

**TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

Gustavo Gimeno, Music Director

# Boléro

**Fabien Gabel**, conductor  
**Jonathan Biss**, piano

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**Samy Moussa**  
*Nocturne* for Orchestra

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**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**  
Piano Concerto No. 9 in E-flat Major, K. 271  
"Jeunehomme"

I. Allegro

II. Andantino

III. Rondeau: Presto

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## Intermission

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**Joseph Marx**  
*Symphonische Nachtmusik*  
(*Symphonic Night Music*)  
(Canadian Première)

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**Maurice Ravel**  
*Boléro*

*Program 1*

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Thursday,  
April 2, 2026

7:30pm

Saturday,  
April 4, 2026

7:30pm

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*Fabien Gabel's appearance is  
generously made possible by  
Fondation DRG.*

Samy Moussa (b. 1984)

## Nocturne for Orchestra

Composed 2014

13 min

*Nocturne* is one of Montreal-born, Berlin-based composer Samy Moussa's most frequently performed orchestral works. "A journey from darkness to light, *Nocturne* evokes the sea at night under a moody halfmoon" was how a recent writeup, for a performance at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, described the piece. Moussa himself prefers to describe the work in more purely musical terms. In an online interview with the Houston Symphony, prior to a performance there in 2021, he said: "I was interested in creating a piece where the centre of gravity would be pitched in the lower registers. It allowed the few moments of brightness to be— hopefully—more extraordinary."

Later in the same interview, asked about "extended techniques" in the piece, he said this: "There are very few.... The last two minutes use a combination of sounds creating a ghostly atmosphere—'spettrale' in the score. The recipe is a selection of harmonics from the violins and the double basses, a bowed cymbal and glockenspiel, very quiet trumpet tremolos with the 'wah-wah' mute, and the use of harmonic tremolos from the flutes, which are achieved by alternating two different fingerings for the same note. It all happens simultaneously. I would not try to listen for any of those isolated sounds particularly, but to listen to the combination, the music."

—Program note by David Perlman

**COMPOSER BIO:** Composer-conductor Samy Moussa is one of the world's leading composers. His work has been performed by many prestigious

orchestras including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, and New York Philharmonic. Notable premières in recent seasons include the orchestral work *Elysium*, which was premièred by the Vienna Philharmonic and Christian Thielemann in 2021. Moussa's Symphony No. 2 was premièred in 2022 by the Toronto Symphony and at the BBC Proms, and in 2025 the Dutch National Opera & Ballet gave the première of the oratorio *Antigone*.

Moussa's works have also been commissioned and performed by the likes of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Staatskapelle Berlin, and Los Angeles Philharmonic. He has featured as a Spotlight Artist with the Toronto Symphony and Composer in Residence with Helsinki Philharmonic, and frequently collaborates with Orchestre symphonique de Montréal.

Moussa's 2025/26 season opened at MITO SettembreMusica festival in Italy where he conducted the Milan Symphony Orchestra. It also includes the world première of his Flute Concerto for Emmanuel Pahud by the Orchestre National de France under Fabien Gabel, a new work premièred by Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin under Kent Nagano, and the première of *Ring* by Ottawa's National Arts Centre Orchestra.

Moussa's work has been acclaimed by critics, juries, and audiences alike, with notable awards including the 2020 Laureate of Fondation Banque Populaire, the 2017 Hindemith Prize, and a 2012 Bayerischen Kunstförderpreis.



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

## Piano Concerto No. 27 in B-flat Major, K. 595

Composed 1777

31 min

**AMONG MOZART'S MANY TALENTS**, Viennese audiences loved his piano playing above all. One way in which he responded to this preference was to compose 12 superlative piano concertos, Nos. 14 to 25, between February 1784 and December 1786. They are deeper in feeling, broader in scope, and richer in colour than any other concertos of their kind, ones to which Beethoven, Brahms, and other similarly high-minded composers would turn for inspiration.

