

SPIRITUAL AMERICANA!

Saturday, May 2 ☆ 7:30 pm ☆ Bel Air High School



Artwork: Jordyn Brown

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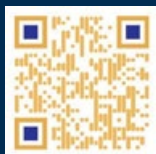
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49th Season

2025-2026

TUESDAY, JUNE 2, 2026 at 7 p.m.

SSO FUNDRAISER CONCERT

(rain date: Tuesday, June 9, 2026 at 7 p.m.)

Hopkins Farm Brewery, 3833 Rider Ln., Havre de Grace



The SSO's 6th annual fundraiser event features food trucks (beginning at 5 pm), 50/50 and raffles, and the SSO playing popular and film music from the patio. Bring the whole family, plus chairs, blankets, picnics, and your sunglasses!

John Philip Sousa • Duke Ellington • Elton John • Neil Diamond • Journey

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Vocal soloists: Sarah Wojcik and Benjamin Gonczy

SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 2026 at 7 p.m.

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Questions: email Amanda the Orchestra Manager at

Manager.SSOOrchestra@gmail.com or call 443-910-2955

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Connecting Our Community Through the Power of Music



The Susquehanna Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1978 by Sheldon Bair, is a community orchestra of professional and amateur volunteer musicians. In a series of concerts and outdoor performances, the Orchestra performs standard orchestral repertoire, opera, and ballet, and is known for premieres of new works and performances of unusual repertoire.

This year marks the 49th Season of the SSO. Such longevity would not be possible without your support. We thank you for attending this evening's concert and look forward to many more years of making music!

Our Mission

The Susquehanna Symphony Orchestra (SSO) is an all-volunteer community arts organization that performs diverse orchestral works to enrich, enlighten, and educate both its talented musicians and engaged audiences. Through a variety of collaborations and partnerships, the SSO contributes to the rich artistic and cultural landscape, which is the heartbeat and soul of Harford County, Maryland, and the surrounding communities.

Our Vision

The Susquehanna Symphony Orchestra uses symphonic music to entertain and connect Harford County and the surrounding area.



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49th Season

2025-2026

Thank You!

The SSO would like to thank Julia Potler (Town of Bel Air) for her help in coordinating the Bel Air High School accommodations (Robert DeLeva, Principal). We would like to express our sincere appreciation to our donors and advertisers for the support they provide. Their assistance helps the SSO provide our community with excellent orchestral music. Please visit our advertisers and tell them the SSO sent you!



We are also indebted to the Harford Community College Music program for providing rehearsal space (Dr. Kim Davis, Dean of Arts & Humanities).

~ The SSO Musicians, Staff, and Board of Directors



This concert is supported by the Harford County Department of Economic Development and grants from Maryland State Arts Council (msac.org) and MSAC through the Harford County Cultural Arts Board.



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Spiritual Americana!

Saturday, May 2, 2026 at 7:30 p.m.

Michael Fili - The Old Line (Concert Fanfare for Brass and Percussion)

Brian Folus, conductor

Samuel Barber - Adagio for Strings
(1910-1981)

George Gershwin – Cuban Overture (Rumba)
(1898-1937)

Intermission

Aaron Copland, arr. Glenn Koponen - “Zion’s Walls”
(1900-1990)

with community choirs
David Tramontana, conductor

Jesse Ayers and Charles Myricks, Jr. - There’s a Stirrin’ in the Water

with community choirs
Kellen Johnson, baritone

George Gershwin - Rhapsody in Blue

Washington García, piano

Thank you to: Jordyn Brown for designing artwork for the May concert; choir leaders David Tramontana, Sandra Files, and Tristan Donica; Matthew Bachman and Steinway Piano Gallery.

The truck rental to transport percussion instruments and equipment was generously funded by Joy and Ray Richardson.

Thank you to King Patel and Jay Desai of Sunset Hospitality for donating a hotel room at Candlewood Suites Aberdeen-Bel Air. "The Patel family have been Harford County residents and business owners for over 40 years. We believe in the power of the arts and believe music builds community. Some of that belief was shaped by Maestro Sheldon Bair in his work as a music educator and we are honored to support the SSO."



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Sheldon Bair



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Guest Conductor
Brian Folus



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Congratulations to Maestro Sheldon Bair
who was named a **Harford Living Treasure**
at the SSO concert on December 6, 2025!



This award from the County Council was presented by Councilwoman Nolanda Robert to Maestro Bair for his work as a Harford County Public Schools educator and founder and musical director of the Susquehanna Symphony Orchestra.

