



ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
STÉPHANE DENÈVE, MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR
GIL SHAHAM, VIOLIN

Sunday, November 17, 2019, at 7pm
Foellinger Great Hall

PROGRAM

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Stéphane Denève, music director and conductor

Gil Shaham, violin

Aaron Jay Kernis
(b. 1960)

Venit Illuminatio (Toward the Illumination of Colored Light)

Béla Bartók
(1881-1945)

Violin Concerto No. 2
Allegro non troppo
Theme and Variations: Andante tranquillo
Rondo: Allegro molto
Gil Shaham, violin

20-minute intermission

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

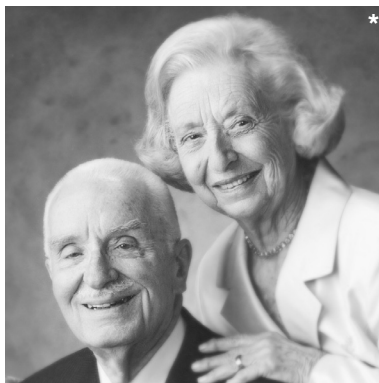
Symphony No. 4 in E Minor, Op. 98
Allegro non troppo
Andante moderato
Allegro giocoso
Allegro energico e passionato

Leading orchestras and soloists from around the world comprise the Great Hall Series. The 2019-20 series includes Apollo's Fire: Vivaldi's Four Seasons—Rediscovered (October 3), Chicago Symphony Orchestra (October 26); St. Louis Symphony Orchestra (November 17); Siberian State Symphony Orchestra (February 29); and Venice Baroque Orchestra: The Swedish Nightingale (March 5). For more information about these events, including conductors, soloists, and program selections, please visit KrannertCenter.com/calendar.

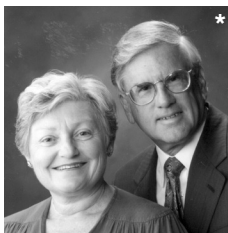
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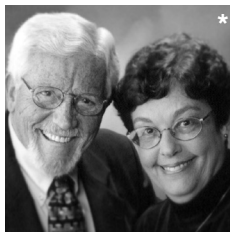


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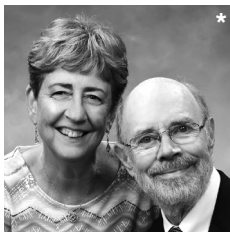
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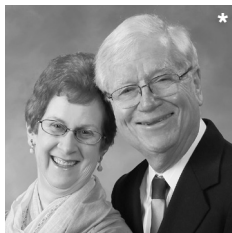


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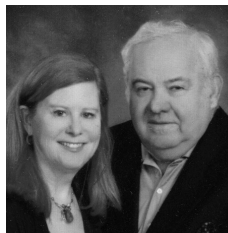
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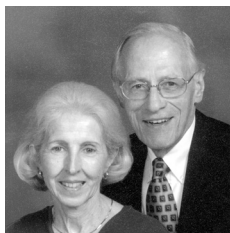
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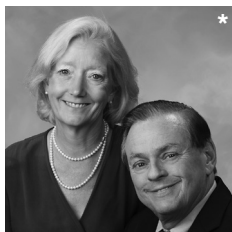
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PROGRAM NOTES

In life, nothing happens the same way twice. Two viewings of the identical movie are different, affected by mood, climate, seat, audience. Two versions of the same road trip are different, affected by weather, traffic, music choices.

In music, this experience is captured in variation form. A melody is repeated, over and over. But each time it is different. Maybe the melody is quieter or louder, faster or slower. Maybe its color shifts with altered chords or a new orchestration.

This concert celebrates musical variation. The finale of Johannes Brahms' symphony and the slow movement of Béla Bartók's concerto are both in some sort of variation form. And Aaron Jay Kernis thinks a lot about change and renewal: in his music, melodies are repeated, but their meaning has been altered by time, by experience.

