







CU ★ PRESENTS



MARCH-APRIL 2024

-  Takács Quartet March 10-11
-  Titanic, the Musical March 15-17
-  Ray Chen and Julio Elizalde March 21
-  Asleep at the Wheel April 5
-  American Stories April 25-28
-  Takács Quartet April 28-29



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Asleep at the Wheel with the CU Boulder Symphony Orchestra comes to Macky Auditorium on April 5 Photo by Jeff Fasano.

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MARCH-APRIL 2024

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Artist Series: *Ray Chen*, photo by John Mac

College of Music: *Promotional art for Titanic*, the Musical

Takács Quartet: *Photo by Amanda Tipton*

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Asleep at the Wheel to work with CU Boulder Symphony Orchestra to bring western swing to life

By Adam Goldstein

Symphonic music and country and western swing may seem like unlikely bedfellows for fans of either genre.

But according to Ray Benson, frontman of the world-renowned, Grammy Award-winning country group Asleep at the Wheel, the pairing of classical strings and honky-tonk twang isn't a new combination. The band will join the CU Boulder Symphony Orchestra and College of Music students for an exceptional performance at Macky Auditorium on April 5. Benson says the fusion of strings, guitars and country swagger will draw on a long-established musical partnership.

"We offer audiences a unique symphony show, in my opinion," Benson said, adding that Asleep at the Wheel has played symphonic concerts across the United States since the early 2000s.

"We play a genre of music called western swing which has roots in old-time fiddle music, country music, jazz, country and blues."

The 1940s saw a rare and ambitious fusion of styles. Western swing artists like Bob Wills, Milton Brown and Hank Thompson melded the folk roots of country music with the lush instrumental expressions of big band music, jazz and other idioms. Asleep at the Wheel continues that approach and—teaming up with the CU Boulder Symphony Orchestra—will bring the full scope of the genre to life for audiences.

The value of the show isn't limited to ticket holders. CU Boulder students will also play a role in the concert, a collaboration that echoes previous performances by Asleep at the Wheel on our campus.

"Fiddles are a big part of what we do and combining that approach with classically trained string musicians is very special. It's not often that you get a collaboration of these styles," Benson said. "We hope music students find this combination interesting and possibly educational."

Indeed, the value of the collaboration for CU Boulder students is immeasurable, according to Joan Braun, Executive Director of CU Presents and the College of Music's Assistant Dean for Concerts and Communications. This concert will offer students learning opportunities that aren't available in a classroom; it gives aspiring musicians the chance to work with award-winning artists in person.

"These are opportunities for our students to be on stage and to interact professionally with an award-winning touring band. That is unique and valuable," Braun said. "Part of our mission is to bring artists to Boulder that audiences wouldn't otherwise experience ... It's an opportunity to see a world-class act without going to New York or Los Angeles. You can see it right here at Macky Auditorium. That is a huge value."

There's also a benefit to the collaboration for the members of Asleep at the Wheel. Working with students and orchestral musicians on this stop gives the band the scope and framework to fully realize their tribute to an American genre forgotten by some.

"We encourage everyone to come out and check out this collaboration," Benson said. "We cover lots of musical ground and we've had some great charts written for the symphony. We always have a great time doing these symphony orchestra shows."

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Titanic, the Musical

March 15-17, 2024

CU Macky Auditorium



Ray Chen, violin and Julio Elizalde, piano

Thursday, March 21, 7:30 p.m.

★ Macky Auditorium



Asleep at the Wheel

With the CU Symphony Orchestra
Friday, April 5, 7:30 p.m.

★ Macky Auditorium



The Current

April 11-14, 2024

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American Stories by American Women

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Takács Quartet

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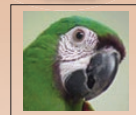


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A haunting double bill

By Henry Michaels

An open door. A broken window. Ghostly visages from the past. All this and more will feature on stage when the CU Boulder College of Music's Eklund Opera Program presents *American Stories by American Women*, an exciting operatic double bill featuring two uniquely American stories.

