

# HEARTLAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Spring 2026 Concert Series

## American Travels

**Ryan Webber**, conductor

**TJ Huggins**, composer

Saturday, March 28, 2026 | 7:30 PM | Charles D. Martin Auditorium, Little Falls

Sunday, March 29, 2026 | 2:30 PM | Gichi-ziibi Center for the Arts, Brainerd

John Powell *How to Train Your Dragon* ca. 5'  
arr. Sean O'Loughlin

John Williams *The Empire Strikes Back* ca. 5.5'  
arr. John C. Whitney

Howard Shore *The Fellowship of the Ring* ca. 10.5'  
arr. John C. Whitney

TJ Huggins *La Preda\** ca. 4.5'  
Winner of HSO's 2026 Call for Scores

-Intermission-

Margaret Bonds *The Montgomery Variations* ca. 25.5'  
I. Decision  
II. Prayer Meeting  
III. March  
IV. Dawn in Dixie  
V. One Sunday in the South  
VI. Lament  
VII. Benediction

\* World premiere



**HEARTLAND** **S**YMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA

**John Powell (1963-)**

**arr. Sean O’Loughlin**

***How to Train Your Dragon* (2010)**

*What was happening in the world when this piece premiered?*

- The world watched anxiously and was ultimately relieved when thirty-three Chilean miners were rescued after being trapped underground for sixty-nine days.
- The FIFA World Cup was held in South Africa, the first time the tournament took place on the African continent. Singer Shakira subsequently released her song “Waka Waka (This Time for Africa)”.
- Technology moved forward with the release of the iPad and the launch of Instagram.

*What should I know about this composer?*

- John Powell is a composer who wrote music for over seventy films, including the *Bourne* franchise, *Happy Feet*, *Wicked*, *Wicked: For Good*, Dr. Seuss’ *The Lorax*, *Drumline*, and *Call of the Wild*.
- Powell’s compositions have earned six Grammy Award nominations and two nominations for the Academy Award for Best Original Score for his *How to Train Your Dragon* and *Wicked* scores.
- Powell was a member of Hans Zimmer’s music studio Remote Control Productions and has collaborated with many composers, including Hans Zimmer and John Williams.

*What should I know about this piece?*

This score accompanies the film adaptation of Cressida Cowell’s book series *How to Train Your Dragon*. The story takes place in the fictional Viking village of Berk and is a coming-of-age story of the chieftain’s son, Hiccup. In his journey befriendng a dragon that was attacking his village and learning about him, Hiccup discovers that sometimes our enemies are not what they seem. Their challenge is convincing the village to come to the understanding that he has.



## **John Williams (1932-)**

**arr. John C. Whitney**

### ***The Empire Strikes Back* (1980)**

*What was happening in the world when this piece premiered?*

- Ronald Reagan was elected the 40th president of the United States.
- Mount Saint Helens erupted in Washington state, one of the most significant American volcanic events.
- Changes to the succession to the Swedish throne take effect, introducing absolute primogeniture, placing Crown Princess Victoria first in line to the throne ahead of her baby brother. Sweden is the first monarchy to adopt this rule of succession. Members of the royal family may also now marry commoners without losing their place in the succession.

*What should I know about this composer?*

- John Williams is one of the most celebrated and recognizable composers of movie scores. His works include *Star Wars*, *Jurassic Park*, *E.T.*, and *Harry Potter*.
- He has received over fifty Academy Award nominations throughout his career.
- In addition to being a successful composer, John Williams is a skilled conductor and has worked with major orchestras, including the Boston Pops.

*What should I know about this piece?*

This score accompanies the space saga *The Empire Strikes Back*, from the *Star Wars* series. The film was nominated for various awards and won two Academy Awards, two Grammy Awards, and a BAFTA, among others. Subsequent releases have raised the film's worldwide gross to \$549–\$550 million, and, adjusted for inflation, it ranks as the 13th-highest-grossing film in the United States and Canada.

