

Royal Conservatory Orchestra conducted by William Eddins

Friday, May 2, 2025 at 8pm

This is the 1,389th concert in Koerner Hall

William Eddins, conductor

Colin Mackey, baritone

Royal Conservatory Orchestra

PROGRAM

Giuseppe Verdi: Overture from *La forza del destino*

Ralph Vaughan Williams: *Songs of Travel*, IRV 77

1. "The Vagabond"
2. "Let Beauty Awake"
3. "The Roadside Fire"
4. "Youth and Love"
5. "In Dreams"
6. "The Infinite Shining Heavens"
7. "Whither Must I Wander?"
8. "Bright is the Ring of Words"
9. "I Have Told the Upward and the Downward Slope"

INTERMISSION

Igor Stravinsky: *Petrushka* (original 1911 version)

1. The Shrove-Tide Fair – leading to The Magic Trick and The Russian Dance
2. In Petrushka's Room
3. In the Moor's Room – including The Dance of the Ballerina, and The Waltz of the Ballerina and the Moor
4. The Shrove-Tide Fair (Evening) – including The Dance of the Nursemaids, The Dance of the Coachmen and Stable boys, The Masqueraders' Scene, and Apparition of Petrushka's Ghost

Giuseppe Verdi

Born in Le Roncole, Italy, October 10, 1813; died in Milan, Italy, January 27, 1901

Overture from *La forza del destino* (1869)

While many of Verdi's operas open with a brief prelude, a few, like *Otello* and *Falstaff*, plunge straight into the drama. Others begin with a full-scale overture, and among these, *La forza del destino* remains the most enduring. At its 1862 premiere in St. Petersburg's Imperial Theatre, the opera opened with a short prelude. A lukewarm reception led Verdi to extensively revise the opera for its 1869 La Scala production, adding a superbly dramatic eight-minute overture that perfectly foreshadows the drama and tragedy that lie ahead. It introduces some of the greatest themes in the opera, from the ominous three-note, thrice-repeated unison brass motif to the agitated string theme that recurs throughout both overture and opera, encapsulating the inevitability of fate – literally, the “force of destiny.” The string theme also underlines Leonora's soaring prayer, high on the violins, vividly evoking the opera's central conflict – honour versus passion – at the mercy of implacable fate.

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Born in Down Ampney, England, October 12, 1872; died in London, England, August 26, 1958

***Songs of Travel*, IRV 77 (1901-4)**

Songs of Travel was the third of three song-cycles that English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams created at the beginning of his career. He started the cycle in 1901 with a setting of “Whither Must I Wander?” (no. 7), capturing the emotional ambiguity of an exhausted wanderer returning to the home he fondly remembers only to find it cold and empty – forcing him to continue his wandering. In the song, poet Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-94) switches between past and present tense and Vaughan Williams mirrors this with changes between minor and major keys, and a suggestion of folk song in both his melody and rhythm. Pleased with the setting, Vaughan Williams selected eight more poems from the 44 in Stevenson's collection *Songs of Travel and Other Verses* (1895), choosing texts that explore recurring themes of wandering and remembered love. The poems also reflect the poet's view of travel as both an outward and an inward journey. He then used musical cues to suggest the wanderer's progression from the security of family and home to the life of a wanderer – a narrative that has long fascinated composers from Schubert to Mahler.

The cycle was first performed in 1904, but only nos. 1, 3, and 8 were published the following year, with five more appearing separately, at the publisher's insistence, in 1907. The final song, “I Have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope” was only discovered by Vaughan Williams's widow after his death. Effectively an epilogue, it briefly quotes four earlier songs – a point that would have been lost if published separate from the cycle. The full cycle for baritone and piano was published in 1960, decades after individual songs and an incomplete cycle had already helped elevate English song from the parlour to an art form.

Vaughan Williams orchestrated the three songs published in 1904 one year later. The rest were done posthumously, using the same instrumental forces, by his trusted copyist/assistant Roy Douglas.

Igor Stravinsky

Born in Oranienbaum [now Lomonosov], nr. St. Petersburg, Russia, June 5/17, 1882; died in New York, NY, April 6, 1971

***Petrushka* (original 1911 version)**

Petrushka is to the Russians what Punch is to the English, Pierrot to the French, Pinocchio to the Italians, and Hanswurst to the Germans. He is a reflection of ourselves – one step removed from reality yet driven by all-too-human emotions. His tragedy, and ours by extension, lies in his longing for the unattainable – for human life itself. His death is therefore painfully human, and his resurrection all the more unsettling.

Stravinsky first envisioned *Petrushka* in 1910, while composing a short *Konzertstück* for piano and orchestra. As he wrote what he called this ‘bizarre piece,’ he constantly pictured a puppet suddenly endowed with life, exasperating the orchestra with diabolical cascades of arpeggios. He later crystallised these ideas into the character of *Petrushka*, “the immortal and unhappy hero of every fair in all countries.”

When Stravinsky shared his idea with impresario Serge Diaghilev, Diaghilev immediately suggested expanding it into a ballet. The two had recently achieved great success with their first collaboration, *The Firebird*

(1909–10), and though Stravinsky was already envisioning *The Rite of Spring*, he turned his attention to this new project. The music from the *Konzertstück* became the second scene of the ballet, with the piano embodying Petrushka himself.

