The Juilliard School

presents

Juilliard Orchestra Jeffrey Milarsky, *Conductor* Yizilin Liang, *Viola* Shiyu Zhuo, *Soprano*

EUNIKE TANZIL (b. 1998) **Ascending Creatures** (2025; World premiere, commissioned by Juilliard)

BÉLA BARTÓK (1881–1945) **Viola Concerto, Op. posth., BB 128** (1945; completed and orchestrated by Tibor Serly)

Moderato

Lento—Adagio religioso—Allegretto

Allegro vivace

YIZILIN LIANG, Viola

Intermission

GUSTAV MAHLER (1860–1911) Symphony No. 4 in G Major (1900)

Bedächtig, nicht eilen In gemächlicher Bewegung, ohne Hast Ruhevoll (Poco adagio) Sehr behaglich SHIYU ZHUO, *Soprano*

Performance time: approximately 1 hour and 50 minutes, including an intermission

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About the Program

By Georgeanne Banker

Ascending Creatures

EUNIKE TANZIL Born: August 17, 1998, in Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia

Legend has it that the very founding of Rome hinged on the flight of birds. "Just as the golden sun arises, there comes descending from the sky a dozen blessed bodies of birds, settling themselves on fine and favorable seats. Thus Romulus sees that given to himself alone, approved by the auspices, were the base and bulwark of his kingdom," wrote the Roman poet Ennius.

An auspicious sighting led Eunike Tanzil to compose Ascending Creatures: "One sunny day in Los Angeles, I looked up at the sky and saw a flock of birds soaring overhead. They flew in groups, their wings flapping asynchronously, each bird moving to its own rhythm, yet all heading in the same direction. Their motion immediately translated into shapes of melodies in my mind," the composer writes. "This piece is inspired by that moment. Like the birds, each instrument in the ensemble moves independently, yet together they push forward with a shared momentum. Ascending Creatures explores the interplay between individuality and unity—a convergence of distinct voices that find coherence in motion."

Sumatra native Tanzil completed her studies at Berklee College of Music before earning a full scholarship to Juilliard where she studied composition with John Corigliano. Under an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon, her debut album, *The First of Everything*, was recently released, and her music has been performed by leading ensembles including the Boston Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Jakarta Simfonia Orchestra, Royal Bangkok Symphony Orchestra, and most recently the Los Angeles Philharmonic, which premiered her work *Ode to the City*

of Dreams at the Hollywood Bowl in July. Outside of the concert hall, Tanzil's projects include her popular online series, Hum Me a Melody, which "transforms street-hummed motifs into symphonic arrangements" and further showcases her spectacular flair for exploring all the textural richness an orchestra has to offer.

Amid dovetailing winds, driving ostinatos, soaring dances, and auspicious flutters, *Ascending Creatures* delves into the mechanics of the orchestra as much as it offers a rhapsodic meditation on what it means to be part of a whole.

Viola Concerto

BÉLA BARTÓK

Born: March 25, 1881, in Nagyszentmiklós, Kingdom of Hungary (present-day Sânnicolau Mare, Romania)

Died: September 26, 1945, in New York City

In a verdant stretch of New York's Adirondack Mountains, Béla Bartók sketched a viola concerto. His pages—covered in crossouts, erasures, long phrases, pops of ideas contrasted with the serene waters of the nearby lakes, by which Bartók spent the final summers of his life. Having fled the rising fascism in his native Hungary, Bartók settled in New York City in 1940, and soon noticed a growing illness that was later diagnosed as leukemia. While undergoing medical treatment, the upstate village of Saranac Lake, whose "cure cottages" had long been a place of respite for the ill, proved for Bartók (and other artists before him like Robert Louis Stevenson) to be a fruitful ground for both creativity and palliative care.

In late 1944, violist William Primrose approached Bartók for a commission. Born in Glasgow in 1904, Primrose studied the violin as a youth with Eugène Ysaÿe, who encouraged his student to take up the viola. Ysaÿe was indeed on to something, as Primrose became one of the 20th century's most prominent violists, who both dazzled on his Stradivari instruments and augmented the

viola's repertory by commissioning several now-canonic works.

At first Bartók declined, but after hearing the violist perform, he accepted the challenge with one stipulation: to not, as Primrose dictated, "feel in any way proscribed by the apparent technical limitations of the instrument." Bartók got to work the following summer in Saranac Lake and sent Primrose an update on September 8, 1945: "I am very glad to tell you that the viola concerto is ready in draft so that only the score has to be written, which means purely mechanical work, so to speak. If nothing happens, I can be through in 5 or 6 weeks." But two weeks later, Bartók passed away, leaving the concerto unfinished.

