



Heartland Symphony Orchestra

Fall 2026 Concert Series

Where We Were

Ryan Webber, Music Director & Conductor

Josh Aerie, Former Music Director (2009-2013)

Alexander Corbett, Former Music Director (2016-2019)

St. Francis Orchestras, Melissa von Itter, Director (Saturday)

Brainerd High School Sinfonia Orchestra, Leslie Zander, Director (Sunday)

Saturday, October 10, 2026 | 7:30 PM

Community High School Auditorium, Little Falls

Sunday, October 11, 2026 | 2:30 PM

Gichi-ziibi Center for the Arts, Brainerd

Jacob Shay	<i>Spark!</i>	ca. 4.5'
Girolamo Frescobaldi Arr. Hans Kindler	<i>Toccata</i>	ca. 5.5'
Rick Sowash	<i>North Country Suite</i> III. Father of Waters V. Into the Winds Josh Aerie, Conductor	ca. 9.5'
Robin Butler	<i>Wings of Freedom</i>	ca. 6.5'
Zoltán Kodály	"Intermezzo" from <i>Háry János</i> Alexander Corbett, Conductor	ca. 5'
Jordan Jinosko	<i>Three Sketches of Unblemished Earth</i> I. Water II. Woodlands III. Heights	ca. 12'
Antonín Dvořák Arr. Todd Parrish	<i>A New World Festival</i>	ca. 3.5'

Jacob Shay (2000-)

***Spark!* (2022)**

What was happening in the world when this piece premiered?

In 2022, the year of *Spark!*'s premiere, the world was experiencing extraordinary change. NASA's James Webb Space Telescope sent back its first spectacular images of the universe, humanity's population surpassed eight billion, and athletes from around the world gathered in Beijing for the Winter Olympics. At the same time, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, extreme climate events, and economic upheaval reminded the world how quickly circumstances can change. Against this backdrop, Jacob Shay's *Spark!* offered something wonderfully immediate: a burst of musical energy inspired by the simple act of discovering an idea and bringing it to life.

What should I know about this composer?

Jacob Shay was a 21-year-old composition student at Concordia College in Moorhead when *Spark!* came about. He was already writing music for visual media and online projects, but this was his first commission from a professional orchestra.

What should I know about this piece?

At just 21, Jacob Shay received an extraordinary opportunity: what began as a request for feedback on some of his compositions became a commission from the Fox Valley Symphony Orchestra. Conductor Kevin Sütterlin challenged Shay to create a short, exhilarating concert opener filled with forward momentum. Shay responded by sketching three possible openings at the piano; Sütterlin selected the third, which became the foundation of *Spark!*.

The title refers to the "spark" of inspiration, particularly the music that inspired Shay as a young composer. Drawing on his love of film and video-game music, Shay pays homage to influences ranging from John Williams to *Super Mario Bros.* composer Koji Kondo. The result combines sweeping, cinematic gestures with lighter and sometimes playful moments. Though only a few minutes long, *Spark!* is designed to make every second count—launching the concert with energy, color, and a sense of musical adventure.

Spark! received its world premiere on October 29, 2022, in Appleton, Wisconsin, performed by the Fox Valley Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Kevin Sütterlin.

Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583-1643)

***Toccata* (1615)**

What was happening in the world when this piece premiered?

In 1615, the world was changing rapidly. Cervantes published the second part of *Don Quixote*, the Tokugawa victory at Osaka brought Japan's era of civil warfare to an end, and European exploration was expanding across the globe. In Rome, meanwhile, Girolamo Frescobaldi published a collection of keyboard music that would help define the emerging Baroque style.

What should I know about this composer?

Frescobaldi was one of the pioneering composers of the early Baroque, and perhaps the most influential keyboard composer of his generation. As organist at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, he became renowned throughout Europe for his virtuosic and expressive playing.

His toccatas embrace the freedom of improvisation, moving unpredictably between rapid flourishes, contrapuntal passages, and moments of striking harmonic intensity.

