

**PYGMALION & SINFONIA DA CAMERA**

present

# **THE CREATION OF THE WORLD**

**42nd Season 2025/26**

Saturday • September 20 • 2025

William M. Staerkel Planetarium



# PROGRAM

## **Benjamin Britten: *Sinfonietta, Op. 1***

1. *Poco presto ed agitato*
2. *Variations, andante lento*
3. *Tarantella [attacca]*

## **Stephen Andrew Taylor: *Orbital* \* (world premiere)**

## **Darius Milhaud: *La création du monde* †**

1. *Ouverture (Overture)*
2. *Le chaos avant la création (The chaos before the creation)*
3. *Le naissance de la flore et de la faune (The birth of the flora and the fauna)*
4. *Le naissance de l'homme et la femme (The birth of the man and the woman)*
5. *Le désir (The desire)*
6. *Le printemps ou l'apaisement (The spring)*

# ARTISTIC DIRECTION & DESIGN

**Ian Hobson**, Music Director & Conductor

**\*Stephen Andrew Taylor**, Conductor

**Waylena McCully**, Producer

**†Jake Pinholster**, Media Designer

**†Nicholas Taboni**, Assistant Media Designer

# SINFONIA DA CAMERA ADMINISTRATION

**Elizabeth Churchya**, Executive Director

**Wesley Boehm**, Orchestra Librarian & Operations Assistant

**Luke Brann**, Stage Manager

# NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

## **Benjamin Britten – *Sinfonietta*, Op. 1 (1932, rev. 1936)**

Benjamin Britten was only 18 years old and a student at the Royal College of Music when he composed his *Sinfonietta*, Op. 1. Though youthful, the work already displays the hallmarks of Britten's mature style: precision of craft, striking clarity of texture, and a distinctive sense of drama. The score was dedicated to his teacher Frank Bridge, whose influence can be heard in the work's taut structure and harmonic daring. It is a work of brilliant beginnings, perfectly suited to launch this evening's journey of sound and vision.

Scored for ten instruments in its original version, the *Sinfonietta* unfolds in three movements. The bold opening *Poco presto ed agitato* sets the tone with incisive rhythms and sharply profiled motifs that build an atmosphere of restless momentum. The slow movement, *Variations*, offers a more introspective counterbalance, spinning a series of inventive transformations from a simple theme and showcasing Britten's gift for expressive lyricism. The finale, marked *Tarantella*, drives forward with exhilarating energy, its propulsive rhythms and sparkling interplay between instruments demanding virtuosity from every player. (Elizabeth Churchya)

## **Stephen Andrew Taylor – *Orbital* (2025)**

*Orbital* is inspired by Samantha Harvey's novel of the same name, which depicts a day in the life of six astronauts aboard the International Space Station. As they circle the Earth (about once every 90 minutes), their orbit brings them near both poles, ascending and descending over all the Earth's continents. For me, these curving shapes evoke rising and falling musical figures, both in lightning-fast passages and the overall shape of the piece.

One of the striking things about the novel is that it ends in the astronauts' night, with all six asleep. We read about their dreams, while their ship keeps circling up and down like a yoyo. I've tried to capture this musically, with the blaze of sunrise returning at the close. *Orbital* is dedicated with gratitude to Ian Hobson and the wonderful musicians of Sinfonia da Camera. (Stephen Andrew Taylor)

## **Darius Milhaud – *La création du monde*, Op. 81 (1923)**

This ambitious work was born from a heady cultural moment in 1920s Paris, when artists and audiences were captivated by the sounds of jazz newly arrived from America. Milhaud, who had encountered jazz firsthand during a visit to Harlem in 1922, was deeply impressed by its rhythmic vitality, improvisatory flair, and blues-inflected harmonies. He soon incorporated these idioms into his own compositions, blending them with his distinctive voice as a member of the progressive French circle known as *Les Six*. (continued on next page)



# NOTE ON THE PROGRAM

## ***La création du monde, Op. 81 (continued)***

Commissioned by the Ballets Suédois and choreographed by Jean Börlin, *La création du monde* is a ballet based on African genesis myths. The scenario, written by Blaise Cendrars, depicts the birth of the world and the emergence of living beings. To capture this primordial energy, Milhaud scored the piece for a chamber ensemble modeled on a jazz band, prominently featuring alto saxophone and ample percussion. As stated by Milhaud himself, "this is a work making wholesale use of the jazz style to convey a purely classical feeling."