Amy Beach's 1932 chamber opera *Cabildo* is a story within a story. The frame sees a group of sightseers touring New Orleans' Cabildo, a government building that once held the imprisoned pirate Pierre Lafitte. After one of the tourists falls asleep in Lafitte's cell—a completely normal place for a nap—the action moves to her dreams of the imprisoned pirate. It's here that most of the roughly 45-minute-long opera's action takes place, including a prison escape, a visit from a lover's ghost and a War of 1812 connection.

Written in 2018, Missy Mazzoli's *Proving Up* is the tale of a family of Nebraska homesteaders seeking to achieve ownership of their land by satisfying the requirements—proving

up—of the Homestead Act: "House of sod, acres of grain, five years of harvest, a window of glass." It's a dark tale of a family haunted—figuratively and literally—by the ghosts of daughters lost to the harshness of prairie life: A father willing to do whatever it takes to prove up, a mother terrified of losing more children and a son confronted by a menacing stranger.

On one level, the American stories presented in Beach's and Mazzoli's operas could not be more different. The moment when the specter of Lafitte's lover idealistically exhorts him to "Pay thy debt to America," for example, seems worlds away from the grim portrait of American homesteading life in *Proving Up*.

Perhaps what they share, then, is a kind of idealism undercut by the reality that the American dream is complicated. Pierre Lafitte ultimately clears his name by fighting alongside Andrew Jackson, a moment of patriotism spurred on by the ghost of his lost love. Yet the pirate hero also participated in the slave trade,

a fact mentioned by the chorus of tourists in Beach's opera—"The Lafittes sold slaves ... Sold their slaves like cattle in the city"—a heavy statement that is flippantly answered by the tour guide's "Right-O!"

For the family in Mazzoli's opera, the Homestead Act and the idea of Manifest Destiny that it represented were built upon layers of exploitation: The settlers used as pawns in an attempt to expand American territory, but also the existing people whose land was stolen and "proved up." The father in *Proving Up* is desperate to achieve the American Dream for himself and his family, but at what cost? In the end, their story serves as a reminder that this dream is sometimes as fragile as a window of glass.

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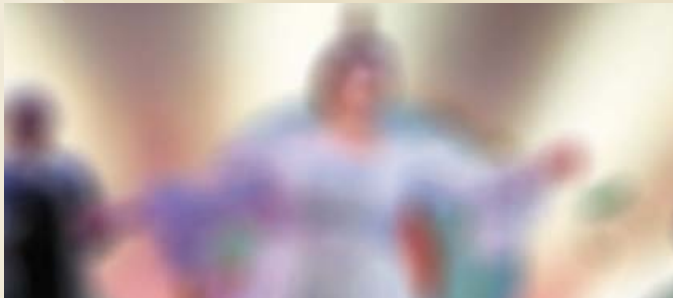


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Thompson Jazz Studies Program introduces new vocal jazz degree, new ensemble and more

By MarieFaith Lane

The College of Music is set to launch an exciting addition to its curriculum this fall—the new Bachelor of Music in Vocal Jazz degree in our Thompson Jazz Studies Program will offer intensive development of all aspects of musicianship as a jazz vocalist with study in jazz improvisation, theory, arranging, repertoire and history as well as individual study and performing in our jazz ensembles.

Professor of Jazz Studies John Gunther shares details of the long-anticipated program: “Thanks to the generous support of Jack and Jeannie Thompson, this program is finally coming to fruition. Jack and Jeannie are astute supporters of the College of

Music and are very involved and aware of the needs of the college.”

He continues, “The program is not only for aspiring jazz vocalists, as we hope it will serve the College of Music more broadly. Jazz improvisation is such an important part of the history of performance of American music and the skill sets that our musicians need to have in the 21st century.”

The methods incorporated into the Thompson Jazz program reflect a commitment to providing real-world experiences. Unlike traditional audition-based ensemble formation, the program embraces a unique approach. “Ensembles are formed without

auditions and then rotated every few weeks, fostering an environment where students of varying ages and experience levels come together and collaborate,” Gunther explains.

“This approach encourages students to build relationships, learn to communicate effectively and navigate the dynamics of working with musicians of varying backgrounds—mirroring the professional world, where collaboration is essential and musicians must adapt to different skill sets within the group.”