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Composer **Michael Fili**

Michael Fili is an award winning American composer based in Maryland, whose music has been praised for its haunting beauty and lyricism. Michael's compositional voice is influenced by his

experience as a professional choral musician, characteristics of which can be found in his instrumental music as well as his choral music. His work has been commissioned and performed throughout North America and Europe and has received awards from organizations including Chanticleer, Chorosynthesis, the International Federation for Choral Music, and Westminster Choir College.

In addition to his work as a composer, Michael maintains an active career as a conductor, singer, and teacher. He is Director of Music at St Paul's, K Street in Washington, DC, where he leads one of the United States' most prominent and active sacred music programs. From 2016 through 2023 he was Artistic Director of StageFree Music, a professional new music ensemble that focused on performing the work of composers with ties to the Washington, DC region.

Michael is on faculty at Howard University in Washington, DC, where he currently serves as head of the Composition and Music Theory programs. He holds degrees in composition from the University of Maryland (DMA), Carnegie Mellon University (MM), and Westminster Choir College (BM). www.michaelfili.com



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Pianist **Hexing Xiao** is joined by fellow HCC faculty musicians **Meghan Shanley Alger**, flute, and **Tim Anderson**, cello, to perform works by Carl Reinecke, Felix Mendelssohn, Franz Joseph Haydn, and Bela Bartok on a program that highlights Tan Dun's "Eight Memories in Watercolor" for solo piano.

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Composer **Jesse Ayers**

Jesse Ayers is an American composer known for his dramatic, immersive works for symphonic winds and orchestra, often incorporating narration, spatial staging, and surround-sound elements. His music

has been performed across the United States and internationally in Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, and several European cities.

Ayers was the winner of the inaugural American Prize for Orchestral Composition, winner of the first Opera Kansas Zepick Modern Opera Composition Competition, and co-winner of the Dayton Ballet “New Music for New Dance” competition. In 2020, he received the Ohio Governor’s award as Ohio’s Outstanding Individual Artist.

Ayers holds the rank of Professor of Music Emeritus at Malone University where he was twice awarded the school’s Distinguished Faculty Award.



Choir Master **David Tramontana**

David Tramontana has been the choir director at Havre de Grace High School for the past 29 years where he directs the Concert choir, Women’s Chorale, and Chamber Singers. Mr. Tramontana is also

the Director of Music and the Chancel Choir Director at the Bel Air United Methodist Church in Bel Air, Maryland. As Director of Music, he supervises the music program and as chancel choir conductor, David prepares weekly anthems and conducts two major works a year with a professional orchestra. David has earned a master’s degree in music education from the Peabody Conservatory of the Johns Hopkins University, a bachelor’s degree in music education with a concentration



on voice from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and an associate degree in Vocal Performance from Bucks County Community College, Pennsylvania. He has continued his education with graduate credits beyond his masters in Choral Conducting, Instrumental conducting, Choral Methods, and Leadership. David lives in Historic Havre de Grace, Maryland with his wife Courtney, and his four children: Bridget, Aidan, Cecelia, and Joseph.



Guest Soloist **Kellen Johnson**

Kellen Johnson (baritone) was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland. He originally began his classical vocal training at the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) with Carol Waters and,

later, with Braxton Peters. After receiving his Associate of Arts voice performance degree in the spring of 2017, Kellen transferred to Towson University to pursue his Bachelor's that fall, studying there under baritone Jason Widney. After a brief hiatus, Kellen returned to Towson in the spring of 2020, where he was selected to sing in a masterclass instructed by the celebrated operatic tenor Lawrence Brownlee. Mr. Johnson currently works as a full-time security officer at the world renowned Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA), inadvertently earning himself the reputation as "the singing security guard." He credits the museum as the place where the second half of his artistic achievements occurred. Mr. Johnson's greatest accomplishment at the museum is undoubtedly his contribution to the groundbreaking *Guarding the Art* exhibition in 2022, where he and sixteen fellow security colleagues co-curated an array of works by women, people of color, and rarely displayed items in the BMA's permanent art collections. By the end of the show's three-month run, Mr. Johnson gave interviews for periodicals such as *The New York Times*, and *The Baltimore Sun*; radio interviews with local classical music station WBJC, NPR, ARD German Radio, and the United Kingdom's BBC; television interviews with local networks WBAL Channel 11 and WJZ Channel 13; and popular national daytime talk shows including *The*

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Susquehanna Symphony Orchestra • 14 • 49th Season: 2025-2026



Today Show: Sunday Morning, an honorable mention on *The Drew Barrymore Show*, and even a special Skype guest appearance on *The Kelly Clarkson Show*.