"That which lives changes from moment to moment . . ." wrote Bartók. ". . . because perpetual variability is a trait of every living creature's character."

AARON JAY KERNIS

Born January 16, 1960, in Bensalem Township, Pennsylvania

Venit Illuminatio (Toward the Illumination of Colored Light)

"The language I speak"

"[M]usic should contain everything at the same time," composer Aaron Kernis has said. His formative musical experiences were from college radio—inhaling 1920s jazz, minimalism, Irish folk music, 1950s rock and roll, disco—and his music reflects the variety of this experience.

Kernis first shone in his early 20s, when the New York Philharmonic played an early work, and he has since become one of America's most lauded composers. He is a winner of the Grawemeyer Award and the Pulitzer Prize, and his music is performed coast to coast.

Many of his works draw from non-musical inspiration: an image, an event, a literary work. Early in Kernis' career it was the darkness of war and the Holocaust; later, it was the deep meaning of his Jewish faith and love for his family.

There are constants in Kernis' music: expressive melodies, lush harmonies, attentiveness to orchestral color and to the emotional impact of music. Kernis thinks of himself primarily as a communicator. "Music is the language I speak [to audiences]," he says.

In fact, Kernis sings throughout his creative process. He strives "to create the long line through singing, through breathing; that's the starting place. I think it came from very formative experiences as a choral singer and the first [voice] lessons I ever had as a child."

If his work speaks directly to listeners, it is very challenging for performers. Kernis is not afraid to push instrumentalists right to the technical edge. One performer calls his writing "virtuosic . . . but not awkward."

The music

The Latin title of this new work can act as a guide: *Venit*, meaning "coming"; *Illuminatio*, meaning "spiritual enlightenment" or "brightness." Coming to enlightenment. Coming towards the light.

The composer writes:

Music for me is something magical. It goes beyond words into places where chords and sounds take the place of language and punctuation.

I am always thinking about the transformation and exchange of emotions and musical ideas and the creation of a wide range of orchestral colors deployed through this large group of brilliant musicians.

With this work I was trying to leave dark thoughts and conflicted emotions behind and find a transformative experience of ecstasy and light. Not just white light of inspiration, but the colored light of change and imagination.

The music of *Venit Illuminatio* is not one thing, speed, or idea. It traverses many things that shift constantly. Melodic shapes and particular chords are repeated over and over into different guises and characters, always in new contexts and with new meanings.

Sometimes, if I'm very lucky, I will come upon a compositional moment where a chord or an instrumental idea will burst out inside my head as color, or even in heightened Technicolor! Hence its place in the subtitle of this piece, *Toward the Illumination of Colored Light*.

BÉLA BARTÓK

Born March 25, 1881, Sânnicolau Mare, Romania
Died September 26, 1945, New York, New York
Violin Concerto No. 2

In 1937, storm clouds gathered across Europe. The growing popularity of pro-Nazi political parties, along with economic dependence on Germany, left Bartók's Hungary vulnerable.

In this climate, Béla Bartók felt powerless. He was disgusted by Hitler and the Nazis, calling them "bandits and assassins," but felt he could not leave his aging mother in Hungary. "In the last years of her life," he wrote, "to abandon her forever—no, this I cannot bring myself to do!"

At this chilly moment, Bartók wrote one of his most lush works, the Second Violin Concerto.

Love-soaked

For Bartók, the violin had a specific, personal meaning. As a young man, he fell madly for the violinist Stefi Geyer. He wrote several pieces for Geyer, including an early violin concerto, and even after the love affair faded, he found himself returning to her instrument, again and again.

Bartók could write for his own instrument, the piano, with bluntness and brutality. But when approaching the violin, he seemed caught in a very different world: hyper-expressive, love-soaked. Indeed, the Second Violin Concerto's soloist pushes deep into the violin's strings, sometimes with ragged violence, sometimes with unbridled passion.