Developing and implementing the new degree program was both a response to internal recognition and driven by external demand. “The Jazz Studies department had been receiving inquiries from high school directors and prospective students eager to know when such a program would be offered,” Gunther says. “The call among young musicians for a broader experience is a clear recognition of the importance of engaging with contemporary music making, improvisation and diverse styles beyond their primary focus.”

Additionally, the jazz program has introduced a new extracurricular ensemble—Ralphie’s Ramblers—committed to embodying the spirit of New Orleans brass bands. Ralphie’s Ramblers ensures that students across disciplines have the opportunity to experience and collaborate in jazz in meaningful ways.

Looking ahead, over spring break, faculty and students from Thompson Jazz will spend a week-long intensive in Havana, studying and performing with master musicians of Afro-Cuban jazz, underscoring the College of Music’s commitment to providing a comprehensive education beyond the classroom walls.

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Takács Quartet

4 p.m., Sunday, April 28, 2024
7:30 p.m., Monday, April 29, 2024
Grusin Music Hall

Program

String Quartet in D minor, Op. 42

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

- I. Andante ed innocentemente
- II. Minuet - Trio
- III. Adagio cantabile
- IV. Finale. Presto

String Quartet in B-flat Major, D. 112 (Op. 168)

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

- I. Allegro ma non troppo
- II. Andante sostenuto
- III. Menuetto. Allegro — Trio
- IV. Presto

—Intermission—

String Sextet No. 2 in G Major, Op. 36

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

- I. Allegro non troppo
- II. Scherzo. Allegro non troppo — Presto giocoso
- III. Poco Adagio
- IV. Poco Allegro

*with Erika Eckert, viola II
and Meta Weiss, cello II*

NEED TO KNOW FOR THE SHOW

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- See **Page 30** of this publication for additional show and venue policies.

Program notes

By Marc Shulgold

String Quartet in D minor, Op. 42 Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Here's a Haydn oddity: a stand-alone quartet, rather than one published as part of the usual set of six. With Opus 42 (the number was added in the 19th century), there is only speculation as to its origins. Most likely, it was drawn from the remnants of an abandoned set of three quartets commissioned in 1784 by two Spanish nobles, the Countess-Duchess of Benavente and Osuna and the Duke of Alba. We've gained this information from Haydn's letter to his publisher, Artaria, in which the composer mentions those quartets (since lost) that would be "very short and consist of three pieces (i.e., movements) only." Opus 42, of course, has four movements—Haydn subsequently added the *Minuet*. The brevity of this work, along with its absence of technical challenges (apart from the top note of the *Minuet*), suggest that it might have been intended as an exercise for a young, student ensemble. Also worth noting is the description affixed to the opening movement: *Andante ed Innocentemente*—slowly and innocently. Perhaps a helpful guide for its intended youthful players?

String Quartet in B-flat Major, D. 112 (Op. 168)

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

It's easy to think of the prodigious Schubert writing music endlessly and easily in his tragically short life—and always with an almost spontaneous sense of predetermined completeness. That was the grown-up composer, when friends often witnessed him as he sat with them at a café, suddenly scribbling out a melody on a napkin to be used later in a new composition. Such was not always the case in his younger years. Here's an example with this B-flat Quartet from 1814. Examining the manuscript now shows that he had originally intended it as a string trio. As he started work, ten lines of music were written—and then struck out. So he began again, this time working with four string parts. Once he got rolling, he completed the first movement in four and a half hours, as he noted proudly on the manuscript. The Trio-turned-Quartet that became Opus 168 (D. 112, if you wish)

was written in eight days in September. He had composed seven String Quartets that year, with the B-flat emerging in his final days while studying at St. Anna Normal-Hauptschule, a teacher training school. (This last of the seven quartets remained unpublished until 1863).