Bartók's sketches were turned over to his longtime friend, violist, violinist, and composer Tibor Serly, who, in Serly's words, enjoyed a "teacher-disciple, almost father-son relationship" with the composer. At what was to be their final meeting, Serly had taken particular note of the concerto, and following Bartók's passing, he felt "more or less duty-bound" to finish it. Serly worked through Bartók's cryptic pages, which lacked page numbers and specific instrumentation, and completed the work in 1949 with Primrose's blessing.

Composed in three connected movements, Bartók had promised Primrose a certain orchestral transparency, and Serly follows suit: modal and folk-flavored melodies, brash punctuations, solo colors, and tutti timbres wrap around the viola like gossamer, even at their weightiest moments. A brief Lento parlando (slow, speaking) introduces the Adagio religioso, which is grounded in the depths of the C string as much as it soars up to the heavens. Peter Bartók notes that in the finale, a rollicking dance inspired by the Romanian folk tradition, his father nods to Primrose in quoting the Scottish folk song "Comin' Thro' the Rye," before drawing the work to what Primrose called "a very exciting end."

Symphony No. 4 in G Major

GUSTAV MAHLER

Born: July 7, 1860, in Bohemia, Austrian Empire

Died: May 18, 1911, in Vienna

In the foreground of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's painting *Children's Games*, a girl taps a hoop adorned with bells, running among hundreds of other children at play. In a silent gallery in Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum, you can almost *hear* this busy scene—shouts and whispers, jokes and jeers, and a steady jingle. Down the street from the gallery, Gustav Mahler's Fourth Symphony saw its Viennese premiere in 1902, where shouts and jeers from a baffled crowd sounded against the steady jingle of sleigh bells; "It starts just as if he were out to play a carnival joke on the public," one listener commented.

As the work sparked widespread confusion if not condemnation, writer Arthur Seidl decried the many critics of Mahler's new symphony, "for it is they who are stubborn and who cannot find the key to his naïve and childlike world!" Starting with that peculiar jingle, which Mahler likened to a jester's cap, we are drawn into a fantastic universe that unfolds like a Bruegelian Wimmelbild—a "teeming picture" of themes, figures, shapes, and colors that coalesce into a sonic panorama of light and shadow, wonder and terror.

Mahler composed his Fourth Symphony between 1899 and 1900, during summers away from his grueling directorship of both the Vienna Court Opera and Philharmonic. He spent his off seasons looking to compose in peace outside of the city; however, the quaint beauty of resort towns often featured the soundscape of loud guests and incessant (or "ghastly," as he called it) resort music. So when the opportunity arose, he purchased a quiet plot of land along the turquoise Wörthersee, and as his Fourth Symphony took shape, he blueprinted what would become his own quiet, Muzak-free

summer home. Mahler "made a bet with himself that he would finish [the Fourth Symphony] before his house was built," his friend Natalie Bauer-Lechner said, and by the late summer of 1900, both his new chalet and new symphony were complete.

The blueprints for the Fourth Symphony hinged on a song Mahler wrote in 1892, Das himmlische Leben ("The Heavenly Life"), which takes its text from the early 19th-century compilation of folk songs and poems, Des Knaben Wunderhorn (The Youth's Magic Horn). Mahler was captivated by the Wunderhorn universe, one filled with "soldiers and children, animals and brightly colored saints ... love and sorrow ... but filled also with a fresh humor that enchanted him," as musicologist Henry-Louis de La Grange wrote. This humor sparked for Mahler a creative cosmogenesis—his Wunderhorn era—and inspired a series of Wunderhorn songs (two of which appear in his Second and Third Symphonies) as well as his Fourth, which he provisionally titled Symphonie Humoreske.

Mahler first set the symphony in six movements—The World as Eternal Now; Earthly Life; Caritas; Morning Bells; The World Without Burdens; and The Heavenly Lifethough an increasing disillusionment with program music ("Leave the public to their own thoughts about the work they are to hear," Mahler commented in 1900) led him to abandon descriptive titles. He ultimately contracted the work into four parts that took a different creative turn, save for the final movement. While Mahler had once envisioned The Heavenly Life as the capstone of his Third Symphony, the song was rather destined to be the "tapering, topmost spire of the edifice" of the Fourth.

