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Camerata Nordica Octet

Wed, Oct 15, 7:30 pm
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CAMERATA NORDICA OCTET

violin

SHUICHI OKADA

HANNA HELGEGREN

DAINA MATEIKAITĖ

KATARZYNA SZYDŁOWSKA

viola

KIMI MAKINO

SEBASTIAN STEINHILBER

cello

ZÉPHYRIN REY-BELLET

FILIP GRADEN

PROGRAM

TRADITIONAL (arr. Camerata Nordica)

Låt till far (Song to my father)

Polska in A Minor (after Karl Lindblad)

HANNA HELGEGREN (b.1981)

The Nordic Seasons

I. Autumn

II. Winter

III. Spring

IV. Summer

Commissioned by and written for Camerata Nordica

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH ((1906-1975)

Two Pieces for String Octet, Op.11

I. Prelude. Adagio

II. Scherzo. Allegro molto

INTERMISSION

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)

Octet in E-flat Major, Op.20

I. Allegro moderato ma con fuoco

II. Andante

III. Scherzo: Allegro leggierissimo

IV. Presto

The Camerata Nordica Octet appears by arrangement with Lisa Sapinkopf Artists,
www.chambermuse.com

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audio recording, and texting are prohibited during the performance.

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This performance is part of Nordic Dream: Voices from Denmark, Finland,
Norway, and Sweden.

PROGRAM NOTES

Låt till far (Song to my father) Polska in A Minor (after Karl Lindblad) Traditional (arr. Camerata Nordica)

“Låt till Far” (Song to my Father) was written by the Swedish fiddler Pers Erik Olsson (1912-1983) to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of his father, well-known fiddler Pers Olof Olsson. Folk fiddling is a generational avocation for this family; the composer is in turn the father of another renowned folk fiddler, Pers Hans Olsson.

The *polska* is a Scandinavian folk dance in 3/4 time, likely influenced by Polish courtly dances such as the polonaise. It is a partner dance in which couples hold each other and turn with smooth, coordinated steps. It is similar to a waltz but with a different rhythmic emphasis, often highlighting both the first and third beats. Karl Lindblad (1853-1911), was a famous Swedish fiddler.

The Nordic Seasons Hanna Helgegren (b.1981)

Camerata Nordica is excited that their performances in North America of *The Nordic Seasons* in October 2025 will be the first public performances of the piece anywhere in the world!

Hanna Helgegren began playing the violin at age 4, and decided early on that she wanted to become a professional violinist. At 17, she began her studies at the Gothenburg School of Music in Sweden, and graduated from the University of the Arts in Berlin in 2004. She says, “I travelled the world with symphony orchestras as well as pop artists. After many years in big cities like Stockholm and Los Angeles, I’ve ended up living in a house next to the forest in the south of Sweden. Somewhere along the path, I happened to discover that I have a strong passion for gardening.”

In addition to her work as a violinist, Hanna is also a composer and arranger. Her music is inspired by the wide array of music she has performed throughout her career, from classical and jazz to folk music and pop. Navigating effortlessly through different musical genres, she finds that experiences and knowledge gained in one genre often prove to be highly valuable in another. She feels an equal fascination with the melancholy of Swedish folk music and the dramatic gestures found in the works of composers such as Richard Strauss.

The composer writes about *The Nordic Seasons*:

When Camerata Nordica asked me to compose a piece in the style of Nordic folk music, the first melody that came to mind was “Länge leve livet” (Long Live Life), which I once sang in a choir long ago, and which has always touched me in a special way. The melody, of unknown origin, has a distinct folk character, and evokes images of nature both wild and pristine. The lyrics tell of love overcoming violence, swords forged into plowshares, and seeds taking root and flourishing. This song was the inspiration for ‘The Nordic Seasons.’ (The original title in Swedish is *Årstider*, meaning, simply, “Seasons”). The melody can be heard in its entirety in the introduction to “Winter.”

In *The Nordic Seasons* I sought to capture the essence of Nordic melancholy, where thoughts can darken as deeply as winter itself. Yet, after a long winter, light inevitably returns, bringing with it hope, playfulness, and joy. Nature has been an immense source of inspiration. Leaning against a tree and watching the mist rise over a bog, or lying on a beach listening to the rhythmic waves, somehow makes it easier to connect with the mystery of existence. In such moments, there is space both for contemplation of life’s transience and for awe at the miraculous nature of creation. The movements mirror nature’s cycles throughout the year, as well as how we, as humans, are shaped by these shifts in mood and emotion. The piece is performed alongside a film which depicts the seasons through landscape imagery.

The Nordic Seasons is a tribute to life in all its forms, an ode to the mystery that surrounds the very essence of our existence. It is also a reminder of how nature invites us to recharge, as well as reconnect with our origins—after all, we are an inseparable part of the natural world.

About the video:

The Nordic Seasons has been a long-term artistic project of Camerata Nordica. The idea behind this commission was to create a piece with a visual component connecting sound and imagery in order to deepen the storytelling and artistic impact. As Camerata frequently performs abroad, this would serve as a unique way to bring a piece of Sweden with us wherever we go.

