

Alton Symphony Orchestra



SYMPHONY NO. 5 - TCHAIKOVSKY

Saturday | 18 October
7:00 pm
Hatheway Cultural
Center, LCCC

ASO 2025—2026 Season

“Symphony No. 5—Tchaikovsky”

October 18, 2025 Saturday 7 pm

Join ASO for an evening of passion and playfulness as we perform Rossini’s “Barber of Seville,” Sibelius’ “Finlandia,” and the emotional journey from darkness to triumph of Tchaikovsky’s “Symphony No. 5!”

“Warmth in Midwinter”

December 7, 2025 Sunday 3pm

Evoke the spirit of the season with the quiet wonder of Holst’s “In the Bleak Midwinter” and warm your heart with the Trans-Siberian Orchestra’s “Mad Russian’s Christmas,” “Christmas Eve/Sarajevo 12/24” and “Sleigh Ride!”

“Variations on Americana”

February 28, 2026 Saturday—3 pm

A lively tribute to American music featuring Bernstein’s “Candide Overture,” Ives’ “Variations on America,” Copland’s timeless “Appalachian Spring” and more!

“Pirates and Other Songs of the Sea”

April 25, 2026 Saturday—7 pm

Set sail with ASO as we close the season with a musical voyage that captures the mystery, majesty, and mischief of the sea! Featuring Debussy’s “La Mer,” Rimsky-Korsakov’s “Scheherazade,” and “Pirates of the Caribbean!”

Visit our website to purchase your tickets
ahead of time!



Wm. Shane Williams
Conductor

Maestro Wm. Shane Williams is celebrating his 13th season as Music Director/Conductor of the Alton Symphony. He is a charismatic and versatile conductor, versed in wide gamut of musical styles, carrying a vision to Make Music Come Alive for All playing under his baton.

His skills and gifting have allowed him conducting opportunities in the United States and abroad: the Zapadocesky Symphony Orchestra of the Czech Republic, the St. Louis Philharmonic, the Illinois Symphony, the Kirkwood Symphony, the Alton Symphony, the

University City Orchestra, and the Gateway Chamber Orchestra, to name a few. Maestro Williams has had the privilege of working with Grammy Award winning violinist Mark O'Connor. Shane is a regular guest conductor, performer, clinician, and adjudicator throughout the region.

His previous conducting posts include the Alton Summer Chamber Series, the Young People's Concert Orchestra at the Webster Community Music School, the Sangamon Valley Youth Symphony, Pops Conductor of the Alton Symphony and Resident Conductor of the Award-winning St. Louis Brass Band.

As a professional musician, Maestro Williams has performed with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra (noted performances at Carnegie Hall), Opera Theater St. Louis, the Illinois Symphony, the Nashville Symphony, Winter Opera St. Louis, the Joffrey Ballet, Ice Capades, Moody Blues, the Elvis Show, the Three Irish Tenors, Opryland USA, Burt Bacharach, Roger Williams, Dionne Warwick, Tommy Tune, Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith and many others.

Maestro Williams serves on the music faculty at Missouri Baptist University where he teaches conducting and oversees the instrumental programs. As an educator, Mr. Williams has taught public, private, and homeschool. In 2002, he founded the SCCYO Summer String and Woodwind Workshops and Audition Preparation Workshops (APW). Also, he has previously served on the music faculty of the Masterworks Music Festival for many years.

Maestro Williams holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Music Education from Austin Peay State University, a Master of Percussion Performance from the St. Louis Conservatory of Music, and a Master of Music degree in Conducting from the University of Missouri-Columbia. He has completed doctoral studies at Lindenwood University.



Vincent Piazza
Concertmaster

A native of Alton, IL, Vincent Piazza began studying violin at the age of nine in the Alton public school system. After studying with Elizabeth Jankowski through high school, he enrolled at the University of Illinois at

Urbana-Champaign, studying with Peter Schaffer and Pacifica Quartet member Sibbi Bernhardsson. Also, during his years at the University of Illinois, Vincent was a student of Italian, receiving a minor and studying in Catania, Sicily. Vincent also holds a Master's degree from Boston University studying violin with Bayla Keyes.

Vincent's summer highlights have included the National Repertory Orchestra, the Round Top Festival Institute and the Tónlistarhátíðar unga fólksins string quartet seminar in Iceland. In 2007 he toured China as a member of the Sinfonia da Camera.

