



APPALACHIAN SPRING

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, MARCH 6 & 7, AT 8 PM

NASHVILLE SYMPHONY

GIANCARLO GUERRERO, *conductor*

PAUL JENKINS, *trombone*

DEREK HAWKES, *trombone*

STEVEN BROWN, *bass trombone*

GILBERT LONG, *tuba*

ALAN HOVHANESS

**Symphony No. 2, "Mysterious
Mountain" – 16 minutes**

I. Andante con moto

II. Double Fugue: Moderato
maestoso – Allegro vivo

III. Andante espressivo: Con moto

HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS

Bachianas brasileiras No. 2 – 21 minutes

Preludio (O canto do capadocio)

Aria (O canto da nossa terra)

Dansa (Lembrança do Sertão)

Toccata (O trenzinho do caipira)

– INTERMISSION –

JENNIFER HIGDON

**Low Brass Concerto – LIVE RECORDING
18 minutes**

Paul Jenkins, trombone

Derek Hawkes, trombone

Steven Brown, bass trombone

Gilbert Long, tuba

AARON COPLAND

Suite from Appalachian Spring – 24 minutes

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*This concert will last one hour and 50 minutes,
including a 20-minute intermission.*

*This concert will be recorded live for future
release and future broadcast. Please keep
noise to a minimum to ensure the
highest-quality recording.*

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Jennifer Higdon returns to the Nashville Symphony with one of her latest concertos. The composer notes that she aimed to reflect “the qualities of majesty, grace and power” of which low brass are capable. Higdon continues to adapt the tradition of American orchestral music to a contemporary sensibility. During the years of the Great Depression and World War II, Aaron Copland similarly sought to speak to audiences of his time. Copland’s contemporary Alan Hovhaness took a different path toward the same goal, making his breakthrough with his stirring *Mysterious Mountain*. All of these composers contributed facets to “the American sound” that is still being reshaped today. In Latin America, Heitor Villa-Lobos fused the music of the past with the rhythms, melodies and timbres of his native Brazil.

ALAN HOVHANESS

Symphony No. 2, “Mysterious Mountain”

Born on March 8, 1911, in
Somerville, Massachusetts

Died on June 21, 2000,
in Seattle, Washington

Composed:
1955

Estimated
length:
16 minutes



First performance:
October 31, 1955, with
Leopold Stokowski conducting
the Houston Symphony

**First Nashville Symphony
performance:**
January 12 & 13, 1959, with
music director Guy Taylor

References to mountains abound in the titles Alan Hovhaness gave to his astoundingly prolific output of symphonies. Along with *Mysterious Mountain*, his best known piece, they include *Three Journeys to a Holy Mountain*, *Cold Mountain* and more. And, as those names suggest, both nature and spiritual reflection were ongoing preoccupations for this composer. “Mountains are symbols, like pyramids of man’s attempt to know God,” he once observed.

Born in New England to an American mother and an Armenian father who was an immigrant from Turkey, Hovhaness later dropped the family name (Chakmakjian) and in its place used his middle name — the Armenian equivalent of “John.” He was a prodigy who became fascinated with both music and astronomy and started to compose at age 4.

Hovhaness obtained a scholarship to study

at the newly established Tanglewood Center, summer home of the Boston Symphony, in 1942. Aaron Copland and Leonard Bernstein, who were both taking part in the composer seminar he joined, were unimpressed by his music. Their disparaging attitudes left a scar, and Hovhaness burned a vast amount of his early scores. He was persuaded to explore his Armenian heritage and also absorbed influences from throughout Asia.

Despite his negative experience at Tanglewood, Hovhaness found encouragement from figures like the choreographer and dancer Martha Graham, who would soon create *Appalachian Spring* with Copland. Later, Hovhaness wrote several ballet scores for Graham’s company. One of his most powerful champions was the conductor Leopold Stokowski, to whom Hovhaness was introduced by the Armenian-American writer William Saroyan. In 1942, Stokowski gave the American premiere

of the composer's Symphony No. 1 "Exile," which commemorates the Armenian genocide.

