

**Exclusive Signature Event**

**An Intimate Evening with Renée Fleming**

**Saturday, November 1, 2025 at 7:30pm**

This is the 1,453<sup>rd</sup> concert in Koerner Hall

**Renée Fleming**, soprano

**Robert Moody**, conductor

**Royal Conservatory Orchestra**

**PROGRAM: VOICE OF NATURE: THE ANTHROPOCENE**

*The following accompanied by a film provided by National Geographic. The audience is asked kindly to hold applause until the end of the film.*

Jackson Browne: "Before the Deluge"

Hazel Dickens: "Pretty bird"

George Frideric Handel: "Care Selve" from *Atalanta*

Nico Muhly, text by Robinson Meyer & Thomas Traherne: "Endless Space"

Joseph Canteloube: "Bailero" from *Songs of the Auvergne*

Maria Schneider, poem by Ted Kooser: "Our Finch Feeder" from *Winter Morning Walks*

Björk: "All is Full of Love"

Heitor Villa-Lobos: "Epilogo" from *Floresta do Amazonas*

Howard Shore: "Twilight and Shadow" from *Lord of the Rings*

Kevin Puts, poem by Dorianne Laux: "Evening"

Curtis Green, text by Pearce Green: "Red Mountains Sometimes Cry"

Burt Bacharach & Hal David: "What the World Needs Now"

**INTERMISSION**

*Entr'acte:*

Jackson Browne: "Before the Deluge" (recording)

Arrangement: Caroline Shaw, with Rhiannon Giddens, Alison Krauss, Renée Fleming, & Yannick Nézet-Séguin, piano

George Frideric Handel: "To Fleeting Pleasures" from *Samson*

George Frideric Handel: "Calm Thou My Soul" from *Alexander Balus*

Ludwig van Beethoven: Overture to *Fidelio*

Reynaldo Hahn: "L'Heure exquise" from *7 Chansons Grises*

Reynaldo Hahn: "Si mes vers avaient des ailes"

Richard Strauss: "Muttertändelei" from *3 Gesänge älterer deutscher Dichter*, op. 43

Richard Strauss: "Waldseligkeit" from *3 Gesänge älterer deutscher Dichter*, op. 43

Gioachino Rossini: Overture to *Il barbiere di Siviglia*

Ruggero Leoncavallo: "Musette svara sulla bocca viva" from *La bohème*

Giacomo Puccini: "O mio babbino caro" from *Gianni Schicchi*

## THE MICHAEL AND SONJA KOERNER FUND FOR CLASSICAL PROGRAMMING

The Royal Conservatory's mission to develop future generations of musicians and to bring the world's greatest performers to Toronto has been made possible, in large part, due to the generosity of Michael and Sonja Koerner. In 2022, the Koerners invested \$10 million to create The Michael and Sonja Koerner Fund for Classical Programming, securing the future of the finest classical music concerts at Koerner Hall and our other performance venues. This latest investment, along with the naming of Michael and Sonja Koerner Hall, support of Glenn Gould School students through The Michael & Sonja Koerner Scholarships, the donation of The Michael and Sonja Koerner Early Instrument Collection, the naming of The Alexandra Koerner Yeo Cello Program and The Alexandra Koerner Yeo Chair in Cello, and support of the annual 21C Music Festival, underscores the Koerner family's dedication to music and to the RCM.

When I was 14, the film *Soylent Green* was released, a sci-fi thriller about a dystopian future of worldwide pollution, dying oceans, depleted resources, and rampant starvation. The story was set in the year 2022.

The movie has faded from memory, but one scene left a profound impression. An aged researcher, unable to go on, has chosen assisted suicide at a government clinic. To ease his last moments of life, he is shown videos of a world that no longer exists: flowers and savannahs, flocks and herds, unpolluted skies and waters, all set to a soundtrack of classical music by Tchaikovsky, Beethoven, and Grieg.

This scene captured my imagination in a terrifying way. The impact increased when I later learned that the actor playing the researcher, Edward G. Robinson, was terminally ill at the time it was filmed.

