43rd Season 2026-27

Spellbound: Spanish Sorcery

Foellinger Great Hall | Krannert Center for the Performing Arts
Saturday, October 31, 2026 | 7:30 p.m.

Ian Hobson, music director and conductor
Guido Sánchez Portuguez, guitar
Marissa Simmons, contralto

L'Apprenti sorcier PAUL DUKAS
("The Sorcerer's Apprentice") (1865–1935)

"Habanera" from *Carmen* GEORGES BIZET
(1838–1875)

MARISSA SIMMONS, *contralto*

Concierto de Aranjuez JOAQUÍN RODRIGO
(1901–1999)

I. *Allegro con spirito*
II. *Adagio*
III. *Allegro gentile*

GUIDO SÁNCHEZ PORTUGUEZ, *guitar*

Intermission

El amor brujo MANUEL DE FALLA
("Love the Magician") (1876–1946)

MARISSA SIMMONS, *contralto*

Night on Bald Mountain MODEST MUSSORGSKY
(1839–1881)

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This event is made possible in part by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council.

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Meet the Music Director



Pianist and conductor **Ian Hobson** (Music Director) - called “powerful and persuasive” by The New York Times - is internationally recognized for his command of an extraordinarily comprehensive repertoire, his consummate performances of the Romantic masters, his deft and idiomatic readings of neglected piano music old and new, and his assured conducting from both the piano and the podium.

In addition to being a celebrated performer, Mr. Hobson is a dedicated scholar and educator who has pioneered renewed interest in music of such lesser-known masters as Ignaz Moscheles and Johann Hummel. He has also been an effective advocate of works written expressly for him by a number of today’s noted composers, including Benjamin Lees, John Gardner, David Liptak, Alan Ridout, and Yehudi Wyner.

In addition to his work with Sinfonia and at the University of Illinois (Swanlund Emeritus Professor), recital and teaching engagements this season take Mr. Hobson throughout the United States and several times to South Korea. Mr. Hobson conducted at Carnegie Mellon University in January 2018.

As guest soloist, Dr. Hobson has appeared with many of the world’s major orchestras; in the United States these include the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and The Philadelphia Orchestra, the symphony orchestras of Baltimore, Florida, Houston, Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, St. Louis and the American Symphony Orchestra, the Orquestra Sinfónica de Puerto Rico. Abroad, he has been heard with Great Britain’s Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, The London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Hallé Orchestra, ORF-Vienna, Orchester de Beethovenhalle, Moscow Chopin Orchestra, Israeli Sinfonieta, and New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. Since his debut in the double role of Conductor and soloist with the Stuttgart

Chamber Orchestra in 1996, Maestro Hobson has been invited to lead the English Chamber Orchestra, the Sinfonia Varsovia (including an appearance at Carnegie Hall), the Pomeranian Philharmonic (Poland), the Fort Worth Chamber Orchestra (Bass Hall), and the Kibbutz Chamber Orchestra of Israel, among others.

Mr. Hobson is also a much sought-after judge for national and international competitions and has been invited to join numerous juries, among them the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition (at the specific request of Mr. Cliburn), the Arthur Rubinstein Competition in Poland, the Chopin Competition in Florida, the Leeds Piano Competition in the U.K., and the Schumann International Competition in Germany. In 2005 Hobson served as Chairman of the Jury for the Cleveland International Competition and the Kosciuzsko Competition in New York; in 2008 he was Chairman of Jury of the New York Piano Competition; and in 2010 he again served in that capacity of the newly renamed New York International Piano Competition.

One of the youngest ever graduates of the Royal Academy of Music, Mr. Hobson began his international career in 1981 when he won First Prize at the Leeds International Piano Competition, after having earned silver medals at both the Arthur Rubinstein and Vienna-Beethoven competitions. Born in Wolverhampton, England, he studied at Cambridge University (England), and at Yale University, in addition to his earlier studies at the Royal Academy of Music. A professor in the Center for Advanced Study at the University of Illinois, Hobson received the endowed chair of Swanlund Professor of Music in 2000.

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Meet the Soloist



Guido Sánchez-Portuguez began his musical studies at the University of Costa Rica's School of Music where he graduated with honors in 2001. In 2004, he was granted a full scholarship for the Master's program at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music with the distinguished professor and internationally acclaimed guitarist Ernesto Bitetti. After finishing his Master's Degree in 2005, Guido was admitted in the prestigious Doctoral Program, graduating in May 2012 as Doctor of Music with minors in Music Theory and Composition.

From 1995 to 2003, Guido was the first guitar of the Guitar Orchestra of Costa Rica, with which he recorded five CDs and toured around the World.