## **Howard Shore (1946-)**

**arr. John C. Whitney**

### ***The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001)**

*What was happening in the world when this piece premiered?*

- Two passenger planes hijacked by Al-Qaeda terrorists crashed into New York's World Trade Center towers, causing the collapse of both and the deaths of 2,606 people.
- At 15 years, 9 months, American swimmer Michael Phelps breaks the 200m butterfly world record at the US World Championship trials in Austin, Texas, becoming the youngest male to set a world record.
- During a trip to Syria, Pope John Paul II became the first pope to enter a mosque.

*What should I know about this composer?*

- Howard Shore, a Canadian composer, wrote the scores for over 80 films.
- He won three Academy Awards for his compositions in *The Lord of the Rings*.
- The scores of *The Lord of the Rings*, performed primarily by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, became some of the most successful film scores ever written and are the biggest success in Shore's career so far.

*What should I know about this piece?*

This highly celebrated score was written for the first piece of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Memorable themes and melodies are heard throughout the following two movies. The films and scores are based on the books of the same title by J. R. R. Tolkien. The story is the struggle of good against evil, bravery from unexpected places, and unlikely, powerful friendships.

**TJ Huggins (1986-)**

***La Preda* (2026)**

Winner of HSO's 2026 Call for Scores

"La Preda" is the Italian phrase for "the prey". The music was composed to invoke the sense of a hunt from the prey's perspective. It starts with a serene and peaceful feeling with the string and woodwind melodies. Life as prey will not stay peaceful for long and quickly evolves into a sense of alertness and, soon, fear. With the introduction of brass and more rhythmic accompaniments from the strings, the hunt is on. The use of a mixed meter gives the listener a feel for the unpredictability of the hunt from the prey's perspective. Will the prey survive or will the predator be victorious? A sudden stop in the music towards the end signals that the hunt is over and in the final section, the horn's melody reveals the prey has survived. The final minor chord at the end poses the question: Are they still the hunted or are they now the hunter?

*Program notes for La Preda written by TJ Huggins*

**Margaret Bonds (1940-1972)**

***The Montgomery Variations* (1964)**

*What was happening in the world when this piece premiered?*

- The Civil Rights Act was signed into law in the United States, prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, religion, gender, or national origin.
- Nelson Mandela was sentenced to life in prison in South Africa, becoming a symbol for the anti-apartheid movement.
- The Tokyo Olympics showcased the first-ever televised games.

### *What should I know about this composer?*

- Margaret Bonds was the first African-American woman to perform with the all-white and all-male Chicago Symphony Orchestra, one of the first African-American women to have her music broadcast on European radio, the first African-American woman to have her music performed widely in Africa, only the second African-American woman in classical music to be elected to full membership in ASCAP, and the first woman, black or white, to win three awards from ASCAP.
- As a composer, she had a wide-ranging experience, including jazz and spiritual arrangements, songs for children, film music, popular songs, choral music, and musicals, as well as classical compositions.

### *What should I know about this piece?*

Considered a crowning work in her extraordinary career, Bonds' *Montgomery Variations* was composed as a tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr., after her visit to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1963. Based on the spiritual "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me," her *Montgomery Variations* is a set of freestyle ruminations on Montgomery as a focal point of the Civil Rights Movement. She never heard the piece performed.

*Program notes written by Melissa von Itter*



## ◆ TJ HUGGINS ◆

TJ Huggins has composed works for a range of ensembles including beginning bands, wind bands, chamber groups, soloists, and orchestras. His style of composing centers around neoclassicism with hints of modernism, and imaginative themes and textures, and has had works for various ensembles premiered in South Carolina, Georgia, and Nevada. He was awarded 1st Place in the 2025



Composition Contest with the Reno Pops Orchestra in Reno, Nevada where his piece “Mystic Realms – Suite for Orchestra” was premiered in November 2025. He also had his masquerade suite “Behind the Mask” premiered by the Palmetto Chamber Orchestra in October 2025. Other ensembles that have performed/premiered works include a flute ensemble, an eight-piece chamber winds piece, horn quartets and duets, chamber winds, and solo flute and horn pieces.

