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SEPTEMBER 24, 2023



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# FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to a very special opening concert of AFCM's 76th season! We are thrilled to kick off another year of exciting musical experiences and cultural exploration. This season, we have curated a diverse repertoire that spans eras and genres, and features some wonderful newly commissioned works, like the one you will hear today from George Tsontakis.

In today's fast-paced world and often disconnected world, chamber music stands as a testament to human expression, fostering connections that transcend boundaries. Our mission has always been to cultivate an environment where artists can share their passion, creativity, and stories through the intimate dialogue of chamber music.

None of this would be possible without the unwavering support of our dedicated patrons, volunteers, and community partners. Your belief in our vision and commitment to the arts have been instrumental in helping AFCM grow and evolve over the years. Thank you for your continued support!

As we embark on another season of musical exploration together, I invite you to immerse yourself in the melodies, harmonies, and stories shaping these musical masterpieces, and let yourself revel in the profound emotions that chamber music evokes.

We look forward to sharing another unforgettable season of music with you as we continue to join together in a continued celebration of chamber music!

**KAETY BYERLEY**  
*Board member, AFCM*



# ACCORDO

## SEPTEMBER 24, 2023 | 3:00 PM

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Steven Copes  
*violin*



Rebecca Albers  
*viola*



Anthony Ross  
*cello*



Sang-Yoon Kim  
*clarinet*



Randy Hodgkinson  
*piano*

### ACCORDO SPECIAL CONCERT

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Accordo is a string ensemble composed of present and former principal string players of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and Minnesota Orchestra. The group has been named “Best Chamber Ensemble” by the Minneapolis Star Tribune and “the dream team of chamber music” by Minnesota Monthly. Accordo has performed since 2008 to full halls and enthusiastic audiences.

Violinist **Steven Copes** leads a diverse and enthusiastic musical life as soloist, chamber musician and orchestral leader. He joined the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra as Concertmaster in 1998, and since then has led the SPCO from the first chair in many highly acclaimed, eclectic programs. He appears frequently as soloist with the SPCO. In addition, he has performed as soloist with the Philharmonia Orchestra of London, the Colorado Symphony, Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra in Boston, the Sao Paulo State Symphony, the Orlando Philharmonic, The Knights, and the Mexico City Philharmonic.

**Rebecca Albers** joined the Minnesota Orchestra as assistant principal viola in 2010 and won the position of principal viola in 2017. She has performed throughout the United States, Asia and Europe, making her New York debut at Lincoln Center, performing the New York premiere of Samuel Adler’s Viola Concerto with the Juilliard Orchestra. An avid chamber musician, she performs often at such festivals as the Marlboro Music Festival, Seattle Chamber Music Society Summer and Winter Festivals, and Rome Chamber Music Festival.

Dynamic leader of the Minnesota Orchestra’s cello section since 1991, prize-winning cellist **Anthony Ross** has appeared as soloist many times with the Orchestra, performing all the standard cello concertos under Osmo Vänskä, Edo de Waart and Eiji Oue. Prior to assuming the principal role in Minnesota, Ross performed for four years as principal cello of the Rochester Philharmonic under David Zinman.



# SPECIAL CONCERT

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## ACCORDO

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South Korean clarinetist **Sang Yoon Kim** is the principal clarinet of The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. Sang Yoon is the top prize winner of the 67th Prague Spring International Music Competition 2015. His career highlights include his appearance as a soloist with the BBC Symphony Orchestra under the baton of their Music Director, Sakari Oramo, at the Prague Spring International Music Festival. Moreover, he is a laureate of multiple international competitions, including the International Clarinet Competition in Ghent, first prize at the UNISA International Flute and Clarinet Competition in 2014, and first prize from the famous Jacques Lancelot International Clarinet Competition in 2012. As a passionate teacher, he was appointed assistant professor at the University of Minnesota in 2022.

