

PROTESTRA 2025

A CONCERT for THE 99%

MAY 10TH —————> 2PM

📍 263 W 86TH ST NYC



Beethoven | *Overture to Egmont*
Coleridge-Taylor | *Violin Concerto in G minor*
Stravinsky | *Petrushka*

PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT
THE **ACLU** FOUNDATION

PROTESTRA 2025

A CONCERT for THE 99%

PROGRAM

OVERTURE TO *EGMONT*, Op. 84 (1810)

Sostenuto, ma non troppo – Allegro

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

***VIOLIN CONCERTO IN G MINOR*, OP. 80 (1912)**

I. Allegro maestoso – Vivace – Allegro molto

II. Andante semplice – Andantino

III. Allegro molto – Moderato

SAMUEL COLERIDGE-TAYLOR (1875–1912)

Reuben Kebede, violin

INTERMISSION

***PETRUSHKA* (1911)**

Lady Liberty - Maya Kitayama

Puppet Master/Billionaire No. 1 - Hailey Cooknick

Puppet Master/Billionaire No. 2 - Mandie Rapoza

Petrushka - Hannah Balagot

IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882–1971)

Choreography by Olivia Palacios & Mandie Rapoza

MUSICIANS

CONDUCTOR

Michelle Rofrano

VIOLIN 1

Samuel Gray, *Concertmaster*

Elizabeth Jones

Sommer Altier

Sunny Sheu

Michael Massina

Ariana Cappon

Deborah Nixon

VIOLIN 2

Dario Cazzani *

Nick Batina

Jocelyn Rosado

Murray Mackinnon

Brian Shaheen

Natalie Wolford

Cristopher Basso

VIOLA

Linnea Marchie *

Rebecca Chaqor

Heather Wallace

Megan Delatour

Mary Eileen McNamee

Jack Rittendale

CELLO

Chris Cortez *

Nathaniel Bernecker

Ines Purcell

Michael Viljoen

Sam Quiggins

Peri Mauer

BASS

Joe Weinberg *

Sarah Favinger

Zarina Kotwal

Mort Cahn

FLUTE/PICCOLO

Juan Carlos Narvaez *

Mitzy Nonaka

Jackie Traish, **Piccolo**

OBOE

Ellen Gruber *

Zachary Ashland

Kai O'Donnell, **English Horn**

CLARINET

Elia Foster *

Danny King

Lara Mitofsky Neuss, **Bass Clarinet**

BASSOON

Sanford Schwartz *

Katherine Munoz

Jae M Author, **Contrabassoon**

HORN

Aliyah Danielle *

Ian Vlahović

Priscilla Rinehart

Shanyse Strickland

TRUMPET

Lindsay Ross *

Bonnie Callahan

Eli Goldstein

TROMBONE

Oscar Mendez *

Nate Rensink

Sophia Huf, **Bass Trombone**

TUBA

Genevieve Blesch

TIMPANI

Tyler Hefferon

PERCUSSION

Jacky Xu

McKenzie Squires

Miguel Tepale

CELESTA

Nacho Ojeda

PIANO

Benjamin Nylander

HARP

Tiffany Wu

* **Principal**

PETRUSHKA - SYNOPSIS

CHARACTERS (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Lady Liberty - The Spirit of American Optimism. She represents the American people.

Puppet Master/Billionaire No. 1 - He represents the latest class of American robber barons who have leveraged technology to amass capital and influence in quantities never seen before.

Puppet Master/Billionaire No. 2 - He represents the dictators and autocrats who use fear and persecution to impose their will on their subjects all over the world.

Petrushka - A puppet magically brought to life to do the Puppet Masters' bidding. He is bestowed with great power but is still merely a pawn in their game.

TABLEAU I:

PART 1: AMERICA™

America the Beautiful, Land of Opportunity, a country destined for greatness. Industry, immigration, and ingenuity transform a wild frontier into a world power; capitalism and consumerism drive technological advancements that help create the most prosperous society ever to exist on Planet Earth. As we spiral forward through time, faster and faster, we come to realize that Lady Liberty has been watching along with us; she is delighted by the exciting picture laid out before us.

