

BRANDENBURG CONCERTOS

February 21 + 22 + 23, 2025



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WELCOME TO H+H

Along with everyone else in the audience, I love the Brandenburgs! Each of the concertos has its own drama, conversations among the instruments, and visible motion as well as melody and rhythm. Violins talk with oboes and bassoons. Harpsichord and flute and violin voice their reflections with one another. Violin and recorders have a dance. Trumpet, recorder, oboe and violin hand off themes and variations moving in sequence across the stage. Our H+H musicians create this magic, masterfully performed and passionately shared—and we the audience complete the experience with the emotions and ovations that can only happen in a concert hall, together.



Experiencing all the Brandenburgs adds more layers of meaning. Meditative movements in some of the concertos contrast with light-stepping tunes in others. Cadenzas dazzle. Melodic trios set a stately elegant pace. The six concertos as a whole constitute a work of musical art in itself.

And consider this weekend's Brandenburg performances in the context of the H+H season, yet another layer and level of artistic creation. The depths of the opening Requiems and full range of *Messiah*'s intimacy, awe, anguish, and promise brought us to the joy of Baroque Christmas. In the opening weeks of this new year, the contrasts and aching harmonies of Crossing the Deep, and the charm and beauty of Handel's cantatas usher us into the hall for these concertos. And Classical greats invite us onward through the spring.

Soon we will be announcing the 2025-26 Season, with new allures shaped by artistic director Jonathan Cohen. Stay tuned—and subscribe! Keep coming to the halls, complete the musical experience that the H+H Orchestra and Chorus create. Listen, watch, reflect, emote, exult. Thank you for being here, in joyful concert.

Rob Shapiro

Kund Ry



Did you know ticket sales cover only 22% of our concert costs?

As a non-profit organization we rely on your donations to close the gap not covered by ticket sales. Give today to keep **all** our musicians on stage.



Your gift to our "You Are the Music" campaign will elevate our artistry, engage a broader audience, and ensure our future.



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PROGRAM SPONSORS

This program is made possible through the generous support of Jim & Cathy Stone.

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THE HANDEL AND HAYDN SOCIETY

Boston's Grammy-winning Handel and Haydn Society performs Baroque and Classical music with a freshness, a vitality, and a creativity that inspires all ages. Called "one of the most exciting ensembles of historically informed performances in the world" (*OperaWire*), H+H has been captivating audiences for 210 consecutive seasons (the most of any performing arts organization in the United States), speaking to its singular success at welcoming new audiences to this extraordinary music, generation after generation.

H+H performed the "Hallelujah" chorus from Handel's *Messiah* in its first concert in 1815, gave the American premiere in 1818, and ever since has been both a musical and a civic leader in the Boston community. During the Civil War, H+H gave numerous concerts in support of the Union Army (H+H member Julia Ward Howe wrote "The Battle Hymn of the Republic") and on January 1, 1863, H+H performed at the Grand Jubilee Concert celebrating the enactment of the Emancipation Proclamation. Two years later, H+H performed at the memorial service for Abraham Lincoln.

H+H's Orchestra and Chorus delight more than 76,000 listeners annually through concerts at Symphony Hall and other leading venues as well as radio broadcasts. Through the Karen S. and George D. Levy Learning and Education Program, H+H supports seven youth choirs of singers in

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grades 2-12 and provides thousands of complimentary tickets to students and communities throughout Boston, ensuring the joy of music is accessible to all. H+H has released 16 CDs on the CORO label and has toured nationally and internationally. In all these ways, H+H fulfills its mission to inspire the intellect, touch the heart, elevate the soul, and connect all of us with our shared humanity through transformative experiences with Baroque and Classical music.