Pianist **Randall Hodgkinson**, Grand Prize winner of the International American Music Competition sponsored by Carnegie Hall and the Rockefeller Foundation, has performed with orchestras in Atlanta, Philadelphia, Buffalo, Boston, Cleveland and abroad in Italy and Iceland. He is an artist member of the Boston Chamber Music Society, and he performs the four-hand and two-piano repertoire with his wife, Leslie Amper. Mr. Hodgkinson's festival appearances include Blue Hill (Maine), BargeMusic, Chestnut Hill Concerts (Madison, Connecticut), Seattle Chamber Music Festival, and Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, and he has performed regularly in the Emmanuel Music Chamber Series. His recordings include solo works by Roger Sessions and Donald Martino for the New World label, chamber music with the Boston Chamber Music Society for Northeastern Records, and the Morton Gould Concerto with the Albany Symphony for Albany Records. Mr. Hodgkinson is currently on the faculty of the New England Conservatory and the Longy School of Music of Bard College.

## PROGRAM

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### CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862–1918)

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*Première Rhapsodie for Clarinet and Piano*

### GEORGE TSONTAKIS (b. 1951)

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*Portraits of El Greco, Book II*

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## INTERMISSION

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### WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)

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*Piano Quartet in E-flat Major, K. 493*

Allegro  
Larghetto  
Allegretto

# PROGRAM NOTES

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As a new member of the Conseil supérieur of the Paris Conservatoire, **CLAUDE DEBUSSY** was required to adjudicate the Conservatoire's examinations in performance and composition among his other responsibilities. In 1910, Debussy served on the clarinet jury and was asked to write a "Solo de Concours" or competition solo required to be performed by the students for their annual exams. The Première Rhapsodie was the result. Debussy was admittedly not looking forward to sitting through the performances of a handful of student clarinetists attempting this difficult new work one after another. The difficulty was exacerbated by the objective to assess the proficiency of these young performers by providing the music to rehearse and commit to memory only one month before the evaluations. But in the end, he was highly satisfied. In a letter to his publisher, Jacques Durand, he wrote, "The clarinet competitions went extremely well, and, to judge by the expressions on the faces of my colleagues, the Rhapsodie was a success."

The Première Rhapsodie was given a special dedication to Prospère Mimart (1859-1928), the Paris Conservatoire's clarinet professor from 1904 to 1918. Mimart was also the performer for the concert premiere on January 16, 1911.

The structure of the Première Rhapsodie is inherently free-form, as the name suggests. In a rapid and exhilarating performance lasting just over seven minutes, the piece places extensive demands on the musician. Challenges encompass various technical hurdles, stamina, breath management, and the fine control of tone, pitch, and expression.

Initially designed for a competition setting, the Première Rhapsodie quickly gained recognition as a masterful solo piece for the clarinet, making its way into concert stage repertoires. Debussy's satisfaction with this composition led him to orchestrate the piano part in 1911, allowing the piece to be performed with a full orchestra. This orchestrated version became a cherished addition to the clarinet and orchestra repertoire. Since then, it has established itself as one of the most performed of all the works in the accompanied solo clarinet repertoire. It is an exciting work for audiences and poses immense technical and expressive challenges for the performer.

"The title "Première" (first) Rhapsodie implies that Debussy may have considered composing a second work, but unfortunately for us, this never materialized."

**AMERICAN COMPOSER GEORGE TSONTAKIS** has received two of classical music's most prestigious accolades: the 2005 International Grawemeyer Award for his Second Violin Concerto and the 2007 Ives Living Award, granted by the American Academy. Tsontakis's mentors include Roger Sessions at Juilliard and Franco Donatoni in Rome. Of Cretan descent, Tsontakis has emerged as a significant voice in Greek music, with his compositions gaining recognition and performances across Europe each season.

For four decades Tsontakis held the position of Composer-in-Residence at the Aspen Music Festival, where he was also the founding director of the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble. He currently holds the title of Distinguished Composer-in-Residence at the Bard College Conservatory. Among his recent premieres are commissioned works for Maverick Concerts, London's Mobius Ensemble, and compositions for orchestras, including the Boston Symphony, Albany Symphony, and St. Paul Chamber Orchestra.

In 2014, Tsontakis composed "Portraits by El Greco, Book I" to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the passing of the Greek artist Doménikos Theotokópoulos, known as "El Greco." This piece, arranged for piano quartet with an additional clarinet, consists of six movements, each inspired by an El Greco painting of religious nature. Due to the composition's success, Tsontakis was compelled to create Book II, composed in 2021 for clarinet quintet.