Two further concertos followed: The relatively superficial No. 26 in D major, K. 537, was completed in February 1788. Its nickname, "Coronation", sprang from the unconfirmed possibility that it was premiered at an all-Mozart concert that formed part of (or shortly followed) the festivities marking the coronation of Leopold II as Holy Roman Emperor in 1790. Then came this final concerto. By 1791, Mozart's popularity with the fickle Viennese public had largely evaporated. As a result, the

première of the new concerto didn't take place at one of his own subscription concerts, as many of the earlier pieces had, but at an event whose featured performer was clarinetist Joseph Bahr.

Mozart's health was failing badly, too. These unhappy developments show themselves, to varying degrees, in much of the music he composed during that last year of his life. In some pieces, such as the Clarinet Concerto and the unfinished Piano Concerto No. 29, the poignancy makes itself felt more indirectly, but no less profoundly.

Its restraint is evident from the opening measures. The first movement deftly balances brilliance and humour with mellowness. Throughout, Mozart allows us glimpses of the heartbreak lurking behind the music's graceful surface. A gentle slow movement follows, angelic in its tenderness and artless simplicity. The solo piano launches the finale, a rondo. In keeping with the concerto's overall conception, the celebrations are more elevated than rustic.

—Program note by Don Anderson

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Joseph Marx (1882–1964)

## *Symphonische Nachtmusik* (Symphonic Night Music)

Canadian Première

Composed 1922

26 min

**LITTLE REMEMBERED** because his rigorously tonal, post-Romantic music was long out of favour by the time he died in 1964, Joseph Marx is enjoying something of a revival. This rekindling of interest can be attributed in part

to the establishment of a website devoted to the Austrian composer in 2001 and recordings of some of his key works in the last couple of decades that have allowed contemporary listeners a chance to discover his music.

Marx grew up in Graz, the second largest city in Austria, where he also undertook his musical studies at the local university, but spent a major portion of his life in the music capital of Vienna. He went on to teach at and

direct the Vienna Music Academy (what later became the Hochschule für Musik) and served as a music critic in the 1930s and '40s.

As a composer, he is most recognized for his 150 art songs, but his orchestral works are becoming better known in part because of a four-volume set of albums devoted to them in the early 2000s. Two of those recordings were later re-released on the Naxos label, giving some of these compositions even higher visibility, including a 2018 compilation that featured Marx's massive *Natur-Trilogie* (*Nature Trilogy*), a set of tone poems he conceived in the early 1920s.

The first and longest section of

that work, *Symphonische Nachtmusik* (*Symphonic Night Music*), runs about 26 minutes. The title suggests a composition that might in some way be dark, moody, or even ominous but the music is just the opposite. Originally titled *Mondnacht* (*Moonlit Night*), it uses an airy Impressionistic style typically associated with composers like Claude Debussy to conjure a shimmering, magical night complete with an evocation of crickets and a solo violin taking on the role of a nightingale. Some critics have questioned the tone poem's sprawling, even formless structure, but its sheer beauty is hard to deny.

—Program note by Kyle MacMillan

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## Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

### *Boléro*

Composed 1928

14 min

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**BOLÉRO WAS PREMIÈRE AS A BALLET**, in Paris, on November 22, 1928, danced by the Ida Rubinstein Company and conducted by Walther Straram. Earlier that year, Rubinstein had commissioned a new ballet score from Ravel, and he had planned to answer her request with orchestrations of piano music by a composer he admired—the Spaniard Isaac Albéniz. Discovering that the transcription rights had already been spoken for, he decided instead to create an original work with Spanish flavouring. Oddly enough for someone well versed in Spanish music, he chose as the title a form that bears little relation to the music—the traditional folk dance, the boléro, is a lively step. When friends pointed this out to him, he shrugged and replied, "It's not important."

He also used the opportunity to conduct a musical experiment. As he put it, the score would be "uniform throughout in its melody, harmony and rhythm, the latter being tapped out continuously on the drum. The only element of variety is supplied by the orchestral crescendo." Instrumental

colouring, an area in which Ravel had attained supreme mastery, plays a major role as well.

