resign from this position. Without the time constraints imposed by the Academy, Mendelssohn's compositional efforts proceeded smoothly and the concerto was finished that fall.

The concerto premiered the 13th of March 1845, in Leipzig. The soloist was Ferdinand David but Mendelssohn who was ill could not conduct and was replaced by his assistant, the Danish composer and conductor Niels Gade. It was October of the same year, that Mendelssohn and David first performed the concerto together. From the very beginning the concerto was hailed as one of the most important works for violin and this estimation has never changed. With its virtuosic passages, heart-melting tunes and emotional depth, it is one of the top five violin concertos, a darling of both violinists and audiences.

The violin concerto follows the classical concerto form, which Mendelssohn adapted to better suit his own musical needs by introducing several innovations. To start, the three movements of the concerto are played without interruption, the first two being seamlessly joined together. Dispensing with the tradition of an orchestral exposition at the beginning of his concerto, Mendelssohn immediately introduces the solo instrument at the outset of the *Allegro appassionato* first movement. The opening theme is then restated by the orchestra. After a bridging passage the second theme is introduced by the winds on top of the sustained open G string by the solo violin. At the end of the development section, rather than transitioning to the recapitulation, Mendelssohn again defies expectations by inserting the cadenza. This cadenza is unique not only because of its placement but also by being fully realized (possibly co-composed with David) rather than improvised by the soloist as was customary in the day. While the soloist is still playing the cadenza, the orchestra sneaks in and starts the recapitulation. The first movement ends with a very fast coda marked *Presto*. Upon the vigorous conclusion of the first movement the bassoon stands as a lone sentinel holding its note. With the gradual introduction of instrumental groups of the orchestra we hear the modulation to the key of C major and the introduction of the main theme of the second movement.

The *Andante* second movement is reminiscent of Mendelssohn's Songs without Words. It begins with a soaring melody of incredible sweetness. However, the serene mood darkens in the middle section when the orchestra introduces a pleading tune in a minor key. The solo violin then takes on the complexity of both melody and accompaniment simultaneously. The movement ends with the return of the serene theme of the opening section.

A brief transitional passage featuring a dialogue between the solo violin and the strings leads into the final movement, an *Allegro molto vivace* introduced by a trumpet fanfare. This movement is a fine example of Mendelssohn's quick-silver mood which can be found in

some his of other works, most notably his overture to *A Midsummer Nights Dream*. The finale offers a magical dialogue between the soloist and the winds offset by a passage where strings and horn carve out a broad countermelody. The concerto concludes with dazzling virtuoso fireworks broken up by a brief cantabile motif inserted in the middle.

Kurt Weill – Symphony No. 2 in G minor, op. 7



Instrumentation: 2 flutes (one flute doubling as piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets in B-flat, 2 bassoons, 2 horns in F, 2 trumpets in B-flat, 2 trombones, timpani and strings. Approximate duration - 30 minutes.

Mention of the name of Kurt Weill immediately brings to mind his many works for the stage, chiefly the “Ballad of Mack the Knife” from *The Threepenny Opera*, his first and most successful collaboration with the playwright Bertolt Brecht. But Weill was a composer divided between two worlds, the “serious” composer of symphonies and concertos versus the innovator of popular song and musical theater. The modernist admirer of Arnold Schoenberg and student of Ferruccio Busoni versus the Broadway craftsman who helped define the sound of mid-20th-century America. Unfortunately, his work for the theater overshadows his orchestral, chamber music and choral compositions, in spite of their originality and unquestionable qualities.

The Second symphony was composed against the backdrop of the Nazi rise to power in Germany. By 1931, Weill’s fame reached Paris through recordings and via the French movie *L’Opéra de quat-sous*, the French language version of G.W. Pabst’s film adaptation of *The Threepenny Opera*. It was an adaptation which both Weill and Brecht opposed. In Paris, a chamber music society called La Sérénade (whose members included Darius Milhaud, a friend of Weill since 1927) invited Weill to give a concert of his music in December of 1932. Weill sent his student Maurice Abravanel (later the highly regarded music director of the Utah Symphony) to oversee the event. Two socially scathing theater pieces by Brecht and Weill were performed, *Mahagonny Songspiel* (a “style study” for the complete three-act opera) and *Der Jasager (The ‘Yes’-Sayer)*. These works created a sensation and the notoriety brought Weill to the attention of the Princess Edmont de Polignac (née Winnaretta Singer) the American-born heiress of the Singer sewing machine fortune. Princess de Polignac who was a leading Parisian patron of the arts (she counted among her protégés Ravel, Debussy, Stravinsky, Fauré, and Poulenc) decided to commission a symphony from Weill.

