

# BANGOR SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

MASTERWORKS III

Past, Present, Future: Bach and Beyond



Sunday, January 28, 2024 @ 3:00 pm

COLLINS CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Lucas Richman, *Conductor*

Awadagin Pratt, *Piano*

Commission Partner:



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**Nathan SHIELDS**

(b. 1983)

*Peregrine* – WORLD PREMIERE – commissioned by the  
Ellis-Beauregard Foundation for the Bangor Symphony Orchestra

**Johann Sebastian BACH**

(1685–1750)

*Keyboard Concerto No. 4 in A major, BWV 1055*

I. Allegro

II. Larghetto

III. Allegro ma non tanto

Awadagin Pratt, PIANO

**Jessie MONTGOMERY**

(b. 1981)

*Rounds* (2022) – nominated for a 2024 GRAMMY Award

Awadagin Pratt, PIANO

INTERMISSION

**Felix MENDELSSOHN**

(1809–1847)

*Symphony No. 4 in A major, Op. 90, "Italian"*

I. Allegro vivace

II. Andante con moto

III. Con moto moderato

IV. Saltarello: Presto

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**Lucas Richman**  
Music Director  
& Conductor

GRAMMY award-winning conductor Lucas Richman has served as Music Director for the Bangor Symphony Orchestra since 2010 and held the position as Music Director for the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra from 2003–2015. Over the course of nearly four decades on the podium, he has garnered an international reputation for his graceful musical leadership in a diverse field of media. In concert halls, orchestral pits and recording studios around the world, Richman earns rave reviews for his artful collaborations with artists in both the classical and commercial music arenas.

He has appeared as guest conductor with numerous orchestras including the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Boston Pops, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Baltimore Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, New Jersey Symphony, Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra and Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Russian National Orchestra, the Oslo Philharmonic, the SWR Radio Orchestra of Kaiserslautern, the Iceland Symphony

Orchestra, the Zhejiang Symphony Orchestra, the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional and the Zagreb Philharmonic. Recent guest conducting highlights include programs with the Cleveland Orchestra, the Orlando Philharmonic and the Israel Camerata Orchestra Jerusalem.

In recent years, Mr. Richman has led performances with notable soloists in both the classical and pop worlds, ranging from Mstislav Rostropovich, Garrick Ohlsson, Lang Lang, Midori, Gil Shaham, Emanuel Ax, Yefim Bronfman and Frederica von Stade to James Taylor, Michael Jackson, Pat Boone, Michael Feinstein, Gloria Estefan, Matthew Morrison, Martin Short, Tony Randall, Victor Borge and Brian Wilson. His numerous collaborations with film composers as their conductor has yielded recorded scores for such films as the Academy Award-nominated *The Village* (with violinist, Hilary Hahn), *As Good As It Gets*, *Face/Off*, *Se7en*, *Breakdown*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *White Noise* and *Flatliners*; in 2010, John Williams invited him to lead the three-month national summer tour of *Star Wars in Concert*. Mr. Richman received a GRAMMY Award (2011) in the category of Best Classical Crossover Album for having conducted the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra on Christopher Tin's classical/world fusion album, *Calling All Dawns*.

Also an accomplished composer, Mr. Richman has had his music performed by over two hundred orchestras and ensembles across the United States. His new CD of solo piano works, *Lucas Richman: Variations*, is available for sale in the lobby and online. For more information, visit [www.lucasrichman.com](http://www.lucasrichman.com).

Experience today's performance online  
from Jan. 31 – Feb. 14 @ [watch.bangorsymphony.org](http://watch.bangorsymphony.org)

## MEET THE GUEST ARTIST

Among his generation of concert artists, pianist Awadagin Pratt is acclaimed for his musical insight and intensely involving performances in recital and with symphony orchestras.

Born in Pittsburgh, Awadagin Pratt began studying piano and violin at an early age. At the age of 16 he entered the University of Illinois, subsequently enrolling at the Peabody Conservatory of Music where he became the first student in the school's history to receive diplomas in three performance areas—piano, violin and conducting.

