

CLASSICAL MUSIC & DANCE

Emanuel Ax, exotic Bizet and Rome: The 10 biggest classical events of 2019



Early music ensemble Atalante will take its cue from 17th century Rome in an April performance. *FILE PHOTO*

Those dealing with seasonal affective disorder can take comfort in the fact that days are now getting longer. Something else to brighten winter doldrums is the amazing lineup of music for the next several months brought to you by Kansas City's world class arts presenters.

We've chosen 10 performances out of a plethora of musical events. We think these are not-to-be-missed concerts, with programs ranging from an exotic opera by Georges Bizet to cutting-edge dance by Twyla Tharp and David Parsons.

The Kansas City Symphony is pulling out all the stops for Gustav Mahler, and powerhouse pianist Yefim Bronfman will appear with the Symphony to perform music by Liszt.

Any Harriman-Jewell Series program is top-notch, but they do have a couple of very special concerts that deserve special attention: the Michael Tilson Thomas and San Francisco Symphony farewell tour and a recital by Emanuel Ax.

Props to the always-classy Friends of Chamber Music, who have three events listed among our top 10. There will be a piano recital by a Friends of Chamber Music regular, as well as some creative takes on the music of 17th century Rome and Arnold Schoenberg.

But first ...

Behzod Abduraimov

Behzod Abduraimov, winner of the London International Piano Competition and product of Park University's International Center for Music, will present a program called "Love and Death." It will include Wagner's *Isolde's Liebestod* transcribed for piano by Liszt, as well as Liszt's B minor Sonata and a suite from *Roméo and Juliet* by Sergei Prokofiev.

7:30 p.m. Jan. 19. 1900 Building, 1900 Shawnee Mission Parkway, Mission. \$10-\$30. www.1900bldg.com.

Richard Goode

Richard Goode has been a stalwart of the Friends of Chamber Music for decades, and for good reason. Goode is a thoughtful interpreter with brilliant technique and deep introspection. He's simply one of the finest pianists of our day, and every time he gives a recital, it is certain to be memorable. Goode will perform Haydn, Mozart, Chopin and, of course, a sonata by Beethoven. A highlight of the concert is Leo Janáček's "In the Mists."

7:30 p.m. April 12. C. Stephen Metzler Hall at the Folly Theater. \$35. 816-561-9999 or

Atalante

With gorgeous costumes and authentic period instruments, Atalante brings early music to life. The Friends of Chamber Music is presenting Atalante in a program called “Milton in Love: The Birth of Opera, Oratorio, and Cantata in the Eternal City.” It will feature music from the pope’s summer residence, Castel Gondolfo, as well as other Roman palaces, castles and oratories. Atalante never fails to deliver highly refined entertainment.

7:30 p.m. April 5. Grace and Holy Trinity Cathedral, 415 W. 13th St. \$35. 816-561-9999 or www.chambermusic.org.

Transfigured Nights

Now here’s a bracing program. The Friends of Chamber Music is presenting an all-star quartet headed up by cellist Alisa Weilerstein. The group will perform Beethoven’s “Ghost” Trio No. 5, Schoenberg’s Verklärte Nacht and Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 15 arranged for piano trio and percussion. The music of Beethoven will play off Schoenberg and Shostakovich nicely. All three composers were rebels and they all wrote revolutionary music, which challenges and thrills audiences.

7:30 p.m. May 10. C. Stephen Metzler Hall at the Folly Theater. \$35. 816-561-9999 or www.chambermusic.org.

Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony

Michael Tilson is making a farewell tour with his San Francisco Symphony. With the conductor’s long history with the Harriman-Jewell Series, the tour’s stop in Kansas City should be especially poignant. On the program is Ravel’s Le Tombeau de Couperin, Mozart’s Violin Concerto No. 3, with Christian Tetzlaff as soloist, and the concert will conclude with Sibelius’ majestic Symphony No. 2.

7:30 p.m. March 21. Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. \$36.50-\$91.50. 816-415-5025 or www.hjseries.org.

Emanuel Ax



Emanuel Ax will appear as part of the Harriman-Jewell series.
Urs Flueeler AP

There are some top tier artists who really seem to vibe with Kansas City. People like Joyce DiDonato, Itzhak Perlman, Yo-Yo Ma and Emanuel Ax. Whenever Ax makes an appearance on the Harriman-Jewell Series, one senses the audience has a special intimacy with this beloved artist. Ax will perform music by Brahms, Schumann, Ravel and Chopin.

7:30 p.m. March 16. Folly Theater, 300 W. 12th St. \$31-\$81.50. 816-415-5025 or www.hjseries.org.

Mahler and Kansas City Symphony

The Mahler Third is absolutely my favorite Mahler symphony. It's a gigantic, symphonic tour of the great chain of being. The work opens with "Pam awakes, summer marches in." We then begin our ascent from "What the flowers in meadows tell me" to "What the animals in the forest tell me," "What the angels tell me" and finally "What love tells me." This is Mahler at his most mystical and most ecstatic. The Kansas City Symphony is providing a rare opportunity to hear this massive work performed live in the acoustics of Helzberg Hall.

8 p.m. May 17 and 18 and 2 p.m. May 19. Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. \$25-\$84. 816-471-0400 or www.kcsymphony.org.

Things are never dull when Yefim Bronfman is in town. Bronfman is a rare combination of brute strength and exquisite sensitivity. As Philip Roth wrote about him: “He looks less like the person who is going to play the piano than like the guy who should be moving it.” You can expect Bronfman to give a full-throttle performance when he takes on Liszt’s Piano Concerto No. 2.

8 p.m. June 7 and 8 and 2 p.m. June 9. Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. \$25-\$85. 816-471-0400 or www.kcsymphony.org.

Kansas City Ballet: Tharp/Parsons/Forsythe

Devon Carney, artistic director of the Kansas City Ballet, often ends his seasons with showstopping performances of contemporary dance. And that’s how he’s ending the 2019 season, with works by three of the greatest contemporary choreographers. “Tharp/Parsons/Forsythe” feature Twyla Tharp’s “In the Upper Room” set to Philip Glass’ thrilling minimalism; William Forsythe’s “In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated,” another contemporary classic; and a world premiere by David Parsons.

7:30 p.m. May 10, 11, 17 and 18 and 2 p.m. May 12 and 19. Muriel Kauffman Theatre, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. \$34-\$114. 816-931-2232 or www.kcballet.org.

Lyric Opera: “The Pearl Fishers”

Bizet was 36-years-old when he died of a heart attack, but he left us a small legacy of masterpieces like “Carmen,” the Symphony in C, the “L’Arlesienne” music and “The Pearl Fishers.” After a century of neglect, opera companies are discovering Bizet’s other opera. “Pearl Fishers” is a lush, opulent example of Orientalism, and it contains some of Bizet’s most ravishing music, including the duet “Au fond du temple saint.”

7:30 p.m. April 27, May 1 and May 3 and 2 p.m. May 5. Muriel Kauffman Theatre, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. \$45.50-\$194.50. 816-471-7344 or www.kcopera.org.

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