Folk

When he wrote the Second Violin Concerto, Bartók was spending 10 hours each day on folk music studies.

He had first felt called as a young man to gather the folksongs of forgotten people in eastern Europe's towns and villages. As he transitioned from amateur folklorist to scientific investigator, this music leached into his own: its rhythms and shapes, its emotions, its unsmoothed quirks.

The opening of the Violin Concerto is marked "Tempo di Verbunkos." Verbunkos began as army recruiting music—officers would perform dances with an ensemble—and it could be wild or sentimental.

In the opening bars, Bartók echoes the sound of a verbunkos ensemble: harp (mimicking the Hungarian cimbalom), strings, clarinet. The violinist soloist sings with a raw, throaty intensity, and even gives a tiny, verbunkos-like musical hiccup.

Variations

Zoltán Székely was a talented young violinist and friend of Bartók's. Listening now to recordings of Székely's playing, we can understand why he asked Bartók to write him a "traditional" concerto. His musicianship is refined, controlled, technically immaculate.

Bartók was resistant, feeling driven to experiment. The resulting concerto walks a middle-way; it has the show-offiness, grand scale, and three movements of a traditional work; but Bartók also dives deeply into an experiment with variation form.

The first movement is a dramatic stand-off between simpler, folk-inspired melodies and a more angular, modern world. The third movement is a variation on the first; exploring its gestures and ideas, but with the dial turned up, leaning wild and whimsical.

The middle movement is a set of theme and variations. A tranquil theme goes on a journey through unexpected terrain: foreboding, dangerous, playful, wistful. When it returns, the theme has been changed; low instruments have withdrawn; solitary woodwinds and wisps of strings circle mournfully above.

The Violin Concerto is among the last works Bartók would complete before leaving his beloved homeland. Bartók knew he was leaving his community, leaving his heartland. He suspected life would not be happy in the distant land of America.

Sadly, he was correct.

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Born May 7, 1833, Hamburg, Germany

Died April 3, 1897, Vienna, Austria

Symphony No. 4 in E Minor, Op. 98

Most musicians agree: Brahms' Fourth Symphony is a central, titanic work in the classical repertoire. It is performed hundreds of times each year across the world.

And yet, the music of this symphony is stern, bleak—early audiences found it complex, distancing. A first-time listener can feel caught in conversation with a dazzling intellectual; the experience might be compelling, but also mysterious, occasionally frustrating.

What draws us to this piece? And what made Brahms write such a beautiful, baffling work?

Fuego y cristal

Brahms' music holds us in its thrall by balancing heart and head. Writer Jorge Luis Borges called this balance "Fuego y cristal" (Fire and crystal).

Take the symphony's opening. There is heart: a violin melody undulates, unfolding like a pure stream of emotion. But it always ruled by head: Brahms has fixed these notes in place according to a strict pattern.

When Brahms first played the first movement of the Fourth Symphony for friends, they didn't understand it at all. "During the whole first movement," one wrote later to Brahms, "I felt as if I were being beaten by two very smart people."

But fastidious technical craft was more than just personal for Brahms. It was political. He observed a musical world where technical standards were slipping. And he fought back, not with words but with music that was unimpeachable—built on painstakingly-laid foundations.

Insect to a flame

By any measure, the 50-something Brahms was a success. Raised in a humble home, largely self-taught, ambition had pulled him to Vienna where he fast became one of the city's musical stars, working as a conductor, pianist, and composer.

The Fourth Symphony was written during two quiet, productive summers in Mürzzuschlag, a sleepy town in the Austrian Alps. Brahms had no financial need to write the symphony; his modest life as a bachelor, combined with long tours and lucrative fees on the sales of his compositions, had made him wealthy.

An internal force drove him. For Brahms, the symphony was the ultimate musical form, and Beethoven the ultimate composer. Beethoven's example drew him like an insect to a flame; Brahms knew that writing symphonies would cause stress, would take years off his life, but he could not stop himself from the stretch, the struggle.

