



School of Music
University of Missouri

2025-2026 Series | Large Ensemble

University Symphony Orchestra

Dr. John McKeever, conductor

Kennedy Kinnick, soloist

September 28, 2025 • 3:00PM
Missouri Theatre

Program

Second Essay for Orchestra Sameul Barber
(1910-1981)

“Parto, parto, ma tu, ben mio” from *La Clemenza di Tito* Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Kennedy Kinnick, mezzo-soprano

intermission

Symphony No. 2 Jean Sibelius
(1865-1957)

- I. Allegretto
- II. Tempo andante, ma rubato
- III. Vivacissimo
- IV. Allegro moderato

University Symphony Orchestra Personnel

Flutes

John Goodson
Nadia Lake
Hanna Noh

Oboes

Sophia Fasone
Sadie Middleton
Prof. Dan Willett

Clarinets

Samantha Decker
Jane Guillot-Beinke
Matthew Kim

Bassoons

Dominick DeStefano
Michael Kouba

Horns

Hayden Alley
Emily Aponte
Alexis Doebelin
Joseph Rutherford

Trumpets

Zachary Beran
Jackson Kenney
Brandon Sconce

Trombones

Jackson Denney
Brendan Frazier
Noah Wright

Tuba

Bryce Herin

Percussion

Carson Allen
Matthew Hinkle
Daniel Noonan
Tanner Prewitt

Violins

Maya Anand
Kip Atteberry
Nathan Bronstein
Angelina Casey
Victoria Cui
Lydia Davis
Mary Draxler
Breanne Garstang
Thomas Goff
Matthew Kim
Drew Lubiewski
Brandon Merchant
Hadley Miller
Hayden Neally
Abigail Richmond
Thomas Robert
Ethan Sanders
Kyle Stawiarski
Aidan Steinkamp *
Sydney Studer
Juliana Vieira +
Simon Whitty

Violas

Ella Frank
Prof. Valerie Malvinni
Elaina Maurer *
Ash Merenbloom
Josephine O
Ava O'Bryan
Aiden Spavale
Evan Wilde

Cellos

Clara Anderson
Broderick Beebe
Sophie Hof
Jillian Keeney
Sara Lawson
Mason Murphy *
Drake O'Hearn
Henry Rao
Rebecca Robuck
Preston Smith

Basses

Samuel Caldwell
Sydney Hoynacki
Lucas Reaume *
Trey Rolfes

Assistant Conductor

Ellie Chang

+ - Concertmaster

* - Principal String

Names are listed in
alphabetical order, seatings
for the winds and percussion
rotate on each piece

Biographies

Kennedy Kinnick, mezzo-soprano, is from Raymore, Missouri USA. She is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance at the University of Missouri (2026). Kennedy is studying voice with Christina Ray. Throughout her academic career, Kennedy has performed in various National Teachers of Singing competitions and has placed in both classical and musical theatre categories.

In the 2022-2023 season, Kennedy made her operatic debut as Hippolyta in Mizzou Opera's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The following summer, Kennedy made an international debut and appeared as Cornelia in Opera Semes production of *Giulio Cesare* in Arezzo, Italy.

In the 2023-2024 season, Kennedy made a company debut as a Flower Girl and studied the role of Cherubino in Landlocked Opera's production of *Le nozze di Figaro*. In the spring 2024, Kennedy performed the role of Polinesso in Mizzou Opera's production of Handel's *Ariodante*.

In the 2024-2025 season, Kennedy performed in Landlocked Opera's production of *L'elisir d'amore*. In March 2025, she performed in Mizzou Opera's production of *The Yeomen of the Guard* as Dame Carruthers. In July 2025, she made a role and company debut as Cherubino in The Lyric Opera Studios production of *Le nozze di Figaro* in Weimar, Germany.

In the upcoming 2025-2026 season, Kennedy will perform as The Mother in Landlocked Opera's production of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* in December. In spring 2026, she will be Hansel in Mizzou Show-Me Opera's production of *Hansel and Gretel*. Tonight, Kennedy will perform as a soloist in collaboration with the University Symphony Orchestra as a winner of the Mizzou Soloist Competition.

John McKeever is the Director of Orchestral Activities at the University of Missouri in Columbia, MO. In 2022/23 Dr. McKeever was the Assistant Conductor for the University of North Carolina School of the Arts Symphony Orchestra. Additionally, Dr. McKeever also worked as the Assistant Conductor for Piedmont Opera, where he conducted their 2023 production of Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*. Dr. McKeever earned a Doctor of Musical Arts in Orchestral Conducting at the University of Colorado Boulder, graduating in 2021. As a graduate teaching assistant, he served as the director of the CU Boulder Campus Orchestra. He also served as an Assistant and Cover Conductor for the Boulder Philharmonic.

Born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska, Dr. McKeever began his studies on the piano. While continuing on the piano, he switched his focus to the double bass in elementary school. He

earned a Bachelor of Music in Double Bass Performance at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts where he studied with Paul Sharpe. While a student at UNCSA, Dr. McKeever developed an interest in conducting and began to work as an assistant conductor for the A.J. Fletcher Opera Institute, Piedmont Opera, and several UNCSA musicals. Dr. McKeever continued his studies at UNCSA, earning a Master of Music in Orchestral Conducting in 2015.

