



*Atton Symphony  
Orchestra*

**VARIATIONS  
ON  
AMERICANA**

**28 FEBRUARY 2026**

**3:00 PM**

**HATHEWAY CULTURAL CENTER, LCCC CAMPUS**

**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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- Help provide funding to secure ASO's future for generations to come

Want to ensure ASO's future? Consider making monthly, yearly, or one-time contributions to the ASO Endowment Fund! Visit our website or speak to a board member for more details!

## Help us "Make Music Come Alive For All" by donating today!



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

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## **Board of Directors**

President—Jessica Poddig

Vice-President/Historian—Leah Cook

Treasurer—Melissa Bock

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Becker

### **Members**

Sam Cook, Victor Freyer, Casey  
Hansen, Pat Rowold, Kelsey Waits



**Zeke Ledbetter,  
Narrator**

Zeke is a first year student at Missouri Baptist University pursuing a degree in Vocal Performance. Originally from Iowa, he has continued his musical development in St. Louis, studying and performing across musical theatre, jazz, opera, and diverse vocal and instrumental settings.

Recent highlights include appearing as a featured soloist in the University of South Dakota premiere of “El Ruido del Agua” which was nominated for a Latin Grammy.

He is grateful for the opportunity to collaborate and perform alongside accomplished musicians.

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ASO would like to thank Liberty Apple Orchard for providing “Lincoln Portrait” through their generosity.

A recruitment poster for the Alton Symphony Orchestra. The background shows an orchestra performing on a stage with red curtains. The text is overlaid on the image.

*Alton Symphony Orchestra*  
making music come alive for all

# JOIN THE BOARD

The Board of Directors have the privilege of working collaboratively to direct and support the Orchestra. We are made up of community members who provide strategic insight to ensure ASO achieves its goal of "Making Music Come Alive For All."



*Program Notes by Anthony Jensen*

**Overture to *Candide* (1956) – Leonard Bernstein**

*Candide, ou l'Optimisme* was a French satirical novella written in 1759 by François-Marie Arouet, better known by his pen name Voltaire. The novel satirizes many different theories, both philosophical and religious, which Voltaire had previously criticized. It was this work that became the foundation for the lyrics and libretto to the Bernstein operetta, *Candide*, composed in 1956 and later revised numerous times by Bernstein, up to his final revision in 1989.

The operetta, an idea of Bernstein's, was intended to be a comedy of dramatic and increasingly over-the-top errors. These tragedies and errors, frequently outside the control of the titular character Candide, would result in him being punished in many ways. Lillian Hellman's libretto was criticized by *The New York Times* as too serious and dark for the otherwise bright and cheerful music. The work, first produced in 1957, was a box office disaster and would remain unpopular for several years until later revisions and productions would help it regain popularity, starting with its Broadway revival in 1973.

**Variations on a Shaker Melody, from *Appalachian Spring* (1944, arr. 1967)**

The Variations on a Shaker Melody is an arrangement on the Shaker tune "Simple Gifts" that was incorporated into his 1944 ballet *Appalachian Spring*, scored for 13 instruments. The ballet was commissioned by choreographer Martha Graham, and remains a staple in the repertoire of the Martha Graham Dance Company, a titan in its own right within the artistic world for both its longevity as the oldest dance company in the United States as well as being "one of the great dance companies of the world," as stated by *The New York Times*.

There are many themes that are present in *Appalachian Spring*, every one of which could fill journal articles in isolation; themes of war and loss, civil rights, racial inequality, and generational trauma are all present throughout the work. However, the one that's most relevant are the Shaker themes, represented by the use of the song "Simple Gifts" which appears throughout the ballet. This idea supports the ballet's central idea of peace and remembrance during wartime, the lyrics of which are likewise significant: "'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free."