PHOTO BY ROBERT TORRES HANDELANDHAYDN.ORG

BRANDENBURG CONCERTOS

Friday, February 21, 2025 at 7:30pm Saturday, February 22, 2025 at 7:30pm Sunday, February 23, 2025 at 3:00pm 2,669th Concert 2,670th Concert 2,671st Concert

Sanders Theatre and NEC's Jordan Hall

Aisslinn Nosky and Ian Watson, co-directors Handel and Haydn Society Orchestra

Johann Sebastian Bach

(1685-1750)

Brandenburg Concerto No. 1 in F Major, BWV 1046

(Allegro)

Adagio

Allegro

Menuet

Susanna Ogata, violino piccolo

Todd Williams and Nathanael Udell, horns

David Dickey, Gaia Saetermoe-Howard, and Mary Cicconetti, oboes

Andrew Schwartz, bassoon

Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 in D Major, BWV 1050

Allegro

Affettuoso

Allegro

Emi Ferguson, flute

Aisslinn Nosky, violin

lan Watson, harpsichord

Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G Major, BWV 1048

(Allegro)

Adagio

Allegro

INTERMISSION

We ask for your help in creating a positive concert experience for the performers and those around you. Cell phones and other audible devices should be switched off during the concert. Photography and recording of any kind are strictly prohibited. Food and beverages are not permitted inside the hall.

Large print programs are available at the patron information table in the lobby.

The concert runs 2 hours and 15 minutes including intermission.

Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 in F Major, BWV 1047

(Allegro)

Andante

Allegro assai

John Thiessen, trumpet

Héloïse Degrugillier, recorder

David Dickey, oboe

Aisslinn Nosky, violin

Brandenburg Concerto No. 6 in B-flat Major, BWV 1051

(Allegro)

Adagio ma non tanto

Allegro

Stephen Goist and Jenny Stirling, violas

Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 in G Major, BWV 1049

Allegro

Andante

Presto

Héloïse Degrugillier and David Dickey, recorders

Aisslinn Nosky, violin

Related Events

Musically Speaking with Teresa Neff

Christopher Hogwood Historically Informed Performance Fellow

Feb 21 + 23 | 1 hour prior to each performance in Sanders Theatre

Feb 22 | 45 minutes prior to the performance in Williams Hall

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THE WORLD BEYOND

BOWED INSTRUMENTS

Bach writes for bowed instruments-violins, violas, cellos, and basses-in each of the six Brandenburg Concertos. In Concerto No. 6, he calls for both the viola *da braccio*, or viola, and the viola *da gamba* (left), an older fretted instrument held between the legs. These and other bowed instruments, including the *rebab tiga tali* from West Malaysia (middle), and the *erhu*, a spiked fiddle from China (right) are considered descendants of the Byzantine *lūrā* and the Arab *Rabāb*.







Viola da gamba

Rebab tiga tali (West Malaysia)

Erhu (China

INSTRUMENT SPOTLIGHT

HARPSICHORD

The distinctive sound of the harpsichord is the result of the strings being plucked rather than struck. The mechanism that generates this sound allows the performer to play in a smoother or more detached manner but cannot produce a wide range of dynamic gradation without changing the number of strings being plucked at any one time.

In Baroque ensembles, the harpsichord was usually part of the basso continuo, a core group within the larger ensemble. In Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 5, however, the harpsichord is also a soloist. Toward the end of the first movement, the harpsichord emerges to play a stunning solo passage. It is not hard to imagine Bach improvising this virtuosic display and later writing it down as part of the presentation manuscript for the Margrave of Brandenburg.



H+H Principal Keyboardist + Associate Conductor Ian Watson

PROGRAM NOTES

SIX CONCERTOS WITH SEVERAL INSTRUMENTS

Johann Sebastian Bach composed the collection of six concertos known today as the Brandenburgs over several years. In the early part of the 18th century, Bach was the organist at the court in Weimar and played either violin or viola in the court ensemble. When, in 1716, Bach was passed over for a promotion by the Duke of Weimar, he realized the only way to advance his career would be through a new job. One such opportunity occurred a year later when Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen offered Bach the position of music director. When Bach asked permission to leave Weimar, however, the duke denied the request. (This was not unusual: musicians were often contractually obligated to request permission to change employers.) Bach persisted, for which he was arrested and detained by the duke for 27 days. After his release on December 2, 1717, Bach was free to move to Cöthen (about 44 miles north of Leipzig), a more prestigious court with a prince who actively participated in music and employed 17 musicians.