What should I know about this piece?

Published in 1615, his *Toccate e partite* helped establish the toccata as a vehicle for both virtuosity and musical expression, influencing generations of composers—including J.S. Bach. This piece was also played as part of Heartland's first concert!

Rick Sowash (1950-)

***North Country Suite* (2012)**

III. Father of Waters

V. Into the Winds

What was happening in the world when this piece premiered?

The Summer Olympics brought more than 10,000 athletes from 204 nations together in London, while NASA's Curiosity rover successfully landed on Mars and CERN announced the discovery of a particle consistent with the long-sought Higgs boson. At the same time, the Arab Spring continued to reshape politics in the Middle East, civil war raged in Syria, and Europe struggled through a major economic crisis. In the United States, Barack Obama was reelected president.

What should I know about this composer?

Rick Sowash is an American composer, author, and storyteller. Born in Mansfield, Ohio, he grew up in a musical family and began composing at about age 12. He says that hearing a performance of Dvořák's Cello Concerto as a young man was one of the experiences that inspired him to pursue composition.

Sowash has written hundreds of compositions in a wide variety of styles and for an equally wide range of performers. He has also worked as a writer, filmmaker, broadcaster, arts administrator, church musician, innkeeper, and storyteller.

There's also a lovely personal connection to this orchestra: Sowash was commissioned by the Heartland Symphony Orchestra in 2011 to write *North Country Suite* to celebrate the orchestra's 35th anniversary.

What should I know about this piece?

Rick Sowash's *North Country Suite* was commissioned by the Heartland Symphony Orchestra in 2011 to celebrate the orchestra's 35th anniversary and premiered in April 2012 under former Music Director Josh Aerie. The five-movement suite is Sowash's musical portrait of northern Minnesota, with movements inspired by the region's landscapes, waterways, forests, and outdoor traditions.

The two movements heard here tell particularly vivid stories. "Father of Waters" follows the Mississippi River from its origins in northern Minnesota toward New Orleans. The music begins with tiny, trickling fragments that gradually gather into the broad flow of the river before transforming unexpectedly into Dixieland—a musical journey from Minnesota to the Mississippi's destination in New Orleans. "Into the Wind," the suite's finale, was inspired by one of Sowash's own canoeing adventures on a Wisconsin lake, when he and his companions found themselves struggling against wind and waves before being rescued and towed to shore.

Robin Butler (2000-)

***Wings of Freedom* (2024)**

What was happening in the world when this piece premiered?

In 2024, the world was experiencing a period of profound change and uncertainty. Wars continued in Ukraine and Gaza, while more than 60 countries held national elections, making it one of the biggest election years in history. At the same time, the Paris Olympics brought together athletes from around the world in a rare celebration of international cooperation. Climate change remained an urgent concern: 2024 ultimately became the warmest year on record, accompanied by devastating floods, storms, wildfires, and other extreme weather events. Yet the year also brought remarkable moments of scientific and technological progress, including rapid advances in artificial intelligence and new efforts toward international cooperation on the challenges facing future generations.

What should I know about this composer?

Butler, composer and flutist from Central Illinois, and he earned his bachelor's degree in music composition from Western Illinois University in 2022. His composition career began remarkably early: while still in high school, he was a three-time finalist in the National Young Composers Challenge (2016-18) and won the 2018 University of Missouri–St. Louis Composers Competition with his orchestral work *Adagio: "A Silent Tear."*

What should I know about this piece?

Wings of Freedom had its world premiere April 6, 2024, in Little Falls, Minnesota, performed by the Heartland Symphony Orchestra under Music Director Ryan Webber. A second premiere-weekend performance took place April 7 in Brainerd. The Heartland Symphony's competition selected Butler's work as the winner of its 2024 Composition Competition.

Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967)

***"Intermezzo" from Háry János Suite* (1926)**

What was happening in the world when this piece premiered?