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Book II begins with an introductory bridge between the two works. Each of the following eight movements represents a specific El Greco painting. During each movement the associated painting will be displayed: a portrayal of Mary Magdalen's redemption; St. Francis's humility; the trials of Laocoon; the passion of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane; St. Sebastian's martyrdom; St. Peter's remorse; the universally understood Resurrection; and the serene image of the Virgin Mary's entry into heaven. The listener's experience of Tsontakis's music is a subjective journey that invites exploration of how the compositions capture the essence of each painting. Paying attention to aspects such as tempo, melody, harmony, and the nuanced use of dissonance and consonance may enrich the connection to the imagery. These auditory elements reflect the emotive qualities of the paintings, demonstrating how they profoundly influenced Tsontakis's musical expression. Allow the music to guide your imagination, linking specific sounds to the visual art, and experience the deep resonance between these two art forms.

Notes by Accordo

**THE PIANO UNDERWENT** continuous transformation during the eighteenth century. After its hammer action had been perfected, the player could at last achieve an even tone and a variety of dynamic shadings. However, the instrument was still in a transitional phase of development; the wooden- framed Walter piano owned by Mozart offered rapid and crisp note production but a narrow sonic range that limited the full expression of his ideas. Soon after Mozart's death, piano manufacturers began to experiment successfully with iron frames that allowed for heavier strings, resulting in greater sonority. Lacking this technical advance, Mozart combined the piano with other instruments to reinforce and amplify his chamber concepts.

In 1785 Mozart contracted with his friend and publisher Franz Anton Hoffmeister to write three piano quartets, a new genre that promised to be marketable to the many Viennese amateur pianists. At that time the piano was not a full thematic partner in the ensemble; early chamber works most often used the keyboard to fill out harmonies supporting the string lines. Mozart's two completed piano quartets are breakthrough works in which the piano and the string group achieve equality. The piano score, so virtuosic that it on occasion resembles a concerto, is balanced by equally strong string lines to create a unified chamber work.

Unfortunately for Mozart, Hoffmeister assessed the first of the quartets as being too difficult for his clients, and he declined publication—but he did allow the cash-strapped Mozart to keep the money that had been advanced. For his next piano quartet, K. 493 (1786), he sought out a new venue—Artaria, who became his primary publisher.

K. 493 is cast in E-flat major, for Mozart a warm key that he favored for his more genial works. The exposition of the first movement introduces a profusion of lyrical themes. The main theme, distinguished by an ornamental turn, is first heard in the solo piano and immediately echoed by the violin. In the intricate development the strings explore the main theme as the piano provides harmonic background; its two sections are separated by a unison statement of this theme. All themes are briefly recapitulated, and the concise coda offers a fugal reworking of the main idea.

The *Larghetto* (A-flat major), in sonata form, develops a pensive melody through exchanges among the three strings and piano. The movement concludes with a serene coda. The *Allegretto finale*, in sonata rondo form, opens with a theme that has been described as “the purest, most childlike and godlike melody ever sung”; an energetic theme follows in the strings. The brilliant piano score demands virtuosity throughout.

