



# GIRLS ON FIRE

A CELEBRATION OF WOMEN IN MUSIC



Friday, February 23, 2024  
Alpharetta Methodist Church



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# GIRLS ON FIRE

Friday, February 23, 2024

Alpharetta Methodist Church  
69 N. Main Street, Alpharetta

Dr. Grant Gilman, *conductor*  
Helen Kim, *violin*  
Alpharetta Symphony

*Please silence all cell phones and other electronic devices.*

Sunburst

Augusta Read Thomas  
(b. 1964)

Violin Concerto No. 2

Florence Price  
(1887-1953)

Helen Kim, *violin*

## INTERMISSION

Symphony in E minor, *Gaelic*  
I. Allegro con fuoco  
III. Lento con molto espressione  
IV. Allegro di molto

Amy Beach  
(1867-1944)

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Andrea Vella  
Paul Wakim  
Thomas Williams  
Amanda Womack

\* in-kind

\*\* in-kind and monetary

# ABOUT THE SOLOIST



## **Helen Kim, *violin***

Helen Hwaya Kim joined the music faculty in 2006 at Kennesaw State University with a stellar performance background. She has appeared as a soloist with the Boston Pops at Boston's Symphony Hall, as well as with the Milwaukee and Atlanta Symphony Orchestras.

Ms. Kim earned her Bachelor and Master's degree from the Juilliard School, where her teachers included Cho-Liang Lin and Dorothy DeLay. While at Juilliard, she served as Concertmaster of the Juilliard Orchestra and was the winner of the Juilliard Concerto Competition at both the Pre-College and College levels. She is the recipient of more than one hundred national and international awards. She won the prestigious Artists International Competition in New York and, as a result, gave debut recitals at Carnegie Weill Hall and the Aspen Summer Music Festival.

A native of Canada, Ms. Kim has been engaged by many of Canada's leading orchestras, including the National Arts Center Orchestra, Montreal Metropolitan Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony, Calgary Philharmonic, McGill Chamber Orchestra, and the Windsor, Regina, Victoria and Prince George Symphonies. She has also appeared with the DeKalb, New Orleans, Aspen and Banff Festival Orchestras, and with orchestras in the United Kingdom, Germany and Poland.

Ms. Kim has toured extensively throughout Canada and the United States, including performances at Alice Tully Hall and the Santa Fe and La Jolla International Music Festivals, where she performed with Cho-Liang Lin, Gary Hoffman, Andre Previn, and the Orion String Quartet. She performed Bach's Double violin concerto with Hilary Hahn at the Amelia Island Chamber music festival. Other festival highlights include performances at the Highlands-Cashiers, Banff, Zenith and Sitka International Chamber Music Festivals.

Ms. Kim currently resides in Atlanta, Georgia, where she served as Assistant and Associate Concertmaster for the Atlanta Symphony for three seasons. She is currently the Assistant Concertmaster of the Atlanta Opera Orchestra and recently joined the roster of the Atlanta Chamber Players.

# PROGRAM NOTES: WOMEN IN CLASSICAL MUSIC

Written by Missy Mahon

*Missy Mahon writes all of the program notes for the Alpharetta Symphony and she has been a part of the Symphony since 2017. Missy has a Master's degree in Musicology from Temple University and a Bachelor's degree in Flute Performance from Columbus State University.*

For centuries, women have struggled within our patriarchal society to be taken seriously as musicians and composers. They were expected to be highly proficient in musical performance (a useful skill to attract a husband or entertain guests); but they were prevented from pursuing it too seriously. Their performances were for the privacy of the home and rarely for the public eye, as that would have been “improper”. Additionally, they were only allowed to sing or play “feminine” instruments such as the piano or clavichord, the lute or guitar, or the harp. Most other instruments were considered “un-ladylike” for various reasons: brass instruments made their faces look funny; flutes, oboes, and the like were considered phallic; and the cello placed between the legs, was completely indecent. Composition and counterpoint were considered too much for the “emotional female mind” to comprehend, those skills required the “logic and mathematical reasoning of a man”.

In spite of these archaic and incorrect social concepts, women have slowly gained their rightful place in the musical world. Early music composers such as Hildegard de Bingen, Barbara Strozzi, Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre, Francesca Caccini, Isabella Leonarda, and Louise Farrenc were the first to ignite the hope for change. During the 18th and 19th centuries, European society had become more tolerant of female performers, eventually allowing them to attend conservatories with the men. This social acceptance was a huge step that allowed European composers and musicians such as Clara Schumann, Fanny Mendelssohn, Ethel Smyth, Lili Boulanger, Nadia Boulanger, Rebecca Clark, Cécile Chaminade, Teresa Carreño, Germaine Tailleferre, and eventually American composers like Florence Price, and Amy Beach to fan the flames of progress further. During this period women could be a featured soloist with an orchestra, but it was the turn of the 20th century before women were allowed to play alongside men in the orchestra. Even after a century of advancement, women still represent less than 50% of orchestral musicians, and only 5% of programmed music is by female composers. The works that we are performing for you tonight rival, and in some ways surpass, those written by men of the period; they are highly skilled, intricate, and brilliant pieces of art. We can only imagine how brightly these women would have burned if they had been given the same liberties and support as their male counterparts.