In the following decade, Stokowski commissioned a new work, which would become *Mysterious Mountain*, and premiered it during his first appearance with the Houston Symphony. Thanks to Stokowski's advocacy, along with multiple performances by other orchestras and Fritz Reiner's recording with the Chicago Symphony, *Mysterious Mountain* became Hovhaness' breakthrough. Hovhaness did not even designate it a "symphony" until much later — listing it as No. 2 of a family that grew to include 67 numbered symphonies (among more than 400 extant works). He remained intensely creative until near the end of his long life, finding new inspiration in the landscapes of the Pacific Northwest.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Stokowski encouraged Hovhaness to give the three-movement symphony a name. *Mysterious Mountain* is thus an afterthought and not an indication of programmatic content. The composer's background in Renaissance music, Baroque counterpoint and liturgical

music blend together in this work. Many listeners are reminded of the gently "English pastoral" style of Ralph Vaughan Williams.

A slow movement opens the work with music of hymn-like serenity. The tightly woven string fabric opens to new vistas of woodwinds and brass, with the celesta contributing its special tint. Hovhaness' early-music interests are most evident in the sophisticated counterpoint of the second movement, which unfolds as a double fugue based on a stepwise, speeded-up chorale, followed by a more animated and restless theme. Hovhaness then interlaces the two themes with great skill, building their combined energy into a noble climax.

The final movement starts off in a mysterious mood, suggesting distant landscapes in a manner reminiscent of Sibelius. He again alludes to the celestial atmosphere of the opening movement, and, after reflective passages for the woodwinds, the work builds to its conclusion on a majestic chorale.

Mysterious Mountain is scored for 3 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 5 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, celesta, harp and strings.

HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS

Bachianas brasileiras No. 2

Born on March 5, 1887,
in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Died on November 17, 1959,
in Rio de Janeiro

Composed:
1930

**Estimated
length:**
21 minutes



First performance:

June 3 or September 3, 1934
(according to contradictory sources),
at the Venice International Festival

First Nashville Symphony performance:

April 8, 1952, with music director
Guy Taylor

The great Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos came of age during an era of revolutionary change in his native Rio de

Janerio. Rejecting formal schooling, he found a sympathetic milieu among the city's street musicians, playing guitar and later supporting

himself as a cellist with gigs in the theater and cinema orchestras, as well as at local hotels.

Starting in 1905, Villa-Lobos began a series of excursions into the Amazon and other rural states of Brazil, collecting musical ideas for future inspiration. He later grew fond of embellishing the details of his adventures with outrageous claims.

Villa-Lobos also liked to play up his image as an essentially self-taught composer and enfant terrible. He became a key figure in the development of an authentically Brazilian musical language, which assimilated influences from European Modernism while at the same time rejecting older European conventions.

This quest led Villa-Lobos to design a system of music education that has had a profound impact on Brazil's cultural life. He found ways to incorporate indigenous Brazilian elements across his productive career, earning the status of Brazil's leading classical composer.

Despite criticism for his dubious connections to the right-wing regime of the dictator Getúlio Vargas, Villa-Lobos gained major international recognition through his visits to the United States, where such conductors as Leopold Stokowski championed his work. When his musical/folk operetta *Magdalena* opened on Broadway in 1948, it became the most expensive show to have been produced there.

Villa-Lobos also maintained connections to Europe — as both an exporter of Brazilian idioms and an importer of such masters as J.S. Bach, a lifelong idol. The *Bachianas brasileiras* epitomize the composer's preoccupation with his Baroque predecessor, whom he called “a kind of universal folkloric source, rich and profound...[a source] linking all peoples.” This series of nine suites spans the period from 1930 to his time in New York in 1945.