In 1992, Mr. Pratt won the Naumburg International Piano Competition and in 1994 was awarded an Avery Fisher Career Grant. His many orchestral performances include appearances with the New York Philharmonic, Minnesota Orchestra and the Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Atlanta, St. Louis, National and Detroit symphonies among others. Summer festival engagements include appearances at Ravinia, Blossom, Wolftrap, Caramoor, Aspen and the Hollywood Bowl.

As an experienced conductor, Mr. Pratt has conducted programs with the Toledo, New Mexico, Vancouver WA, Winston-Salem and Santa Fe symphonies, the Northwest Sinfonietta, the Concertante di Chicago and several orchestras in Japan. Mr. Pratt currently serves as the Music Director of the Miami Valley Symphony Orchestra in Ohio.

Through the Art of the Piano Foundation and inspired by a stanza from T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, Mr. Pratt commissioned seven composers—Jessie Montgomery, Alvin Singleton, Judd Greenstein, Tyshawn Sorey, Jonathan Bailey Holland, Paola Prestini and Peteris Vasks—to compose works for piano with ensembles. Mr. Pratt has or will have performed the Montgomery concerto with more than 30 US orchestras, including the Boston, Chicago, St. Louis, Atlanta, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Bangor and Milwaukee symphonies and The Minnesota Orchestra. All seven works were recorded in summer 2022 with the chamber orchestra *A Far Cry* for New Amsterdam Records.

In July 2023, Pratt joined the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music as a Professor of Piano. He was previously a Professor of Piano and Artist in Residence at the College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati for nineteen years.

Mr. Pratt's recordings for Angel/EMI include *A Long Way From Normal*, an all Beethoven Sonata CD, *Live From South Africa*, *Transformations* and an all Bach disc with the St. Lawrence String Quartet. His most recent recordings are the Brahms Sonatas for Cello and Piano with Zuill Bailey for Telarc and a recording of the music of Judith Lang Zaimont with the Harlem String Quartet.

Awadagin Pratt is a Yamaha artist. For more information, please visit [www.awadagin.com](http://www.awadagin.com).



Photo: Rob Davidson

### Awadagin Pratt Piano

## Peregrine

by Nathan Shields | Length: 15 minutes

**COMPOSER BIOGRAPHY** | Nathan Shields's music has been praised for its "elusive luminance" (*The Washington Post*) and as "affecting... alternately kinetic and reflective" (*The New York Times*). A Guggenheim Fellow and recipient of the Ellis-Beauregard Foundation's 2022 Composer Award, Shields has collaborated with the Jupiter and JACK String Quartets, Tanglewood Orchestra, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Mendelssohn Academy Orchestra, Bangor and Charlottesville Symphonies, New York New Music Ensemble, Music from Copland House, and the Horszowski Trio, among others. He has received commissions from Tanglewood, the Leipzig Gewandhaus, the Fromm Foundation, BMI, and Concert Artists Guild, as well as fellowships and awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Yaddo, Copland House, BMI, ASCAP, and the Presser Foundation. He teaches at St. John's College and the Brooklyn Institute for Social Research, and writes about music for the Baffler and other publications.

**COMPOSER PROGRAM NOTE BY NATHAN SHIELDS** | In *Teaching a Stone to Talk*, Annie Dillard describes the skull of a weasel, discovered with its jaws still fixed to the throat of the eagle that carried it off. "I think it would be well, and proper," she writes, "to grasp your one necessity and not let it go, to dangle from it limp wherever it takes you." Dillard draws on an old tradition that treats birds of prey, in their savagery and single-mindedness, as metaphors for the life of the spirit: in one of his poems, St. John of the Cross likens the soul to a falcon, stooping to seize divine love in its beak.