That year of 1814 looks to be a time of learning for Schubert. Not just how to be a teacher, but how to write a string quartet. He'd spent some time reading through the quartets of Haydn and Mozart, and it shows in Opus 168. The opening *Allegro* builds from a simple little triplet turn that is cleverly used without becoming overused. Perhaps inspired by Mozart's love of powerful chords followed by dramatic silences, Schubert utilizes those effects now and then just to see how they can add moments of unexpected interest. In the G minor *Andante*, unsettling dramatics lead to a gentle melody that hints at the Schubertian lyricism we will be observing throughout his maturity. Spoiler alert: There's a strange surprise as the movement ends, with a brief unison *fortissimo* episode that comes out of nowhere. No surprises with the following Haydnesque *Minuet*, however. Schubert then offers a *Presto* finale that finds the first violin hovering above everyone like a playful hummingbird, with a six-note phrase that is soon joined by the second violin an octave below—a little phrase that occasionally infects the rest of the quartet. There is a sense of youthful joy in this bubbly ending, suggesting perhaps that Schubert was anticipating leaving behind those dreary training-school days.

String Sextet No. 2 in G Major, Op. 36

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Becoming an important composer demands a lifetime of learning, experimenting and just plain living. Sampling Brahms' list of early works shows him developing the techniques necessary to gain confidence and, eventually, public acceptance. That list is dominated by chamber and piano pieces, choral works and songs sprinkled around such early ventures into orchestral writing as the two Serenades and the First Piano Concerto—along with preliminary sketches for the Symphony No. 1. In producing two String Sextets within a few years of each other, he was improving his skills as a contrapuntalist, setting one or two solo voices against intricate accompaniments.

In Opus 36, we sense his excitement at giving the cello fresh prominence and, in the finale, nimbly managing multiple musical lines. (In avoiding the String Quartet, it should be mentioned he was also escaping comparisons with Beethoven.) Not that the studious Brahms was locked away from the outside world: As he worked on the Second Sextet in 1864 (its predecessor was published two years earlier), he was wrestling with his passionate feelings for two women. Most famously was his complex lifelong relationship with Clara Schumann, who'd earlier received a letter bearing a theme that would reappear in the new Sextet's slow movement. And then, there was Agathe von Siebold (1835-1909), a young soprano with a lovely figure and long black hair he'd met in Göttingen during the summer of 1858 (Brahms' companion Joachim was also smitten). So deep were their feelings for each other that Agathe and Johannes soon agreed to marry. Friends felt this was the proper choice, though Clara could not hide her jealousy. But the public humiliation Brahms suffered at the Leipzig premiere of his First Piano Concerto in 1859 made him realize that marriage to a struggling composer is not the life for a young woman—though it was Agathe who would break things off.

Despite the Second Sextet's bright key of G major, there is an element of moodiness here. Even the lovely melody that opens the work, sung over a disquieting *ostinato* in the viola, is hardly joyous. As this movement ends, Brahms salutes Agathe with a musical phrase based on her name. At its completion, he wrote to a friend, "Here I have freed myself from my last love." And so it would be. The Sextet continues with a charming, surprisingly restrained *Scherzo* that contrasts with its middle Trio section, offering a rousing Hungarian dance. The intricate, expressive slow movement—Clara's theme with five variations—leads to a vigorous finale that seems cathartic, if one views this work as an ode to lost love, or as an exercise in counterpoint by a young composer learning his craft. Or both.

About the performers

The world-renowned Takács Quartet is now entering its 49th season.

Edward Dusinberre, Harumi Rhodes (violins), Richard O'Neill (viola) and András Fejér (cello) are excited about the 2023-2024 season that features varied projects including a new work written for them. Nokuthula Ngwenyama composed *Flow*, an exploration and celebration of the natural world. The work was commissioned by nine concert presenters throughout the USA. July sees the release of a new recording of works by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and Dvořák for Hyperion Records, while later in the season the quartet will release works by Schubert including his final quartet in G major. In the Spring of 2024 the ensemble will perform and record piano quintets by Price and Dvořák with long-time chamber music partner Marc-Andre Hamelin.

As Associate Artists at London's Wigmore Hall the Takács will perform four concerts featuring works by Hough, Price, Janacek, Schubert and Beethoven. During the season the ensemble will play at other prestigious European venues including Berlin, Geneva, Linz, Innsbruck, Cambridge and St. Andrews. The Takács will appear at the Adams Chamber Music Festival in New Zealand. The group's North American engagements include concerts in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington DC, Vancouver, Ann Arbor, Phoenix, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Portland, Cleveland, Santa Fe and Stanford. The ensemble will perform two Bartók cycles at San Jose State University and Middlebury College and appear for the first time at the Virginia Arts Festival with pianist Olga Kern.