**Variations on *America* (1891, orch. 1962) – Charles Ives, orch. William Schuman**

The *Variations on America* is a theme and variations on the tune "My Country 'Tis of Thee," which, at the time, was one of the two de facto anthems of the United States prior to the official 1931 adoption of "The Star-Spangled Banner." The original piece was written for organ, which Ives composed and performed himself at the age of 17. Despite the 1892 premiere and revisions until 1894, the piece was not published until it was discovered by the organist E. Power Biggs in 1949, which quickly became a staple in the repertoire for American organists. In 1962, the composer and arts administrator William Schuman orchestrated the piece, the version being performed this evening, and it was premiered in 1964 by the New York Philharmonic.

Ives was an interesting figure for his many experiments in music, his music featuring techniques like polyrhythms, tone clusters, quarter-tone tuning, and even elements of aleatory, all of which were foreshadowing the many innovations that would be more widely adopted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The *Variations* is significant in that it features his first notated usage of bitonality, found in the interludes: the first interlude features F major and D<sup>b</sup> major, and the second combines A<sup>b</sup> major and F major.

**Sword Dance (arr. 2011) – Traditional, arr. Bob Philips**

Bob Phillips, author/composer, pedagogue, teacher trainer, and conductor, is renowned as an innovator in string education. Bob has authored over 25 book series for use in the classroom, has had over 200 works published for orchestras and bands, and is an award-winning ASCAP composer. His works are regularly performed at the Midwest Clinic. His instructional DVDs, String Clinics to Go, have been used by thousands of teachers.

In Philips' notes on the piece: This outstanding arrangement is accessible by even very young full orchestras. Every section gets a chance with the melody, and each variation is represented with a different texture and accompaniment, invigorating the lively dance tune as the piece catapults toward the surprise presto ending! Thoughtful use of percussion adds to the colorful scoring. Students will love this high-energy delight from the Renaissance era.

**Dark Adventure (2001) – Ralph Ford (b.1963)**

Ralph Ford is a composer, arranger, conductor, and clinician. He is an exclusive composer and arranger for the Belwin division of Alfred Music in Los Angeles, California, with over 250 titles available worldwide for orchestra, concert band, jazz ensemble, and marching band. He has received international and regional advertising awards for his jingles and 3-D animation.

In Ford's notes on the piece: A musical adventure through mysticism and magic. This unique setting offers a wide variety of dynamics, textures, and styles while remaining playable. The momentum is quickly established, and your students are part of the journey. This is a super piece that will capture the imagination of students and listeners alike.

**Warsaw Concerto (1941) – Richard Addinsell (1904-1977)**

The *Warsaw Concerto* was not originally composed for the concert hall, and in fact only exists as a single movement of just under 10 minutes in length. Its original purpose was to be used as part of a film score, to the British film *Dangerous Moonlight*, which is centered on the struggle of the Polish during the 1939 invasion by Nazi Germany. The concerto was not part of the original production plan for the film; the producers had initially approached Sergei Rachmaninoff for permission to use his Piano Concerto No. 2 in its place, which was considered too expensive to use due to the concerns of copyright, if not outright forbidden. Instead, Addinsell composed the piece in Rachmaninoff's style, using the scores he had for the Piano Concerto No. 2 and No. 3, as well as the Rhapsody on a Theme from Paganini, as reference. This proved to be a powerful decision, as John Huntley notes:

The associations which individual members of the audience may have in relation to a certain piece of well-known music are quite beyond the control of the director of a film in which it is used.... And so with *Dangerous Moonlight* it was rightly decided to have a piece of music specially written, that could be used to become associated in the mind of the audience with Poland, air raids in Warsaw, and whatever the director wanted to suggest.

The concerto is at the heart of the film, as it tells the story of a Polish composer and pianist, Stefan Radecki, who enlists in the Polish Air Force fighting against the German Luftwaffe. Radecki is, throughout the film, in the process of composing this concerto as a symbol to the strength of the human spirit in the face of nearly overwhelming adversity. The film ends during the piece's premiere as part of an extended concert scene, with three movements listed on the program; only one of which was ever written by Addinsell.