From 2012-2018, Dr. McKeever served as the Assistant Conductor for Piedmont Opera in Winston-Salem, NC. In 2018 he made his conducting debut with the company in Piedmont Opera's production of *The Pirates of Penzance*. In 2016, Dr. McKeever shadowed the American Ballet Theatre's spring season at the Metropolitan Opera at the invitation of the company's principal conductor, Charles Barker. Dr. McKeever's teachers include James Allbritten, David Amado, Charles Barker, Michael Jinbo, Christopher James Lees, Gary Lewis, Jonathan Schiffman, and Kevin Stites.

For more information, please visit johnmckeeperconductor.com.

Program Notes

Samuel Barber (1910-1981): *Second Essay for Orchestra* (1942)

Samuel Barber was an American composer whose lush, lyrical style made him one of the most Romantic voices of the 20th century. He wrote his first piece at age seven and attempted an opera at ten, before entering the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied piano, voice, composition, and conducting. Known for music that is both heartfelt and artfully crafted, Barber created works that continue to captivate audiences. Between 1937 and 1978, he wrote three *Essays for Orchestra*, each exploring a single musical idea the way a writer might develop an argument on the page. His *Second Essay for Orchestra* is widely considered the most powerful of the three.

Barber composed this piece in 1942, just months after the U.S. entered World War II, after the attack on Pearl Harbor. He confessed to a friend: "My music has been going so well that it seems incongruous for times such as these." However, he decided the best thing he could do was keep creating "tutta forza"—with full force. The piece was commissioned by conductor Bruno Walter, who led the premiere with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall in April 1942. Shortly afterward, Barber joined the Army Air Corps.

Like a written essay, the work begins with a quiet "thesis" in the flute and bass clarinet, a simple idea from which the entire piece grows. This theme blossoms into a broad, lyrical passage in the strings, with the steady rumble of timpani that reminds us of the troubled times in which it was

written. Barber wrote that: “Although it has no program, one perhaps hears that it was written in war-time.” The middle section launches into a fugue where the orchestra trades ideas back and forth like a debate. Barber then moves the music toward a more impassioned expression. The final section is again lyric and intense, ending with a broad, hymn-like finale that feels both solemn and uplifting.

Lasting approximately ten minutes, Barber showcases his ability to take a concise musical idea and explore every possibility it contains, moving from reflection to passion, from logic to lyricism, and from dissonance to harmony.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791): “Parto parto, ma tu, ben mio” from *La clemenza di Tito* (1791)

Mozart’s final opera, *La clemenza di Tito*, was composed in the hectic last year of his life, immediately after *The Magic Flute*. Commissioned for the coronation of Leopold II as King of Bohemia, the opera tells a story of love, loyalty, and political intrigue at the court of the Roman Emperor Tito. Among its most captivating moments is the aria “Parto, parto! Ma tu, ben mio,” sung by the young warrior Sextus, who finds himself torn between duty, loyalty, and unrequited love.

In this opera, Sextus is a “trouser role,” a young male character sung by a mezzo-soprano voice, allowing the music to express both tenderness and passion. In this scene, Sextus comforts Vitellia, the scorned love of Emperor Tito, while secretly struggling with his own feelings. The music mirrors this emotional journey: it begins gently, gradually gaining speed and intensity as Sextus’s concern turns to urgency and determination.

A distinctive feature of this aria is the solo clarinet, which shadows the vocal line throughout. Mozart wrote it for Anton Stadler, a close friend and virtuoso clarinetist who had just helped develop the basset clarinet—an instrument with an unusually wide range. With the basset clarinet’s extended range, Mozart was able to heighten the drama of the aria, using the instrument to mirror and color the vocal phrases in both warm low and radiant high registers. This interplay between the clarinet and voice amplified the vocalist’s expressivity, brilliance, and emotional depth.

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957): Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 43 (1902)

In 1901, Jean Sibelius traveled from Finland to Italy with his family, stopping in Berlin before settling in the sunlit village of Rapallo, just south of Venice. It was there that he began work on what would become his second symphony. When he returned home, he continued refining

the work, finally conducting its premiere in Helsinki on March 8, 1902. The symphony was an immediate success, performed multiple times to full houses, and it remains one of Sibelius's most beloved works today.

Although composed during a period of Finnish national tension under Russian rule, Sibelius consistently denied that the symphony had any explicit political message. Nevertheless, Finnish audiences could not help but hear hope, courage, and resilience in its soaring melodies and dramatic contrasts.

The symphony has four movements, each taking the listener on a different journey. The first movement opens with a simple repeated figure in the strings, as he will do throughout this symphony, material initially presented as melodic will become accompanimental as the woodwinds enter with a spritely theme shortly thereafter. The second movement opens quietly, with plucked low strings and a solemn bassoon line, before blossoming into a richly layered string melody full of warmth and emotion. The third movement, a brisk and energetic scherzo, alternates with a lyrical oboe trio that seems to call for something different and leads seamlessly into the final movement. The last movement emerges as a culmination of everything that came before, rising to a powerful, triumphant conclusion. The finale swells, soars, and builds to a magnificent conclusion that feels both joyful and unstoppable.

Program notes by Ellie Chang