The members of the Takács Quartet are Christoffersen Fellows and Artists in Residence at the University of Colorado Boulder. For the 23-24 season the quartet enter into a partnership with El Sistema Colorado, working closely with its chamber music education program in Denver. During the summer months the Takács join the faculty at the Music Academy of the West, running an intensive quartet seminar.

In 2021 the Takács won a Presto Music Recording of the Year Award for their recordings of string quartets by Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn, and a

Gramophone Award with pianist Garrick Ohlsson for piano quintets by Amy Beach and Elgar. Other releases for Hyperion feature works by Haydn, Schubert, Janáček, Smetana, Debussy and Britten, as well as piano quintets by César Franck and Shostakovich (with Marc-André Hamelin), and viola quintets by Brahms and Dvorák (with Lawrence Power). For their CDs on the Decca/London label, the Quartet has won three Gramophone Awards, a Grammy Award, three Japanese Record Academy Awards, Disc of the Year at the inaugural BBC Music Magazine Awards, and Ensemble Album of the Year at the Classical Brits. Full details of all recordings can be found in the Recordings section of the Quartet's website.

The Takács Quartet is known for its innovative programming. In 2021-22 the ensemble partnered with bandoneon virtuoso Julien Labro to premiere new works by Clarice Assad and Bryce Dessner, commissioned by Music Accord. In 2014 the Takács performed a program inspired by Philip Roth's novel *Everyman* with Meryl Streep at Princeton, and again with her at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto in 2015. They first performed *Everyman* at Carnegie Hall in 2007 with Philip Seymour Hoffman. They have toured 14 cities with the poet Robert Pinsky, and played regularly with the Hungarian Folk group Muzsikás.

In 2014 the Takács became the first string quartet to be awarded the Wigmore Hall Medal. In 2012, Gramophone announced that the Takács was the first string quartet to be inducted into its Hall of Fame. The ensemble also won the 2011 Award for Chamber Music and Song presented by the Royal Philharmonic Society in London.

The Takács Quartet was formed in 1975 at the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest by Gabor Takács-Nagy, Károly Schranz, Gabor Ormai and András Fejér, while all four were students. The group received international attention in 1977, winning First Prize and the Critics' Prize at the International String Quartet Competition in Evian, France. The Quartet also won the Gold Medal at the 1978 Portsmouth and Bordeaux Competitions and First Prizes at the Budapest International String Quartet Competition in 1978 and the Bratislava Competition in 1981. The Quartet made its North American debut tour in 1982. Members of the Takács Quartet are the grateful beneficiaries of an instrument loan by the Drake Foundation.

ERIKA ECKERT

CU Boulder viola professor since 1994, Erika Eckert has also served on the faculties of the Cleveland Institute of Music, Baldwin Wallace College, Brevard Music Center Summer Institute & Festival, and the Chautauqua Institution in New York. This summer she joins the faculty of Madeline Island Chamber Music. As co-founder of the Cavani String Quartet, she performed on major concert series worldwide and garnered an impressive list of awards and prizes, including first prize at the Naumburg Chamber Music Competition. As a member of the Eckert-McDonald Duo, she presented Colorado premieres of works by Carter Pann, John Drumheller, Chen Yi and Libby Larsen, among others, and can be heard on the Meridian and Azica labels. Eckert also served as an adjudicator for the NFAA Arts Recognition and Talent Search, the exclusive nominating agency for the Presidential Scholars in the Arts, and appeared in their Academy Nominated Documentary, *Rehearsing a Dream*.

Full bio available at
colorado.edu/music/erika-eckert

META WEISS

American cellist Meta Weiss (pronounced MAY-ta) made her international debut at the age of seven in Utrecht, Holland, and has established herself as one of the leading artists of her generation. An acclaimed soloist and chamber musician, her performances have taken her to venues throughout the U.S. and internationally, including Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center, Boston Symphony Hall, The Kimmel Center, Royal Albert Hall, The Sydney Opera House, Melbourne Recital Centre, Auckland Town Hall and Teatro Britanico (Peru). Weiss has performed concertos with orchestras worldwide and has also served as guest principal cello of the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, and guest associate principal cello of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. A passionate chamber musician, she has appeared on chamber series and festivals across the U.S., Australia, Canada, China and Europe. Top prize-winner in numerous competitions, she has been hailed as "magnetic" (ArtsJournal) and "luminous" (Sydney Arts Guide) by critics and audiences around the globe.