**The Stars and Stripes Forever (1897) – John Philip Sousa (1854-1932)**

Sousa was a renowned composer of patriotic marches throughout his career, and there is no better example of this career than *The Stars and Stripes Forever*. The march was composed during a return trip from a European vacation with his wife in 1896 when he learned about the death of David Blakely, the manager of the Sousa Band. He composed the march on Christmas Day, 1896, and was committed to paper on his arrival in the United States after he wrote it in his head. It was premiered in May the following year, and it immediately became a staple of march repertoire and was embraced with enthusiasm. In 1987, an Act of Congress adopted it to be the national march of the United States. While not as familiar to audiences as the music, Sousa also wrote a set of lyrics to be sung with the march.

**Lincoln Portrait (1942) – Aaron Copland (1900-1990)**

*Lincoln Portrait* is a tone poem for orchestra and narrator which was commissioned by conductor Andre Kostelanetz for a performance by the New York Philharmonic. The piece presents a mosaic of music and text alike, using popular folk songs from the period such as "Camptown Races" and "On Springfield Mountain" and setting text from a variety of descriptions of Lincoln and some of his speeches, notably the "Gettysburg Address," the "Lincoln-Douglas Debates from 1858," and the "1862 Address to Congress." Since its premiere by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra in 1942 with Willam Adams narrating, many significant figures both within and outside of the world of music have narrated performances of the piece, including Neil Armstrong (1984 and 2009), Bill Clinton (2003), Samuel L. Jackson (2001), Barack Obama (2005), James Earl Jones (1999 and 2009), Carl Sandburg (1959, whose performance won a Grammy in 1960), George Takei (2004 and 2017), and, for his 80th birthday, Aaron Copland himself (1980).

**Selections from *West Side Story* (1957) – Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)**

In 1949, the choreographer and director Jerome Robbins approached Leonard Bernstein and Arthur Laurents about collaborating on a new project that was to be a musical adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* set in mid-1950s Manhattan on the Upper West Side. The initial meeting, as well as multiple subsequent meetings between the three of them, did not result in any fruitful progress toward the project, then titled *East Side Story*. This older version of the production was centered on a conflict between a Catholic and Jewish family living on the Lower East Side, centered around the themes of antisemitism, still fresh in memory in the years since the end of World War II. However, in 1956, Laurents and Bernstein had a meeting in Hollywood where the conversation turned toward the recent social phenomenon of juvenile delinquent gangs. This sparked many ideas, leading to the Manhattan setting between Tony, a Polish-Irish immigrant, and Maria, a native to Puerto Rico. The collaboration between the three was rekindled and progress once more began on the retitled *West Side Story*.



## Ann Geiler, AYS Conductor

Ann Geiler earned her BME from Lindenwood University and her MME from the University of Missouri-St. Louis. She was public school string teacher who taught strings from grades 4 through Jr. College for 30 years and retired in 2017. Ann has been active in professional music organizations throughout Missouri

and the US, which promote music education. She remains active in promoting string education in her retirement and is currently on the Adjudicator Committee for the Missouri State High School Activities Association. Ms. Geiler is Past-President of the Missouri Chapter of the American String Teachers Association and has been MMEA Orchestra Vice-President, has coordinated the Missouri All-Collegiate and High School Orchestras, been a member of the Mo-ASTA board, and served as Middle School Orchestra Vice-President, treasurer, and President of the St. Louis Suburban Music Educators Association. Ann is a trained adjudicator for the Solo & Small Ensemble and Large Group Festivals and travels throughout the state evaluating and encouraging string students. Ms. Geiler is a professional cellist who plays in Quartet Brioso as well as various orchestras in Missouri and Illinois. She has received numerous awards for her work in Music Education. Ann is a member of Mu Phi Epsilon Professional Music Fraternity. She is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice-President Alumni Advisor, president of the St. Louis Alumni Chapter, and the Final Notes Contributor for *The Triangle* the official magazine of Mu Phi Epsilon.