PART 2: THE PUPPET SHOW

Two Puppet Masters emerge from the shadows. They see Lady Liberty and try to entice her, to flatter and woo her. They have not arrived empty-handed and present her with a gift: the puppet Petrushka. She is entranced by this gesture of goodwill. The Puppet Masters bring Petrushka to life and show Lady Liberty how they pull his strings to make him dance; while Petrushka enjoys it, at least at first, it is clear he aspires to be more than a plaything for the powerful. Everyone joins in, but all good things must come to an end...it's time for Petrushka to get dressed and get back to work.

TABLEAU II: THE OVAL OFFICE

The Puppet Masters and Lady Liberty leave Petrushka alone in his office, but not before giving him a gift for being such a loyal puppet: a shiny new smartphone! It comes with Petrushka's favorite social media app, X, pre-installed; he logs into his account and eagerly begins sharing his thoughts with the world. While his tweets are goofy and entertaining at first, they quickly become arrogant, fraudulent, even wrathful. It soon becomes clear that Petrushka's words are more than just pixels in a news feed—they have real-world consequences, sometimes deadly. But Petrushka laughs it off... surely puppets are accountable only to their masters.

CONTINUED...

PETRUSHKA - SYNOPSIS, CONT.

TABLEAU III: THE BATTLE OF THE BILLIONAIRES

Speak of the devil—Puppet Master No. 1 has returned to remind Petrushka who's boss; Petrushka, discontented with a life of subservience, decides to fight back. They circle each other, attempt to establish dominance, and (of course) engage in some good old-fashioned wheeling and dealing. Petrushka, bold as ever, even manages to momentarily ensnare his overlord with his strings! Puppet Master No. 2 joins the fray to give his associate the upper hand before Lady Liberty reappears; her presence is enough to halt the hostilities, at least temporarily. As the quartet departs together, we begin to grasp the sheer enormity of the wealth and clout these oligarchs and authoritarians command...as well as the global repercussions of their impulsive games of political machination and economic extraction.

TABLEAU IV:

PART 1: WHAT WE COULD BE

Lady Liberty returns, disillusioned by the pettiness and callousness of these men she thought were her friends. Yet she realizes that the continued exploitation of the American people by the rich and powerful doesn't have to be inevitable—We the People have always protested oppression and fought for progress, and continue to do so! She is reminded that there is still cause for optimism and hope if we choose the path of working together to uplift one another and create real change.

PART 2: YOU'RE THE PUPPET

Suddenly, the billionaires rush in, sparring with each other once again; the fracas interrupts Lady Liberty's optimistic vision for America. While she attempts to regain her footing, the billionaires realize they have a window of opportunity in front of them. They temporarily put aside their power struggles to agree on the one thing they have in common: they all want to control Lady Liberty. They gang up on her; once she is under their rule, they show her their very different vision for the United States of America.



PROGRAM NOTES



OVERTURE TO *EGMONT*, Op. 84 (1810)

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) was a German composer and pianist, regarded as one of the most influential figures in Western classical music, spanning the late Classical and early Romantic periods. His music was deeply informed by the politics of his time. Growing up under the influence of Enlightenment thinkers such as Voltaire and Rousseau, Beethoven became a passionate supporter of the French Revolution and its ideals, including opposition to monarchy and tyranny. In his letters, he wrote of catching the “revolutionary fever” upon arriving in Vienna in 1792, declaring that he aimed to “do good whenever you can... not to deny the truth, even before the throne.” His anti-oligarchy and anti-authoritarian sentiments were evident in works like his opera *Fidelio*, which tells the story of love and the human spirit triumphing over oppression, and his Third Symphony, *Eroica*. Initially dedicated to Napoleon, Beethoven rescinded this dedication in 1804 upon learning that Napoleon had declared himself Emperor.

