



SATURDAY, JULY 18, 2026 / 5:00 PM

SCHWAB ACADEMY ORCHESTRA
“Music from the New World”

PHOTO: BRANDON T. KING / THEOTUS MEDIA



WELCOME!

Welcome to the final concert of the 2026 Ventura College Schwab Academy of Music!

To celebrate America's 250th anniversary, this program is a musical reflection on our country's story. This repertoire looks to the past, celebrates the individuals who have shaped our history, and highlights the importance of community.

Margaret Bonds' *Montgomery Variations* reflects on moments of courage and despair during the Civil Rights Movement. Dedicated to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the work reminds us that our nation's story includes both triumphs and struggles.

Antonín Dvořák's Symphony No. 9, "From the New World" celebrates the cultural richness of the United States through the eyes of someone experiencing it for the first time.

I programmed Daniel Slatkin's *Voyager 130* for two reasons. First, to celebrate the importance of scientific discovery and curiosity, and second, to recognize the power of community. Daniel, who calls Ventura County home, generously spent time working with our students this week, sharing his music and his perspective. We are incredibly grateful for his generosity.

Perhaps the most remarkable part of tonight's performance is that the orchestra learned this entire program in just two weeks. Their dedication, enthusiasm, and commitment to one another have been inspiring, and I could not be more proud of what they have accomplished.

Thank you for being here and for supporting these young musicians. I hope you enjoy the performance.

— Ashley Walters

PROGRAM

Voyager 130 (2024).....Daniel Slatkin
 (b. 1994)

The Montgomery Variations (1964).....Margaret Bonds
 (1913–1972)

I. “Decision”

V. “One Sunday in the South”

VII. ”Benediction”

Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Op. 95 (1893).....Antonín Dvořák
 "From the New World" (1841–1904)



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PROGRAM NOTES

Voyager 130 – Daniel Slatkin

Daniel Slatkin (b. 1994) is a Los Angeles-based composer whose work spans film, television, and the concert hall. Between screen projects, he often turns to concert writing which allows him to stretch his imagination in ways film scoring does not. In the summer of 2022, while immersed in Beethoven's string quartets, Slatkin found himself drawn to the Cavatina from the Thirteenth Quartet, Op. 130, and discovered that a recording of that movement rides aboard the Golden Record, a phonograph record of sounds, music, and images drawn from mankind's creative lineage, meant to represent humanity in case the spacecraft is ever found by other life.

Voyager 130 traces that journey in sound, moving through the same arc that the spacecraft followed. It opens on the launchpad, with synthesized computer chatter, rumbling low strings and brass evoking the rocket's raw power, and a solo oboe standing in for Voyager's own communications system. As the rocket launches and reaches orbit, fragments of the Cavatina begin to emerge, first as a fanfare, then in its original string-quartet form, layered with the actual multilingual greetings recorded on the Golden Record. The music grows grander and more expansive as Voyager passes Jupiter, Saturn, and Neptune, then turns cold and spare as the spacecraft crosses into the empty edge of the solar system, its onboard sounds warped and stretched into the void. After building to a triumphant climax, the piece settles into quiet: a canon of Cavatina fragments dissolving into high string harmonics and that same lone oboe, drifting off alone into deep space.

Since its 2024 world premiere with the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, *Voyager 130* has been performed by the St. Louis, Detroit, and Lyon symphonies, and the LA Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl. This ambitious new work channels America's taste for adventure and exploration, and connects it with mankind's innate restlessness and yearning for the unknown, linking centuries of human creativity to the frontiers still ahead.

PROGRAM NOTES

The Montgomery Variations – Margaret Bonds

Margaret Bonds (1913–1972) was a trailblazing Chicago-born composer and pianist, mentored as a teenager by fellow composer Florence Price and later a lifelong friend and collaborator of poet Langston Hughes. In 1933, she became the first African American soloist to perform with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Throughout her career, Bonds wove African American spirituals into the language of classical composition, using them as the foundation for ambitious orchestral and choral works.

The Montgomery Variations, composed in 1963 and dedicated to Martin Luther King Jr., is rooted in the spiritual "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me" and reflects Bonds' witness to the Civil Rights Movement and its struggle for freedom and justice. Written after Bonds' own visit to Montgomery, Alabama, the work unfolds as a series of freestyle variations that bring to mind Bach's partitas, though Bonds purposefully resists over-developing the spiritual melodies to preserve their personal and emotional weight.

Today's selections trace an arc from resolve to tragedy to grace. "Decision" captures the moment when, under Dr. King's leadership, the people of Montgomery chose to boycott the city's buses and fight for their rights as citizens – a quiet but world-changing act of courage. "One Sunday in the South" depicts children in Sunday School engaged in the quiet rituals of faith – until the explosion of a bomb planted by Southern extremists that killed several children and shook the conscience of the world. "Benediction" offers the work's transcendent final word: a loving God, parent to all people, pouring forth grace upon the good and the bad alike.

For decades after her death, much of Bonds' output went unpublished and unperformed. Her music is now finally being rediscovered and celebrated by major orchestras across the country.

PROGRAM NOTES

Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Op. 95 – Antonín Dvořák

The Czech master Antonín Dvořák composed his Symphony No. 9 ("From the New World") during his years living in America, where he served as director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York from 1892 to 1895. He might never have come at all had it not been for the tenacity of the conservatory's founder, Jeannette Thurber (the wife of a millionaire grocer), who pursued Dvořák relentlessly until he finally accepted, reportedly after an offer of twenty-five times his current salary.