Full bio available at
colorado.edu/music/meta-weiss

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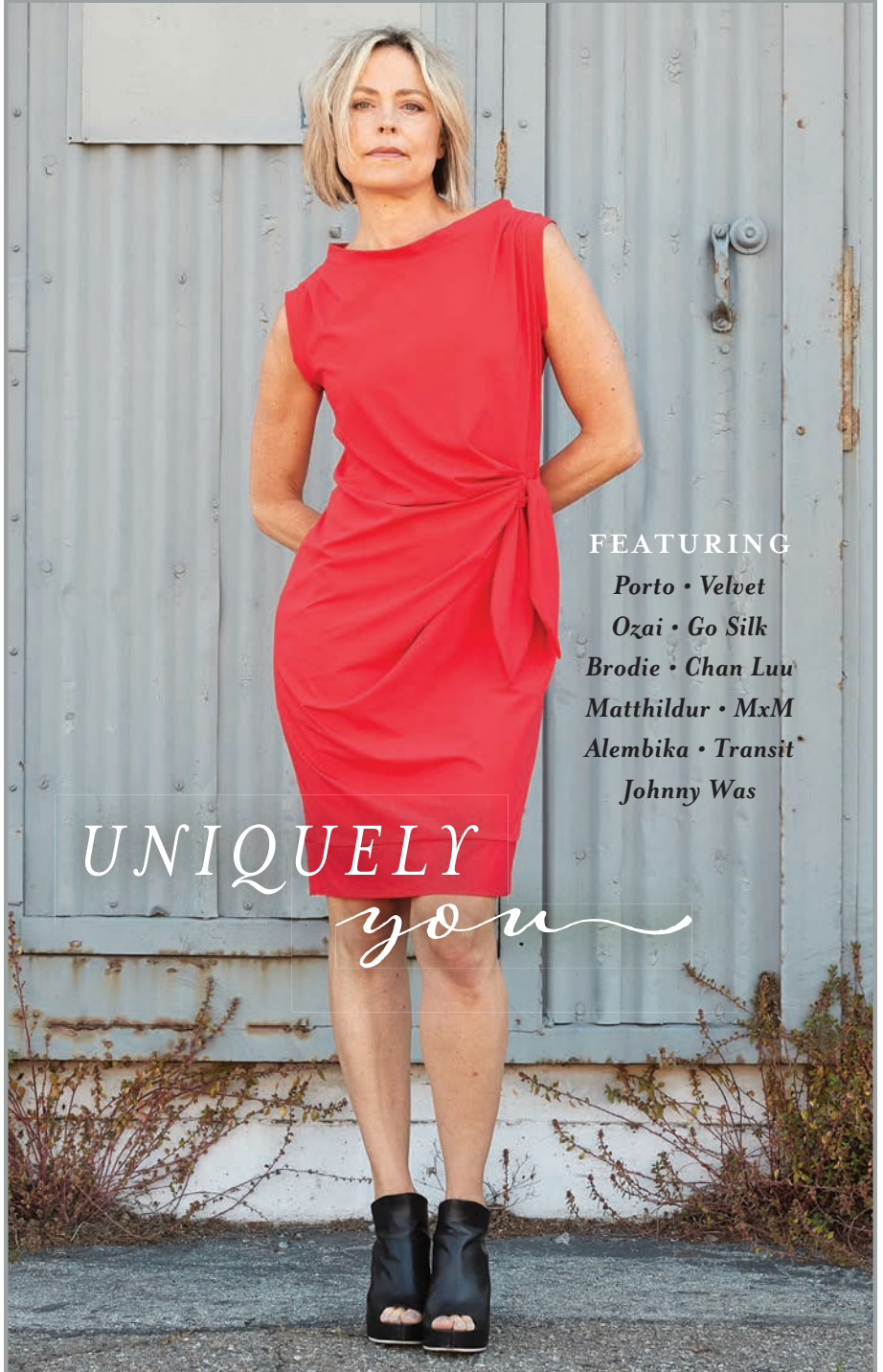
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**Celebrating the legacy
and impact of Anna Sie,
lifelong supporter of the
arts and humanity**

By Allison Nitch

Known for her heartfelt philanthropy on both local and national levels, Anna Sie dedicated her life to supporting causes she felt passionate about, including students and faculty at the University of Colorado Boulder.