The word “suite” is particularly appropriate here, for in each work Villa-Lobos bridges the model of Bach's Baroque instrumental suites with references to Brazilian musical forms and culture. *Bachianas brasileiras No. 2* in particular offers snapshots of the Brazilian

landscape and the back-country character types the composer witnessed during his youthful years of travel across remote areas.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The *Bachianas brasileiras* translate some of the musical precedents found in Bach — many of which are based on dance types — into a Brazilian context. No. 2 is a four-movement suite that begins with *Prelúdio*, to which Villa-Lobos adds the Brazilian parallel title *O canto do capadocio* (“Slacker's Song”). The longest of the four movements, this Prelude unfolds as a longing, even languid, Adagio melody, with a more animated dance emerging in the middle. *Aria*, also titled *O canto da nossa terra* (“Song of Our Land”), is also in song form, its melancholy main melody surrounding an upbeat piano-and-saxophone-dominated central section.

Dansa, whose twin title is *Lembrança do Sertão* (“Memento of the Sertão” — referring to the outback of northeastern Brazil), presents a vivid landscape of dynamic rhythms that propel the trombone's suave melody. The most famous part of *Bachianas brasileiras No. 2* is the final movement, which gives the entire suite its name: *O trenzinho do caipira* (“Little Train of the Caipira” — i.e., of the outback). Villa-Lobos associates this metaphorical train journey with the idea of the *Toccata*, referring to the Baroque tradition of fun, flashy music meant to show off technique. Here, he calls on his expanded percussion section (full of local color) to depict the steam locomotive's painstaking yet somehow assured propulsion. Over this track of brightly accented rhythms is laid an attractively songful melody. The melody guides the train along to its destination.

Bachianas brasileiras No. 2 is scored for flute (doubling piccolo), oboe, clarinet, tenor saxophone (doubling baritone saxophone), bassoon, contrabassoon, 2 horns, trombone, timpani, percussion (including a variety of native Brazilian rattles), celesta, piano and strings.

JENNIFER HIGDON

Low Brass Concerto

Born on December 31, 1962
in Brooklyn, New York

Currently resides
in Philadelphia

Composed:
2017

**Estimated
length:**
18 minutes

**First performance:**

February 1, 2018, with Riccardo Muti
conducting the Chicago Symphony

**First Nashville Symphony
performance:**

These are the orchestra's first
performances and will be recorded live
for a forthcoming release on Naxos.

Jennifer Higdon is one of America's most acclaimed figures in classical music, receiving the 2010 Pulitzer Prize in Music and multiple GRAMMY® Awards.

She enjoys several hundred performances a year of her works, and *blue cathedral* is one of today's most performed contemporary works. Her works have been released on more than 60 recordings. Higdon's first opera, *Cold Mountain* (2015) won the International Opera Award for Best World Premiere; Santa Fe Opera's recording was nominated for two GRAMMY® Awards. Higdon holds the Rock Chair in Composition at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Her music is published exclusively by Lawdon Press.

Born in Brooklyn, Higdon grew up in Atlanta and East Tennessee, with much exposure to country and rock. At age 15, she decided to teach herself flute and later became a performance major at Bowling Green State University.

The idea of composing emerged almost by chance, when her flute teacher asked her to write a short piece. "I found arranging sounds to be fascinating," says Higdon. Soon the desire to compose became unavoidable, taking over her life. Now, with commissions pouring in and her music in high demand, Higdon is frequently on the road yet still composes several hours every day.

The concerto format figures prominently in Higdon's catalogue. Examples include an

acclaimed Concerto for Orchestra, a bluegrass-styled concerto for string trio, and concertos for oboe, piano, harp, violin, viola, string trio, soprano sax and percussion. The Concerto for Low Brass was commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, with the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra serving as co-commissioners. One shared element that makes these compositions so consistently compelling is Higdon's knack for telling a musical story through instruments alone — stories in which the solo instruments become protagonists as they interact with their peers in the orchestra.