"Think of the undifferentiated blue of the sky, which is harder to capture than any changing and contrasting shades," Mahler said to Bauer-Lechner. "This is the basic tone of the whole work. Only once does it become overcast and uncannily awesome—

but it is not the sky itself that grows dark, for it shines eternally blue. It is only that it seems suddenly sinister to us—just as on the most beautiful day, in a forest flooded with sunshine, one is often overcome by a shudder of Panic dread. The Scherzo is so mystical, confused, and uncanny that it will make your hair stand on end. But you'll soon see, in the following Adagio, where everything sorts itself out, that it wasn't meant so seriously after all."

The opening jingle is glazed with an icy uncertainty that quickly melts away with the introduction of our warm, home key of G Major. Here, Mahler suffuses a "childlike happy mood," as he once implied to a friend, throughout the movement's seven tuneful themes as they dart through vivid moments of divine joy and panic dread.

The Scherzo, a "Dance of Death," as Mahler once called it, features a cameo by the old German image of death, Freund Hein. Amid the occasional clangor of bells-up clarinets and cobweb melodies from the winds and brass, our suspect "friend" grabs a fiddle and "strikes up the dance," as the provisional title indicated, with screeching strings in scordatura, or alternate tuning, each twisted one step higher than usual.

A set of slow and fast variations, the third movement brings us back to our comforting G-major home, where, despite some profoundly trying excursions, it stays largely grounded. Here, Mahler drew inspiration from "the smile of St. Ursula," woven child-hood memories of his own mother's face, "For she, too, had suffered endlessly, but had always resolved everything in love and forgiveness."

At last, we arrive at "The Heavenly Life," a song for solo soprano that offers a child's vision of life after death, where the food is plentiful and where nightmarish fiddles are superseded by dreamy ones. Like a trail of breadcrumbs, Mahler peppered the first three movements with thematic elements

of the last, leading us away from home to a place that feels strangely familiar, if not just a hair unsettling.

Four months before his death in 1911, Mahler led the New York Philharmonic in what was to be his final performance of the Fourth Symphony. Long after Mahler's passing, the musicians would recall his focus not just on rhythm and tuning but on breathing, warming up the mechanics

of keys and valves and bows and mallets with a certain vocality. While the road to Elysium culminates with a lone soprano's song, Mahler always encouraged his chorus of instrumentalists to "use a lot of vibrato," violist Herbert Borodkin remembered, "and sing, as he called it."

Georgeanne Banker earned her Master of Music degree in Historical Performance at Juilliard in 2020.

Texts and Translations

MAHLER Symphony No. 4 in G Major

Fourth Movement

Texts for *Das himmlische Leben* are found in *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, a collection of anonymous German folk songs and poems first published by Ludwig Achim von Arnim and Klemens Brentano between 1805 and 1808.

Das himmlische Leben

(aus Des Knaben Wunderhorn)
Wir genießen die himmlischen Freuden,
D'rum tun wir das Irdische meiden.
Kein weltlich' Getümmel
Hört man nicht im Himmel!
Lebt alles in sanftester Ruh'.
Wir führen ein englisches Leben,
Sind dennoch ganz lustig daneben;
Wir tanzen und springen,
Wir hüpfen und singen,
Sankt Peter im Himmel sieht zu.
Johannes das Lämmlein auslasset,
Der Metzger Herodes d'rauf passet.

Wir führen ein geduldig's, Unschuldig's, geduldig's, Ein liebliches Lämmlein zu Tod. Sankt Lucas den Ochsen tät schlachten

Ohn' einig's Bedenken und Achten. Der Wein kost' kein Heller

Im himmlischen Keller; Die Englein, die backen das Brot Gut' Kräuter von allerhand Arten, Die wachsen im himmlischen Garten,

Gut' Spargel, Fisolen Und was wir nur wollen.

Ganze Schüsseln voll sind uns bereit! Gut' Äpfel, gut' Birn' und gut' Trauben; Die Gärtner, die alles erlauben.

Willst Rehbock, willst Hasen,

Auf offener Straßen Sie laufen herbei!

Sollt' ein Fasttag etwa kommen,

Alle Fische gleich mit Freuden

angeschwommen!

Dort läuft schon Sankt Peter Mit Netz und mit Köder

Zum himmlischen Weiher hinein. Sankt Martha die Köchin muß sein.