In 1999 he formed "Erio", a guitar trio dedicated to playing his own music. With this group he recorded several pieces which are included in a 2018 self-titled release.

In 2012, Guido directed and produced a CD with the Grammy-winner singer Sylvia McNair in which he is also featured as performer and arranger.

From 2009-2014, Guido was a lecturer at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University where he taught courses in Latin American music history and techniques for arranging in Latin styles. Guido was also the Resident Arranger and Musical Director of the Latin American Popular Music Ensemble. With this ensemble, he recorded Pasaje Urbano, a CD featuring his ability as a performer and arranger as well as director and producer.

A winner of several awards from competitions like the JoAnn Falletta International Guitar Concerto Competition and the Concurso de Guitarra de Costa Rica, Guido has been invited to prestigious festivals like Ellnora Guitar Festival, Mid America Guitar Ensemble Festival, Indiana Guitar Festival, Boardwalk International Arts Festival, Festival Internacional de Guitarra de Costa Rica, Festival Permanente de Música de Suchitoto, Festival de Guitares D'Alsace, and Guitar Days in Buffalo, NY.

In 2015 Guido was appointed Director of Guitar Studies at Franklin College in Indiana, and until 2017 he also taught guitar at Parkland College in Illinois.

Guido is currently Clinical Assistant Professor of Guitar and Theory at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he is also the founder and director of the U of I Guitar Ensemble and the Illinois Latin American Ensemble. Additionally, along three other guitar professors from across Illinois, Guido has recently co-founded the M.A.G.I.Q. Illinois Guitar Quartet, which has already been invited as the special guest artist for the 2024 edition of the Mid America Guitar Ensemble Festival and the Edwardsville Symphony Orchestra 2024-25 Season. He was also featured as one of the guest artists for the 2024 season of the La Porte Symphony Orchestra, with which he performed Joaquín Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez*.

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Meet the Soloist



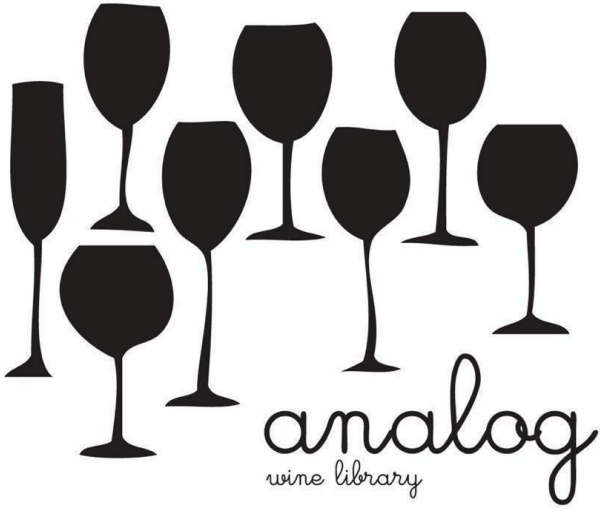
Originally from Chicago, **Marissa Simmons** is a contralto, noted for her “rawly sensual, wry, whiskey-toned voice” (San Francisco Classical Voice), and “deep, evenly produced mezzo and theatrical magnetism” (South Florida Classical Review). She is also distinguished by her “comic precision” (San Francisco Examiner) and praised as “una formidable” (Especial/El Nuevo Herald).

Simmons’ has performed a variety of roles including Madame de la Haltière, La Zia Principessa, La Zelatrice, & La Maestra delle Novizie (Suor Angelica), Miss Todd (Old Maid and the Thief), Carmen (La tragédie de Carmen), Dinah (Trouble in Tahiti), Margret (Wozzek), Prudence (Dust of the Road), Mother (I will fly like a bird), Tisbe (La Cenerentola), Nerone & Ottone (L’incoronazione di Poppea), Iolanthe (Iolanthe), Maria Callas (Jackie O), Roane Heckle (Great Scott), and more.

Simmons has sung with many prestigious companies including the Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Virginia Arts Festival, Virginia Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Charlottesville Opera, Music Academy of the West, Miami Lyric Opera, Thompson Street Opera Company, Chicago City Opera, Evanston Chamber Opera, the Gilbert & Sullivan Opera Company, and more.

Not only is she an opera singer, but Simmons is also a composer. She conducted the world premiere of one of her orchestral compositions in Austria at age 15. Her newest commissioned composition, “An Open Letter to Samuel Alito: Lament of the Choiceless” had its premier with Paradox Opera in March of 2023.