Mr. Johnson has also dedicated his time to performing for the local community, now marking his third full year as bass/baritone soloist with the University Baptist Church Choir. He has been a recent participant in the Summer Music in Tuscany program, studying opera for two weeks in Sarteano, Italy; he will return to SMT for the third year in a row this July. As a professional opera singer, Kellen also celebrated his third full season with the Annapolis Opera Chorus. Recent productions from last year include Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* and Verdi's *La traviata (The Straying Woman)*. Finally, in May, he made his chorus debut in the nation's capital with Washington National Opera for their production of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*. During the current season, Mr. Johnson returned to Annapolis in October for Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. This past March, Kellen gave a recital of sacred art songs back at the BMA, in celebration of the recent opening of their latest exhibition *Matisse in Venice: Stations of the Cross*. Last month, he gave two performances of *Songstresses: Art Songs by Women Composers*, a three-person collaboration with former Annapolis Opera colleague and soprano Sofia Scattarreggia and singer/composer/accompanist Marie Herrington at The Peale Center and at Govans Presbyterian Church in Baltimore. Mr. Johnson makes his professional concert debut with this Susquehanna Symphony Orchestra performance.



Guest Soloist **Washington García**

Ecuadorian-American pianist Washington García Eljuri began his musical studies at the age of six. He has studied under renowned teachers such as Genoveva Granja, Toshko Stoyanov, Ann Schein, Yoheved Kaplinsky, and Julian Martin. Dr. García holds a Bachelor of Music from the National Conservatory of Music in Ecuador, and both



Master's and Doctoral degrees from the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University. He graduated at the age of 25, becoming the youngest Latin American to receive a doctoral degree in piano performance from this prestigious institution. He is the recipient of the "Condecoración Dr. Vicente Rocafuerte," the highest Cultural Achievement Award given by the Ecuadorian National Assembly, equivalent to the Presidential Medal of Freedom or Congressional Gold Medal in the United States.

Dr. García's successful debut performance at the age of six led to numerous performances at the most significant cultural centers in Ecuador. He has won first prizes at the Guillermo Wright-Vallarino National Piano Competition in Quito, the Elizabeth Davis Memorial Piano Competition, the 19th International Young Artist Piano Competition in Washington D.C., the 2004 Baltimore Music Club Piano Competition, and the Harrison Winter Piano Competition. As the Harrison Winter winner at the Peabody Institute, he was selected to perform with the Peabody Concert Orchestra. He was also a top prizewinner at the Yale Gordon Piano Competition and the Russell Wonderlic Piano Competition.

From a very early age, Dr. García became a seasoned concert pianist, extensively performing throughout Ecuador. Since his debut with the Ecuadorian National Symphony Orchestra at age 15, he has been an active recitalist, soloist, and lecturer in prestigious venues across Italy, Switzerland, Austria, France, Spain, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Canada, Chile, Mexico, Ecuador, Colombia, Japan, China, Indonesia, Singapore, Taiwan, and the United States. In the U.S., he has offered solo recitals and master classes in almost 30 states.

Dr. García has served on the faculty of the Peabody Preparatory of the Johns Hopkins University and Texas State University, where he was a Professor of Piano, Coordinator of the Keyboard Area, and the Assistant Director of the School of Music. He is currently the Dean of the School of Music at Stetson University in Florida. Prior to his appointment at Stetson, he was the founding Director of the School of Music at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, where he held the Robert M. Spire Professorship as a full Professor of Piano.

Washington García became a Steinway Artist in 2014.

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 Christine Doney
 Rachel Friedman
 Chase Groh
 Shannon Hash
 *David Lin
 Andrew Nowakowski
 Kim Politz
 Cathy Stewart
 Lily Wang
 Amy Wilkinson
 Lisa Williams

Manfred Reek
 Principal
 *Nara Anusonti-Inthra
 *Jzaleilah Barroquillo
 Liliana Ceci
 Rebecca Comaty
 *Aubrey Goble
 Sara Michlin
 Joyce Pekarek
 Mohammad Amrr Pharoan
 Peter Porter
 Martha Schmidt
 Anna Smoot
 Bernadette Solounias
 Jennifer Yeager
 Tracey Young

Violas

Viktor Khodyko
 Principal
 Nicole Andanar
 Sydney Branch-Butts
 Kirsten Dorsey
 Maryam Khan
 George McNally
 Melissa Pileggi
 Arooj Safdar
 Heather Spotts
 Andrew Swingler

