PROGRAM PAGE

HOUGH FAMILY FOUNDATION MASTERWORKS

RAVEL'S DAPHNIS AND CHLOE

William Eddins, *Conductor*
George Li, *Piano*

Friday, Jan 23, 2026, Straz Center - Morsani at 8 pm
Saturday, Jan 24, 2026, Mahaffey Theater at 8 pm
Sunday, Jan 25, 2026, Ruth Eckerd Hall at 7:30 pm

Charles Tomlinson Griffes (1884 - 1920)	**The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan, Op. 8**
Maurice Ravel (1875 - 1937)	**Piano Concerto in G Major** I. *Allegramente* II. *Adagio assai* III. *Presto*
	Intermission
Paul Dukas (1865 - 1935)	**The Sorcerer's Apprentice**
Maurice Ravel (1875 - 1937)	**Daphnis et Chloé: Suite No. 2** *Lever du jour* *Pantomime* *Danse générale*

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Charles T. Griffes (1884-1920)
The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan
Duration: ca. 13 minutes

What to listen for:

- This early masterpiece of American impressionism captures the dreamy quality of Coleridge's poem.

Charles Griffes was an American original who planned to be a concert pianist, but his shyness and the allure of Debussy and Ravel steered him toward composing, and studies with Humperdinck set his course in stone.

Composition, however, didn't pay the bills, so Griffes took a position as director of music at the Hackley School in Tarrytown, NY, a "grim and unrewarding'' job he held until his death at age 35 from the flu. The upside was a sunny, bucolic atmosphere that encouraged Griffes to spend time outdoors and flesh out ideas on paper, and by 1919 his short list of works and performances established him as a rising star of the nascent American symphonic style.

Impressed by Oriental poetry and Eastern exoticism in art and music, he dabbled in a form of Japanese pantomime called Sho-jo. This influence led, albeit indirectly, to his best-known work, *The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan*, inspired by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and originally composed for the piano. The idea of a musical depiction of the poem came to him in a dream, and the evocative writing mirrors the mood and mystical quality of the words, especially the opening lines:

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan

A stately pleasure-dome decree:

Where Alph, the sacred river, ran

Through caverns measureless to man

Down to a sunless sea.

The music begins as a low rumble in the strings, evoking the river flowing through caves of ice, then "sunny spots of greenery," and "gardens bright with sinuous rills." The music then reverts to dance and leads to a rousing climax before suddenly returning to the mood of the opening. This is TFO's first performance of the work.

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
Piano Concerto in G Major
Duration: ca. 23 minutes

What to listen for:

- Don't be surprised to hear echoes of George Gerswhin in this otherwise French masterpiece.

Maurice Ravel is one of the more intriguing figures in the classical music brochure. Standing just over 5 feet tall, impeccably dressed and groomed, fascinated by watches and precision machines and protective of his personal life, Ravel has been both a delight and a frustration for biographers. Most agree, however, that he was a brilliant and imaginative musician who wrote works of consummate beauty on every scale except the symphony.

The coloristic wash of *Daphnis et Chloé* (also on this program), the ethereal *Pavane for a Dead Princess* and the gracious String Quartet are sublime, subtle masterstrokes, and his hypnotic *Bolero* remains an audience favorite. He also wrote two concertos for piano, the one you will hear shortly, and another for the left hand only (composed for the Viennese pianist, Paul Wittgenstein, who lost his right arm in World War I).

The Piano Concerto in G Major, completed in 1931, was "written very much in the same spirit as those of Mozart and Saint-Saens," Ravel once said. But listeners also might hear someone else: George Gershwin.

A bit of background. During a tour of the United States in 1928, Ravel attended a performance of the musical *Funny Face* and expressed an interest in meeting its composer – the rising star of American musical theater. In an encounter that is now legendary, Gershwin asked Ravel if he could study with him. Ravel modestly told the younger man there was nothing he could teach him that he didn't already know, and that his natural gifts were far better than any lesson in composition.

Ravel instead wrote a letter to the famed pedagogue Nadia Boulanger, asking if she would "have the courage, which I wouldn't dare, to undertake the awesome responsibility" of teaching this talented young man.