## **Sunburst | Augusta Read Thomas (b. 1964)**

Described as “one of the most recognizable and widely loved figures in American Music” by the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Thomas has an impressive resumé making her one of the most active composers in the world. From 1993-2001, she was an assistant professor of composition at the Eastman School of Music before becoming a Professor of Music at Northwestern University from 2001-2006. Currently, she serves as Professor of Composition in Music at the University of Chicago. For 9 years, she served as composer-in-residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; it was during this residency that she premiered *Astral Canticle*, leading

Thomas to be considered as a finalist for the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in Music. She has won the Ernst von Siemens Music Prize, in addition to several other prestigious awards. And, in 2016 she founded the University of Chicago's Center for Contemporary Compositions. Music critic Edward Reichel wrote, "Augusta Read Thomas has secured for herself a permanent place in the pantheon of American composers of the 20th and 21st centuries. She is without question one of the best and most important composers that this country has today. Her music has substance and depth and a sense of purpose."

Opening the program tonight in dazzling fanfare, *Sunburst* was commissioned by the Tampa Metropolitan Youth Orchestra who premiered the work in 2022. Thomas has described a lot of her work, "like living inside of a poem... I think of myself, and have been described as, a poet-composer. I sculpt my music akin to how poets create, refine, and polish their poems." Inspired by the fiery orb, she leaves us to ponder images of flashing sunlight: as it breaks through the clouds, or rays of light beaming from a central point.

### **Violin Concerto No. 2 | Florence Price (1887-1953)**



In a letter to Serge Koussevitzky, the conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Price stated that, "I have two handicaps - those of sex and race. I am a woman; and I have some Negro blood in my veins. [However,] I would like to be judged on merit alone." Thanks to the strides taken by female composers and musicians that had come before her, she was at least able to pursue a professional career in music, even though the odds were stacked against her. She was fortunate enough to study at the New England Conservatory, but to avoid racial discrimination, she had to pass herself off as Mexican.

She briefly taught at and became the head of the music department at Atlanta University (now Clark Atlanta University) before marrying lawyer Thomas J. Price and moving to Arkansas. By this time, the South had become more racially segregated; and after a time, the family moved to Chicago to escape the horrors of Jim Crow. In 1931 she divorced her abusive husband and raised her two daughters as a single mother.

Despite her recent struggles, she flourished as part of the Chicago Black Renaissance where she was able to study with all the best teachers in the city. But, to make ends meet, she wrote jingles for the radio, played organ for silent films, and moved in with Black pianist, composer, and friend Margaret Bonds. Their close friendship led to several important artistic connections which helped them both to receive national recognition for their work. In 1932 Price won first prize in the Wanamaker's Music Contest for her Symphony in E minor. A huge breakthrough came for her the following summer when the Chicago Symphony Orchestra debuted the award-winning work, thus making Price the first Black female composer to have a symphony performed by a major American orchestra. Price's daughter once commented that her mother had originally "wanted to become a doctor but felt the difficulties of becoming a woman doctor at the time were too formidable. Instead, she became that even greater rarity...a woman composer of symphonies".

Of her surviving 458 works, the Violin Concerto No. 2 is a gem among so many of her truly incredible works. Considered lost, the piece was rediscovered in 2009 when renovators stumbled upon a huge collection of Price's manuscripts at her abandoned summer home outside of Chicago. Concerto No. 2 is grounded in Dvorak-esque European traditions and romanticism, but with a distinctive American spiritual flair. The short concerto unfolds in four interlocking sections bound together with three contrasting ideas: an assertive melody first stated in the orchestra, a meandering theme in the solo violin, and a lyrical duet between the solo violin and trumpet.



## Symphony in E minor, Op. 32, *Gaelic* | Amy Beach (1867-1944)

Stifled by the time and society, Amy Beach quietly persevered throughout her life to become a pioneer for women in classical music, as well as a remarkable composer in her own right. The “Gaelic” Symphony was the first symphony by an American woman to be composed, published, and then performed by a major orchestra; however, it is also considered by many to be the first truly great American symphony, regardless of the composer’s sex. It is also the first American symphonic work to utilize Anglo-American folk music (the credit for which is usually given later to Aaron Copland, Charles Ives, and Virgil Thomson). Beach was not only the dominant female composer, but one of the most performed American composers of the time. Despite her strict and repressive childhood, then the gilded cage of her society marriage, Beach was a mostly self-taught musical genius, an accomplished concert pianist in the United States and Europe, a successful composer, and an advocate for women in music as founder and first president of the Society of American Women Composers.