Beethoven’s 1810 incidental music for Goethe’s 1788 play *Egmont* continues in the same anti-authoritarian tradition as *Eroica* and *Fidelio*. Set in the Netherlands during the Spanish monarchy’s oppressive reign, the play portrays the struggle of the Count of Egmont, who resists the Spanish Inquisition’s attempts to force Protestant citizens to convert to Catholicism. For his defiance, Egmont is imprisoned and executed, becoming a martyr for the cause. His death sparked public outrage, eventually leading to a national liberation movement that contributed to the Dutch independence from Spain. Beethoven’s fiery, defiant overture perfectly captures the spirit of resistance and triumph over oppression.

The *Egmont Overture* encapsulates the entire drama. It opens with a dark, slow introduction that evokes the oppressive atmosphere of Spain and its Inquisition, using a rhythm reminiscent of the sarabande. This gradually transforms into a passionate, defiant representation of Egmont’s martyrdom, culminating in a brilliant coda that symbolizes the people’s victory over authoritarianism.



VIOLIN CONCERTO IN G MINOR, OP. 80 (1912) **SAMUEL COLERIDGE-TAYLOR (1875–1912)**

Born in 1875 in London to an English mother and an African father descended from formerly-enslaved persons, **Samuel Coleridge-Taylor** faced the challenges of being a mixed-race composer in Victorian England. However, his extraordinary musical talent quickly set him apart. At just 15 years old, Coleridge-Taylor was recommended by his choirmaster for entrance to the Royal College of Music. Although admitted as a violin student, he went on to earn scholarships and a fellowship in composition, including the Lesley Alexander Prize two years in a row.

From the onset of his professional career, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor talent garnered immediate recognition. At 23, he composed *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, which became one of the most performed English-language cantatas for decades. Fighting through societal barriers, he rose to prominence internationally through his deeply expressive music and advocacy for racial equality. His compositions garnered inspiration from African-American culture as well as his African roots while maintaining an English voice.

In spite of his global popularity, Coleridge-Taylor was rarely adequately compensated for his compositions. After his tragic death at 37, his daughter, Gwendolen Avril Coleridge-Taylor, went on to advocate for stronger copyright laws. Avril Coleridge-Taylor and other musicians assisted in founding the Performing Right Society, a copyright collective ensuring composers are properly compensated for their work. This effort made in honor of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor is remembered by working musicians to this day.

The *Violin Concerto in G Minor*, Op. 80, completed in 1912, was the last major work Coleridge-Taylor wrote before his untimely death later that year. Commissioned for the American violinist Maud Powell, this concerto is a powerful testament to Coleridge-Taylor's late style. Structured in three movements, the concerto highlights Coleridge-Taylor's masterful use of orchestral color, while its melodic lines and rhythmic vitality reflect the influence of African-American spirituals. **cont...**

Coleridge-Taylor had originally orchestrated the concerto and sent the manuscript to the United States for Powell's performance. Unfortunately, the manuscript was lost in transit, forcing the composer to reconstruct the entire score. The concerto was ultimately premiered by Powell at the Norfolk Music Festival in Virginia in 1912, just months before Coleridge-Taylor's death. The second movement's lyrical passages were echoed as W.J. Read performed it at the composer's funeral, a final tribute to a life steeped in music.



PETRUSHKA (1911) **IGOR STRAVINSKY** (1882–1971)

Igor Stravinsky was a chameleon of a composer who changed styles several times during his career as it suited him. He rose to fame in the opening decades of the 20th century and helped usher in a new era of classical music, with a mathematical approach to composition that marked a clear departure from Romantic-Era musical language. Light on lyricism, heavy on rhythmic intensity and harmonic density, and infused with an unmistakable idiosyncratic quirkiness, Stravinsky's music in many ways came to define what we now consider the "modernist" sound in classical music.

