Chapel Hill Philharmonia

Sunday, 19 October 2025
3:00 pm

Moeser Auditorium
University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill

Donald L. Oehler, Music Director

Meet the Orchestra

The Star Spangled Banner	John Stafford Smith (1750-1836)
Rondeau from the Incidental Music to Abdelazer, Z. 750	Henry Purcell (1659-1695)
The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra, Op. 34	Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)
Radetzky March, Op. 228	Johann Strauss Sr. (1804-1849)

Kid Conductors!

The last piece of our program provides an opportunity for children to conduct the orchestra. We will endeavor to photograph each child so you can see and remember their faces from the podium.

To receive a photo of your child, send a request to orchestra@chapelhillphilharmonia.org, and include:

1. The number on the card they are given after conducting

2. Any information that helps identify your child (e.g., what they are wearing).

Chapel Hill Philharmonia will not distribute photographs of the children, post them on any social media platform, or use them in promotional material. All photographs will be deleted by 30 November 2025.

Meet the Orchestra

The Star Spangled Banner. We begin our program with our national anthem, which uses lyrics from the poem "Defence of Fort M'Henry" written by American lawyer Francis Scott Key. He wrote this poem during the War of 1812, while detained on a British ship during the night of 13 September 1814, as the British forces bombarded the American fort.

Artist's Rendering of the Battle at Fort McHenry

The lyrics are set to a popular British song, "To Anacreon in Heaven," attributed to John Stafford Smith, a member of the Anacreontic Society. Although the date of the composition is uncertain, it must have been composed sometime between 1766 and 1773 for the Anacreontic Society, a gentleman's club in 18th century London.

Key's lyrics, set to Stafford Smith's music, became a well-known and recognized patriotic song throughout the United States. It was officially designated as the U.S. national anthem on 3 March 1931.

Rondeau. Henry Purcell (1659 – 1695) was an English composer of Baroque music, most remembered for his more than 100 songs; a tragic opera, *Dido and Aeneas*; and his incidental music to a version of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* called "The Fairy Queen." Purcell was generally considered among the greatest English opera composers of the 17th century,

Henry Purcell

The Rondeau from Henry Purcell's incidental music to Aphra Behn's "Abdelazer," written in 1695, provides the theme Benjamin Britten used for his *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*. It is the second movement in the incidental music for the play, and thus, is a more expository and stately dance, rather than dramatic and tense, as are some of the later movements.

The play, "Abdelazer or The Moor's Revenge" is a wonderfully complex tale filled with kings, queens, and villains, all set against a backdrop of thrilling adventure.

The **Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra** is a 1945 musical composition by Benjamin Britten (1913 – 1976) with a subtitle "Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell." Composed specifically to introduce young listeners to each of the instruments that make up the orchestra, Britten's composition was originally commissioned for the British educational documentary film entitled *Instruments of the Orchestra* by the Ministry of Education and released on 29 November 1946.

Here, in outline form, is the structure of Britten's *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*:

THEME – Purcell's tune played by the full orchestra and each of the four main sections.

1. Full Orchestra
2. Woodwinds – Instruments mostly made of wood or metal, that are blown, either across an open hole (flutes), across a single reed (clarinets) or through two reeds bound together (oboes and bassoons).
3. Brass – Instruments mostly made of metal, in which the player buzzes through a mouthpiece to create the vibration. Valves or slides are used to allow the instruments to play all the notes of a chromatic scale in tune.

4. Strings – Hollow wooden boxes with strings stretched across the top. The strings can be plucked or played with a bow that allows for a continuous sound.
5. Percussion – Instruments that you bang on. Some are pitched; some are not.
6. Full Orchestra

VARIATIONS – Each instrument of the orchestra shows off its special character.

Benjamin Britten

Woodwind Variations

1. Flutes and Piccolo – metal tubes with air blown across an open hole.
2. Oboes – wooden tubes with air blown through a double reed to create a melancholy sound.
3. Clarinets – a wooden tube that uses a single reed to produce a mellower sound.
4. Bassoons – bigger double reed instrument, the larger sibling to the oboes with a deeper sound.

String Variations

1. Violins – highest pitched instrument of the strings. It is very agile and bright sounding.
2. Violas – a slightly larger version of the violin. It has a slightly darker sound.
3. Cellos – bigger yet with a darker more melodious sound. It is held between the player's legs.
4. Double Basses – largest of the string family. Players stand to play the double bass.
5. Harp – 47 strings, which are plucked. It has seven pedals used to adjust the pitch of the strings.

Brass Variations

1. French Horns – coiled metal instruments derived from hunting horns used in the forest.
2. Trumpets – the most martial of the brass instruments, calling one to immediate action.
3. Trombones and Tuba – the lowest members of the brass family. The trombones use slides to play notes in tune.

Percussion Variations

While there are many percussion instruments, festured here are timpani, cymbals, bass drum, snare drum Chinese blocks, tambourine, triangle, xylophone, castanets, tam-tam, and whip.

FUGUE – Now that we have heard from each of the instruments, we reassemble the full orchestra with each instrument in turn, piling on, building to a big finish in this concluding section. Once everyone has entered, the brass are re-introduced (with a strike on the tam-tam) with Purcell's original melody.

The **Radetzky March.** This march composed by Johann Strauss Sr. (1804 – 1849) was first performed on 31 August 1848 in Vienna to celebrate the victory of the Austrian Empire under Field Marshal Joseph Radetzky von Radetz (the piece's namesake) over the Italian forces at the Battle of Custoza, during the First Italian War of Independence.

Johann Strauss Sr.

It has been noted that its tone is more celebratory than martial, but it nevertheless became popular among marching regimental soldiers. Today, the work is primarily associated with the Vienna Philharmonic as an encore to their New Year's Concert.

We use this opportunity to let some of our young members of the audience come up and conduct the orchestra for a portion of this piece. Members of the audience are encouraged to clap in time during the refrain.

Program Notes by Garth E. Molyneux