Worried that Amy’s voracious talent would turn her into a “prideful” un-ladylike prodigy, her controlling mother limited time at the piano and denied her daughter lessons for several years. At the age of 16, her mother finally consented to let Amy publicly debut as a pianist in Boston. Her career flourished; she even starred with the Boston Symphony Orchestra as a soloist multiple times. However, just two years later, three months after she turned 18, she was married to Dr. Henry Harris Aubrey Beach, a prominent Harvard faculty surgeon, 24 years her senior, who had followed her career from an early age. The marriage, which raised her middle-class family into high society, was conditional that she “live according to his status”; thus, she would have to limit public performances to twice a year and donate the profits of those performances to charity, never teach piano, and to take his name (she signed her compositions Mrs. H.H.A. Beach), thereby erasing her hard-earned pre-marital reputation. Despite Dr. Beach’s confining expectations, he greatly encouraged his wife in her self-taught compositional studies, encouraging her to write pioneering “larger works” that include her Mass in E flat Major, Op. 5 and the “Gaelic” Symphony.

Beach felt that “In order to make the best use of folk-songs of any nation as material for musical composition, the writer should be one of the people whose songs he chooses, or at least brought up among them” and since she had been surrounded by the Irish her entire life due to the heavy emigration caused by the potato famine, she found her inspiration for the “Gaelic” all around her. In general, the Irish were despised “for the social strain they inflicted on the city, and for their alien and subversive religion”. Beach on the other hand, saw beauty in their struggles and decided to utilize various tunes written just before the Great Famine, representing an abundant and flourishing Ireland.

For Allegro con fuoco, Beach used one of her own Celtic inspired songs, “Dark is the Night” (which she set to a poem by William Ernest Henley), to depict the treacherous ocean crossing from Ireland. The introduction depicts the sea with rumbling chromatic swirls while the brass, with an air of strength and resolve, rise above the tempest with the theme. An Irish jig appears halfway through as a glimmer of hope and nostalgia; later closing the movement in simple celebration for a safe passage. Lento con molto espressione uses two Gaelic tunes in counterpoint: one that mourns a dead child, while the other celebrates Ireland’s beauty. In combining these contrasting tunes, Beach creates a sympathetic lament representing the multi-faceted sorrows of the Irish people. Allegro di molto draws from the previous movements, specifically the setting of “Dark is the Night” from the first movement, reimagining the material in a new celebratory setting in homage to the Irish people and “their sturdy daily life, their passions and battles”.



# THE ALPHARETTA SYMPHONY

Grant Gilman **Conductor & Music Director**

## **Violin I**

Earl Hough †  
Thomas Collins  
Claire Haneberg  
Susan Hanna  
In honor of Mary Betron  
Evan Lohbrunner  
Laurie Niedfeldt  
Qolett Richardson-Jackson  
Javier Schirmer  
Michael Woodward

## **Violin II**

Benjamin Cork \*  
Karen Anderson  
Rachel Calahan  
Leesha Jones  
Sponsored by Stephen Jones  
Karen Kolpitcke  
Sage Segal  
Sponsored by The Nest Café  
Midori Uyesugi  
Sponsored by Kenji Uyesugi  
Paul Wakim

## **Viola**

Kim Stocksdale \*  
Sponsored by Joel and Kim Stocksdale  
Crystal Harrison  
Olivia Johnson  
Sponsored by Aperturent  
Janée Minnick  
Sponsored by UPS  
Isobel Allegra  
Robinson-Ortiz  
Peace Stegall

## **Cello**

Rachel Bender \*  
Jessalyn Palmer  
Sponsored by Van and Diane Banke,  
and Corona  
Alex Paul  
Emily Travis  
Arianna Valentino  
Andrea Verburg  
Jeremy Woolstenhulme  
Samuel Zajde

## **Bass**

Mark Ribbens \*  
Jacob Lenz  
Vance Meholic  
Sponsored by Ralph and Christine Gleason

## **Flute**

Kelly Meholic \*  
Sponsored by Karen Hatin  
Missy Mahon \*\*  
Sponsored by James and Debra Mahon  
Sponsored by St. Thomas Aquinas  
Catholic Church Adult Choir  
Chris Petre-Baumer  
Kim Stefanick

## **Piccolo**

Chris Petre-Baumer

## **Oboe**

Torrence Welch\*  
Jessica Wilson

## **English Horn**

Gavin Joyner

## **Clarinet**

Barbaraann Bongiovanni \*  
Sponsored by Joel Stocksdale  
Sponsored by Chuck Nelson  
Robert Barnes  
Joel Stocksdale

## **Bass Clarinet**

Robert Barnes

## **Bassoon**

Avishay Ben Zvi \*  
Steven Finn

## **Contrabassoon**

Kevin Roach

## **French Horn**

Russell Williamson \*  
Brian Hedrick  
Christi Lenz  
Sponsored in memory of Tom Jones  
Mike Robinson  
Tyler Smith  
Ben Vickrey

## **Trumpet**

Geary Newman \*  
Scott Moninger  
Sponsored by Big Sky Franchise Team

## **Trombone**

Loren Haefer \*  
Brad Griner  
Steve Sako

## **Bass Trombone**

Brad Griner

## **Tuba**

Brian Faire

## **Timpani**

Dominic Ryder \*

## **Percussion**

Bryan Wysocki \*  
Dylan Mantione  
Noah Samuelson

## **Keyboard**

Julian Calvin

## **Harp**

Tyler Hartley

† Concertmaster

\* Principal

\*\* Assistant or Acting Principal

*Musicians in each section are listed in alphabetical order, after the principals.*

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