Robert Goddard launched the world's first liquid-fueled rocket in Massachusetts, an early milestone in modern rocketry, while John Logie Baird demonstrated an early mechanical television system in London. In popular culture, Winnie-the-Pooh was published, and Gertrude Ederle became the first woman to swim the English Channel.

What should I know about this composer?

Kodály was a composer, ethnomusicologist, educator, linguist, and philosopher, and his life's work was deeply connected to Hungarian cultural identity. Kodály and fellow Hungarian composer Béla Bartók were pioneers in the systematic study of folk music. Beginning in the early 1900s, they traveled into rural areas of Hungary, recording and transcribing traditional songs—often using early phonograph equipment. Kodály believed that this music wasn't merely a collection of quaint folk tunes; it represented an important part of Hungary's artistic and cultural heritage. Those folk traditions became central to his compositional language.

Kodály was also enormously influential as an educator. His ideas about music education eventually became internationally known as the Kodály Method, emphasizing singing, musical literacy, and the idea that high-quality music education should be available to everyone.

What should I know about this piece?

The work follows Háy János, a veteran soldier who entertains those around him with wildly exaggerated stories of his heroic adventures. His tales are so improbable that the line between reality and imagination quickly disappears.

Jordan Jinosko (1994-)

Three Sketches of Unblemished Earth (2022)

What should I know about this composer?

Jordan Jinosko is an award-winning American composer whose music draws inspiration from nature, mythology, personal experience, and social activism. Her works have been performed at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, and other major venues, and her music spans concert, film, and media composition. A graduate of the University of Michigan, Jinosko has studied with composers including Michael Daugherty, Bright Sheng, and Samuel Adler. Her commitment to environmental advocacy is reflected in works such as *Three Sketches of Unblemished Earth*.

What should I know about this piece?

Three Sketches of Unblemished Earth grew directly out of Jinosko's experiences hiking along the Appalachian Trail. She describes the three movements as musical sketches of landscapes she encountered along the journey.

I. Water

The first movement comes from Jinosko's memories of early mornings on the trail, particularly watching cold dew settle around nearby lakes.

She describes the water as a place where her mind could wander and brood, but also as something that repeatedly brought her back to a feeling of peace. That gives the movement a contemplative quality: it's not simply a musical depiction of water, but of the experience of stopping and paying attention to nature.

II. Woodlands

The middle movement is quite different. Jinosko calls it essentially "traveling music" and describes its character as childlike, playful, and adventurous.

That makes a lovely contrast with *Water*: first we pause and observe, then we move through the landscape.

III. Heights

Jinosko calls *Heights* her "love letter" to the mountainous regions of the American Northeast. But the movement isn't simply a celebration of beautiful scenery. She intended it as a reminder of what humanity stands to lose through pollution and environmental destruction, and as a call to find ways of living more peacefully with the planet.

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904), arr. Todd Parish
A New World Festival (2025)

What was happening in the world when this piece premiered?

In 1893, the world was entering the modern industrial age. Chicago hosted the spectacular World's Columbian Exposition, a world's fair celebrating the 400th anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the Americas and showcasing new technology, architecture, art, and industry to millions of visitors. In Hawaii, Queen Lili'uokalani was overthrown in January, beginning the political process that eventually led to the islands' annexation by the United States. Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony was premiered just weeks before his death, while Verdi's *Falstaff* also premiered that year. Antonín Dvořák was serving as director of the National Conservatory of Music, thinking deeply about what an authentically American musical identity might sound like. On December 16, his Ninth Symphony, *From the New World*, received its triumphant premiere at Carnegie Hall under Anton Seidl.

What should I know about this composer?