Fast forward to the pandemic. After more than two decades of constant touring, usually to urban cultural centres, performances abruptly ceased, and I suddenly found myself at home. I sought comfort in long walks outside near my house. I needed this time outdoors to maintain my emotional equilibrium, and I was reminded that nature would always be my touchstone. At the same time, the news about climate change grew more alarming: the extinction of animals we took for granted when we were children, the knowledge that white rhinos had disappeared from the wild, and daily reports of heat, fires, and flooding. I realized that the crisis we had been warned of for so long had arrived.

I thought of the great legacy of song literature that I love, when Romantic-era poets and composers reveled in imagery of nature, finding reflections of human experience in the environment. I decided to record some of this music, and to juxtapose these classics with the voices of living composers, addressing our current, troubled relationship with the natural world.

The result, in collaboration with my friend Yannick Nézet-Séguin, was the album *Voice of Nature: the Anthropocene*. When it received the 2023 Grammy Award for Best Classical Solo Vocal Album, I was thrilled, and I had the idea to tour music addressing this theme of nature as both our inspiration and our victim.

I was incredibly fortunate to connect with the imaginative, dedicated leadership at the National Geographic Society, the global non-profit committed to exploring, illuminating, and protecting the wonder of our world. It has been so exciting to work with this universally respected, landmark institution. I am deeply grateful for the help of President and Chief Operating Officer Michael Ulica, Chief Executive Officer Jill Tiefenthaler, and Producer/Editor Sam Deleon, whose expertise and vision have been instrumental in creating the video you will see in the first half of tonight's program.

Thankfully, the stunning natural world depicted in this film still exists, unlike that movie scene so upsetting to my younger self. In blending these beautiful images with music, my hope is, in some small way, to rekindle your appreciation of nature, and encourage any efforts you can make to protect the planet we share.

*Sincerely, Renée Fleming*

## Renée Fleming

### Soprano

Renée Fleming is internationally celebrated for her vocal and dramatic artistry, as well as her dedicated advocacy for the powerful impacts of the creative arts in health. A 2023 Kennedy Center Honoree and winner of five Grammy Awards and the US National Medal of Arts, she has sung for momentous occasions from the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony to the Diamond Jubilee for Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace. In 2008 she became the first woman

in the 125-year history of the Metropolitan Opera to solo headline an opening night gala, and in 2014, she became the first classical artist ever to sing “The Star-Spangled Banner” for the Super Bowl. In 2023, the World Health Organization appointed her as a Goodwill Ambassador for Arts and Health and this year at Davos, she became an inaugural member of the World Economic Forum’s Global Arts and Culture Council.

Renée’s latest recital and concert program, *Voice of Nature: the Anthropocene*, inspired by her 2023 Grammy-winning album, includes an original film created by the National Geographic Society to reflect the musical selections. In 2024 at the Metropolitan Opera, she reprised her role in *The Hours*, an opera based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel and award-winning film. This spring, she will reprise her celebrated portrayal of Pat Nixon in *Nixon in China* at the Opéra de Paris.

Renée’s anthology *Music and Mind: Harnessing the Arts for Health and Wellness* was published in 2024. A prominent advocate for research at the intersection of arts, health, and neuroscience, she created a live program called *Music and Mind*, which she has presented in more than 70 cities around the world, earning Research!America’s Rosenfeld Award for Impact on Public Opinion and Harvard Medical School’s David Mahoney Neuroscience Prize. She is now an advisor for major initiatives in this field, including the NeuroArts Blueprint at Johns Hopkins University. She launched the Renée Fleming NeuroArts Investigator Awards, funding interdisciplinary research projects by early career scientists in collaboration with creative artists.