The commission arrived in January of 1933. Excited by the prospect of writing a concert work after a hiatus of 10 years, Weill set to work immediately. However, Hitler's ascension to power on January 30th shook life in Germany to its foundation, especially for Jews. It didn't take long for Weill to realize that as a Jew and as an avant-garde artist, he had no future in Germany and in March he and his wife Lotte Lenya, headed to Paris taking with him the unfinished score of the symphony. As soon as he arrived in Paris he received a commission from the choreographer George Balanchine and the English philanthropist Edward James, for a "ballet with songs" that would be a modern retelling of the Medieval morality plays depicting the *Seven Deadly Sins*. Weill took up work on the Second Symphony again that summer, but progress was slow due to his being busy with settling down in Paris (finding an apartment; finding a new publisher) so the symphony wasn't finished until the next February.

The first performance of the Second symphony took place on October 11, 1934 by the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra and Bruno Walter, a fellow Jewish refugee from Germany, and former conducting assistant of Gustav Mahler. Further performances in The Hague, Rotterdam and New York (also under Walter) followed in short order. The symphony was received with enthusiasm by the public. The critics dismissed the composition as tasteless and inane. Such was the intensity of the critics' condemnation that it stopped Weill from writing any music for the concert hall for the rest of his life. After the first few performances, the Second symphony languished in obscurity until the 1970s when it started to appear again on concert programs.

The Second symphony was written without any ostensible program, but Walter upon seeing the score was impressed by what he termed its "nocturnal, uncanny and mysterious atmosphere". He tried to extract from the composer a title that would give some clue to its programmatic content. Both in his response to Walter and in his own program note, Weill denied any such content. In the event, when Walter suggested the title *Three Night Scenes* for the New York premiere, Weill reluctantly agreed.

Cast in three movements, the Second symphony brims with contrasts that feel theatrical. In a manner reminiscent of Mahler, Weill shifts abruptly from biting rhythms to haunting melodies, and from sardonic outbursts to lyrical interludes.

The first movement starts with a slow introduction containing an undercurrent of quick notes which increase in intensity to reveal a lyric trumpet melody reminiscent of the cabaret ballads featured in Weill's music for the theatre. This melody prefaces the movement's main *Allegro molto* section which is cast in a neo-Classical sonata form and bristles with irony and tension.

The *Largo* second movement is the emotional core of the symphony. The movement moves slowly but inexorably, building to several climaxes. Initially it is a funeral march

reminiscent of Mahler and his influence on music a generation after his death. However, Weill the theatrical composer is never far away, something that is particularly evident when we hear the trombone solo, underpinned by a quietly chugging accompaniment. The violins then develop the melody in a bittersweet fashion. After a final climax, the movement's opening theme returns in a subdued manner and then fades out.

The last movement is a quasi-rondo with varied development. While cast overall as an *Allegro vivace*, the central episode marked quasi-marziale is scored for woodwind and brass only. This section could be interpreted as a parody of a Nazi march. Otherwise in the course of the movement the music increases speed episodically and the symphony concludes with a tarantella-like coda.

Program notes by Joseph Nachman©

SOLOIST

Joey Machin - Violin Soloist



Joey Machin is a violinist and violist from Toronto, Canada. As an avid chamber musician, he has performed for members of renowned ensembles such as the Ébène, Brentano, Borromeo, Emerson, Juilliard, Dover, Talich, Calidore, and Jerusalem quartets. He was awarded first prize in the 2025-2026 Golden Violin Award Competition, one of Canada's largest privately-funded music awards.

Joey is currently exploring the piano trio repertoire with Ottica Trio, coached by Violaine Melançon. Before forming the trio, his string quartet, Horatio, won the 2024 McGill Chamber Music Competition and was selected as a finalist in the 2024 Lyon International Chamber Music Competition. Joey has participated in numerous chamber music festivals and programs, including the Taos School of Music, Montreal International String Quartet Academy, Robert Mann String Quartet Institute, Calidore String Quartet Seminar, and Yellow Barn Young Artists Program.