“She was really the most generous human being that I’ve ever met,” said CU Boulder alumna Michele Ritter (Anth’81) and University of Colorado Foundation trustee. “She really cared about people and issues, and if something came her way and she was able to make an impact—to make someone’s life better or to help in a broader way—she never missed an opportunity. She had this spirit about her that was open, generous, heartfelt and authentic.”

Sie left a powerful legacy of impact at CU Boulder, establishing a transformational student scholarship in the College of Music with her husband, John, and endowing several faculty chairs.

“At the College of Music, we aim to offer our students diverse opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration,” said John Davis, the college’s dean. “Such broad-based opportunities rely in no small part on the active, consistent engagement of our community of supporters. Anna Sie’s dedication to our college both indelibly impacted our students, programs and activities, and influenced others’ giving.”

“Anna Sie was extraordinarily committed to giving back, and in countless arenas, that is exactly what she and John accomplished for many years,” agreed Daniel Sher, College of Music dean emeritus.

“Anna was a superb partner with John, and she will be remembered for her generosity of spirit as much as philanthropic generosity.”

Changing lives through scholarships

Sie’s love of music led to the sponsorship of a student scholarship program at CU Boulder’s College of Music, which changed the lives of more than a dozen former students, including the accomplished opera singer Wei Wu (MMus’13).

After hearing then-student Wu perform at Central City Opera in 2007, the Sies were struck by the raw talent of this young man, explained Ritter. His performance inspired the couple to generously contribute to CU Boulder’s Eklund Opera Fund—specifically to support two Chinese opera singers, Wu and Yang Bo, beginning in the 2008-09 academic year.

Now a Grammy Award-winning bass, Wu trained at the People University of China, Beijing, before continuing his education at CU Boulder.

“Auntie Anna, also known as Mrs. Sie, always humbly said, ‘I am only a small part of your success,’” shared Wu. “However, I know deep down that her and Uncle John’s kindness and generosity played a significant role in my achievements.”

He continued, “She never expected anything in return, always welcoming me into her family with open arms. We cooked, laughed and shared countless memories together. She made me feel like I had a true family in the U.S.

“Now, I proudly make my Metropolitan Opera debut dedicated to Auntie Anna—a new production of Carmen opening on New Year’s Eve, one of the important performance events of the whole season. I hope to keep carrying her spirit of philanthropy forward and make her proud.”

Cultivating culture in higher education and beyond

Sie also established several faculty chairs at Front Range universities, including the Anna Maglione-Sie Chair in Italian Language & Literature at the University of Denver; and the Dan & Boyce Sher Chair at CU Boulder’s College of Music. Faculty chair positions are important opportunities on campus, as they help provide talented faculty with the flexibility and resources to pursue their creative work in a university setting.

Sie received recognition through many awards for her philanthropic work and holds an honorary doctorate in higher education at the University of Denver, an honorary doctorate in humane letters from the University of Colorado and an honorary doctorate from Regis University.

Beyond higher education, Sie helped enrich Denver’s cultural offerings. As the home of Denver Film, the Sie FilmCenter was established in 2010 and features the finest in independent and world cinema. The Sie FilmCenter also regularly hosts festivals, program series and other special events that bring filmgoers and filmmakers together to celebrate the art of film. Sie also established the prestigious annual Italian Filmmaker Award at the Denver Film Festival.

“She was an immigrant child from southern Italy and she said she learned her English by watching movies,” noted Ritter. “She loved American movies. Everything she did was about giving back and about drawing on her own personal experiences—sometimes challenges and struggles—to make it easier for other people that might be also experiencing those [same] challenges and struggles.”

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