Sour cherries

As he sat in front of the unfinished score of his Fourth Symphony, Brahms realized something. The music of the symphony "tastes of the climate here," he wrote. "The cherries are tart—you wouldn't eat them!"

Brahms knew about tartness. In public he could be blunt and charmless, and according to one contemporary, his speech was "curt, abrupt, vigorously rapping out his words, allusive rather than explanatory."

The music of this symphony has something of Brahms' own character: austere, stern, bleak, hollering instead of singing, stumbling instead of dancing. It is allusive, preferring hint and suggestion to unambiguous statement. And it rarely relaxes into the warmth of a smile.

The first movement sighs and storms, while the slow movement begins with a plaintive cry in something akin to the Phrygian mode—a sort of darkened minor scale. Brahms thought this mode expressed "profound need and remorse."

The third movement, in bright C Major, glitters with a metallic harshness that blinds. High winds and ringing percussion assault our senses.

Finale problem

As symphonies grew in size and scope, composers worried increasingly about how to end them. A finale had to do everything: sum up, give unity, provide closure, set pulses racing.

Brahms solved his fourth movement problem by looking to the past. He was a passionate music historian long before such a thing was common, filling his shelves with Bach and Mozart, pouring their techniques and ideas into his music.

It was the chaconne from Bach's *Partita in D Minor* for solo violin that came into Brahms' mind. Its form, he wrote, could inspire "a whole world of the deepest thoughts and most powerful feelings."

The chaconne has its origins as a stately dance. When composers started playing with the form, the dance faded. What remained was a bass line, repeated over and over, with colors and shapes shifting above.

Brahms' fourth movement is a chaconne, using the form to create an entire world of musical experience. At the opening, brass and winds are hard, granite. Strings wrap them in rich velvet, and later a flute wavers with a lonely song before trombones emerge quietly from the underworld.

The conclusion goes off like a rocket. "[H]ow it thunders!" wrote Brahms.

—Tim Munro

PROFILES

STÉPHANE DENÈVE (music director and conductor) is the 13th Music Director for the 140-year-old St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, beginning his tenure in the 2019-2020 season. He also serves as Music Director of the Brussels Philharmonic, Principal Guest Conductor of The Philadelphia Orchestra, and Director of the Centre for Future Orchestral Repertoire (CffOR).

Recognized internationally for the exceptional quality of his performances and programming, Denève regularly appears at major concert venues with the world's greatest orchestras and soloists. He has a special affinity for the music of his native France and is a passionate advocate for music of the 21st century. A gifted communicator and educator, he is committed to inspiring the next generation of musicians and listeners, and has worked regularly with young people in the programs such as those of the Tanglewood Music Center, New World Symphony, the Colburn School, and the Music Academy of the West.

He is a frequent guest with leading orchestras such as the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestra Sinfonica dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, The Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Toronto Symphony, Orchestre National de France, Vienna Symphony, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, and NHK Symphony. Last season, he led a major United States tour with the Brussels Philharmonic.

In the field of opera, Denève has led productions at the Royal Opera House, Glyndebourne Festival, La Scala, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Saito Kinen Festival, Gran Teatro de Liceu, Netherlands Opera, La Monnaie, Deutsche Oper Am Rhein, and at the Opéra National de Paris.

As a recording artist, he has won critical acclaim for his recordings of the works of Poulenc, Debussy, Ravel, Roussel, Franck, and Honegger. He is a triple winner of the Diapason d'Or of the Year, has been shortlisted for *Gramophone's* Artist of the Year Award, and has won the prize for symphonic music at the International Classical Music Awards. His most recent releases include *Lost Horizon*, a two-disc set of music by Guillaume Connesson with the Brussels Philharmonic, saxophonist Timothy McAllister, and violinist Renaud Capuçon on Deutsche Grammophon; Honegger's *Jeanne d'Arc au bûcher* with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra on its label; and *Cinema* with violinist Renaud Capuçon and the Brussels Philharmonic on Erato/Warner Classics featuring some of the most memorable melodies from the silver screen.