Like his mentor Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov—the father of Russian nationalism in classical music—Stravinsky leaned heavily on Russian legends and folk songs as source material early in his musical career. Premiered in 1911, *Petrushka* is one of his landmark works, a ballet written for Serge Diaghelev's Ballet Russes and starring the company's primo ballerino Vaslav Nijinsky in the title role. It was a truly groundbreaking moment in the history of ballet and classical music: Gone were the days of counting "1-2-3-4"...Stravinsky's highly complex score demanded a new standard of artistic excellence from dancers and musicians alike.

The original story unfolds at a Shrovetide Fair and follows three Russian puppets—Petrushka, The Moor, and the Ballerina—brought to life by a Magician. After their group dance, we get a sneak peek behind the curtain to observe their aspirations, manipulations, and animosities. **cont...**

But with no Magician to be found in the puppets' rooms...how do they continue to dance and interact with each other? The dramatic conclusion leaves us to ponder what is real, what is illusion, and who is actually pulling the puppet strings.

PROTESTRA's multidisciplinary, multimedia production asks the same questions, but within the context of the current national political landscape. While most orchestras nowadays play *Petrushka* as a standalone concert piece, PROTESTRA's interpretation will also feature four dancers in reimagined versions of the ballet's principal roles. Additionally, video projected above the orchestra will supplement the newly-created choreography and further examine the outsized role that the 1% plays—and has always played—in American politics and public policy formation.

Petrushka is performed only infrequently as a fully-staged ballet in part because it is so notoriously difficult. Another good reason: The role of The Moor, *Petrushka*'s rival, was written as a blackface character who, in the course of just a few minutes of stage time, perpetuates several harmful tropes. While conducting research for this production, we learned that even within the last decade, ballet companies staging *Petrushka* still stubbornly cleave to the idea that great works of classical music should be immutable time capsules, never to be altered or adapted for contemporary audiences. Needless to say, PROTESTRA is more than happy to eschew myopic originalism and do away with this highly problematic depiction. (For what it's worth, Isabelle Fokine, granddaughter of *Petrushka*'s original choreographer, Mikhail Fokine, is of the same mindset and has suggested replacing The Moor with a swaggering Cossack, "The Warrior," swapping out exoticism for a traditionally Russian character. She thinks her grandfather would understand and approve wholeheartedly.)

Our research also revealed that Stravinsky had an opportunistic predilection for authoritarian regimes: He was a lifelong Tsarist who advocated loudly for having his music performed in Nazi Germany and who considered Benito Mussolini "the savior of Italy and—let us hope—of Europe." While PROTESTRA has long toyed with the idea of transforming *Petrushka* into a cheeky critique of the puppets in our government, we suddenly found ourselves with the additional opportunity to repurpose the work of a fascist sympathizer to deliver a decidedly antifascist message.





MICHELLE ROFRANO, CONDUCTOR

Michelle Rofrano is an Italian-American conductor with a keen interest in the intersection of art, storytelling, and social activism. An avid opera conductor, upcoming engagements in the 2023-24 season include debuts leading Cenerentola with Toledo Opera, L'Amant Anonyme with Madison Opera, Turandot with Fargo Moorhead Opera, and a return to the Curtis Institute of Music leading a double bill of Les Mamelles de Tirésias and The Seven Deadly Sins. Recent projects include conducting The Turn of the Screw with the Curtis Institute, Amelia al Ballo with the Juilliard School, La Traviata and Cendrillon (Viardot) with City Lyric Opera, The Fall of the House of Usher (Glass) with Orpheus PDX, Don Quichotte at Camacho's Wedding (Telemann) with Opera Saratoga, and both Trouble in Tahiti and new Francesca Zambello production of The Queen of Spades with The Glimmerglass Festival. In 2022-23, Rofrano was involved in several exciting experimental opera projects, including conducting the meditative opera Song of the Ambassadors (Skye/Allado-McDowell) at Alice Tully Hall, a groundbreaking opera in development that interweaves music, science, and technology; and music directing the recorded project No One Is Forgotten: An Immersive Opera, the first opera designed for 3D Spatial Audio adapted from the original play by Winter Miller and co-composed by Paola Prestini and Sxip Shirey. Rofrano has previously served as cover conductor with companies such as San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, The Glimmerglass Festival, Spoleto Festival USA, Florida Grand Opera, and Opera Birmingham. A champion of social progress in the field of classical music, Rofrano is the Founder and Artistic Director of PROTESTRA, an activist orchestra that advocates for social justice through diverse programming and benefit performances. She is also a co-creator of Girls Who Conduct, an initiative that mentors young women and non-binary musicians in an effort to achieve gender parity on the conducting podium.