Gershwin obviously made an impression on Ravel, and the jazziness he molded into the concerto pays homage to him through a tip of the hat to *Rhapsody in Blue*. Some might even think that the concerto and *An American in Paris* were written by the same person

The opening movement is a romp, lighthearted and carefree, and releases the shackles of its classical mold through an air of American jazz. The middle section is a seductive adagio that sends listeners into a dream world, suddenly broken by a closing presto taken at breakneck speed and full of exotic percussive accents.

Paul Dukas (1865-1935)
The Sorcerer's Apprentice
Duration: ca. 12 minutes

What to listen for:

- Dukas' deft use of the orchestra tells a story through vivid instrumental colors, shades and dynamics that bring the characters to life.

Music is full of one-hit wonders, especially in rock 'n' roll. But the world of classical music has its share of composers known for a single work, even if they devoted a lifetime to otherwise neglected or now-forgotten pieces.

Think Johann Pachelbel's catchy *Canon*, Carl Orff's explosive *Carmina Burana*, or Bedrich Smetana's flowing *Moldau*. Then there's our friend Paul Dukas, who will be forever linked to a magical broom that, well, swept his career into a corner.

Millions came to know Dukas in the 1940 Disney animated classic, *Fantasia*, which featured a work written nearly a half-century earlier, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice.* But long before the film, this brief orchestral scherzo stood out, overshadowing his *La Peri* ballet*,* the *Piano Sonata,* the *Rameau Variations,* the opera *Ariane and Bluebeard,* and the *Symphony in C*.

Sorcerer's Apprentice brought in royalties but became a stereotype that made the Frenchman appear one-dimensional. Even today, it hinders a "fuller understanding of Dukas, as that single work is far better known than its composer,'' notes the Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians.

Composed in 1897 and based on Goethe's poem, *Der Zauberlehrling*, the music depicts a sorcerer's helper who – too lazy to clean his master's workshop and fill a bathtub – enchants a broom to do the work for him. But lacking the requisite magical skills, he can't stop the broom from delivering pails of water, and the tub overflows. Frantic, the apprentice cuts the broom in half, only to create two goon-sweepers that work at even greater speed, flooding the room. Soon, an army of brooms runs amok, until the sorcerer returns and breaks the spell.

Dukas captured Goethe's story through a flurry of instrumental color, tension and release, and rhythmic nuance. The music opens mysteriously, and teases with hints of a theme and well-placed orchestral outbursts. Plucked strings give way to a lone clarinet, then oboe, then flute. A loud drum beat brings everything to a halt before the music lurches ominously forward.

Then, a trio of bassoons introduce the famous Hitchcockian theme – the broom has awoken. The full orchestra embraces the tune in a whirlwind of energy before the bassoons return and everyone closes in riotous unison.

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
Daphnis et Chloé Suite No. 2
Duration: ca. 18 minutes

What to listen for:

- Ravel's evocative use of orchestral textures and lush harmonies make *Daybreak* a model of program music.

If Mozart could compose an entire symphony while playing billiards, Ravel struggled with every note. "I did my work slowly, drop by drop," he once said. "I tore it out of me in pieces."

His best works are luxuriant and emotionally calculated, noted above all for their exquisite craftsmanship. They also are marked by a refined sense of taste and an ear for structural brilliance. As an orchestrator, he was unmatched, taking his cue from that master of instrumental coloring, Rimsky-Korsakov.

His masterpiece, many argue, is *Daphnis et Chloé*, written for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, but exclusively heard today as a concert suite. TFO will perform the three movements that make up the Suite No. 2:

Daybreak − One of Ravel's most lavish creations, this music depicts the early morning sunrise as birds begin their songs and the world awakens.

Pantomime – The woodwinds hold court here with themes moving among oboe, clarinet and English horn.

General Dance − This wild conclusion shows Ravel at his raunchy best, twisting the entire orchestra into a musical pretzel before an explosive coda designed to bring the audience to its feet.

Kurt Loft is a journalist and music critic who has written for various newspapers, magazines and arts groups for more than 40 years. A member of the Music Critics Association of North America, he lives in St. Petersburg.