He attended Coastal Carolina University where he received, both, a Bachelor of Arts in Music with a concentration in Trombone Performance and a Master of Arts in Teaching with a concentration in K-12 Instrumental Music Education. He currently performs with the Palmetto Chamber Orchestra as Principal Oboe and English Horn, oboe and English Horn with the Mosaic Wind Quintet, and is also Principal Oboe with the Lake Murray Symphony Orchestra. He is in his 15th year as an educator and is currently the band director, music teacher, and arts department chair at Kelly Miller Elementary School in Winnsboro, SC. He currently lives in Columbia, South Carolina.

# ◆ HEARTLAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA PERSONNEL ◆

## **VIOLIN 1**

Leslie Zander, Concertmaster .....	Brainerd
J. David Arnott .....	St. Cloud
Tamara Bottge .....	St. Cloud
Paul Sandberg .....	Brainerd
Arriana Schwab .....	Royalton
Hans Stadem-Ward .....	Minneapolis

## **VIOLIN 2**

Claire Rud, Principal .....	Brainerd
Megan Hanson .....	Brainerd
Peggy Rutman .....	Nisswa
Jamie Sunder .....	Little Falls
Louise Washburn .....	Brainerd

## **VIOLA**

Tracie Becker .....	Deerwood
Alicia Cebulla .....	Pierz
Isabelle Corrigan .....	Pierz
Laura Flategraff .....	Brainerd
Kylie Laman .....	Brainerd
Shelby Lee .....	Brainerd
Autumn Paulus .....	Brainerd
Ethan Sunder .....	Little Falls

## **CELLO**

Amanda Jansen .....	St. Cloud
<i>Mary Anne Bennett Memorial Chair</i>	
Jenna Hanson .....	Brainerd
Elijah Hayes .....	Brainerd
Jane Huppler .....	Onamia
Taisha Linder .....	Pillager
Robin Myers .....	Brainerd

## **STRING BASS**

Don Neu, Principal .....	Freeport
Val Buchmeier .....	St. Michael
Gunnar Kuehl .....	Baxter
Elsie Predmore .....	Brainerd

## ◆ HEARTLAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA STAFF ◆

Operations Director – Navasha Kieffer  
 Orchestra Manager – Fran Dosh  
 Music Librarian – Alicia Cebulla

HSO is always in need of additional string players and sometimes others instruments.

If interested in joining, please contact  
**heartlandssymphony@gmail.com.**

## **PICCOLO**

Kyle Brown .....	Brainerd
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## **FLUTE**

Lauren Nickisch, Principal .....	Pequot Lakes
Gabrielle Van Grootheest .....	Crosby

## **OBOE**

Amy Kessler, Co-Principal .....	Merrifield
Kaarin Hanske, Co-Principal .....	Baxter
Kinsten Rought .....	McGregor

## **ENGLISH HORN**

Amy Kessler .....	Merrifield
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## **CLARINET**

Max Sommers, Principal .....	Brainerd
Katie Brimhall .....	Brainerd
Briana Halstead .....	Garrison

## **BASS CLARINET**

Briana Halstead .....	Garrison
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## **BASSOON**

Brian Sterriker, Principal .....	Long Prairie
Alyssa Schindler .....	Tenstrike

## **CONTRABASSOON**

Miriam Webber .....	Bemidji
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## **FRENCH HORN**

Terri Deming .....	Little Falls
Andrea Lund .....	Brainerd
Jen Mickels .....	Baxter
Becky Stadem .....	Brainerd

## **TRUMPET**

Christopher Fogerud, Principal .....	Brainerd
Nick Bunio .....	Grand Rapids
<i>Lina Belar Honorary Chair</i>	
Gary Taylor .....	Deerwood

## **TROMBONE**

Tristen Heller, Principal .....	Remer
Todd Peterson .....	Little Falls

## **BASS TROMBONE**

Steven K. Anderson .....	Merrifield
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## **TUBA**

Doug Durant, Principal .....	Brainerd
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## **TIMPANI**

Cody Ewald, Principal .....	Baxter
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## **PERCUSSION**

Emmett Gainey .....	Little Falls
Eoin O'Connell .....	Brainerd
Elsie Predmore .....	Brainerd

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**HEARTLAND SYMPHONY**  
ORCHESTRA

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