IN THE COMPOSER'S WORDS

Jennifer Higdon has supplied the following comments on the Concerto for Low Brass:

"Normally, when people think of brass they think of power, which is not an inaccurate assessment. Brass players are quick to tell you that they also can play beautiful melodies, and do so quietly and with exquisite control. So early on in the planning process for this concerto, I decided to think about the music as reflections of the qualities of majesty, grace and power.

"Writing this concerto was a tremendous challenge, primarily because there is normally one person standing at the front of the stage, and this work requires four. Fortunately, I've had the opportunity on several occasions to

write a concerto for multiple soloists. My first opportunity was with my bluegrass/classical hybrid concerto for Time for Three, *Concerto 4-3*, and the second time was writing *On a Wire* [for the ensemble eighth blackbird].

“When I accept a commission and start the process of deciding what kind of music to write in a piece, I think a lot about the personalities of the players. I have, after decades of writing music, learned that the low brass players are always fun to work with. They bring an infectious joy to everything they play, which in itself is inspiring.

“With all of this in mind, I decided to write a traditional work that highlights these qualities, in straightforward lines and melodies. It is sometimes the most challenging thing for

a composer to do: compose a melody or chorale, with no special effects or colors, just focusing on the moving line. This is a work in one movement, with alternating slow and fast sections. There are solos for each player, as well as a few duets, and some chorales. This is a musical portrait of four extraordinary players, each working individually and as a group, bringing to the front of the stage all of *their* majesty, grace and power.”

In addition to the solo parts for 2 tenor trombones, bass trombone and tuba, the Concerto for Low Brass is scored for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, timpani, 2 percussionists and strings.

ABOUT THE SOLOISTS



PAUL JENKINS
trombone

A native of Plano, Texas, Paul Jenkins has served as Principal Trombone of the Nashville Symphony since 2014. Prior to joining the Nashville Symphony, he served one year as Acting Associate Principal of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. He studied trombone at Northwestern University with Michael Mulcahy and at The Colburn

School with Mark Lawrence. He was an active freelance musician in Chicago during his time there, including performances with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Riccardo Muti and Kurt Masur. Jenkins has been in recital as a soloist at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and locally in chamber performances with the Nashville Trombone Quartet. He is also an active session musician in Nashville, having recorded numerous film, television and video game soundtracks.



DEREK HAWKES
trombone

Born in West Chester, Pennsylvania, to a musical family, Derek W. Hawkes began piano instruction at age 5 and trombone at age 10. He studied primarily with John Kitzman; H. Dennis Smith; and, most recently, Toby Oft. Hawkes was Principal Trombone of the Bangor Symphony Orchestra in Maine, and he spent two seasons as Second Trombone of the Jacksonville Symphony

beginning in 2015. He was also a multiple-year substitute on trombone, euphonium and bass trumpet with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. He is in his third season as the Assistant Principal/Second Trombone of the Nashville Symphony.

Hawkes graduated magna cum laude with a Bachelor of Music Degree in Trombone Performance at Southern Methodist University in 2014. He also pursued studies as a graduate diploma student at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston.



STEVEN BROWN

bass trombone

A native of Hays, Kansas, Steven Brown joined the Nashville Symphony in 1998. Previously, he was a member of the Richmond (Indiana) Symphony; the AIMS Opera Festival Orchestra in Gratz, Austria; and the Ohio Light Opera. He was

also a substitute member of the Cincinnati Symphony, the Baltimore Symphony, the Dayton Philharmonic and the Columbus Symphony. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Music Education from the University of Illinois and a Master's Degree in Trombone Performance from the Peabody Conservatory. His primary teachers include Elliot Chasanov, Randy Campora and Tony Chipurn.



GILBERT LONG

tuba

Gilbert Long joined the Nashville Symphony in 1978. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in tuba from the University of Louisville and completed work toward a Master's Degree at Austin Peay State University.

In addition to his position with the Nashville Symphony, Long is part-owner of Aardworks Publishing Company, a member of the Jack Daniel's Silver Cornet Band, and a

tuba instructor at Blair School of Music, where he plays in the Faculty Brass Quintet. He has also been involved in Sewanee Music Festival, Peninsula Music Festival, New Hampshire Music Festival and the Tennessee Governor's School for the Arts.