Violoncellos

Julia Dather
 Principal
 Elaine Bundy
 Michele Hermes
 Barbara Hill
 Domonique Hittner
 Evan Kazanjian
 *Joshua Klemm
 Kyle Richardson
 Alex Russell
 *Bryson Sales
 Mia Sanders
 Jill Smith

Basses

Brian Folus
 Principal
 Connor Alban
 Andrew Butts
 Gene Crocetti
 Matthew Miloszar
 Scott Nowaskey
 Beth Weed

Flutes

Doris Reinhardt
 Carol Thompson
 Marissa Ramsland
Piccolo

Oboes

Barbara Bair
 Cathy Zink
 Wendy Nesbitt
English Horn

Clarinets

Fiona Sparks
 Kelly Rhodes
 Ariel Foote
Bass Clarinet

Alto Saxophone

Avery Mendoza

Bassoons

Max Coleman
 George Greco
 Fionna Nastari

Horns

Ariyo Shahry
 Kayla Eidle
 Kelley Moorman
 Mike DeZearn

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 Austin Kopp
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Bel Air United Methodist Church Chancel Choir

David Tramontana, director

Anabel Barcena, Kristin Brought, Bonnie Burns, Bruce Burns, Nadya Carrico, Dan Davis, Deborah Englar, Ruth Flanders, Kathy Frawley, Dave Greenwood, Gayle Greenwood, Jean Henderson, Dessie Johnson, Robin Johnson, Daniel Kirkland, Nicholas Kirkland, Peg Nichols, Bob Sacco, Barb Sedlak, Diane Sengstacke, Lavonne Taylor

Edgewood High School Chamber Choir

Tristan Donica, director

Alissa Arnold, Alyssa Brandon, Preston Cottingham, Madeline Donica, Tristan Donica, Zoey Gossman, Joram Jensen, Audrey Johnson, Evey Kalka, Sarah Kozan, Natalie Krimm, Jasmine Moreno, Princewill Morris-Adiegwu, Melody Morrison, Malachi Moss, Anneliese Perrault, Ryan Rogers, Michael Starnes, Nathan Thwaites, James Tyler, Elizabeth Wolbert, Katelyn Tsai, Allison Walters

Havre de Grace High School Chamber Singers

David Tramontana, director

Jadon Ayala, Emily Benner, Keon Bowser, Morgan Coit, DeKlon Crothers, Alivia Dunlap, Carsen Fannon, Tahirah Fowler, Eleeah Hall, Tiara Johnson, Aiden Macejak, Ellie Miller, Wesley Miller, Abigail Morris, Elyse Muller, Vincent Nnadi, Collins Onoh, Brooklyn Pruitt, Rabhya Sharma, Han Tran, Harmony West, Taran Yaeger



Program Notes

Written by Brian Folus

The Old Line — Michael Fili

Composed in 2025 by Michael Fili for brass and percussion, *The Old Line* was written in celebration of the U.S. Semiquincentennial (250th anniversary) this year. The title refers to the nickname George Washington gave to a Continental Army regiment from Maryland when they heroically held off the British and saved the Americans from destruction in the Battle of Long Island – the first major battle of the Revolutionary War – on August 27, 1776.

The composer writes: the “opening motive recalls that of [Aaron] Copland’s *Fanfare for the Common Man*, a reference intended to commemorate the common person’s contribution to the U.S. independence movement and remind modern Americans of the responsibility we have inherited to continue to fight for freedom, unity, and equity for all who call this great nation home 250 years after its founding.”

Adagio for Strings — Samuel Barber

Samuel Barber, who grew up in West Chester, PA, was a pianist, conductor, and composer. The piece was originally composed in 1936 as the slow movement of his String Quartet, Opus 11. At the request of conductor Arturo Toscanini, Barber arranged the movement for string orchestra. That version premiered on November 5, 1938 with Toscanini conducting the NBC Symphony Orchestra from Studio 8H at 30 Rockefeller Plaza in New York City, which is now home to *Saturday Night Live*.

The *Adagio* is famously described as the “saddest music ever written,” due to its long, emotional buildup to a powerful climax followed by a quiet, resigned ending. With its immense, cathartic sorrow, it became a staple at national moments of mourning, including the funerals of FDR and JFK as well as in the days following September 11.