For further information, please visit also.org/deneve.

GIL SHAHAM (violin, William and Laura Orthwein Guest Artist) is one of the foremost violinists of our time; his flawless technique combined with his inimitable warmth and generosity of spirit has solidified his renown as an American master. The Grammy Award-winner, also named *Musical America's* "Instrumentalist of the Year," is sought after throughout the world for concerto appearances with leading orchestras and conductors, and regularly gives recitals and appears with ensembles on the world's great concert stages and at the most prestigious festivals.

Highlights of recent years include the acclaimed recording and performances of J.S. Bach's complete sonatas and partitas for solo violin. In the coming seasons in addition to championing these solo works, he will join his long-time duo partner, pianist Akira Eguchi, in recitals throughout North America, Europe, and Asia.

Appearances with orchestras regularly include the Berlin Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Israel Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris, and San Francisco Symphony, as well as multi-year residencies with the Orchestras of Montreal, Stuttgart, and Singapore. With orchestra, Shaham continues his exploration of "Violin Concertos of the 1930s," including the works of Barber, Bartók, Berg, Korngold, and Prokofiev, among many others.

Shaham has more than two dozen concerto and solo CDs to his name, earning multiple Grammys, a Grand Prix du Disque, Diapason d'Or, and *Gramophone* Editor's Choice. Many of these recordings appear on Canary Classics, the label he founded in 2004. His CDs include *1930s Violin Concertos*, *Virtuoso Violin Works*, *Elgar's Violin Concerto*, *Hebrew Melodies*, *The Butterfly Lovers*, and many more. His most recent recording in the series *1930s Violin Concertos Vol. 2*, including Prokofiev's *Violin Concerto* and Bartók's *Violin Concerto No. 2*, was nominated for a Grammy Award.

Shaham was born in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, in 1971. He moved with his parents to Israel, where he began violin studies with Samuel Bernstein of the Rubin Academy of Music at the age of seven, receiving annual scholarships from the America-Israel Cultural Foundation. In 1981, he made debuts with the Jerusalem Symphony and the Israel Philharmonic, and the following year, took the first prize in Israel's Claremont Competition. He then became a scholarship student at Juilliard, and also studied at Columbia University.

Shaham was awarded an Avery Fisher Career Grant in 1990, and in 2008 he received the coveted Avery Fisher Prize. In 2012, he was named "Instrumentalist of the Year" by *Musical America*. He plays the 1699 "Countess Polignac" Stradivarius, and lives in New York City with his wife, violinist Adele Anthony, and their three children.

AARON JAY KERNIS (composer) is one of America's most performed and honored composers. He is the winner of two 2019 Grammy Awards (including Best Contemporary Classical Composition for his Violin Concerto for James Ehnes), a Pulitzer Prize, Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition, and Nemmers Award.

His music appears prominently on concert programs worldwide, and he has been commissioned by preeminent performing organizations and artists, including the New York and Royal Liverpool Philharmonics, San Francisco, Toronto, and Melbourne (AU) Symphonies, Los Angeles and Saint Paul Chamber and Minnesota Orchestras, Walt Disney Company, The Knights, San Francisco Girls and Brooklyn Youth Choruses, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Renee Fleming, Dawn Upshaw, Joshua Bell, Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, and Sharon Isbin to name a few.

His works have been recorded on Nonesuch, Naxos, Phoenix, Onyx, Signum, Virgin Cedille, and Argo, with which Kernis had an exclusive recording contract, and many other labels. Recent and upcoming are discs including his new flute concerto with flutist Marina Piccinini and Leonard Slatkin/Marin Alsop conducting the Peabody Symphony; his third string quartet ("River") as part of the Jasper Quartet's The Kernis Project; the Grammy-winning recording of his violin concerto for James Ehnes with the Seattle Symphony and Ludovic Morlot; and the Nashville Symphony and Giancarlo Guerrero of recent orchestral music.