Vincent has a long history with the Alton Symphony Orchestra. He was a member of the Alton Junior Youth Symphony, the Alton Youth Symphony, and, during high school, the Alton Symphony. He enjoyed playing in many ensembles. While playing with the Alton Symphony in high school, he also performed with the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra and the Alton High School Symphonic Orchestra.

Today, Vincent works at St. Louis College of Pharmacy in the Office of Institutional Advancement. He freelances in the St. Louis area and teaches privately. He resides in Edwardsville with his wife Jenna and their five children, Rachel, Allegra, Luca, Giuliana and Matteo. Rachel, Luca, and Matteo play violin, Allegra plays cello, and Gigi plays piano.

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The Alton Symphony Orchestra acknowledges support from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

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Tickets are \$10 to win numerous gift certificates for businesses all around Alton! Purchase tickets at a ticket table or in the lobby at intermission!

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Program Notes by Anthony Jensen

Gioachino Rossini - William Tell Overture (1829)

The grand opera, *Guillaume Tell*, would be Rossini's final contribution to the field of opera, composed in 1829 and premiered in the August of that same year. It was one of the two operas which Rossini wrote in French, alongside *Le Comte Ory* from the year before. The opera is in 4 acts and is an adaptation of the play written by the historian Friedrich Schiller. The play and libretto detail the story of the eponymous Swiss marksman who fought for and helped win the independence of Switzerland from the Habsburg Empire in the early 14th century. Putting on a production of the opera has historically been an enormous undertaking, both due to its 4 hour length and technical demands from the cast, with most performances having significant cuts in the score - even at its premiere, only three of the four acts were performed - and the political nature of the work made it a frequent target for censorship across Europe during the 19th century.

The overture has become a staple in its own right as a piece of repertoire independent from the complete opera and the overture does not feature any of the opera's thematic or narrative ideas, with the exception of the *ranz des vaches* in the third section of the overture. The piece has four parts, each linked seamlessly to one another.

"The Prelude (Dawn)" opens the overture, featuring a solo cello accompanied by the cello section and double basses. Two timpani rolls evoke the gentle start of rolling thunder to prepare for the second section, "The Storm." The second section begins with a soft dialogue between the winds and upper strings before bursting into a dramatic climax with the introduction of the brass and percussion. The orchestration thins down to a lone flute as the storm subsides. "The Ranz des Vaches," or the "Call to the Cows," is a traditional Swiss melody introduced by the english horn in the section, the theme of which reappears throughout the rest of the opera as a leitmotif representative of the idyllic Swiss countryside.

"The March of the Swiss Soldiers" is perhaps the most famous part of the entire overture, and has been used in many different examples of popular media. While we have an association with the march and horseriding, this is partly due to its use as the theme for *The Lone Ranger*; the march in the opera doesn't have the same connotations. It alludes to the victory of the Swiss, and their newfound independence, during the battle at the end of the opera.

Jean Sibelius - Finlandia (1899)

Jean Sibelius composed the piece we know today as Finlandia for the Press Celebrations of 1899, which was a covert protest against the increasing censorship from the Russian Empire. The original suite *Press Celebrations Music* that Sibelius composed was never originally released under Sibelius' supervision, and it was not until nearly 99 years later that the suite itself was reconstructed. This original suite featured a prelude and a series of 6 tableaux depicting episodes of Finnish history. These movements were:

Preludium: Andante

Tableau 1: *The Song of Väinämöinen*

Tableau 2: *The Finns are Baptized by Bishop Henry*

Tableau 3: *Scene from Duke Johan's Court*

Tableau 4: *The Finns in the Thirty Years' War*

Tableau 5: *The Great Hostility*

Tableau 6: *Finland Awakes*

During the piece's lifetime, it was performed under many alternative names in order to avoid further censorship, such as *Happy Feelings at the awakening of Finnish Spring*, *A Scandinavian Choral March*, as well as generic, covert titles such as "Impromptu." The Finlandia that we know today is an arrangement of the final two movements of the original suite.