Antonín Dvořák was one of the most celebrated Czech composers of the nineteenth century. Born the eldest son of a butcher and innkeeper in a small Bohemian village, Dvořák rose from humble beginnings to international fame through works that combined the traditions of European classical music with the rhythms and melodies of his Czech heritage. From 1892 to 1895, he lived in the United States as director of New York's National Conservatory of Music. His American experience inspired some of his most enduring works, including Symphony No. 9, *From the New World*. During the summer of that year, Dvořák and his family spent several months in the Czech immigrant community of Spillville, Iowa, where the surrounding landscape and community left a lasting impression on the composer.

What should I know about this piece?

The title *From the New World* does not necessarily mean that the music depicts America. Rather, it reflects Dvořák's experience of America as an outsider looking in. The symphony is filled with contrasts between the familiar and the unfamiliar, homesickness and discovery, European tradition and American influence. Dvořák's Czech roots remain unmistakable in his melodic writing, rhythmic vitality, and use of dance-like figures.



Initiative
FOUNDATION

HSO would like to thank the Initiative Foundation for
the opportunity to utilize their parking lot as a fundraiser
during the Little Falls Arts & Crafts Fair.

◆ JOSH AERIE ◆

Josh Aerie is a nonprofit arts executive, cellist, chamber musician, and symphonic conductor. He is passionate about bringing music into the lives of others. Throughout his diverse career, Josh has worked to harness the power of the musical arts to catalyze and transform communities.

Josh was appointed Executive Director of the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Association in September 2025. Founded in 1973 in South Bend, Indiana, the Fischhoff hosts the largest chamber music competition in the world and is one of the most prestigious prizes attainable in classical music. The Fischhoff also engages thousands of students throughout the Midwest each year in a variety of educational outreach programs, and brings high-level chamber music training to middle and high school musicians through its Chamber Music Academy and Summer Intensive in partnership with the University of Notre Dame.



Prior to leading Fischhoff, Josh was Executive Director of The Music Village, a community musical arts center and school in downtown South Bend, a position he held for over 10 years. Under his leadership, The Music Village saw significant institutional growth, with exponential increases in enrollment, programming, philanthropy, facilities, and partnerships.

Aerie is cellist in the Sylvan Trio, a flute-cello-piano ensemble that performs throughout the U.S. and can be heard on classical radio and streaming services across the globe. The Sylvans are strong proponents for new music and underrepresented composers, and are known for dynamic performances that blur the line between stage and audience. Founded in 2013, the Trio has been heard over 25 times on *Performance Today*, the nation's most listened-to classical music radio program.

In 2007, Aerie founded the Woodland Chamber Music Workshop, an annual summer festival for adult musicians in northern Minnesota. The Workshop attracted participants from across the country for a week of intensive chamber ensemble coaching, seminars, and performances with six faculty.

Aerie has served as music director of symphonies in Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Washington, D.C., and Wisconsin. Most recently, he was Music Director of the Columbus Symphony Orchestra, Indiana's oldest orchestral ensemble, where he instituted live-streamed educational programming, a regional youth concerto competition, and a nationwide composition competition.

While living in Minnesota, Aerie served on the music faculties of the University of Wisconsin Superior, College of St. Scholastica, and Minnesota North College. He also co-founded the North Shore Philharmonic Orchestra, served as Chair of the state's largest Arts Council, and was Advisor to the Minnesota State Arts Board.

After completing undergraduate degrees at Oberlin College and Conservatory of Music, Aerie was cellist in the graduate string quartet at the University of Colorado Boulder where he studied with the Takács Quartet and earned a Master of Music.

◆ ALEXANDER CORBETT ◆

Alexander Corbett leads a diverse career as a conductor and educator. He serves as director of orchestral studies at Temple College, where he serves as the chair of the Department of Music, conducts the symphony orchestra, and teaches courses in applied violin, applied viola, music history, music literature, and string methods. He has previously taught at the University of Minnesota–Morris, the College of Saint Benedict–Saint John's University, and the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities. He was also the conductor and music director of the Heartland Symphony Orchestra for three seasons and is honored to return as a guest conductor.