He is the Workshop Director of the Nashville Symphony Composer Lab and, for 15 years, served as New Music Adviser to the Minnesota Orchestra, with which he co-founded and directed its Composer Institute for 11 years. Kernis teaches composition at Yale School of Music, and was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the Classical Music Hall of Fame. Leta Miller's book-length portrait of Kernis and his work was published in 2014 by University of Illinois Press as part of its American Composer series.

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Celebrated as one of today's most exciting and enduring orchestras, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra is the second-oldest orchestra in the country, marking its 140th year with the 2019-2020 season and its first with Music Director Stéphane Denève. Widely considered one of the world's finest orchestras, the SLSO maintains its commitment to artistic excellence, educational impact, and community connections—all in service to its mission of enriching lives through the power of music.

In addition to its regular concert performances at Powell Hall, which has been the permanent home of the SLSO for more than 50 years, the orchestra is an integral part of the diverse and vibrant St. Louis community, presenting dozens of free education and community programs and performances throughout the region each year. It has an ongoing commitment to championing music of our time, through commissions, a collaboration with the Mizzou New Music Initiative, and its popular St. Louis Symphony: Live at the Pulitzer series. The SLSO also serves as the resident orchestra for Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, with the upcoming season marking the 43rd year of this unique partnership.

The Grammy Award-winning SLSO's impact beyond the St. Louis region is realized through weekly Saturday night concert broadcasts on St. Louis Public Radio, acclaimed recordings, and regular touring activity. A sought-after artistic partner by preeminent musicians and composers from across the globe, as well as by local and national organizations, the SLSO enjoys a long history of robust and enduring artistic collaborations that have developed and deepened over the years.

Today, the SLSO builds on the institution's current momentum on all fronts, including artistic, financial, audience growth, and community impact, and looks toward the future with Stéphane Denève. For more information, visit slso.org.

140TH SEASON 2019-2020

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Stéphane Denève

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Louis D. Beaumont Chair
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Concertmaster
Erin Schreiber, Assistant Concertmaster
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Maxine Goldenhersh Chair
Jessica Cheng, Margaret B. Grigg Chair
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Emily Ho
Silvian Iticovici, Second Associate
Concertmaster Emeritus
Joo Kim
Melody Lee
Xiaoxiao Qiang
Angie Smart, Mary and Oliver Langenberg Chair
Hiroko Yoshida
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Dr. Frederick Eno Woodruff Chair
Kristin Ahlstrom, Associate Principal,
Virginia V. Weldon, M.D. Chair
Eva Kozma, Assistant Principal
Andrea Jarrett
Rebecca Boyer Hall
Nicolae Bica
Janet Carpenter
Lisa Chong
Elizabeth Dziekonski
Ling Ling Guan
Asako Kuboki
Wendy Plank Rosen
Shawn Weil
Hannah Ji**

VIOLAS

Beth Guterman Chu, Principal,
Ben H. and Katherine G. Wells Chair
Jonathan Chu, Assistant Principal
Michael Casimir
Andrew Francois
Susan Gordon
Leonid Plashinov-Johnson
Chris Tantillo
Shannon Farrell Williams
Xi Zhang
Linda Numagami**

*Chair vacant

**Replacement

***Leave of Absence

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Melissa Brooks, Associate Principal,
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Wilfred and Ann Lee Konneker Chair
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Jaewon Kim**

BASS CLARINET

Tzuying Huang

E-FLAT CLARINET

Jaewon Kim**

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Andrew Gott, Associate Principal
Felicia Foland
Vincent Karamanov

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Vincent Karamanov

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***Leave of Absence