The video director for the project is Jack Walton, a British filmmaker based in Sweden who has made documentaries for the BBC. Passionate about the arts, Jack has collaborated regularly with Camerata Nordica over the past five years, bringing a deep understanding of their musical identity to the project.

The director's goal in *The Nordic Seasons* is to offer audiences a visual experience that will enhance the music's origins, connecting sight and sound in a way that deepens the storytelling and artistic impact.

Two Pieces for String Octet, Op. 11 Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Shostakovich began his Two Pieces for String Octet while composing his First Symphony in December, 1924, but had to hold off completing it until after the symphony was completed, orchestrated, and copied. By the time he returned to the chamber piece in July 1925, Shostakovich had changed his mind about the makeup of the piece.

He had originally envisioned it as a suite for double string quartet in five movements and had sketched a prelude and fugue seven months earlier. When he returned to the work, however, he found that he could no longer summon up the enthusiasm for so large a chamber work; his mind was teeming with ideas for what were to become the First Piano Sonata and the Second Symphony. As a result, Shostakovich scrapped the fugue and wrote a scherzo as a counterweight to the prelude instead. He thought the scherzo “the very best thing I have written” (Laurel Fay, *Shostakovich, A Life*).

Both movements are examples of Shostakovich as a young modernist: edgy, piquantly dissonant, highly rhythmic, lightly lyrical, and forcefully driven.



Dmitri Shostakovich; photo collection of Laurel Fay

Octet in E-flat Major, Op. 20 Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Mendelssohn composed his glorious Octet for strings in 1825 when he was merely 16 years old. Today, it is regarded as a first-rate masterwork on par with those of the finest mature composers of any age, granting Mendelssohn the reputation of the greatest prodigy in Western musical history. What is more, Mendelssohn had no specific models from distinguished predecessors as a basis: his Octet is the first of its kind and has arguably never been surpassed.

Conrad Wilson summarizes: “Its youthful verve, brilliance and perfection make it one of the miracles of nineteenth-century music.” Recent research by Nicolas Kitchen of the Borromeo Quartet reveals that a more mature Mendelssohn somewhat substantially edited the score before its final publication in 1832. Mendelssohn dedicated the Octet to his violin teacher Eduard Rietz, and the first violin part is virtuosic throughout.

The Octet is a full-scale four-movement work in the classical style. The opening movement is a sprawling sonata complete with contrasting themes, development, recapitulation and coda, over twice as long as any of the subsequent movements. The second movement Andante is a poignant, melancholy slow movement exploiting a myriad of suave and ever-changing textural possibilities. The third movement offers a stunning first example of Mendelssohn’s distinctive scherzi featuring quicksilver agility with a soft dynamic evoking the time-honored suggestion of woodland fairies. As his sister Fanny would write, “The whole piece is to be played staccato and pianissimo with shivering tremolos and lightning flashes of trills. All is new, strange and yet so familiar and pleasing—one feels close to the world of spirits lightly carried up into the air.”

The finale launches into swift perpetual motion with an eight-part fugue working through the entire ensemble from bottom to top, followed by a theme that reminds many listeners of Handel’s *Messiah*. The entire Octet is a miracle of scoring using just about every imaginable permutation of voices provided by the eight string players. Such mastery derives from the numerous string symphonies Mendelssohn wrote between the ages of 12 and 14 with one particularly vivid precursor in the String Symphony No. 8 in D major. —Kai Christiansen

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

CAMERATA NORDICA OCTET

Established in 1974, Camerata Nordica has become the country's leading chamber orchestra. The ensemble has garnered a reputation for its distinctive performance style, captivating audiences by performing standing up, without a conductor, and occasionally by heart. This dynamic energy and shared musical purpose form the core of the ensemble's identity, complemented by its innovative and creative programming.

Comprised of both permanent and international members, Camerata Nordica draws exceptional talent from chamber music ensembles and orchestras across Sweden and Europe. This amalgamation of skilled musicians allows the ensemble to deliver a distinct and intimate chamber music experience to its audiences, leaving a lasting impact.

In addition to frequent tours across Sweden, Camerata Nordica has graced numerous stages throughout Europe and beyond, earning high praise from audiences and critics alike during performances in South America, the United States, Canada, and

other international locations. The orchestra's debut at the BBC Proms in 2013 further solidified its acclaim and reputation.

Locally, the ensemble nurtures a strong bond with its audience, acting as a pillar within the vibrant musical community. Camerata Nordica places great importance on engaging and inspiring young audiences, actively developing projects tailored to their needs. Furthermore, the orchestra frequently commissions new works from Swedish contemporary composers, fostering the flourishing of modern musical expression.

Camerata Nordica has enjoyed a fruitful collaboration with the esteemed label BIS, resulting in numerous acclaimed recordings. Notably, three of these recordings have received nominations for the prestigious Swedish Grammis Awards. The orchestra's performances are regularly featured on radio and television, extending its reach and impact even further.