Musically, the work exemplifies Milhaud's use of polytonality—the simultaneous sounding of different key centers—woven together with syncopated rhythms and jazz-inspired motifs. The opening, with its bluesy subject, immediately situates the listener in a new sound world where classical counterpoint collides with jazz improvisation. Over the course of six continuous sections, the music evokes both the turbulence and the wonder of creation: pulsing dances, lush harmonic colors, and moments of lyrical repose ultimately give way to a radiant conclusion that affirms the vitality of life before offering a tender goodbye from the saxophone.

Nearly a century after its premiere, *La création du monde* remains a landmark chamber work. Its bold fusion of myth, modernism, and jazz idioms makes it an ideal centerpiece for this audiovisual concert in the immersive setting of the planetarium, where science, story, and sound combine to reimagine the origins of the universe. (Elizabeth Churchya)



# ORCHESTRA PERSONNEL

## **VIOLIN I**

Michael Barta, *Concertmaster*

## **VIOLIN II**

Alfred Abel, *Principal*

## **VIOLA**

Csaba Erdélyi, *Principal*

## **CELLO**

Jun Lee, *Principal*

## **DOUBLE BASS**

David Burray, *Principal*

## **FLUTE**

Jonathan Keeble, *Principal*  
Rebecca Johnson

## **OBOE**

Wesley Boehm, *Acting Principal*

## **CLARINET**

Gary June, *Acting Principal*  
Solomon Baer

## **BASS CLARINET**

Gary June, *Principal*

## **ALTO SAXOPHONE**

Nicki Roman, *Principal*

## **BASSOON**

Ben Roidl-Ward, *Principal*

## **FRENCH HORN**

Bernhard Scully, *Principal*

## **TRUMPET**

Charles Daval, *Principal*  
Joshua Dolney

## **TROMBONE**

James Pugh, *Principal*

## **KEYBOARD**

Junhong Jiang, *Principal*

## **TIMPANI**

William Moersch, *Principal*

## **PERCUSSION**

Ricardo Flores, *Principal*

# ABOUT SINFONIA DA CAMERA

In residence at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, this professional chamber orchestra is led by world-renowned pianist, conductor, and educator, Maestro Ian Hobson. Sinfonia da Camera is comprised of University of Illinois faculty, staff, and students, as well as distinguished regional and national freelance musicians. Founded in 1984, Sinfonia has welcomed world-class soloists, commissioned new works, and presented beloved orchestra favorites and hidden gems to local audiences for 40 years.

In its debut season, Sinfonia released an acclaimed recording of French Piano Concerti with music director Ian Hobson conducting from the keyboard; it was the subject of a 90-minute Public Television special. Since that time, Sinfonia has performed over 1,000 musical works featuring more than 150 local and guest artists. Through Maestro Hobson's commitment to excellence in all of the orchestra's endeavors - special projects, recordings, tours, and concerts for the hometown crowd at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts - Sinfonia has achieved national and international recognition.

Sinfonia has been featured on over a dozen recordings and has several projects in the works. In 2011, the Albany label released a Sinfonia recording on another American composer, Willian Schuman, during his centenary year. A live recording of Sinfonia da Camera's October 6, 2012 concert featuring music by Pulitzer Prize-Winning composer George Walker was recently released on Albany Records. The fourth and final volume of the Ignaz Moscheles cycle was released in 2012. The previous volumes were reviewed by American Record Guide: "Hobson, whose elegant phrasing, remarkable ear for color, and miraculous ability to evenly sustain the most difficult runs - each like a string of pearls - are simply a joy to hear" and "[The concerti] seem tailor-made for Hobson's great panache and free-wheeling style." Ten recordings by Sinfonia da Camera for the Zephyr label have been released to rave reviews at home and abroad.

To learn more about the orchestra, Maestro Hobson, the musicians, administration, and Advisory board visit our website at [\*\*www.sinfonia.illinois.edu\*\*](http://www.sinfonia.illinois.edu).