Simmons earned a Master of Music under Catherine Cook at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. She received her Bachelor of Music in both Classical Voice Performance and Music Theory and Composition from the University of Miami Frost School of Music with Dr. Esther Jane Hardenbergh and Dr. Lansing McLoskey.



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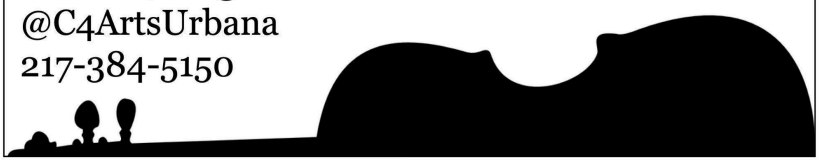


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Notes on the Program

L'Apprenti sorcier ("The Sorcerer's Apprentice"), Scherzo, After a Ballad by Goethe

Paul Dukas

(Born October 1, 1865, in Paris; died there on May 17, 1935)

Paul Dukas sometimes seems to belong to the group of composers who are known by only a single composition. The composer's witty orchestral scherzo, *L'Apprenti sorcier* ("The Sorcerer's Apprentice"), is Dukas's defining work. *L'Apprenti sorcier*, a brilliant and amusing piece, very closely follows a Goethe poem, *Der Zauberlehrling*, written in 1797. Dukas explicitly subtitled his musical work "Scherzo after a ballad by Goethe," confirming the poem as his direct narrative source. The poem, a narrative in the form of a ballad, tells the ancient story of a young apprentice magician who decides, while his master is away, to try one of the tricks he has seen the master sorcerer perform. Both works feature an apprentice who uses his master's spell to give life to a broom to carry water.

The apprentice makes a broom start up from the corner where it is leaning and begin fetching water for his bath. When the tub is full, the apprentice wants to command the broom to stop, but he does not know the magic words, so the broom continues to bring more water, and soon the whole room is flooded. In desperation, the boy grabs an ax and chops the broom in half, but then both halves of the broom draw water. A raging torrent rushes through the house, and the panic-stricken apprentice calls for help, which arrives just as he is about to drown. The master comes to the apprentice's aid, and with a few magic words, makes the broomsticks stop and return to the corner, mere pieces of wood again.

Dukas' work owes a great deal of its popularity to its story, but its success is also founded on Dukas' ability to create phrases that, although built on simple musical ideas, grow and expand considerably. The main theme expands monumentally as the story's tension increases. Dukas is also a master of orchestration, bringing the story's action to life with his music. He follows the story closely in musical terms, brilliantly capturing the magic, humor, and wild action of the poem.

Dukas skillfully uses dramatic crescendos and quiet lulls. For *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, Dukas transcribed the words of Goethe's poem allowing the audience to follow the trajectory of the narrative and to

understand why his music rose and fell in the way it did. It is most famous for its use in Disney's 1940 film of *Fantasia*, starring Mickey Mouse.

"Habañera" from Carmen

Georges Bizet

(Born October 25, 1838, in Paris; died June 3, 1875, in Bougival, France)

Now one of the most popular operas in the standard repertoire, Bizet's *Carmen*, when it was first performed, on March 3, 1875, at the Paris Opéra-Comique, was far from a success. It was labeled obscene; the music was thought to be obscure as well as devoid of color, and detractors also felt it had an unoriginal and undistinguished melody. Today regarded as one of the most colorful operas, it tells the story of a Spanish Gypsy girl, Carmen, who did not care about the fate of the men she chose to satisfy her great appetite for love.

In the celebrated aria "Habañera" from Act 1, the Gypsy, Carmen, is leaving the cigarette factory, and she seductively and provocatively sings about love and its unpredictability. In the aria, probably the most well-known single aria from the opera, she is wooing the young soldier José.

Concierto de Aranjuez for Guitar and Orchestra

Joaquín Rodrigo

(Born November 22, 1901, in Sagunto, Valencia; died July 6, 1999, in Madrid)

Although he was blind from the age of three, Joaquín Rodrigo was a very significant creative, critical, and pedagogical force in contemporary Spanish music. After early training in Valencia, he went to Paris, as so many Spanish musicians did. There, Rodrigo was a composition pupil of Paul Dukas and studied musicology with Maurice Emmanuel and André Pirro. Returning to Spain in 1939, Rodrigo settled in Madrid and divided his activities between composing, writing music criticism, and serving as Professor of the History of Music at the University of Madrid. Rodrigo followed in the tradition of Isaac Albéniz, who wrote in an idiom that drew from Spain's native music, effectively blending folksong with sophisticated harmonies and instrumental colors. Rodrigo's music gives Spanish nationalism a strong presence.