As a soloist, Joey has performed Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E Minor with North York Concert Orchestra, and he performed Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto in D Major in the finals of the 2025 McGill Romantic Concerto Competition, having previously played it with McGill's Beethoven Orchestra. Joey also has an interest in contemporary music. In addition to having his own compositions recorded by the Bedford Trio and Continuum Ensemble, he has enjoyed premiering and recording chamber works of several living composers. Joey studied violin in Toronto with Ivan Ivanovich and is currently pursuing a bachelor of music in violin performance at McGill University in the class of Violaine Melançon.

CONDUCTED BY



Henry Janzen, Hart House Orchestra Music Director and Principal Conductor

Henry has extensive international experience conducting a variety of ensembles. A highlight for him was conducting the Hart House Orchestra 40th year celebratory concert at Carnegie Hall. He has toured Europe both as violist and conductor.

As President of the Canadian Viola Society he represented Canada at International Viola Society meetings. One of his accomplishments was the re-drafting of the International Viola Society bylaws.

At present, in addition to conducting the Hart House Orchestra, he teaches Applied Instrumental techniques at the University of Toronto Schools and the University of Guelph.

Music has its own language. Through music we communicate with each other in a way which both transports and transforms us, enriching both our lives and the lives of our listeners.

ORCHESTRA MEMBERS OF 2025-2026

Violin I

Joanna Tang CM (Fall)
Haruna Monri CM
Cathy Xi Chen AssocCM
Rena Far
Yuna Koh
Frederic Mercier
Emilie Anne Charest
Fei Ye
Jolie Ho
Silvana Pesenti
Angang Evelyn
Hayden Wong
Ayala Revah
Madeleine Tait
Ben Lai
Ryan Woodland
Hans Fischer
Nathalie Ott Mercier
Joseph Nachman

Violin II

Tim Leung P
Trish Howells AP
Philip Richard AssocP
Sophia Lee
Kate Sohn
Yiou Zheng
Brenna Whyte
Vincent Hung
Dania González
Catherine Chen
Millie Newis
Behram Hathi
Faye Wan
Peter Martin
Perry Wong
Allie Jeon
Anina Zhao
Ryan Fu
Nicole Desaulnier

Viola

Julian Fisher P
Elliott McMurchy
Luciano Salvetti Martinez
Aaron Shulman
Jesse Coleman
Bridget Allen-O'Neil

Jeff Baker
Sela Zhao
Elizabeth Brubaker
Elisabeth Widner
Arn Macpherson
Sooa Lim

Cello

Adam Caulfield P
Betty Tang AP
Ilyas Syed
Chelsea Cheng
Nicole Weng
Nathaniel Dickie
Hilary Parkes
Lara Isaac
Kj Aitken
Alistair Grieve
Tyson Caul
Julia Kim *

Bass

Hannah Rubia P
David McElroy
Radek Puky
Nikita Kullojka

Flute/Piccolo

Laura Bolt CP
Renee Willmon CP
Ayla Denenberg
Troy Whynot

Oboe

Megan Yuen P
Jeremy Lavrence
Catherine Lu
Mira Teresi

Clarinet

Daniel Choi P
Anka Stefanovic
(Bass)
Evan Lawrence
Joshua Zung

Bassoon

Zenghao Wang P
Reid Sox-Harris
Joshua Zung

Horn

Matthew Graystone P
Damir Pavelic
Yonatan Kahn
Adam Rosenfield
Grace Song
Nathan Bergman

Trumpet

David Forsey P
Brennan Schommer*

Trombone

Chien-Hsun Chiu P
Chenhao Gong
Shaiyan Keshvari

Timpani

Phoenix Mok-Wong

Percussion

Tom Philip
Catherine Lu

Piano

Ryan Woodland

CM – Concert Master
AssocCM – Associate CM
P – Principal
AssocP – Associate
Principal

AP – Assistant Principal
CP – Co-principal

*Guest Musician

Please consider supporting the Hart House Orchestra. Any donations are very appreciated as they help support our upcoming programming goals, and can be made via the QR code below:



HartHouse
FOR YOU