REUBEN KEBEDE, VIOLIN

Violinist **Reuben Kebede** has performed recitals across the U.S. and Europe. As first violinist of the Ivalas Quartet, he recently completed an Artist Diploma at The Juilliard School in the Graduate Resident String Quartet program. He also received an Artist Diploma in string quartet performance from CU Boulder under the tutelage of Edward Dusinberre, Harumi Rhodes, and the members of the Takács Quartet. Previously, he studied with Danielle Belen at the University of Michigan, where he served as concertmaster of both university orchestras, and with Sarah Plum at Drake University. In his free time Reuben loves reading, as well as watching and discussing soccer and films.



DANCERS



OLIVIA PALACIOS, CHOREOGRAPHER

Olivia Palacios is a choreographer for theatre and concert dance, filmmaker and designer. Her choreography can be seen in "The Last Bimbo of the Apocalypse," currently running Off-Broadway at Signature Theatre. Other select choreography and assisting includes: The Public Theater, BAM, Big Dance Theater (Annie-B Parson), Princeton University, Columbia University, The Chase Brock Experience, New York Theatre Barn, General Mischief Dance, Triskelion Arts, Modern Accord Depot, New Dance Alliance, The Tank, Dixon Place, OMG Art Faire, New Ohio Theater, Theatre for the New City, Front Porch Theatricals and Spoke the Hub. Select film work includes "Girl in Summer" (Director/Choreographer, WINNER: Best Made in Coney Island at Coney Island Film Festival); up next: "Cherry" (Director) and "always" (Director/Choreographer/Animator). OliviaPalacios.com / [@ByLiv_Pal](https://www.instagram.com/ByLiv_Pal)



MANDIE RAPOZA, CHOREOGRAPHER

Mandie is a British theatre maker and choreographer based in NYC. Broadway: Merrily We Roll Along (Revival), Tuck Everlasting. National Tour: Something Rotten! (1st National), Emojiland. The Kennedy Center: Spells of the Sea. New York Theatre: Assistant Choreographer, Merrily We Roll Along (NYTW); Choreographer, Indecent (Fordham Lincoln Center); Movement Director, The Parlor (SOHO Rep); Director Choreographer, Fragments (Dixon Place); Assistant Director, YAGMCB (The York Theatre). Select Regional: The Sound of Music, Crazy For You, A Christmas Carol, 9 to 5, White Christmas, Funny Girl. Love always to Michael & Orin. Instagram: [@mandierapoza](https://www.instagram.com/mandierapoza). www.mandierapoza.com



MAYA KITAYAMA

Maya Kitayama (she/her) is a dancer and performer originally from the Bay Area and currently based in NYC. She was most recently in the cast of Hypnotique hosted by The McKittrick Hotel (home of Sleep No More). Additional credits include Beauty and the Beast (Drury Lane), Cole Porter's Can-Can (Porchlight Music Theater), Love's Labour's Lost (Scranton Shakes), and Holiday Inn (Mill Mountain Theatre). Maya is a principal member of Thistle Dance under the direction of Kristen Brooks Sandler and regularly performs both regionally and in NYC. She attended the Fordham/Ailey BFA program and currently works full time in the civic engagement space. @mayakitayama