While in New York, Dvořák grew close with Harry T. Burleigh, an African American student who sang him traditional spirituals in the hallways of the school. According to Burleigh, "Dvořák just saturated himself with the spirit of these old tunes." Deeply moved by what he heard, Dvořák came to believe that African American melodies held the key to a genuinely American music, telling a New York newspaper that in them he found "all that is needed for a great and noble school of music." That conviction – and the sound of Burleigh's voice – shaped the symphony he began sketching soon after, drawing on the same spirituals and folk traditions that would later inspire Margaret Bonds.

The symphony premiered to an overflowing crowd at Carnegie Hall on December 16, 1893, and was declared by one critic "the greatest symphonic work ever composed in this country." Its aching second movement, the Largo, would go on to have a life of its own: William Arms Fisher, one of Dvořák's students, later set it to words and it entered American culture as the beloved "Goin' Home." Yet when European audiences heard the symphony, they found it sounded as Bohemian as anything Dvořák had ever written – as conductor Kurt Masur once observed, it is ultimately a great tragic symphony written on the theme of homesickness.

Today, audiences worldwide continue to respond enthusiastically to both the distinctly American and the universal elements of Dvořák's masterwork, and the "New World" Symphony stands as one of the most beloved pieces in the symphonic repertoire.

FLUTE

Bonnie Griffin
Dori Riggs
Carol Lockart^{∞^}

OBOE

Kimaree Gilad^{∞^}
Owen Zgliniec
Cameron Hartich§

CLARINET

Addie Ragsdale
James Gilmore
Andy Huang
Alejandro Portillo
Nolan Hrdina-Rivera
Brian Walsh^

BASSOON

Nick Akdag^{∞^}
Maciej Flis§
Eric Johnson-Tamai§
CONTRABASSOON

TRUMPET

Jeff Frumkin
Victor Rodriguez
Luke Ringberg
Ethan Nikula
David Pittel^{∞^}

HORN

Joaquin Martinez
Jon Titmus^{∞^}
Rachel Berry§
Nathan Jones§

TROMBONE

Jared Geronimo
Carlos Varga
Gwang Kim^{∞^}

TUBA

Elliott Messecar

PERCUSSION

Jack Sturgeon
George Mechamel
Jordan Curcuruto^{∞^}
Matthew LeVeque^{∞^}

VIOLIN I

Axel Martin
CONCERTMASTER
Ann Lam
Angela Gonzalez
Alex Fager^
Axel Griswold
Tracy Clark
William Chu

VIOLIN II

Megan Chiu°
Amara Field
Anna Tellez
Julissa Bozman^
Susan Philbrick
Hannah Kelley
Janeane Napp
Tarah Brown

VIOLA

Isabella Vogelaar°
Diane Gilbert^
Connie Hood
Margot Aldcroft§
Briana Bandy§

CELLO

Anna Rowlands°
Nathan Gallardo
Alanm Magana Gonzalez
Oval Wolf
Ian Lam
Isaac Nicely
Skyla O'Connor
Felix Chau
Erika Duke Kirkpatrick^

BASS

Mattie Rowlands
David Wolfe
Barry Newton^{∞^}

HARP

Yiska Lamada

PIANO/CELESTE

Finnegan Neilan

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Ashley Walters[∞]
DIRECTOR

Brian Hotchkin[∞]
**MARKETING, DESIGN, &
PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Luvi Avendano[∞]
Jordan Curcuruto[∞]
John Hester
ARTISTIC PRODUCERS

Laura Solis-Teteris
**PERFORMING ARTS DEPARTMENT
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT**

Gabriel Aragon
**PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
ASSISTANT**

Tyson Sauthoff
**PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
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Devon Thrumston
STAGE MANAGER

Kai Olmos
ORCHESTRA ASSISTANT

Dorothy Schaefer
CHAMBER MUSIC ASSISTANT

^ Schwab Mentor
∞ VCPA Faculty
° Principal
§ Guest Artist

ABOUT THE ACADEMY

Made possible through Miriam Schwab’s extraordinary generosity, **Ventura College’s Miriam & Henry Schwab Academy of Music** was created to provide student instrumentalists opportunities in orchestra and chamber music through three main components.

The **Schwab Summer Academy** is an intensive program held each July. Participants study and perform a series of concerts alongside notable professional mentors. The **Extension Program** extends this mentorship throughout the year.

The Summer Academy dovetails with the finals of the **Henry Schwab Violin & Viola Competition**, established in memory of Miriam’s late husband Henry – a celebrated concert violinist. This competition highlights talented young soloists performing concertos accompanied by the full Academy Orchestra.

Miriam – a violinist herself who played with the Ventura College Symphony Orchestra for over a decade – highly valued the importance of exceptional music instruction in our community. At the time of her passing, Miriam’s bequest made history as the largest gift ever made to a community college in Southern California.

“The Schwab Academy teaches more than just music,” says music director **Ashley Walters**. “It teaches students the value of hard work, collaboration, and perseverance. Just as importantly, it provides a supportive community where students of all ages can learn from one another, build lasting friendships, and gain the confidence to pursue their dreams.”

SUPPORT



Miriam Schwab’s passion for music and her generous support of student musicians made the Schwab Academy of Music possible. If you would like to help us strengthen and grow Miriam’s vision for the Academy, please consider making a donation through the Ventura College Foundation. For more information, contact **Pete Parker, Director of Development**.

805-289-6158
pparker@vcccd.edu

SPECIAL THANKS

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