The *Finlandia Hymn* that concludes the piece is a well-known hymn which has had several different texts set to its melody during its lifetime, such as "Be Still, My Soul" and "I Then Shall Live," and was even the national anthem of an African state known as the Republic of Biafra in the late 1960s in what is now the south-eastern corner of the contemporary state of Nigeria. This tune is often erroneously referred to as a traditional melody; Sibelius, in fact, was the person who originally composed the melody. The original lyrics were provided by the Finnish poet Veikko Antero Koskenniemi in 1941 and has been discussed at length to become Finland's official anthem. An English translation of Koskenniemi's Suomi lyrics have been provided below:

English:

O Finland, behold, your day has now come dawning;
Banished is night, its menace gone with light,
Larks' song again in morning-brightness ringing,
Filling the air to heaven's great height,
And morning's glow, night's darkness overcoming;
Your day is come, o my native land.

O Finland, rise, stand proud, the future facing,
Your valiant deeds recalling, once again;
O Finland rise, in the world's sight erasing
From your fair brows vile slavery's stain.
You were not broken by oppressors ruling;
Your morn has come, o my native land.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky - Symphony No. 5 (1888)

Tchaikovsky was a prominent counterpoint to the group of Russian composers known as The Five. Where The Five had strong nationalist proclivities toward establishing a defined style of Russian music, Tchaikovsky had trained formally at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory, which had decidedly Western leanings, particularly towards the Germanic style of the time. This led the composer on a path of reconciliation between his native musical practices from childhood and his academic training. It was this cross-pollination between styles that would ultimately lead Tchaikovsky to meet musicians like Theodor Avé-Lallemant, the symphony's dedicatee.

Avé-Lallemant, a musician and music teacher from Germany, was nearly 40 years older than Tchaikovsky and was quite close to composers like Robert and Clara Schumann, Johannes Brahms, and Joseph Joachim. Him and Tchaikovsky met in January 1888, when the elderly Avé-Lallemant attended a concert of Tchaikovsky's music given by the composer at Hamburg. As Tchaikovsky wrote in his *Autobiographical Account of a Tour Abroad in the Year 1888*:

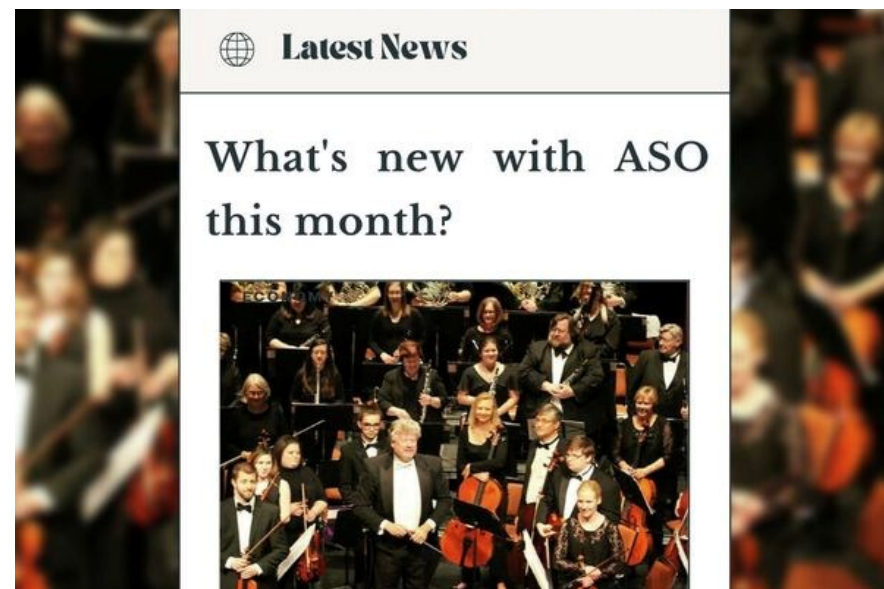
First of all I should mention the chief director of the Philharmonic Society, the aged Herr Avé-Lallemant. This most venerable old man of over eighty paid me great attention and treated me with paternal affection. In spite of his age and frailness, as well as the long distance from his house, he attended my two rehearsals, the concert, and even Dr. Bernuth's reception [after the concert]. [...] When I then visited this kindly old gentleman, who passionately loves music and who, as should be obvious to the reader, is quite free from that aversion which many old people have against everything that has been written in recent times, I had a very lengthy and interesting conversation with him.