Notes by Nancy Monsman

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# 2023-2024 SEASON

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Evening Series	Special Concert	Commissions
<b>Jerusalem Quartet</b> Wednesday, October 11, 2023 7:30 p.m.	<b>Accordo</b> Sunday, September 24, 2023 3:00 p.m.	<b>George Tsontakis</b> <i>Portraits of El Greco, Book II</i> Accordo Sunday, September 24, 2023 3:00 p.m. Arizona Premier
<b>Michael Stephen Brown, piano</b> Wednesday, November 8, 2023 7:30 p.m.	<b>Tucson Winter Chamber Music Festival</b>	<b>Leilehua Lanzilotti</b> <i>abupua'a</i> Argus Quartet January 17, 2024 Arizona Premier
<b>Isidore String Quartet</b> Wednesday, December 6, 2023 7:30 p.m.	<b>Winter Festival 2024</b> March 3–10, 2024  Peter Rejto, <i>Artistic Director</i>	<b>Pierre Jalbert</b> <i>Quintet for Clarinet and Strings</i> Dover Quartet March 3, 2024 World Premier
<b>Argus Quartet</b> Wednesday, January 17, 2024 7:30 p.m.	<b>Dover Quartet</b> Joel Link, <i>violin</i> Bryan Lee, <i>violin</i> Julianne Lee, <i>viola</i> Camden Shaw, <i>cello</i>	
<b>Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center</b> Wednesday, January 31, 2024 7:30 p.m.	Edward Arron, <i>cello</i> Jennifer Frautschi, <i>violin</i> Romie de Guise-Langlois, <i>clarinet</i>	
<b>Juilliard String Quartet</b> Wednesday, February 7, 2024 7:30 p.m.	Bernadette Harvey, <i>piano</i> Jeewon Park, <i>piano</i> Masumi Per Rostad, <i>viola</i> Randall Scarlata, <i>baritone</i> Axel Strauss, <i>violin</i>	
<b>Fauré Quartett</b> Wednesday, March 27, 2024 7:30 p.m.		
<b>PIANO &amp; FRIENDS</b>		<i>Tickets online or at the box office.</i>
<b>Alexander Malofeev, piano</b> Sunday, October 22, 2023 3:00 p.m.		<i>For program and artist information, please visit <a href="http://arizonachambermusic.org">arizonachambermusic.org</a>.</i>
<b>Nikki Chooi, violin</b> <b>Timothy Chooi, violin</b> Sunday, January 7, 2024 3:00 p.m.		<i>If you are interested in sponsoring a concert or a musician, please contact Cathy Anderson in the box office or at <a href="mailto:arizonachambermusic.org">arizonachambermusic.org</a>.</i>
<b>Steven Banks, saxophone</b> <b>Xak Bjerken, piano</b> Sunday, February 18, 2024 3:00 p.m.		<i>If you are interested in sponsoring a commissioned work, please contact Cathy Anderson at <a href="mailto:office@arizonachambermusic.org">office@arizonachambermusic.org</a></i>

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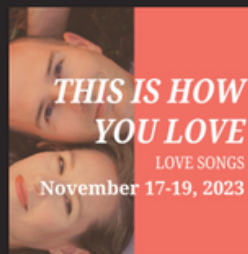
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*All's Fair in Love and War*

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November 2–19, 2023

**under  
milk wood**  
by Dylan Thomas  
January 11–28, 2024

**AN ILIAD**  
by Homer  
adapted by Lisa Peterson & Denis O'Hare  
Feb 22–March 10, 2024

**Love's Labor's Lost**  
by William Shakespeare  
Apr 18–May 5, 2024



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William Shakespeare's  
*A Midsummer Night's Dream*  
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**October 7 & 8** **Gershwin:** Overture to *Funny face*  
**Boyer:** *Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue*, with pianist Jeffrey Biegel  
**Rosauro:** Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra, with Dorothy Vanek  
Youth Concerto winner, Campbell Stewart (marimba)  
**Gershwin:** *Porgy and Bess* "A Symphonic Picture"  
arranged by Robert Russell Bennett

**November 11 & 12** **Lalo:** *Le roi d'Ys* Overture  
**Various:** Arias and duets from operas, with Renata Vari,  
Diana Peralta and Alonso Sicairos  
**Strauss:** *Serenade*, Op. 7  
**Tchaikovsky:** *Romeo and Juliet* Overture

**February 10 & 11** **Fernandez:** *Batuque* from *Reisado do Pastoreio*  
**Coleridge-Taylor:** Violin Concerto, Op. 80, with violinist Carissa Powe  
**Walker:** *Lyric for Strings*  
**Stravinsky:** Violin Concerto in D Major (movement 1), with  
Dorothy Vanek Youth Concerto winner, Rachel Gardner (violin)  
**Still:** *Symphony No. 1 (Afro-American Symphony)*

**March 16 & 17** **Asia:** *Gateways*  
**Dvořák:** Cello Concerto Op. 104, with cellist Zuill Bailey  
**Dvořák:** *Symphony No. 7* Op. 70

**April 27 & 28** *Guest conductor Giovanni Pompeo*  
**Verdi:** Overture to *I Vespri Siciliani*  
**Kalman:** Hudson Concerto, with pianist Alexander Frey  
**Rósa:** *Spellbound* Concerto, with pianist Alexander Frey  
**Sibelius:** *Symphony No. 5*, Op. 72

ADDITIONAL GRANT SUPPORT PROVIDED BY:



*Coming next from AFCM!*



WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11  
Jerusalem Quartet



SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22  
Alexander Malofeev,  
*piano*



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8  
Michael Stephen  
Brown, *piano*

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Digital Program



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