Renée has recorded everything from complete operas and song recitals to indie rock and jazz. In 2023, Decca released a special double-length album of live recordings from Renée’s greatest performances at the Metropolitan Opera. Known for bringing new audiences to classical music and opera, Renée has sung not only with Luciano Pavarotti and Andrea Bocelli, but also with Elton John, Paul Simon, Sting, Josh Groban, Dead and Company, and Joan Baez. Renée’s voice is featured on the soundtracks of Best Picture Oscar winners *The Shape of Water* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

Co-Artistic Director of the Aspen Opera Center and VocalArts at the Aspen Music Festival, Renée is also Advisor for Special Projects at LA Opera and Artist Development Advisor at Wolf Trap Opera. Renée’s other awards include the 2023 Crystal Award from the World Economic Forum in Davos, the Fulbright Lifetime Achievement Medal, Germany’s Cross of the Order of Merit, Sweden’s Polar Music Prize, and honorary doctorates from 10 major universities. [www.reneefleming.com](http://www.reneefleming.com)

## **Robert Moody**

### **Conductor**

Conductor Robert Moody celebrates his tenth season as Music Director of the Memphis Symphony Orchestra and nineteenth season as Music Director of Arizona Musicfest. He was named Music Director of the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra in June 2024. He holds the title of Principal Opera Conductor for Lakeland Symphony/Opera.

Moody’s 2025-26 season includes debuts with the Philadelphia Orchestra, San Francisco, Madison, Tallahassee, and Winnipeg symphonies; Hong Kong Philharmonic; and tonight with the Royal Conservatory Orchestra. He is also pleased to work with the students at the Iberacademy in Medellín, Colombia.

He has led many of the major orchestras and opera companies of the world, including the Chicago, Cincinnati, Dallas, Houston, and Toronto symphony orchestras; Los Angeles and Buffalo philharmonics, Minnesota Orchestra, and Washington National Opera. Internationally, his recent engagements include the Aachen and Baden Baden Symphony Orchestras in Germany, Orquesta Filarmonica de Bogotá (Colombia), and the Vienna Chamber Orchestra (Austria). He made his debut in China in 2024 with the Shen Zhen Symphony Orchestra. He is a frequent guest conductor in South Africa, returning this season for the third time to conduct the three major orchestras there – Cape Town, Johannesburg, and KZN Philharmonic in Durban. He regularly collaborates with soprano Renée Fleming.

## **Royal Conservatory Orchestra**

### **Joaquin Valdepeñas, Resident Conductor**

The Royal Conservatory Orchestra (RCO), part of the Temerty Orchestral Program, is widely regarded as an outstanding ensemble and one of the best training orchestras in North America. Four renowned conductors work with the RCO each season, allowing Glenn Gould School students to gain experience through professional rehearsal and

performance conditions. A full week of rehearsals culminates in a Koerner Hall performance under the batons of such distinguished guest conductors as Sir Roger Norrington, former Ihnatowycz Chair in Piano Leon Fleisher, Bramwell Tovey, Johannes Debus, Peter Oundjian, Gábor Takács-Nagy, Ivars Taurins, Tania Miller, Andrei Feher, Mario Bernardi, Richard Bradshaw, Nathan Brock, Julian Kuerti, Uri Mayer, Tito Muñoz, András Keller, Earl Lee, Naomi Woo, William Eddins, and Lior Shambadal. With four annual performances, participation in the RCO ensures that instrumental students in the Bachelor of Music and the Artist Diploma Program of The Glenn Gould School graduate with extensive orchestral performance experience. Additionally, winners of The Robert W. and G. Ann Corcoran Concerto Competition have the opportunity to appear each year as soloists with the RCO. Graduates of the RCO have joined the ranks of the greatest orchestras in the world, including the Cleveland Orchestra, the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the BBC Orchestra, the Israel Philharmonic, the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Tafelmusik, the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Calgary Philharmonic, the Quebec Symphony Orchestra, the Hallé Orchestra of Manchester, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and Leipzig Gewandhaus. In addition to performances in Koerner Hall, the RCO has performed on numerous occasions at the Isabel Bader Performing Arts Centre in Kingston, has been heard repeatedly on the national broadcasts of the *CBC Radio*, and in May 2024 made its Carnegie Hall debut under Maestro Peter Oundjian. I know

*Renée Fleming and Robert Moody are making their Royal Conservatory debuts. On October 31, The Royal Conservatory hosted "Music and the Mind: A Smart Start to Early Childhood Education," a day-long symposium of musicians, scientists, and educators, moderated by Ms. Fleming. For information on the RCM's Smart Start Program, please visit <https://www.smartstartprogram.org/>*