Probably the best known of all Rodrigo's works is the *Concierto de Aranjuez* for guitar and orchestra, which propelled him into the front ranks of Spanish composers. Rodrigo composed *Concierto de Aranjuez* in 1939 and dedicated it to Regino Sainz de la Maza, the soloist at its premiere in Barcelona on November 9, 1940. Over the years it has become one of the

most widely performed concertos, although it has often been played in transcriptions for instruments other than the guitar.

The composition derives its name from a famous royal residence, a palace on the banks of the Tagus River not far from Madrid and Toledo on the way to Andalusia. The castle has been called the most beautiful and most cheerful of all the Spanish royal residences. The composer said, in the notes to the concerto, that one "may fancy seeing the ghost of Goya, held in thrall by melancholia. . .. [I]n its themes there linger the fragrance of magnolias, the singing of birds and the gushing of fountains. [It] is meant to sound like the hidden breeze that stirs the tree tops in its parks; it should be only as strong as a butterfly, and as dainty as a verónica."

The *Concierto* evokes the era of 16th-century Spanish kings Carlos I, who was also Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, and Phillip II, embodying the rhythms and melodic inflections of Spanish folk music joined with Rodrigo's own melodic invention and colorful orchestration. Rodrigo utilized the structure of a Baroque concerto: three movements in a fast-slow-fast arrangement, with distinct alternation between solo and orchestral passages in the outer movements.

Delicacy is combined with rhythmic energy in the concerto's dancing first movement, *Allegro con spirito*, in which most of the ideas are generated by the guitar solo that begins the piece. The middle movement, a romantic *Adagio* of reflective character, has an improvisational quality and delivers a feeling of melancholy passion and romance that suggests a Moorish influence. Toward the end of the movement, an extended guitar cadenza leads to an orchestral climax. The final movement, *Allegro gentile*, is a rondo whose folk-like principal theme features a rhythmic pattern that combines measures of two and three beats.

The work is lightly and transparently scored, so that the soloist can be easily heard, but the orchestra is nevertheless sizable.

El Amor Brujo ("Love the Magician")

Manuel de Falla

(Born November 23, 1876, in Cádiz, Spain; died November 14, 1946, in Alta Gracia, Argentina)

A Spanish Gypsy, Pastora Imperio, inspired the songs and dances and performed the lead role in Falla's ballet, *El Amor Brujo*, when it was first performed in Madrid on April 15, 1915. She was a famous descendant of an Andalusian family devoted to dance and song. She proposed to Falla that she would like to "interpret a song and dance" to be written and

composed by him and Martínez Sierra (1881-1947), a well-known playwright. He agreed because she captivated him, as did her performances and her proposal.

The work he composed for Pastora Imperio was a chamber ballet with only two characters, the Gypsy Candélas and her new lover. When the ballet made its premiere, only the Gypsy audience members showed enthusiasm, but later, Falla and Sierra revised it. They deleted some songs and recitatives, expanded the plot, increased the characters to four, and enlarged the orchestra. The expanded version premiered in Paris on May 22, 1925, conducted by the composer and became a rousing success. The score, and especially *Danza Ritual del Fuego* ("Ritual Fire Dance"), has become popular in symphonic repertory.

The story tells about Candélas, a beautiful young Gypsy, who had loved a jealous and unfaithful man whose ghost haunts her after his death. She meets a new lover, Carmélo, but the ghost intervenes and frightens her so that she withdraws from her new love. She feels bewitched; her new lover persuades her friend Lucía to allow the ghost to make love to her instead. The following day, the ghost comes and meets Lucia, whom he finds irresistible, and the new lover has time to convince Candélas that he is truly in earnest. The ghost is exorcised, and all ends happily.

Among other selections, the musical score includes:

Escena ("The Scene") in which the jealous ghost makes his furious presence known with a shrill theme.

Canción ("Song of the Will-o'-the-Wisp") in which love is compared to an evanescent creature, the Will-o'-the-Wisp.

El Círculo Mágico ("The Magic Circle: The Tale of the Fisherman") is a calm interlude.

Danza Ritual del Fuego ("Ritual Fire Dance") is danced to drive off evil spirits. This exorcism is one of the most popular parts of the ballet.