His suggestions for the ballet's setting and choreography involved a factory, a group of workers, and an amorous, eventually murderous rendezvous between one of the women, her jealous lover, and a toreador. Instead, choreographer Bronislava Nijinska set it in a Spanish inn. A woman (Rubinstein) danced alone atop a table surrounded by men. As her steps grew more and more animated, her observers became increasingly excited, eventually pounding the table in rhythm to the music. At the climax, knives were drawn and a brawl broke out.

After its first, wildly successful ballet performance, *Boléro* quickly won popularity in the concert hall as well. The whole affair surprised Ravel and also embarrassed him. The composer purportedly remarked: "I've written only one masterpiece, *Boléro*. Unfortunately, there's no music in it." As to the latter assertion, countless audiences have begged to differ. It may not be wise to hear *Boléro* too often, but when everything falls into place, it has the power to mesmerize the senses and quicken the pulse.

—Program note by Don Anderson

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

## Piano Concerto No. 9 in E-flat Major, K. 271 “Jeunehomme”

Composed 1777

31 min

**IN LETTERS FROM 1778**, Mozart mentioned a female pianist who performed one of his concertos and whose name he spelled variously as “jenomè”, “genomai”, and “jenomy”. In 2003, musicologist Michael Lorenz confirmed that the concerto K. 271 was commissioned by the French pianist Louise Victoire Jenamy (the “Jeunehomme” designation came from an early 20th-century study of Mozart by Téodor de Wyzewa and Georges de Saint-Foix). Even so, Mozart himself made good use of the work. He took it with him on tour in the fall of 1777, and was still playing it in the 1780s, in Vienna. Obviously, he thought highly of it. It was a watershed in his career—perhaps his first real masterpiece. For its day, it was a work of singular ambition, range, and power (it is long, too), provocative and experimental in its structures and its details. Notably, Mozart makes innovative use of conventional, modest orchestral forces, and pushes the limits of mid-18th-century piano technique.

The work begins with a surprise: the piano, in violation of contemporary concerto etiquette, playfully interrupts the orchestra’s opening fanfares before allowing the expected orchestral introduction to continue unruffled. At the end of the movement, too, the piano continues to play after the cadenza—another breach of etiquette. (Mozart supplied cadenzas for all three movements, incidentally.) The first movement is brimming with ideas, and its form is fantastically innovative, but the emotionally fraught “Andantino” is no less original. The first minor-key movement in a Mozart concerto, it

exposes a vein of tragedy previously unknown to the genre in the anguished, dissonant main theme, introduced by muted violins in imitation in their lowest register. The piano supplies serious arioso-like commentary of considerable rhetorical power.

The rondo finale, by contrast, is all bustle and babble—well, not quite all. Just when the rondo form seems to have run its course, the music stops dead, and Mozart interpolates a completely unrelated but magical new episode—a movement within a movement, in A-flat major, that he gives a separate heading: “Menuetto”. It takes the form of an elegant theme with several luscious variations, with increasingly florid piano writing exquisitely accompanied by the strings. The rondo theme does return, but Mozart’s imagination does not relax: listen for the witty fade-out of the rondo theme at the movement’s end.

—Program note by Kevin Bazzana



## **Fabien Gabel, conductor**

Fabien Gabel made his TSO début in January 2014.

The 2025/26 season marks Fabien Gabel's first as Chief Conductor of the Tonkünstler-Orchester Niederösterreich. He has established an international career of the highest calibre, appearing with orchestras such as the Orchestre de Paris, London Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester, Cleveland Orchestra, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, Seoul Philharmonic, and Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. Praised for his dynamic style and sensitive approach to the score, he is best known for his eclectic choice of repertoire, ranging from leading core symphonic works to championing lesser-known composers of the 19th and the 20th centuries. He also highlights contemporary works and has conducted the première performances of pieces by Dieter Ammann, Anders Hillborg, and Samy Moussa.

During the 2025/26 season, Gabel will make his début at the Metropolitan Opera in *Carmen* and with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra on a five-day tour of Spain with Yuja Wang. In Europe, he returns to the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre National de France, Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg, Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia, and the BBC and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestras. In North America, he returns to the Minnesota Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and he makes his South American début with the São Paulo State Symphony Orchestra (OSESP).