Although content with his duties at Cöthen, within four years Bach was contemplating another move. Financial constraints were affecting the situation at court; Prince Leopold cut the budget and left three vacant music positions unfilled. Bach was also aware of the limited educational opportunities for his children in Cöthen and even traveled to Hamburg, possibly to investigate the prospect of an organist position there. By March 1721 he had compiled a set of six concertos, dedicating it to Christian Ludwig, Margrave of Brandenburg. In the dedication, Bach wrote that he was sending the concertos in response to the margrave's request from "a few years ago," suggesting that Bach may have been offering his compositional résumé to the Brandenburg court.

The simplicity of the title Bach chose for the margrave's copy, Six Concerts avec plusieurs instruments (Six Concertos for Several Instruments), belies the array of instrumental combinations and formal diversity in this collection assembled by Bach from among his instrumental works. Each concerto retains the alternation of passages for larger ensemble (tutti) and soloists, and all but the first concerto follows the three-movement structure that characterized the form of the concerto in Bach's day. Yet each is distinctive not only in its particular solo group but also in the details of each movement; Bach solves self-imposed compositional challenges within each concerto, especially the balance within the solo groups.

The solo instruments in Concerto No. 1 in F major, BWV 1046, are two horns, three oboes, bassoon, and violin (violino piccolo). The winds (horn, oboe, bassoon) of the solo group might easily overpower a single violin, so for much of the first movement Bach uses the solo violin as the leader of the larger ensemble. In the second movement, the emergence of the violin in dialogue with the oboes and bassoon creates a delightful musical conversation. In the subsequent Allegro, Bach pairs the violin with one horn, then one oboe, before presenting a series of dance movements that feature the soloists.

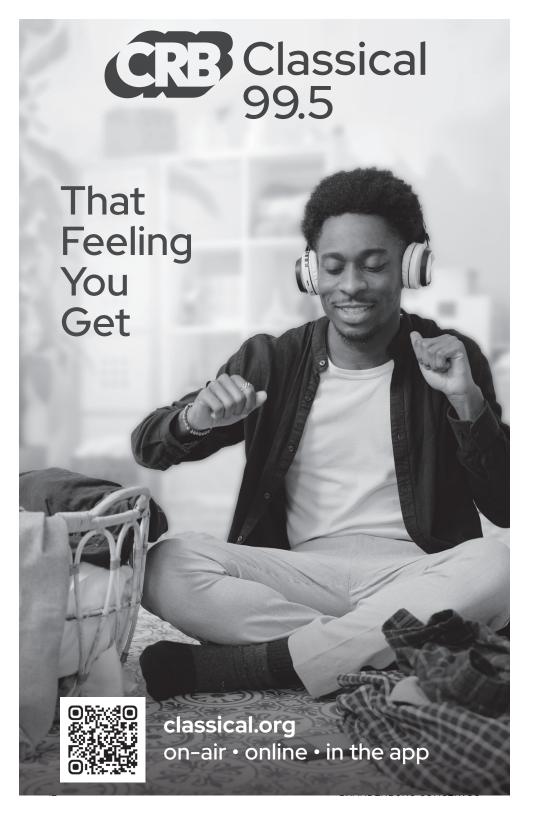
In the score for Concerto No. 5 in D major, BWV 1050, Bach delineates two roles for the harpsichord: continuo player and soloist. When the harpsichord is part of the continuo, only the left hand notes are written because it was assumed that the player would improvise the correct chords for the right hand. When the harpsichord is soloist, however, Bach writes out the music for both hands, including a spectacular cadenza-like passage at the end of the first movement. Along with the harpsichord, the other two soloists in this concerto, flute and violin, play in imitation, passing lines back and forth in a seemingly effortless exchange. This continues in the second movement, scored only for the three soloists, creating an intimate and introspective mood. In the last movement, Bach again sets the soloists' lines in imitation, now part of a joyful dance.