Kein' Musik ist ja nicht auf Erden, Die unsrer verglichen kann werden.

Elftausend Jungfrauen Zu tanzen sich trauen.

Sankt Ursula selbst dazu lacht. Kein' Musik ist ja nicht auf Erden, Die unsrer verglichen kann werden. Cäcilia mit ihren Verwandten

Sind treffliche Hofmusikanten! Die englischen Stimmen

Ermuntern die Sinnen,

Daß alles für Freuden erwacht.

The Heavenly Life

(from *The Youth's Magic Horn*) We enjoy heavenly pleasures and therefore avoid earthly ones. No worldly tumult

is to be heard in heaven. All live in greatest peace. We lead angelic lives,

yet have a merry time of it besides.

We dance and we spring, We skip and we sing.

Saint Peter in heaven looks on. John lets the lambkin out.

and Herod the Butcher lies in wait for it.

We lead a patient, an innocent, patient, dear little lamb to its death. Saint Luke slaughters the ox without any thought or concern.

Wine doesn't cost a penny in the heavenly cellars; The angels bake the bread. Good greens of every sort

grow in the heavenly vegetable patch,

good asparagus, string beans, and whatever we want. Whole dishfuls are set for us!

Good apples, good pears and good grapes,

and gardeners who allow everything!

If you want roebuck or hare, on the public streets they come running right up. Should a fast day come along,

all the fishes at once come swimming with joy.

There goes Saint Peter running

with his net and his bait to the heavenly pond. Saint Martha must be the cook. There is just no music on earth that can compare to ours.

Even the eleven thousand virgins

venture to dance,

and Saint Ursula herself has to laugh. There is just no music on earth that can compare to ours. Cecilia and all her relations

make excellent court musicians.

The angelic voices gladden our senses, so that all awaken for joy.

Meet the Artists



Jeffrey Milarsky

American conductor Jeffrey Milarsky (BM '88, MM '90, percussion) is the music director of AXIOM. Known for his innovative programming, he has been hailed for his interpretation of a wide range of repertoire, which spans from Bach to Xenakis. In recent seasons, he has worked with such orchestras as the New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic. American Composers Orchestra, MET Chamber Ensemble, Bergen Philharmonic, New World Symphony, and the Tanglewood Festival Orchestra. In the U.S. and abroad, he has premiered and recorded works by many groundbreaking contemporary composers in venues including Carnegie Hall, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Boston's Symphony Hall, and IRCAM in Paris. Milarsky's long history of premiering, recording, and performing American composers was recognized in 2013 with the Ditson Conductor's Award. His interest and dedication have brought forth collaborations with esteemed composers and an entire generation of emerging composers. A dedicated teacher, Milarsky serves on the conducting faculty at Juilliard and is a senior lecturer in music at Columbia University, where he is the music director and conductor of the Columbia University Orchestra. An indemand timpanist and percussionist, Milarsky has been the principal timpanist for the Santa Fe Opera since 2005. In addition, he has performed and recorded with the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, and Pittsburgh Symphony. He has recorded extensively for Angel, Bridge, Teldec, Telarc, New World, CRI, Music-Masters, EMI, Koch, and London records. Milarsky was awarded the Peter Mennin Prize for outstanding leadership and achievement in the arts during his studies at Juilliard.



Eunike Tanzil

Indonesian composer and pianist Eunike Tanzil (MM '98, composition) is known for music characterized by lyrical melodic lines and emotive harmonic progressions. Her musical aptitude spans genres including classical, jazz, and world music, while her compositions craft narratives that resonate deeply with audiences. Under an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon, she will be releasing her debut album, recorded live with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, this year. Her music has been performed by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Louisville Orchestra, Jakarta Simfonia Orchestra, Royal Bangkok Symphony Orchestra, Nashville Symphony, and National Symphony Orchestra. In July, her orchestral work Ode to the City of Dreams was premiered by the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the prestigious Hollywood Bowl. Whether writing for media or the concert hall, Tanzil thrives on projects that offer opportunities to collaborate and exchange ideas with similarly passionate artists. She has collaborated with Ray Chen, TwoSet Violin, and Arturo Sandoval, showcasing a diverse musical portfolio. Her recent collaboration with Grammy-winning Chinese-Icelandic singer Laufey on Only Mine, part of a Bose and Porsche campaign, highlights Tanzil's versatility as a producer,