Premiered in Paris, *Petrushka* brought a revolutionary soundscape to the ballet stage: strident, incisive sonorities, jagged rhythms, irregular metres, and a previously unexplored range of musically expressive character for dance. Mikhail Fokine, who had choreographed *The Firebird*, guided the dancers through its unprecedented, constantly shifting rhythmic patterns. The most famous dissonance in the score is the so-called ‘Petrushka chord,’ the musical germ of the entire ballet – a biting clash of C major (the piano’s white keys) and F sharp major (the black keys), capturing the mix of burlesque and pathos at the heart of Petrushka’s character. Stravinsky also wove in Russian folk melodies, connecting his score closely to the time and place represented on stage. Austrian waltzes and a French music hall song also blend seamlessly into Stravinsky’s distinctive musical language. The score, structured as a mosaic of narrative and set-piece dances, favours juxtaposition over traditional symphonic development. Diaghilev brought in the best talent of the day to develop and produce the ballet. Alexandre Benois, a devoted admirer of Russian puppet theatre, collaborated with Stravinsky on the scenario and designed the decor. Fokine choreographed the work. In their respective biographies, the four major players in the creation of the ballet, Stravinsky, Diaghilev, Fokine, and Benois each claimed the primary role in shaping the ballet; the truth, doubtless, lies somewhere in between.

Pierre Monteux conducted the premiere June 13, 1911, with Nijinsky, Karsavina, Orlov, and Cecchetti in the principal roles. The performances at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris were a triumph, and *Petrushka* was widely hailed as the greatest achievement of the Ballets Russes under Diaghilev. When the company toured Europe and the United States with the production, they required 12 rail cars to transport its elaborate sets. A tour de force of virtuosity, *Petrushka* remains one of Stravinsky’s most frequently performed and staged ballets.

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William Eddins

Conductor

William Eddins is the Music Director Emeritus of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra and a frequent guest conductor of major orchestras throughout the world.

Recent engagements include conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra with Yo-Yo Ma and collaborations with Wynton Marsalis’s Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with both the Detroit Symphony and Minnesota Orchestra.

Eddins has conducted the New York Philharmonic, St. Louis Symphony, the symphony orchestras of Boston, Cincinnati, Atlanta, Detroit, Dallas, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Houston, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Internationally, Eddins was principal guest conductor of the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra (Ireland). He has also conducted the Berlin Staatskapelle, Berlin Radio Orchestra, Welsh National Opera, and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

Career highlights include taking the Edmonton Symphony Orchestras to Carnegie Hall in May of 2012 and leading the KwaZulu-Natal Philharmonic on tour in South Africa with soprano Renée Fleming.

An accomplished pianist and chamber musician, he regularly conducts from the piano in works by Mozart, Beethoven, Gershwin, and Ravel. Recently, Eddins has been performing Enrique Granados’s seminal solo piano work *Goyescas* (1911), having performed recitals in Minneapolis, Milwaukee, and Houston in 2023.

Mr. Eddins has performed at the Ravinia Festival, the Aspen Music Festival, the Hollywood Bowl, Chautauqua Festival, the Boston University Tanglewood Institute, and the Civic Orchestra of Chicago.

Colin Mackey

Baritone

Originally from Newfoundland, baritone Colin Mackey is finishing his time with the McPhee Artist Development Program of Calgary Opera and will be joining the Atelier lyrique of Opéra de Montréal as an artist-in-residence in 2025. Colin has proven himself equally capable on concert, recital, and operatic stages, having recently made his

Calgary Opera mainstage debut in their double-bill production of *Gianni Schicchi* and *Bluebeard's Castle*. In 2024, Colin earned an Artist Diploma in Performance from The Glenn Gould School of The Royal Conservatory, with the generous support of a full-tuition Temerty Foundation Scholarship, having previously completed a master's degree from McGill University in 2022.

Recent highlights include Il notaio in *Gianni Schicchi*, role studies of Malatesta in *Don Pasquale*, and the title role of *Don Giovanni* (Calgary Opera), Marquis de La Force in *Dialogues of the Carmelites* (The Glenn Gould School), Belcore in *L'elisir d'amore* (Highlands Opera Studio), Minskman in Jonathan Dove's *Flight*, Adonis in *Venus and Adonis* (The Glenn Gould School), and Dr. Falke in *Die Fledermaus* (Toronto Operetta Theatre).

In his final year at The Glenn Gould School, Colin was fortunate to be amongst the winners of both The Robert W. and G. Ann Corcoran Concerto Competition and The Glenn Gould School Chamber Competition. This past summer, with the generous support of the Art Song Foundation of Canada and the Jacqueline Desmarais Foundation for Young Canadian Opera Singers, Colin attended the Franz Schubert Institute in Baden, Austria. There, Colin had the opportunity to perform and learn from internationally renowned artists such as Elly Ameling, Robert Holl, Julius Drake, Roger Vignoles, Wolfram Rieger, Helmut Deutsch, and more. After such an inspirational summer, Colin is planning to return with collaborative partner, Karmen Grubišić, in the summer of 2025. In addition to performing, Colin is an experienced teacher and is passionate about music education and community music making. www.colinmackey.com

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. Through the RBC Guest Conductor Program, 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 Ichnatowycz 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, Andrés Keller, 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 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.