To our modern ears Concerto No. 3 in G major, BWV 1048, may seem to be the least concerto-like of the set. Scored for three violins, three violas, three cellos, and continuo—perhaps the reason it was placed as the third concerto of the set—Bach uses the groups of strings both collectively and individually. The first movement begins with a distinctive three-note motive that is passed through each solo group—a treat for the eye as well as the ear. The second movement contains only two chords and so the challenge for the ensemble lies in how to realize those pitches. The chords might be played as written or used as the skeletal structure for a short improvised passage for one of the soloists. This transitions to the third movement, a swirling dance that opens with a flourish first heard in the violins and then imitated by the violas and cellos.

Each of the four soloists in Concerto No. 2 in F major, BWV 1047—trumpet, recorder, oboe, and violin—has a distinctive tone color. After the opening ritornello (statement by the full ensemble) in the first movement, Bach scores the solo violin with only continuo accompaniment followed by an abbreviated ritornello. Then, the solo oboe enters accompanied by the violin. This pattern continues, with each soloist handing off the melody to the next and separated by a short ritornello, until all four instruments have been introduced. They are mixed and matched in intricate patterns for the remainder of the movement. Bach withholds the trumpet from the second movement, a graceful dance in minor, before the final movement opens with the trumpet introducing a fugue theme that is imitated by each soloist in turn.

Concerto No. 6 in B-flat major, BWV 1051, is the only concerto in the set that does not use violin. Instead, Bach scores it for two new-style instruments called violas da braccio (held by the arms), two old-style violas da gamba (held by the legs), cello, and continuo—a total of six parts. The new-style violas and cello are featured in the last two movements. In the second movement, the violas da gamba do not play and in the third movement they are cast in a supporting role. Because of Bach's scoring for the older instruments, scholars believe an earlier version of this concerto may date back to Bach's time in Weimar.

Bach uses only high-range instruments, violin and two recorders, as the soloists in Concerto No. 4, in G major, BWV 1049. With its focus on long-held notes in the recorders and the sparse accompaniment, the first movement engenders a focused, yet leisurely, pace. While the two solo recorders are easily heard, it can be difficult to hear a solo violin among the rest of the strings. Bach solves this compositional challenge by using the solo violin to connect the full ensemble and solo sections, and by writing an extended solo passage later in the movement. In the second movement, the soloists



act as echoes to the rest of the ensemble. These roles are then reversed as the soloists elaborate on the opening idea and the ensemble replies. This movement closes with a transition that harmonically prepares the final movement, Presto, a whirlwind of ideas for the full ensemble and soloists alike.

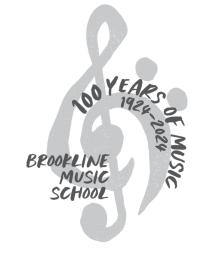
Many details surrounding the Brandenburg Concertos remain a mystery, including why Bach sent this particular collection to the margrave some two years after meeting him. The concertos were probably not performed at the margrave's court and no record of his response has survived, leading many to wonder if one was never sent. Equally uncertain is the performance history of these works before Bach created this particular collection. At least two can be traced back to Weimar and earlier versions of the concertos were most likely performed in Cöthen at the Sunday evening chamber music concerts. After Bach's death in 1750, the Brandenburg Concertos were not performed regularly. That changed when the collection was published in the mid-19th century; since then these beloved works have been a favorite for audiences and performers. Bach's imaginative blending of instrumental colors, textures, and structures in these virtuosic pieces set the standard for today's understanding of Baroque instrumental music.

