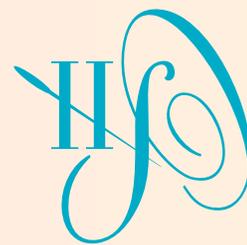


# PRELUDE

MAY 2024 • MASTERWORKS #8



HARTFORD  
SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA

## Mozart & Prokofiev May 10 – 12, 2024

What would you do if you had the chance to talk with Mozart, and could ask him about his personal experiences or why he composed a particular piece of music? If that scenario captures your imagination, then you can surely understand the thrill we feel when we perform music by a living composer. The piano concerto on this concert was written by Kenneth Fuchs, and chatting with him creates a unique and valuable personal connection with him and with his music.



Kenneth Fuchs

organist. Fuchs was raised by a single mother, who, at 90 years old, is extremely proud of her son's achievements.

The music that first captivated him was the American songbook – the music of Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, Jule Styne and Broadway musicals. Somewhere around the age of ten, Fuchs recalled, he started to “get serious” about music. He played flute in the Piper High School band in Sunrise, Florida, and to this day, he remains grateful to his high school band director, Bentley Shellahamer, who encouraged his interest in composition, telling his young student, “I will play everything you write.” The band director helped Fuchs learn how to voice harmonies, how to write for wind instruments, and impressed upon him the need to understand the range of each instrument. Fuchs explained, “Writing for winds is not like strings, where a musician can play continuously. Winds and

Kenneth Fuchs, born in 1956, grew up in Saddle Brook, New Jersey. When he was ten, his family moved to Fort Lauderdale, Florida. His love of music began in a childhood church choir in the Presbyterian Church where he also took piano lessons from the church

brass players need to breathe!” His band director wrote out the ranges for each band instrument on manuscript paper, pages that Fuchs treasures to this day. True to his word, Shellahamer played Fuchs' first piece, which won a student composition award from the Florida Bandmasters Association. Fuchs and Shellahamer still maintain a close relationship.

Now Fuchs pays it forward. As a professor of music composition at UConn, Fuchs does everything he can to encourage his students to find their own voice and to “write as much as possible.”

**“My job is to get them to take their enthusiasm... and to focus it... That begins with writing a work for their own instrument. What better way for them to express their own musical thoughts than through writing for an instrument they feel comfortable with?”**

***QN: You had great encouragement in high school. What came next?***

For my undergraduate training, I attended the University of Miami as a music composition major. I had two amazing composition teachers: Alfred Reed and Clifton Williams and conductor Frederick Fennell (founder of the Eastman Wind Ensemble), all of whom were outstanding figures in the band field. Given my high school band experiences and

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their influence, I focused on writing for concert bands and wind ensembles.

I immediately applied to Juilliard for graduate school, but I had no experience writing for orchestra. The Juilliard faculty advised me to expand my knowledge, compose an orchestral work, and then reapply. I was pretty gutsy, I guess, because I wrote to three composers I admired, asking for their guidance and advice. I wrote to Aaron Copland, William Schuman (former president of Juilliard and Lincoln Center), and Stephen Sondheim. All three answered me. They took my questions seriously and each offered to get together with me when I got to New York. I learned then that the true greats are never too big to lend a helping hand.

When I got to New York to meet with Schuman and Sondheim, I stopped in at Patelson's Music House, which was a very well-known music store that used to be across the street from the Carnegie Hall stage door on 56<sup>th</sup> Street. I boldly asked the owner, Joseph Patelson, for a job, and two weeks later, I got a letter from Patelson offering me a position. That same week, I got a letter from Schuman, telling me he had arranged for me to take lessons from Stanley Wolfe, who was then the director of the Extension Division at Juilliard. So, for the next year, I worked at Patelson's six days a week and studied at night with Wolfe, working on an orchestral composition that I could submit to Juilliard. The work paid off. I re-applied, was admitted, and then spent the next nine years at Juilliard earning my Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees.

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***QN: You've worked at various academic institutions since your graduation from Juilliard. Why did you choose academia?***

As everyone knows, being a fledgling composer doesn't exactly pay the bills. It's important to find a place where you have the freedom to compose, as well as a source of income. I was lucky enough to find that in academia. While a student at Juilliard, I worked as the assistant to the associate dean, which gave me the needed experience to take the next step. After graduating from Juilliard in 1988, I worked as

Assistant Dean at the North Carolina School of the Arts for one year. From 1990 until 1998, I was Dean of Students and Academics at the Manhattan School of Music. In 1998, I was asked to become the first Director of a new state-of-the-art music facility at the University of Oklahoma. The President of the University was David Boren, a two-term governor and three-term senator of Oklahoma, who sincerely believed in the importance of the fine arts for every individual, as evidenced by the fact that he had secured the funding for the new music building. It was the chance of a lifetime, and I could not say no.