Long is also the founding member of Tri Star Brass, an ensemble consisting of faculty brass quintets from MTSU, Belmont University and Blair School of Music. As a studio musician, he has recorded with Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith, Matchbox 20, Yusuf Islam/Cat Stevens and Garth Brooks.

AARON COPLAND

Suite from *Appalachian Spring*

Born on November 14, 1900,
in Brooklyn, New York

Died on December 2, 1990,
in North Tarrytown, New York

Composed:
1943-44

**Estimated
length:**
24 minutes



First performance:

October 30, 1944, at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., with a chamber ensemble conducted by Louis Horst (complete ballet);

October 4, 1945, in New York, with Arthur Rodzinski conducting the New York Philharmonic (orchestral suite)

First Nashville Symphony performance:

April 28, 1953, with music director Guy Taylor

Appalachian Spring has become the byword for its composer's "brand" of homespun sincerity. Composer John Adams likens

Copland's musical language to "pieces of Shaker furniture, simple to the point of being humble, but sturdy and effective.

Copland's path toward honing this style was not a simple or straightforward one. Having come of age in Brooklyn as the son of Russian-Jewish immigrants, he first studied theory from a correspondence course before finding private mentorship. He went on to study with Nadia Boulanger in Paris during the 1920s and became interested in the experiments with "symphonic jazz" that were creating a buzz at the time.

The Great Depression sharpened Copland's desire to communicate with a wider audience. Numerous ballet, theater and film projects in the 1930s gave Copland the contexts he needed to evolve a style of greater simplicity and directness while also conveying a distinctly American aura. With *Billy the Kid*, his "folk-ballet" from 1938, for example, Copland found a way to use widely spaced harmonies that vividly conjure a sense of "the open prairie."

In 1943, the eminent arts patron Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge commissioned Martha Graham to create a ballet on American themes. Graham herself first danced the role of the unnamed Bride.

Copland's working title was *Ballet for Martha*, which later became the subtitle. After he had already composed the score, Graham chose the now familiar title from a section of the American poet Hart Crane's epic *The Bridge*. "Spring" here refers to water rather than the season. Also interesting to note: Copland imagined the music for the ballet's unspoiled, folk-like Americana while living in both Hollywood and Mexico.

Appalachian Spring tells the story of a young, 19th-century pioneer couple simply called the Bride and her Husbandman. They are simultaneously joyful and anxious as they contemplate what their married life will be like. A revivalist Preacher and a Pioneer Woman

offer the couple moral support. By the end, despite their fears, the young couple enter into their new home in the wilderness, "quiet and strong." The biographer Howard Pollack interprets the characters as "symbolic archetypes... the Pioneer Woman as the noble American dream, and the Revivalist and his Followers as an ascetic, resolute puritanism."

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WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

An idyllic, dreamy opening establishes the pastoral scene. Copland expands on a simple three-note idea and introduces each character. The music layers into bright, warm chords, like a dawn mist slowly evaporating. A sudden jolt of energy signals the start of the action. Copland writes that "a sentiment both elated and religious gives the keynote to this scene." Then comes a gentle duo dance for the Bride and her groom. The tempo then quickens — with "suggestions of square dances and country fiddlers" — for the scene with the Preacher and his flock.

A brief transition recalls the introductory music. Then we hear the ballet's best-known sequence: a set of five variations on a Shaker melody that had been published in a mid-19th-century collection under the title *Simple Gifts*. First heard on solo clarinet, with decorative comments from the woodwinds, this is the only preexisting folk melody Copland used in *Appalachian Spring*. The suite concludes with a coda of muted strings.

Appalachian Spring is scored for 2 flutes (2nd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, timpani, percussion, piano, harp and strings.

— Thomas May is the Nashville Symphony's program annotator.