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ARTIST PROFILES



Aisslinn Nosky, co-director

Appointed Concertmaster of the Handel and Haydn Society in 2011, violinist Aisslinn Nosky captivates audiences in Boston and around the world with her innovative interpretations and impeccable technique. Her fierce passion for early music and skill as a soloist, director, and conductor generate robust appreciation from press and audiences alike. Hailed as "superb" by *The New York Times* and "a fearsomely powerful musician" by *The Toronto Star*, she excels as an artist and ensemble leader.

Outside of her work with H+H, Aisslinn collaborates as guest director and soloist with orchestras across the globe, including the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Charlotte Symphony, Utah Symphony, and Holland Baroque. She was a member of Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra from 2005 to 2016 and served as principal guest conductor of the Niagara Symphony from 2016 to 2019. She is currently guest artist in residence of the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra.

Born in Canada, Aisslinn began playing violin at age three and made her solo debut with the CBC Vancouver Orchestra at eight. A passionate educator, she has served on the faculty of Amherst Early Music Festival and the International Baroque Institute of Longy, and her teaching and performing residencies include the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, the University of Nebraska at Omaha, the Rotterdam Conservatory, the Hanyang University College of Music, the Juilliard School, and the New England Conservatory of Music.



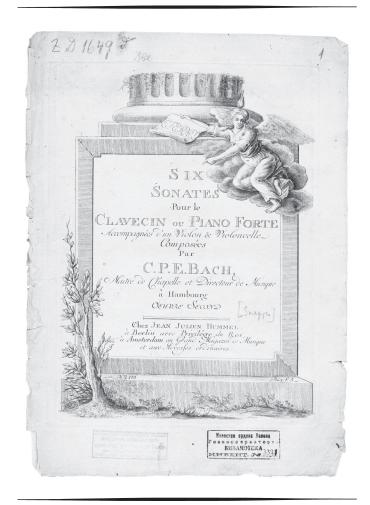
Ian Watson. co-director

The multi-talented Ian Watson has been described by leading publications as a "world-class soloist," a performer of "virtuosic panache," and "a conductor of formidable ability." Ian first played with the Handel and Haydn Society in 2007 and has served as Associate Conductor since 2016. He is also Artistic Director of the Connecticut Early Music Festival.

At age 14 Ian won a scholarship to the Junior School of the Royal Academy of Music in London, later winning all the prizes for organ performance. He completed his studies with Flor Peeters in Belgium.

lan has appeared with most major UK orchestras, the Polish and Stuttgart Chamber Orchestras, Colorado Symphony, Charlotte Symphony, Komische Oper Berlin, and numerous others. He is featured on many film soundtracks, including *Amadeus*, Polanski's *Death and the Maiden*, *Restoration*, *Cry the Beloved Country*, *Voices from a Locked Room*, and the BBC's production of *David Copperfield*.

The Complete Works



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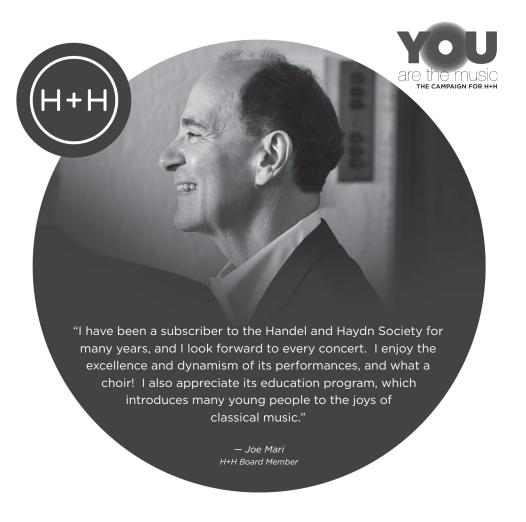
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SANDERS THEATRE PATRON INFORMATION

Sanders Theatre is managed by Memorial Hall/Lowell Hall Complex at Harvard University.