As Camerata Nordica continues its artistic journey, it remains committed to pushing boundaries, inspiring audiences, and shaping the cultural landscape through music-making and an unwavering dedication to the highest artistic standards.



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"Their music brilliantly encapsulates flamboyant technical prowess, boundless imagination and instant melodic appeal."
— *The Journal of Music*

Dreamers' Circus has emerged as a preeminent purveyor of Nordic folk and traditional music. They present a genre-bending mix of folk, jazz, and classical, all infused with influences from popular music. The result is entirely captivating.



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Fri, Nov 14, 7:30 pm
Hodgson Concert Hall

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Hear this colossal choral wonder performed with a lineup of outstanding soloists. The program opens with J.S. Bach's piquant Concerto for Oboe and Violin. The world-renowned Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chorus sings Bach's exquisite Cantata BWV 56.



BRANFORD MARSALIS QUARTET *Belonging*

Sun, Nov 16, 7:00 pm
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"Over the years, the quartet has developed a kind of group mind."
— *The Guardian*

This celebrated ensemble is revered for uncompromising interpretations of original compositions, jazz standards, and popular classics. They recently released *Belonging*, an interpretation of Keith Jarrett's 1974 album of the same name.

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Photo by Mark Mobley

Why I Give...

Meet Bill Ross, a city planning consultant and principal of Ross Associates, who lives in Madison with his wife, Sharon Cutler Ross, an algebraist and professor emerita of mathematics at Georgia State University. This season they are sponsoring Dance Me: The Music of Leonard Cohen, an April 21 performance by Ballets Jazz Montréal at the Classic Center Theatre.

Growing up, my music consisted of 1950s rock-and-roll. My mother had her classical 78s and Sharon's mother played her Eileen Farrell records or anything Wagner to motivate herself while cleaning the house.

We moved to Madison about 25 years ago, attracted in large part by the Madison-Morgan Cultural Center. The center began, under the direction of Christopher Rex (now unfortunately departed), an annual chamber music festival that took its title seriously and grew over time.

When we learned of UGA's Performing Arts Center, we were Johnny on the spot! At first, we would laboriously select the performances we wished to attend. Finally, we were ordering tickets for so many performances that for the past several years, we have just bought the entire season and attended all that we could. For those we can't, we find friends who can attend instead so our seats are never wasted.



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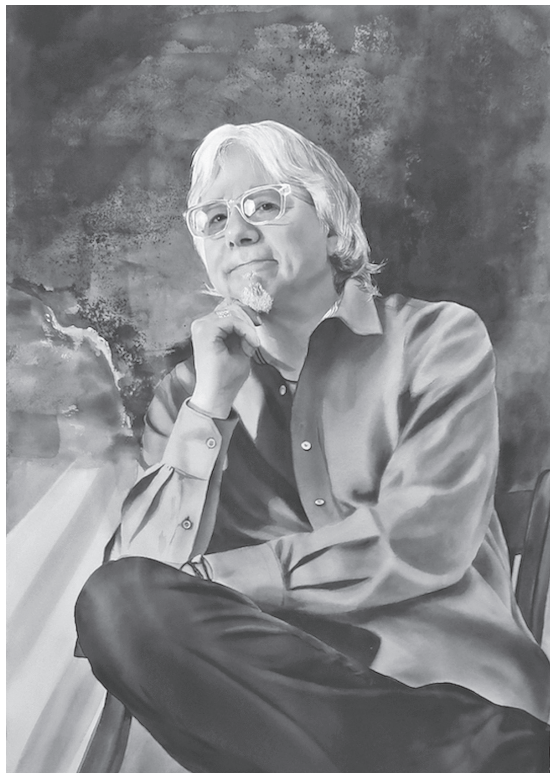
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Mike Mills, watercolor on paper

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by Jackie Dorsey

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Jackie Dorsey is an award-winning watercolor artist in Athens, Georgia. In this series, she pays homage to eight Georgia-based living legends. Based on her own photo shoots, these paintings form a subset of a larger exhibition originally shown during the summer of 2023 at the Lyndon House Arts Center in Athens. It will be shown in an expanded version at the Marietta Cobb Museum of Art during fall 2026.

For more detailed bios and photo shoot descriptions of the musicians in the larger exhibition, catalogues are available at jackiedorseyart.com.



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Concessions are available for purchase in the PAC lobby for all UGA Presents performances and other selected events. Food and drink are prohibited inside the performance venues. Complimentary cough lozenges are available at the coat check desk. Please do not unwrap lozenges during performances.

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We appreciate the dedicated service of the many community volunteers who serve at the Performing Arts Center. To inquire about joining our team, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator at (706) 542-2634. Training sessions are held each August.

RENTALS

Hodgson Concert Hall and Ramsey Concert Hall are available for rental. For information please call (706) 542-2290 or visit the rental page at pac.uga.edu/rentals. Rental inquiries for the Fine Arts Theatre should be directed to the UGA Dept. of Theatre and Film Studies.

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