The two became fast friends, and Tchaikovsky was so moved by the old man's kindness and passion that he reached out a few months later requesting Avé-Lallemant's permission to dedicate the Fifth Symphony to the old man from his publisher in Germany, Daniel Rahter. The reply that Rahter sent was the following:

I have seen Herr Avé-Lallemant here [in Hamburg]; he told me that he had written to you saying that he considers himself too insignificant to accept the intended distinction. However, he will be very glad about it, so just go ahead with your plan.

Rahter went so far as to convince the organizers of the Geneva concert to push their performance up by nearly a week such that Tchaikovsky could conduct the work in Hamburg. Unfortunately, due to the failing health of Avé-Lallemant, he would not be able to attend the concert given by the Hamburg Philharmonie on March 15, 1889, nor would he live long enough to hear a performance of it, as Avé-Lallemant would pass away in November of the following year. He sent Tchaikovsky this message on the morning of the Hamburg concert:

Dear and esteemed Sir and friend! My cold has unfortunately got so worse that I shall have to keep to my room, and perhaps even to my bed, for several days, which means that I can also not attend the concert! How cruel this is for me, since you have become very dear to me not just as a composer, but also as the splendid person you are. I must therefore call out to you a written *Grüß Gott, and, if He grants it, Auf Wiedersehen [Till we meet!]*



Visit our website to sign up for monthly updates about where ASO is in the community, scholarships, competitions, fundraisers, and more!



Not sure if you're ready to audition for ASO? Check out the Riverbend Community Orchestra! This group was formed by ASO and Alton Youth Symphony to create a space for casual musicians of high school age and older! Visit our website for more details!

“Symphony No. 5 - Tchaikovsky”
October 18, 2025—7 pm

National Anthem	Francis Scott Key John Stafford Smith
Guillaume Tell Overture	Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)
Finlandia Op.26	Jean Sibelius (1863-1957)

*****INTERMISSION*****

Refreshments served in upstairs lobby
All Around Alton Raffle Tickets sold in upstairs lobby

Symphony No.5 Op.64, in E minor	Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)
Andante-Allegro con anima	
Andante cantabile con alcuna licenza	
Valse: Allegro Moderato	
Finale: Andante maestoso – Allegro vivace	

Librarian—Gary Lee
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Musicians

<u>Violin I</u> Vincent Piazza, <i>Concertmaster</i> <i>Dr. Frank M. Boals Chair</i> Rachel Piazza Sr. Marie-Therese Swiezynski Kelsey Waits Allison Woerner Tressa Zimmerman	<u>Oboe / English Horn</u> Cathy Woelbling Paul, <i>Principal</i> <i>Dr. Scott Hawley Chair</i> Brandon Thompson
<u>Violin II</u> Connie Clayton Casey Hansen Mary Mahoney Natalie O’Rando Alison Schulz <i>John Simmons Chair</i>	<u>Clarinet</u> Jenna Piazza, <i>Principal</i> <i>Anthony Lordi Chair</i> Melissa Bock
<u>Viola</u> Paul Quinlisk, <i>Principal</i> Ryan Dissett Jill Jamill Jean Heil	<u>Bassoon</u> Sheila Acuncius, <i>Principal</i> Greg Van Asch
<u>Cello</u> Gary Lee, <i>Principal</i> <i>Henry Swanger Chair</i> Robert Flick Abigail Knoche Sam Mundell Elyse Tillman <i>Jerre Honke Chair</i>	<u>Horn</u> John Lindley, <i>Principal</i> <i>Allen Biggs Chair</i> David Williams, <i>Assistant</i> Matt Geary Bryan Manzano Jessica Poddig
	<u>Trumpet</u> Chris Dressler, <i>Principal</i> <i>Dr. Christopher Langdon Chair</i> Rick Acuncius Isaiah Christner
	<u>Trombone</u> Marquita Reef, <i>Principal</i> Larry Ashlock Chris Galloway
<u>Bass</u> Anita Hagerman Kit Young	<u>Tuba</u> Ben Duane
<u>Flute</u> Tami Flick, <i>Principal</i> Linda Atkinson Corrina Pohlman	<u>Percussion</u> Gary Morris, <i>Principal</i> Connor Caporal Wade Cermak-Hernandez
	<u>Tympani</u> Brad Rushton