45 Quincy Street, Room 027, Cambridge, MA 02138

T 617.496.4595 | F 617.495.2420 | memhall@fas.harvard.edu

For history of the building, visit www.fas.harvard.edu/memhall

Restrooms are located on the lower level.

Latecomers will be seated at the discretion of management.

Photography and recording of any kind is not permitted in Sanders Theatre. Equipment may be confiscated.

Lost and Found

Call 617.496.4595 or visit Memorial Hall 027. Harvard University is not responsible for lost or stolen property.

Parking

There is no parking at Sanders Theatre.

Free parking for most events is available at Broadway Garage, corner of Broadway and Felton Street, from one hour preperformance to one hour post. Parking for some events will be at 52 Oxford Street Garage.

Accessibility

Accessible seating can be arranged through the Box Office.

Sanders Theatre is equipped with Assistive Listening Devices, available 30 minutes prior to events.

Parking for patrons with disabilities Limited accessible parking is available at Broadway Garage. Contact University Disability Services for other locations.

T 617.495.1859 or email: disabilityservices@harvard.edu

Please allow 3 business days for response.

The Harvard Box Office

Advance Sales: Richard A. and Susan F. Smith Campus Center

1350 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge MA 02138; 617.496.2222

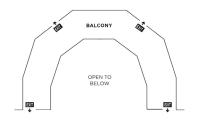
www.boxoffice.harvard.edu for calendar and hours

Pre-Performance Sales: Sanders Theatre

Open on event days only, 90 minutes prior to scheduled start time.

Closes 30 minutes after start time.





NEC'S JORDAN HALL PATRON INFORMATION

Accessibility:

Jordan Hall is wheelchair accessible. The elevator is accessible through the street level entrance to the left of the stairs at the Gainsborough Street entrance.

Large print programs are available at the patron information table in the lobby.

Assistive listening devices are available. Please see the head usher for details.

Late seating: Those arriving, or returning, to their seats late will be seated at the discretion of the management.

Lost and found: On the day of the event, patrons should check with the Security Guard on duty. After the event, patrons can call 617.585.1290.

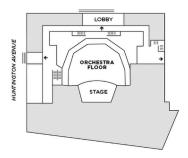
Coatrooms are located on the orchestra level near the men's rooms.

Ladies' rooms are located on the orchestra level to the left after you enter.

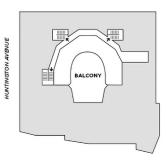
Men's rooms are located on the orchestra level to the right after you enter.

All gender restroom is located near Brown Hall down the stairs past the Beethoven statue.

In case of emergency patrons will be notified by an announcement from the stage. Should the building need to be evacuated, please follow any lighted exit sign to the street or follow alternate instructions as directed. Do not use elevators. Walk, do not run.



GAINSBOROUGH STREET



GENERAL INFORMATION

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Box Office

Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm 617.262.1815 boxoffice@handelandhaydn.org

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Groups of 10 or more save 20%. groups@handelandhaydn.org

Musically Speaking

Join Historically Informed Performance Fellow Teresa Neff for an engaging exploration of the music and instruments featured in concert.

Talks begin 1 hour prior to performances at Sanders Theatre and 45 minutes prior to performances at NEC's Jordan Hall and Symphony Hall.

Musically Speaking Locations

Sanders Theatre: on stage NEC's Jordan Hall: Williams Hall Symphony Hall: Higginson Hall

Merchandise

The Handel and Haydn Society offers gift items and recordings featuring the Orchestra and Chorus and guest artists throughout the season. Your purchases help support our education and artistic programming.

Shop Locations

Symphony Hall: At the base of the staircase on the left side of the hall (Orchestra Level)

NEC's Jordan Hall: Lobby Merchandise is also available online at handelandhaydn.org.







Explore the season and get your tickets at bso.org



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H+H Orchestra

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