A Night on Bald Mountain

Modest Mussorgsky

(Born March 21, 1839, in Karevo; died March 28, 1881, in St. Petersburg)

Mussorgsky was twenty-one when he received a commission to write *A Night on Bald Mountain*. For it, he set one act of the drama to music: *The Witch* by Baron Mengden, after Nikolai Gogol's story, *Saint John's Eve*. In

Russian folklore, the legendary Witches' Sabbath and Black Mass are held annually on Mount Triglav ("The Bald Mountain") near Kyiv in Ukraine, on June 23rd, the night before the Feast of St. John the Baptist. On this night, the black god Chernobog, or perhaps the Devil in the form of a black goat, is said to supervise the revelry of devils, witches, sorcerers, and other malevolent spirits. Mussorgsky had some early ideas for this work but did not mention the commission for six years until he had completed what he called *Saint John's Night on Bald Mountain*, which he said he had planned in 1866 and completed on June 23, 1867. Mussorgsky dedicated the work to the composer Mili Balakirev.

Although both Mussorgsky's talent and inspiration were sizable, his technique and craftsmanship were often criticized because many people thought his music was extreme. Some critics felt that, as a result of his independent ideas, he defied musical convention to his compositions' detriment.

A letter to Rimsky-Korsakov, written about ten days after Mussorgsky finished the work, shows that Mussorgsky consciously used special techniques to achieve his effects, from the "witches glorifying Satan -- stark naked, barbarous and filthy" to "funny, fiery and brisk." He mentions having finished a "tone picture" and he confides that the "plan and form of the composition is rather original." He also seems confident about what he has written: "In my opinion, *St. John's Night* is something new and is bound to impress a thoughtful musician." Later, in another letter, he wrote, "My music is Russian and independent in form and character, fiery and disorderly in tone."

The original version falls into four main sections, which the composer described: 1) Assembly of the witches, their talk and gossip; 2) Satan's journey to the mountain; 3) The Black Mass, with witches circling Satan's throne and singing his praise; and 4) the Sabbath, in which Satan takes as partners the witches who have caught his fancy.

Mussorgsky wrote his *A Night on Bald Mountain* in several different forms, displaying dissatisfaction with some of them and receiving comment and pressure from his friends to rewrite and improve the work.
Rimsky-Korsakov thought that *A Night on Bald Mountain* needed considerable work to smooth out its irregularities. After Mussorgsky's death, Rimsky-Korsakov improved the orchestration and adjusted the harmonies, although in the process he made so many changes from the original score that his version of the piece is distinctly different from the original. Although the original Mussorgsky version is very occasionally still

performed, the more well-known of the two is the Rimsky-Korsakov emendation.

Around 1886, a Russian publisher issued the score of *A Night on Bald Mountain* as a “posthumous work completed and orchestrated by N. Rimsky-Korsakov,” and for around eighty years, until a version of Mussorgsky’s original was published, it was the only known version of this popular, short tone-poem.

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Smile Politely

Sinfonia da Camera

In residence at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, this professional chamber orchestra is led by world-renowned pianist, conductor, and educator, Maestro Ian Hobson. Sinfonia da Camera is comprised of University of Illinois faculty, staff, and students, as well as distinguished regional and national freelance musicians. Founded in 1984, Sinfonia has welcomed world-class soloists, commissioned new works, and presented beloved orchestra favorites and hidden gems to local audiences for over 40 years.

In its debut season, Sinfonia released an acclaimed recording of French Piano Concerti with music director Ian Hobson conducting from the keyboard; it was the subject of a 90-minute Public Television special. Since that time, Sinfonia has performed over 1,000 musical works featuring more than 150 local and guest artists. Through Maestro Hobson's commitment to excellence in all of the orchestra's endeavors - special projects, recordings, tours, and concerts for the hometown crowd at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts - Sinfonia has achieved national and international recognition.

Sinfonia has been featured on over a dozen recordings and has several projects in the works. In 2011, the Albany label released a Sinfonia recording on another American composer, William Schuman, during his centenary year. A live recording of Sinfonia da Camera's October 6, 2012 concert featuring music by Pulitzer Prize-Winning composer George Walker was recently released on Albany Records. The fourth and final volume of the Ignaz Moscheles cycle was released in 2012. The previous volumes were reviewed by American Record Guide: "Hobson, whose elegant phrasing, remarkable ear for color, and miraculous ability to evenly sustain the most difficult runs - each like a string of pearls - are simply a joy to hear" and "[The concerti] seem tailor-made for Hobson's great panache and free-wheeling style." Ten recordings by Sinfonia da Camera for the Zephyr label have been released to rave reviews at home and abroad.

To learn more about the orchestra, Maestro Hobson, the musicians, administration, and Advisory board visit our website at www.sinfonia.illinois.edu.



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Contributors from August 1, 2025 through September 8, 2026.
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