Cuban Overture (Rumba) — George Gershwin

George Gershwin’s two-week holiday in Havana, immersed in Cuban popular music, inspired this lively and tantalizing overture composed in 1932. The overture contains a variety of Caribbean rhythms and native percussion and quotes two popular songs of the day, “Échale Salsita” and “La Paloma.” The work, originally titled *Rumba*, premiered on August 16, 1932, at the now-demolished Lewisohn Stadium in Harlem, to an audience of over 17,000 with 5,000 more waiting at the gates to hear the all-Gershwin concert presented by the New York Philharmonic. Three months after this successful concert, the work was renamed *Cuban Overture* and has been a staple of orchestral repertoire since.



Program Notes, continued

“Zion’s Walls” — Aaron Copland

This work by the great American composer Aaron Copland has been arranged for chorus and wind band by Glenn Koponen. “Zion’s Walls” is a revivalist song with words and music accredited to John G. McCurry. Copland used this song both in his opera *The Tender Land* and as the second song in *Old American Songs*, Set 2 (1952).

We welcome David Tramontana to the podium to conduct the community choir and the SSO woodwind and brass sections.

***There’s a Stirrin’ in the Water* — Jesse Ayers and Charles Myricks, Jr.**

This work for chorus, orchestra and baritone soloist is a medley of great American Spirituals. The piece was composed by Jesse Ayers and Charles Myricks, Jr. in 2016, commissioned by the Akron Symphony Orchestra (Christopher Wilkins, music director). The spirituals included are: “Steal Away,” “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child,” “Deep River,” “God’s Gonna Set This World on Fire,” “I am Determined to Walk with Jesus,” and “Ain’t Got Time to Die.”

In addition to the community choir led by David Tramontana, the SSO welcomes baritone Kellen Johnson for today’s performance.

***Rhapsody in Blue* — George Gershwin**

Rhapsody in Blue, also composed by George Gershwin, was commissioned by jazz band leader Paul Whiteman for the concert “An Experiment in Modern Music” on February 12, 1924 at Aeolian Hall in New York City and featured Gershwin at the piano plus Whiteman’s Palais Royal Orchestra. Gershwin’s blending of classical and jazz idioms was a novel innovation at the time. Subsequent scoring by Ferde Grofé for pit orchestra (1926) and symphonic orchestra (1942) that is performed today have also become favorites for piano soloists worldwide.

The SSO welcomes our friend Washington García to our stage. He is well-known in Maryland, having attended Peabody and performed a Mozart piano concerto with the SSO in the past.

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Violin, Viola, Flute, Clarinet, Alto Saxophone,
Trumpet, Trombone, Percussion Kits

501(c)3 providing 250+ musical instruments to HCPS
students in need.

All financial donations go directly towards instrument
repairs and supplies such as rosin, valve oil, and reeds

**Thank you for your generosity and for
supporting music education!**





Adopt a Percussion Instrument

Looking for a unique way to support the SSO? Adopt a percussion instrument and your support will directly impact our percussion section for years to come.

SSO Wish List:

Symphonic Woodblock: \$25

2 sets Symphonic Medium Glockenspiel Mallets: \$40 each

2 sets Symphonic Glockenspiel Mallets, Brass: \$45 each

2 sets Marimba Mallets, Soft: \$75 each

2 sets Marimba Mallets, Medium: \$75 each

Snare Drum Case: \$115

Drum Set with Cases and Cymbals: \$2,000

1-Octave Crotales with stand: \$2,200

Symphonic 3.5 Octave Glockenspiel with stand: \$4,500

A Very Special Thank You to Those Who Have Donated!

Castanet Machine and Timpani Key

donated by Ray and Joy Richardson

Yamaha Keyboard, in memory of Judith A. Petzold

donated by her children

Percussion Utility Case, in loving memory of Bryan James Michalak

donated by Robert & Glenda Michalak

Four Tom Toms (concert), Suspended Cymbals and Stands, and Musser Chimes

donated by the Agape Fund of InFaith Community Foundation

Bell Tree, in memory of Ed Shannahan

donated by SSO Cellists: Laura Ruth, Carol Scanlan, Michele Martin, Barb Hill, Elaine Bundy, Dr. Fred Gehris, and Arash Shahry

19" Crash Cymbals

donated by Mary Ellen and William Bates

Wood Blocks

donated by Dr. Fred Gehris

Mallets for Bongos, Bells, Vibraphones; Snare Drum Case

donated by Sally Bair

Field Drum, in loving memory of Ken Hanlon

donated by Nancy Varelli Shuman

Temple Blocks and Conga Drum, in memory of Nick and Virginia Izzo

donated by their children, Suzanne Izzo Floyd, Nicolene Izzo Polyak, and Michele Izzo Croft



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