arranger, and orchestrator. She has also lent her musical expertise to film projects such as The Addams Family 2, I Wanna Dance With Somebody, and Abominable and the Invisible City. She scored the recent American romantic comedy Asian Persuasion, which premiered at the SOHO International Film Festival in 2023. Tanzil's professional journey has been further enriched by mentorship from industry luminaries such as John Debney and Pinar Toprakm, and she is proud to have been selected for the NBC Universal Composers Initiative (2024–26). Beyond the studio, Tanzil fosters a vibrant community of creatives on social media, redefining what it means to be a composer in the 21st century. Her creativity shines in her Hum Me A Melody series, in which she transforms street-hummed motifs into symphonic arrangements. Through educational content and clips of her compositions, she aims to introduce orchestral music to a wider audience and inspire aspiring composers. Tanzil studied at the Berklee College of Music and Juilliard, where she studied under the guidance of Oscar-winning composer John Corigliano.



Yizilin Liang

Violist Yizilin Liang is pursuing her master's degree at Juilliard, where she studies with Hsin-Yun Huang. Liang is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music whose previous mentors include Roberto Díaz, Edward Gazouleas, Nian Liu, and Xidi Shen, who laid the foundation for Liang's artistic development. She won first prize at the Washington International String Competition and has been awarded the Paul Ayres Prize at the

Cecil Aronowitz International Viola Competition; an honorary mention at the Oskar Nedbal International Viola Competition: first and special prizes at the International Viola Competition "Villa de Llanes" in Spain, where she was invited to perform; and first prize at the Hong Kong International String Competition. She has served as principal viola of the Curtis Symphony Orchestra and performed with Symphony in C. Liang is also an active chamber musician, appearing with Curtis on Tour and the Kingston Chamber Music Festival, and has participated in festivals including the Ravinia Festival's Steans Music Institute, Morningside Music Bridge, and the New York String Orchestra Seminar.



Shiyu Zhuo

Soprano Shiyu Zhuo, a native of Zhejiang, China, is pursuing her Graduate Diploma at Juilliard under Amy Burton. Zhuo has sung Norina in scenes from Don Pasquale as well as Une Pastourelle in L'enfant et les sortilèges at Alice Tully Hall and has covered Despina in Così fan tutte. This spring, she will sing the role of Nannetta in Verdi's Falstaff with Juilliard Opera. Her previous roles include Musetta (La Bohème), Calisto (La Calisto), Gretel (Hänsel und Gretel), and Suzel (L'amico Fritz). On the concert stage, she appeared as the soprano soloist in Handel's Cecilia, volgi un squardo at Alice Tully Hall and in Mozart's Mass in C Minor with the NEC Philharmonic, Zhuo is a first-prize winner of the Korea-China International Music Competition and a 2025 Loren L. Zachary Competition semifinalist.

Gail Chamock Scholarship

Juilliard Orchestra

Juilliard's largest and most visible student performing ensemble, the Juilliard Orchestra is known for delivering polished and passionate performances of works spanning the repertoire. Comprising more than 375 students in the bachelor's and master's degree programs, the orchestra appears throughout the season in concerts on the stages of Juilliard's Peter Jay Sharp Theater, Alice Tully Hall, and Carnegie Hall. The orchestra is a strong partner to Juilliard's other divisions, appearing in opera, dance, and drama productions as well as presenting an annual concert of world premieres by Juilliard student composers. This season, an impressive roster of world-renowned conductors leads the Juilliard Orchestra, including Marin Alsop, David Belkovski, Nicholas Carter, Stephanie Childress, Joseph Colaneri, JoAnn Falletta, Patrick Furrer, Fabien Gabel, Barbara Hannigan, Jonathon Heyward, Ken Lam, Brad Lubman, and David Moody as well as faculty conductors David Robertson, the director of conducting studies and distinguished visiting faculty, and Jeffrey Milarsky. Among the virtual projects that students from the orchestra participated in during the 2020 lockdown was Bolero Juilliard, which became a viral sensation. The Juilliard Orchestra has toured across the U.S. and throughout Europe, South America, and Asia, where it was the first Western conservatory ensemble allowed to visit and perform following the opening of the People's Republic of China in 1987, returning two decades later, in 2008. In 2019, the orchestra traveled to London, performing alongside the Royal Academy of Music in Royal Albert Hall at the BBC Proms. Other ensembles under the Juilliard Orchestra umbrella include the conductorless Juilliard Chamber Orchestra, Wind Orchestra, Lab Orchestra, and contemporary music group AXIOM.

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