In France, Gabel works regularly with all major Paris orchestras and had a highly acclaimed début at the Opéra national de Paris in 2022/23. Gabel recently led the recording of a new score for Abel Gance's 1927 epic film, *Napoléon*, with the Orchestre National de France and Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France. The first part of the film was presented at the 2024 Festival de Cannes and will be shown in theatres, on French television, and on Netflix.

Gabel performs with soloists such as Daniil Trifonov, Yefim Bronfman, Emanuel Ax, Bertrand Chamayou, Seong-Jin Cho, Francesco Piemontesi, Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Gidon Kremer, Augustin Hadelich, Vilde Frang, Daniel Lozakovich, Christian Tetzlaff, Gautier Capuçon, Daniel Müller-Schott, Johannes Moser, Håkan Hardenberger, and Emmanuel Pahud, and with singers such as Measha Bruegggosman, Natalie Dessay, Petra Lang, Jennifer Larmore, Marie-Nicole Lemieux, Nikola Hillebrand, Asmik Grigorian, and Michael Schade.

Having attracted international attention in 2004 as the winner of the Donatella Flick Conducting Competition, Gabel was Assistant Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra from 2004 to 2006. He was music director of Orchestre symphonique de Québec from 2012 to 2021, and of Orchestre Français des Jeunes from 2017 to 2021.

Born in Paris to a family of accomplished musicians, Gabel began playing the trumpet at the age of 6 and honed his skills at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris and at the Hochschule für Musik Karlsruhe. He played with various Parisian orchestras under prominent conductors such as Pierre Boulez, Sir Colin Davis, Riccardo Muti, Seiji Ozawa, Simon Rattle, and Bernard Haitink before embarking on his conducting career.

Gabel was named a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French government in January 2020.



## Jonathan Biss, piano

Jonathan Biss made his TSO début in May 2008.

Pianist Jonathan Biss is recognized globally for his “impeccable taste and formidable technique” (*The New Yorker*). Praised by *The Boston Globe* as “an eloquent and insightful music writer,” Biss published his fourth book, *Unquiet: My Life with Beethoven*, in 2020, examining music and his own life’s journey through the lens of Beethoven’s last piano sonatas. The book was the first Audible Original by a classical musician and one of Audible’s top audiobooks of the year.

Biss has appeared as a soloist with some of the world’s foremost orchestras, including the Los Angeles and New York Philharmonics, the Boston Symphony, the Royal Concertgebouw, the London Symphony, and more. He has served as the Co-Artistic Director of the Marlboro Music School and Festival alongside pianist Mitsuko Uchida since 2018. He served on the faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music for ten years, and has been a guest professor at schools such as the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and the New England Conservatory of Music.

Coinciding with the 250th anniversary of Beethoven’s birth in 2020, Biss recorded the composer’s complete piano sonatas, and offered insights to all 32 landmark works via his free, online Coursera lecture series, *Exploring Beethoven’s Piano Sonatas*. In March 2020, Biss gave a virtual recital presented by the 92nd Street Y, wherein he performed Beethoven’s last three piano sonatas for an online audience of more than 280,000 people. In 2024, Biss participated in Princeton University Concerts’ *Healing with Music Series*, appearing alongside author Adam Haslett for a panel discussion on anxiety, depression, and creativity. Biss is the recipient of numerous honours, including the Leonard Bernstein Award, the Andrew Wolf Chamber Music Award, an Avery Fisher Career Grant, the Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award, and a Gilmore Young Artist Award. His albums for EMI have won the Diapason d’or de l’année and Edison Awards. He was an artist-in-residence on American Public Media’s *Performance Today* and the first American chosen to participate in the BBC’s New Generation Artists program.

Biss is a third-generation professional musician; his grandmother is Raya Garbousova, one of the first famous female cellists (for whom Samuel Barber composed his Cello Concerto), and his parents are violinist Miriam Fried and violist/violinist Paul Biss. Growing up surrounded by music, Biss began his piano studies at age 6, with his first musical collaborations alongside his mother and father. He studied with Evelyne Brancart at Indiana University, and Leon Fleisher at the Curtis Institute of Music.