HAILEY COOKNICK

Originally from Dallas, TX, Hailey grew up studying classical dance, which led to earning a BFA at Point Park University, concentrating in Modern & Jazz Dance. Hailey has enjoyed opportunities both on stage performing, as well as creating and re-staging new work as a dancer and Resident Choreographer for Step One Dance Company on Holland America Line. A combination of performance and associate work continued on shows, such as CATS (Jean's Playhouse) and ROCKY (The Fireside Theatre). Most recently she choreographed SHREK (SUNY New Paltz), and looks forward to working with casts this summer on JERSEY BOYS and GREASE (Jean's Playhouse). She appreciates playing between existing rep and discovering new material and concepts, which is why she continues to take advantage of every opportunity to work with choreographer Mandie Rapoza and team!



HANNAH BALAGOT

Hannah Balagot first met choreographers Mandie and Olivia in 2019 working together on an original piece that fused together dance and text. She has enjoyed working with them on various projects ever since that navigate human complexity and that bring forth joy through movement. Since moving to New York from California in 2012 she has performed in various musical and stage productions around the country and Europe and today continues to spread her love of theater by teaching with Skyline Arts in Jersey City.

PROTESTRA 2025

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SPECIAL THANKS



Heartfelt thanks to St. Paul & St. Andrew UMC for the rental of their facilities, and to Brent Ness, Kevin Arthur, Jr., and Steven Yee for all their help and attention throughout the past week. We are proud to produce this concert at a church with such a strong commitment to love-inspired action and social justice.

Tech Production:

Adam Klein - Audio Engineer

Lara Mitofsky Neuss - PROTESTRA Liaison

Pamela Wess - Video Engineer

Jenna Stewart - Stage Manager

Petrushka Video:

Camilla Tassi - Projection Mapping & Technical Consultant

Chris Armijo - Video Editor

Lara Mitofsky Neuss, Michelle Rofrano, Ian Vlahović - PROTESTRA Video Team

Lauren Bremen - Lighting Design

Petrushka Production Concept & Direction - Michelle Rofrano & Ian Vlahović

Thanks to [Centanni Percussion](#) for the rental of their instruments.

SUBSTITUTE MUSICIANS

Allie Pritchard

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Resources For Further Learning and Action Crowd-Sourced by the PROTESTRA Organizer Team

Website with protest + resistance resources:

<https://www.fiftyfifty.one/>

Contact your U.S. House Rep:

<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

Contact your U.S. Senator:

<https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm>

Call your representatives:

<https://5calls.org/>

Project 2025 Tracker - See how many of the Heritage Foundation's policy proposals have already been enacted:

<https://www.project2025.observer/>

Keep an eye on new Executive Orders coming out of the White House:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/>

Litigation tracker (NYU School of Law):

<https://www.justsecurity.org/107087/tracker-litigation-legal-challenges-trump-administration/>

Court Watch (litigation tracker - it's current, even though it says 1/30/2025):

<https://www.courtwatch.news/p/lawsuits-related-to-trump-admin-executive-orders>

Democracy Docket (Marc Elias, voting rights lawyer):

<https://www.democracydocket.com/>

Charities to follow and support:

ACLU

<https://www.aclu.org/>

Southern Poverty Law Center

<https://www.splcenter.org/>

Democracy Forward

<https://democracyforward.org/>

EV Loves NYC:

<https://www.evloves.nyc/>

The New York Immigration Coalition:

<https://www.nyic.org/>

Book recommendations:

- Democracy for the Few - Michael Parenti
- On Tyranny: 20 Lessons from the 20th Century - Timothy Snyder
- A People's History of the United States - Howard Zinn
- The Trouble with Reality: A Ruminant on Moral Panic in Our Time - Brooke Gladstone

Blog recommendations:

Emptywheel (Marcy Wheeler)

<https://www.emptywheel.net/>

Social media account recommendations:

Rebecca Watson (skepchick)

<https://www.youtube.com/@RebeccaWatson>

<https://www.patreon.com/rebecca>