*Peregrine* is a reflection on this tradition. It is in part a portrait of America's wild places, particularly of Maine's Acadia National Park, where the peregrine falcon roosts. But the word *peregrine* also means *pilgrim* or *wanderer*, and the piece is also an exploration of the wild places in us. The music reflects this double meaning, alternating between animal ferocity and restless introspection. It begins raucously, full of shrill cries and the momentum of flight, which give way to a contemplative adagio led by the solo horn. The driving energy of the beginning returns, at first quietly then with growing force, leading to a reprise of the opening. After a last lull, as if gathering strength, the piece builds to an explosive close.

## Keyboard Concerto No. 4 in A major, BWV 1055

by Johann Sebastian Bach | Length: 14 minutes

In addition to his formidable skills as a composer, J.S. Bach was famous during his lifetime for his abilities as a performer. He often traveled throughout Germany, tuning and installing organs, and would use these opportunities to showcase his talent as an organist. He was also a virtuoso on the harpsichord, and was particularly renowned for his ability to improvise.

The concerto on today's program is one of nine keyboard concerti composed by Bach. In most cases, these concerti already existed for other instruments, but were adapted for harpsichord by Bach because he wanted to perform them at the Collegium Musicum concerts that took place at Zimmerman's Coffeehouse in Leipzig. Bach had become the director of the Collegium Musicum in 1729, six years after his arrival in Leipzig. Founded by composer Georg Telemann, this ensemble consisted of university and professional musicians. Bach held this post for over a decade, while also holding a teaching position at the Thomasschule and directing music at three churches in Leipzig: the Thomaskirche, Nikolaikirche and Paulinerkirche (in addition to his aforementioned frequent travels to service and perform on pipe organs). His performances at the coffeehouse were the closest that Bach ever came to giving public concerts, and it can be said that he created the keyboard concerto, bringing the harpsichord out of the background as an accompanying instrument and placing it in the spotlight as a featured solo instrument.

Bach's joyful *Keyboard Concerto in A major* was composed in 1738, but the first and last movements were most likely taken from a previous version of this concerto for the oboe d'amore. Bach added new material, such as the sparkling harpsichord arpeggios in the opening movement and the virtuosic passagework in the finale. The lilting, hauntingly beautiful middle movement is a Larghetto in 12/8 time.

## Rounds

by **Jessie Montgomery** | Length: 15 minutes

Hailing from Manhattan's Lower East Side, Jessie Montgomery (b. 1981) received early instruction in violin and composition at the Third Street Music School Settlement, which was founded in 1894 and is the longest-running community music school in the U.S. The daughter of a musician and theatre artist, Montgomery's parents brought her to rallies, performances and parties on the Lower East Side when she was growing up. These experiences inform her perspective as a composer, music educator and advocate. Montgomery received a bachelor's degree in violin performance from the Juilliard School, and a master's degree in composition for film and multimedia from New York University. In 2021, she became the Mead Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Since 1999, she has been affiliated with The Sphinx Organization, which supports young African-American and Latinx string players, and has been awarded the Sphinx Medal of Excellence, their highest honor. She has been selected by the New York Philharmonic to be one of the featured composers for *Project 19*, which commemorates the centennial of the ratification of the 19th amendment, granting equal voting rights to women in the United States. Montgomery's extensive list of compositions includes works for chamber ensemble and orchestra, as well as choral and vocal works.

*Rounds* was commissioned for today's soloist, pianist Awadagin Pratt, by the Art of the Piano Foundation and co-commissioned by nine orchestras from across the U.S. The premiere took place on March 27, 2022, with Pratt at the keyboard and John Morris Russell conducting the Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina.

Montgomery shares this information about *Rounds* on her website, [jessiemontgomery.com](http://jessiemontgomery.com): "*Rounds* for solo piano and string orchestra is inspired by the imagery and themes from T.S. Eliot's epic poem, *Four Quartets*. Early in the first poem, *Burnt Norton*, we find these evocative lines:

*At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;  
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,  
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,  
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,  
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,  
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.*

In addition to this inspiration, while working on the piece, I became fascinated by fractals (infinite patterns found in nature that are self-similar across different scales) and also delved into the work of contemporary biologist and philosopher Andreas Weber, who writes about the interdependency of all beings. Weber explores how every living organism has a rhythm that interacts and impacts with all of the living things around it and results in a multitude of outcomes.