Kenneth Fuchs

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***QN: Beyond talent and hard work, your story shows that persistence and determination are vital for success.***

Absolutely. That's true for all things, but especially in the arts. In 2003, when I was ready to record my first orchestral album, I reached out to JoAnn Falletta (music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic), since she was my classmate at Juilliard. I asked if she would be interested in recording three of my works and her response was immediate and enthusiastic. As it turned out, she already had plans to record with the London Symphony Orchestra, and she told me that if I could raise the funds to add three sessions, she'd be able to record my compositions.

At that time, I was the Director of Music at the University of Oklahoma. When I explained the project to President Boren, he immediately told me that the University would help raise the needed funds. A few months later I was in London recording with JoAnn and the LSO. Naxos Records released the album in 2005 and it immediately earned TWO Grammy nominations! No one could believe that a first-time album would receive that level of acclaim, and I know it would not have happened without support from David Boren and the University. That was an early lesson in the importance of raising funds and finding financial support for the arts. Nothing in the

arts happens without the support of a committed community and the generosity of donors.

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**QN: We are performing your piano concerto at our upcoming concert, and we'd love to know about your process and how you start work on a piece.**

The best way to work is through collaboration. The piano concerto that your audiences will hear was commissioned by and written for Jeffrey Biegel, a brilliant pianist who was also my classmate at Juilliard. I had previously written a piano trio for Jeffrey, so we already worked well together.

I devote time every day to my work. When I begin, I make lots of "sketches," writing down a multitude of melodic ideas. I'm "old school" in that I use a pencil and manuscript paper and I work at the piano. After about three or four weeks, I've accumulated enough ideas to begin the process of putting it together. I hear the music in my head as I am sketching. It's not just



Kenneth Fuchs

the melodic line that I hear; I hear the music fully formed, complete with the orchestration, so I just write down everything that's coming into my head. I never know where it might lead, and the final composition could

be radically different. Or a musical sketch might work for a different project.

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**QN: Your works feel amazingly accessible.**

Well, thank you! My goal as a composer is to write music that is emotionally direct and speaks comfortably to audiences. I believe it is important to write music that the audience can understand. A composer's job is to recognize the power of all different kinds of musical sounds so that the audience can respond. I'm delighted to know that my works are well-received.

**QN: You won the Grammy in 2019 for the album that features the piano concerto we will hear at this concert. Tell us what it takes to create an album.**

That album was the FOURTH Grammy nomination we received, and the album won the Grammy for Best Classical Compendium. More recently, I was the executive producer and composer of "Cloud Slant, Orchestral Works, Vol. 1" with the Sinfonia of London. That album, released in 2023 by Chandos Records, was a project that spanned more than four years with conductor John Wilson, and was also nominated for a Grammy in the category Producer of the Year, Classical. As with all my recordings, I put the whole project together. I wrote all the music, raised all the funds – about \$125,000 – to pay for the orchestra, the recording, and the soloists. It was thrilling to again be nominated for a Grammy, and to be the first living American composer whose music John Wilson is recording on two separate volumes.

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**QN: Being a working artist is often a difficult path. How do you guide your students who may not have family support or encouragement?**

First, I know how lucky I am. I never heard my mom say, "I don't think you should do this." Not all my students – or even my colleagues – have received that level of familial support. And I also know there is nothing easy about a career in music, whether as a composer, conductor, or performer. It is tough, unforgiving, and when the chips are down, it is heartbreaking. But when the chips are up, it is thrilling. It requires an absolute belief in what you are meant to do with your life. From my first encounter with Bentley Shellahamer at Piper High School, I always felt I had something to say as a composer, and that belief is core to everything I do.

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**QN: Will you share a little about your personal life?**

I met my husband, Chris, in April of 1980 and this year, we are celebrating 44 years together. Chris is a graphic designer and we have been together since I started at Juilliard. We first lived on the Upper West Side (at 71<sup>st</sup> Street in a fabulous floor-through

brownstone apartment) and then moved to Inwood, at the northern tip of Manhattan. We lived in New York for twenty years and only moved when I got the job in Oklahoma. We've been living in Connecticut since 2005, and we have a great townhouse in Mansfield, right near the University of Connecticut where I now work.

***QN: What would people never guess about you?***

I'm fascinated by the great ocean liners of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As I young child, on trips to New York City, I loved visiting the harbor and staring up at the massive prows of the ships, getting ready to cross the Atlantic. I can still recall the briny smell of the salt water and even the odor of the ropes. I loved the bustle of activity along the piers. One of my favorite ocean liners is the SS United States, which captured the Blue Riband for the fastest transatlantic crossing on its maiden voyage in July of 1952. In fact, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the crossing, I composed an orchestral showpiece, *Atlantic Riband*, which was recorded by the London Symphony with JoAnn Falletta conducting.