Corbett earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Violin Performance with Sally O'Reilly at the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities, where he was a Berneking Fellow and graduate assistant. Other influential teachers include Joanne Cohen, Mark Russell Smith, Yair Kless, Lydia Artymiw, Daniel Breedon, and Scott Jones. He spent his summers studying at the Brevard Music Center (Brevard, NC), Bravo! Summer Music Festival (Minneapolis, MN), and Pienza Music Festival (Pienza, Italy).

Corbett maintains a private teaching studio in Temple, Texas. He lives in Temple with his wife, pianist Kate Bae.



Accompanying Heartland Symphony Orchestra
at the Little Falls Concert on October 11, 2026

◆ ST. FRANCIS MUSIC CENTER CONCERT ORCHESTRA ◆

Under the Direction of Melissa von Itter

VIOLIN

Declan Vogt	Little Falls
Lindsey Vetsch	Browerville
Marley Hamilton	Brainerd
Vivian Rudolph	Little Falls
Melissa von Itter	Anchorage, AK
Adam Surma	Little Falls
Jan Hovda	Rice
Pamela Wolters	Little Falls
Frances Carroll	Little Falls
Vicki Spofford	Little Falls
Annie Gabel	Little Falls
Mackenzie Vetsch	Browerville
Christopher Kozumplik	Little Falls
Olivia Wallace	St. Cloud
Debbie Jansma	Baxter
Nora Hollerman	Little Falls
Marilyn Husby	Little Falls

VIOLA

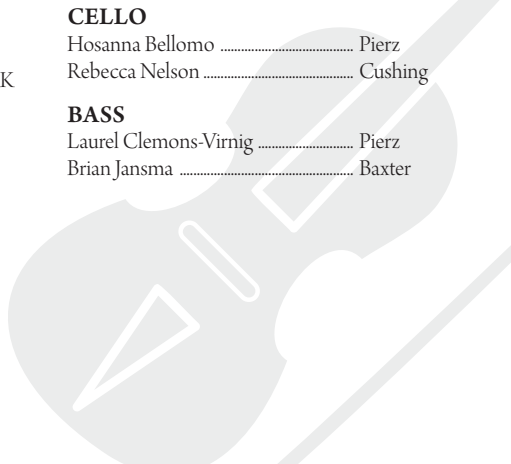
Maggie Wildenberg	Billings, MT
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CELO

Hosanna Bellomo	Pierz
Rebecca Nelson	Cushing

BASS

Laurel Clemons-Virnig	Pierz
Brian Jansma	Baxter



◆ HEARTLAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA PERSONNEL ◆

VIOLIN 1

Leslie Zander, Concertmaster	Brainerd
J. David Arnott	St. Cloud
Tamara Bottge	St. Cloud
Sandy Larson	Brainerd
Janet Pederson	Bemidji

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
Ethan Sunder	Little Falls

CELLO

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

STRING BASS

Don Neu, Principal	Freeport
Val Buchmeier	St. Michael

BANJO

Tim Zander	Brainerd
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PICCOLO

Audrey Aspen	Royalton
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FLUTE

Lauren Nickisch, Principal	Pequot Lakes
Lisa Winter	Wadena

OBOE

Amy Kessler, Principal	Merrifield
Kaarin Hanske	Baxter

CLARINET

Max Sommers, Principal	Brainerd
Cathy Dens	Brainerd

BASS CLARINET

Melissa von Itter	Little Falls
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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
Marilyn Quist	Nisswa
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
Sarah Fogderud	Brainerd
Todd Peterson	Little Falls

BASS TROMBONE

Steven K. Anderson	Merrifield
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TUBA

Doug Durant, Principal	Brainerd
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TIMPANI

Angela Byram	Crosslake
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PERCUSSION

Emmett Gainey	Little Falls
Eoin O'Connell	Brainerd
John Tetrault	St. Cloud

◆ 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
heartlandsymphony@gmail.com.

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2026–2027

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