### **AYS Seniors and Percussionists**

#### **Violin 1**

Eme Macias  
Anderson Brooks

#### **Percussion**

Olivia Dalton  
Karliah McDonald  
Miles Schroeder

#### **Cello**

Zeke Sunderland

Thank you for performing with Alton Symphony Orchestra today!

### Latest News

## What's new with ASO this month?



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

# ABOUT US



Riverbend Community Orchestra is an orchestra for aspiring young musicians or seasoned performers. We have a flexible commitment that allows musicians to commit to concerts as their time allows.

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!

# “Variations on Americana”

February 28, 2026—3 pm

National Anthem

Francis Scott Key

John Stafford Smith

Candide Overture

Leonard Bernstein

(1918-1990)

Variations on a Shaker Melody

Aaron Copland

(1900-1990)

Variations on America

Charles Ives

(1874-1954)

Arr. William Schumann

Sword Dance

arr. Bob Phillips

Dark Adventure

Ralph Ford

*Ann Geiler, AYS Director*

*AYS Seniors and Percussion*

Warsaw Concerto

Richard Addinsell

(1904-1977)

*Tyler He, piano*

*Marie Stillwell Concerto Competition Winner*

Stars and Stripes Forever

John Philip Sousa

(1854-1932)

\*\*\*\*\*INTERMISSION\*\*\*\*\*

*Refreshments in upstairs lobby*

Lincoln Portrait

Aaron Copland

(1900-1990)

*Zeke Ledbetter, narrator*

*(Lincoln Portrait is provided through the generosity of Liberty Apple Orchard)*

Selections from Westside Story

Leonard Bernstein

(1918-1990)

Librarian—Gary Lee

Technical Coordinator, Hatheway Hall—Brian McKinney

Properties—Isaiah Christner

## Musicians

### Violin I

Vincent Piazza, *Concertmaster*

*Dr. Frank M. Boals Chair*

Anderson Brooks\*

Abby Leatherman

Eme Macias\*

Sr. Marie-Therese Swiezynski

Kelsey Waits

Kate Wrigley

Tressa Zimmerman

### Violin II

Connie Clayton

Casey Hansen

*John Simmons Chair*

Mary Mahoney

Natalie O’Rando

Pat Rowold

Alison Schulz

### Viola

Paul Quinlisk, *Principal*

Ryan Dissett

Jill Hamill

Anthony Jensen

Jean Heil

### Cello

Gary Lee, *Principal*

*Henry Swanger Chair*

Robert Flick

Ann Geiler

Zeke Sunderland\*

Elyse Tillman

*Jerre Honke Chair*

### Bass

Austin Koller

### Flute

Tami Flick, *Principal*

Giifti Benti

Corrina Pohlman

### Oboe / English Horn

Cathy Woelbling Paul, *Principal*

*Dr. Scott Hawley Chair*

Brandon Thompson

### Clarinet

Jenna Piazza, *Principal*

*Anthony Lordi Chair*

Melissa Bock

### Bassoon

David Carter

Greg Van Asch

Walter Blume (*contrabassoon*)

### Horn

John Lindley, *Principal*

*Allen Biggs Chair*

Matt Geary

Bryan Manzano

Jessica Poddig

### Trumpet

Chris Dressler, *Principal*

*Dr. Christopher Langdon Chair*

Rick Acuncius

Isaiah Christner

Jeff Steinheimer

Aiden Mason

### Trombone

Marquita Reef, *Principal*

Gage Brown

Chris Galloway

### Tuba

Ben Duane

### Percussion

Gary Morris, *Principal*

Connor Caporal

Wade Cermak-Hernandez

Olivia Dalton\*

Karliah McDonald\*

Miles Schroeder\*

### Timpani

Brad Rushton

### Piano

Justine Aldridge

\*AYS Musicians