***QN: Do you have any favorite hobbies or interest?***

Cooking. After a long day of teaching or composing, I love to stop to prepare a meal for Chris and me. I want to learn more about various cooking techniques. Some of my favorite chefs are Lidia Bastianich, Bobby Flay and Ina Garten. Sipping a glass of wine, talking and cooking is my idea of a great evening. Right now, I'm closely following Lidia Bastianich to learn how to cook in a more authentic Italian style.

I also love reading poetry and have set the works of several poets to vocal music. Favorite poets include William Blake, Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman,

Robert Frost, Richard Wilbur and John Updike, to name a few.

***QN: We are so happy to be performing your music!***

I know that so much in life depends on the relationships we form. I met Carolyn Kuan in 2007 at the Cabrillo Festival of New Music. Imagine my joy in learning that my piano concerto would be performed by the HSO not once but THREE times! Knowing what it takes to support the arts, I want to thank all of HSO's patrons and donors. Please know what your support means to me and to all musicians. You are part of the community that keeps music alive!

***Thank you so much, Kenneth, for your candor in chatting with us! We are all looking forward to meeting you and we are thrilled you'll be joining us for the concert!***

Kenneth Fuchs



# JOIN US!

**Please join the HSO on May 10-12, 2014, to hear Prokofiev's Classical Symphony Op. 25, Fuchs' Piano Concerto, *Spiritualist*, and two pieces by Mozart: Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* and Symphony No. 38, *Prague*.**

**Did you borrow this *Prelude*? Get your own free copy! Whether you're a ticket buyer, donor, curious about the music, or know someone who is, just send an email to [dshulansky@hartfordsymphony.org](mailto:dshulansky@hartfordsymphony.org). We'll make sure you receive *Prelude* by email, in advance of each HSO Masterworks concert!**

**Are you interested in learning more about our featured composer? The works of Kenneth Fuchs are engaging and completely accessible. Please click on the links for some delightful treats!**

Rush: Concerto for Alto Saxophone by Kenneth Fuchs, performed by the Ithaca College Wind Symphony at the 2023 Ithaca College Concerto Competition:

**[RUSH: Concerto for Alto Saxophone - Kenneth Fuchs - YouTube](#)**

Christina's World, a composition by Kenneth Fuchs for winds, brass and percussion, performed by the U.S. Coast Guard Band, may be heard in this recording:

**[Christina's World - Kenneth Fuchs | U.S. Coast Guard Band - YouTube](#)**

Enjoy this recording of orchestral works by Kenneth Fuchs, performed by Sinfonia of London, with conductor John Wilson, on the Chandos label:

**[Cloud Slant: I. Blue Fall \(youtube.com\)](#)**



**WONDERING HOW THE MUSIC OF OUR FEATURED CONCERT WILL SOUND? Try HSO'S LISTENING GUIDE, with links to the pieces you'll hear on our concert stage – and more!**

Delight in this performance of Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony* by the Frankfurt Radio Symphony:

**[Prokofjew: 1. Sinfonie \(»Symphonie classique«\) - hr-Sinfonieorchester - François Leleux \(youtube.com\)](#)**

Enjoy the Grammy-winning recording of Kenneth Fuchs' Piano Concerto, *Spiritualist*, by the London Symphony conducted by JoAnn Falletta, with pianist Jeffrey Biegel:

**[Kenneth Fuchs : The Spiritualist \(2016\) - YouTube](#)**

The Vienna Symphony performed the Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* on a 2006 tour of Japan, and may be viewed here:

**[Mozart - The Marriage of Figaro Overture \(K.492\) - Wiener Symphoniker - Fabio Luisi \(HD\) \(youtube.com\)](#)**

Enjoy this performance of Mozart's Symphony No. 38 in D major, *Prague*, performed by the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Manfred Honeck:

**[Mozart - Symphony No. 38 in D major "Prague" K.504 | Mozart from Prague - YouTube](#)**

# CASEY'S CLASSICS

Want the best recordings of the pieces you'll experience on the concert program? Coleman Casey, HSO's dear friend, Director Emeritus and beloved in-house audiophile, offers his recording recommendations of selections featured in our upcoming Masterworks Concert.

Serge Prokofiev's Symphony #1, known as the *Classical Symphony*, his pastiche work in the style of Haydn, is perfectly played and recorded by that paragon of eighteenth-century interpretation, Neville Marriner, with The Academy of St. Martin in the Fields (DECCA).

Mozart's Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* gets a fizzingly memorable performance with George Szell and the Cleveland Orchestra (SONY).

Mozart's Symphony #38, *Prague*, has countless fine recordings, but the great master, Otto Klemperer, and the Philharmonia Orchestra, deserve special praise for the ability to bring forth the delicious woodwind textures of this great work with singing string lines in what is truly a classic performance (WARNER).



Kenneth Fuchs