Structurally, with these concepts in mind, I set the form of the work as a rondo, within a rondo, within a rondo. The five major sections are a rondo; section "A" is also a rondo in itself; and the cadenza—which is partially improvised by the soloist—breaks the pattern, yet, contains within it, the overall form of the work."

## Symphony No. 4 in A major, Op. 90, “Italian”

by Felix Mendelssohn | Length: 27 minutes

The son of a wealthy banker and grandson of a prominent German philosopher, Felix Mendelssohn grew up on an estate in Berlin. He and his siblings (including Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel, a gifted musician in her own right) received a first-rate education at home, with highly qualified tutors in music, art and literature. Mendelssohn flourished in this environment, making his public debut as a concert pianist at age nine, composing his first published work, a string quartet, at age thirteen, and his first symphony at age fifteen. In addition, he was a gifted painter, poet and athlete.

In 1830, Mendelssohn traveled to Italy for the first time, spending time in Venice, Florence, Rome, Naples, Genoa and Milan. The twenty-one-year-old composer thoroughly enjoyed his stay, writing that “the whole country had such a festive air that I felt as if I were a young prince making his entry.” In a letter to Fanny, he wrote, “I have once more begun to compose with fresh vigor, and the Italian symphony makes rapid progress; it will be the happiest piece I have ever written, especially the last movement.” Other events drew the composer away from the symphony until 1832, when he received a commission from the Philharmonic Society of London for a new work. He quickly completed his earlier sketches of the Italian symphony between mid-January and March 13, 1833, and conducted the first performance with the Philharmonic Society of London on May 13, 1833. After the concert, his friend Ignaz Moscheles, who served on the board of the orchestra and was a gifted composer and pianist in his own right, wrote in his diary, “Mendelssohn was the outstanding success of the concert; he conducted his magnificent *A major Symphony* and received rapturous applause.” Curiously, Mendelssohn was not pleased with the symphony, and set about making revisions after the premiere. He never completed these revisions, but refused to publish the symphony and never conducted it again. The symphony was finally published in its original form in 1851, four years after Mendelssohn’s untimely death at age thirty-eight.

Surely, no other opening to a symphony sparkles more brightly than this one, described by musicologist R. Larry Todd as “a burst of Mediterranean sunlight”, and by author Eduard Jacob as “blue sky in A major”. Music critic and author Michael Steinberg states that “The first movement is music of architectural genius and the highest of high spirits,” and program annotator and conductor Dr. William E. Runyan writes, “The first movement instantaneously sets the mood; if any music may be said to be joyous, this is it!” The soaring opening theme is played over driving, repeated notes in the woodwinds; the entire movement is brimming with boundless, rhythmic energy.

In contrast to the opening movement, the melancholy second movement is said to have been inspired by Mendelssohn’s observation of a somber processional of pilgrims in Rome. As Eduard Jacob writes, “The mood is penitential; we sense the weary steps of the pilgrims along the stony road.” The movement concludes quietly, and the processional slowly disappears in the distance. A refined and gentle minuet and trio follows, featuring the horns and bassoons in the trio section.

The finale is in a minor key, which is highly unusual for a symphony that opens with a movement in a major key. Mendelssohn defined this finale as a *saltarello*, a traditional, energetic Italian dance that involves a great deal of jumping and leaping. One also hears elements of a *tarantella*, another traditional Italian dance that was danced (as described in folklore) to sweat out the venom from a tarantula bite. Instead of the usual recapitulation, Mendelssohn deftly juxtaposes the two dances over a sustained pedal point. The music gradually becomes hushed, but concludes emphatically with fortissimo chords, bringing this masterpiece to a rousing and exuberant conclusion.

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