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Concert: Empire Brass

Empire Brass

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ITHACA

Ithaca College
School of Music



ITHACA COLLEGE CONCERTS 1990-91

EMPIRE BRASS

ROLF SMEDVIG, Trumpet
JEFFREY CURNOW, Trumpet
ERIC RUSKE, French Horn
SCOTT A. HARTMAN, Trombone
J. SAMUEL PILAFIAN, Tuba

Assisted by
Bob Leidhecker, Percussion

PROCESSION OF THE NOBLES <i>from Mlada</i>	Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908)
POLOVTSIAN DANCE <i>from Prince Igor</i>	Alexander Borodin (1833-1887)
DANCE OF THE COMEDIANS <i>from The Bartered Bride</i>	Bedrich Smetana (1824-1884)
SEGUIDILLA	Joaquín Turina (1882-1949)
LA FLORISTA	Joaquín Turina
PAVANE FOR A DEAD PRINCESS	Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
ANITRA'S DANCE <i>from Peer Gynt</i>	Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)
MORNING DANCE <i>from Romeo and Juliet</i>	Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)
HUNGARIAN DANCE No. 5	Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
SLAVONIC DANCE No. 8	Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904)

WEDDING DANCE AND TROIKA
from *Lt. Kijé* Sergei Prokofiev
(1891-1943)

INTERMISSION

BUCKAROO HOLIDAY
from *Rodeo* Aaron Copland
(b.1900)

SIMPLE GIFTS Aaron Copland

STREET SONG (1988)
commissioned by the EMPIRE BRASS Michael Tilson Thomas
(b. 1944)

SUMMERTIME
from *Porgy and Bess* George Gershwin
(1898-1937)

AMERICA
from *West Side Story* Leonard Bernstein
(b.1918)

THE ELLINGTON SUITE
Caravan
Sophisticated Lady
Take the "A" Train Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington
(1899-1974)
Duke Ellington/Billy Strayhorn

Walter Ford Hall Auditorium
Friday, September 7, 1990
8:15 p.m.

Columbia Artists Management, Inc.
Personal Direction - R. Douglas Sheldon Associate: Michele Minter
165 West 57th Street, New York, NY 10019

Faculty Quintet-in-Residence at Boston University

Telarc Records
CBS+Angel/EMI Records
Vincent Bach Stradivarius Brasses, manufactured by the Selmar Company
Empire Brass Music Series is published by G. Schirmer, Inc.

PROGRAM NOTES

Procession of the Nobles from *Mlada*. *Mlada* (1889-90), Rimsky-Korsakov's fourth opera-ballet, was premièred in St. Petersburg on 16 February 1891, at the sixth Russian Symphonic Concert. Rimsky-Korsakov writes that the opera-ballet is based on the life of the western Slavs (Polabians) and was taken from the scenario by Gedeonov; the opera-ballet, begun in collaboration with Borodin, Cui, Mussorgsky and Minkus, was dropped. On 27 February 1889, the second anniversary of Borodin's death, Liadov, according to Rimsky-Korsakov, "remarked that *Mlada* would make a suitable opera subject for me. Without hesitation, I said, 'Very well, I'll get on with it at once.'" The opera plays out the conflict between forces of good and those of the underworld.

In my reminiscences of 1876-7 I spoke of my enthusiasm for the poetry of pagan worship—an enthusiasm that had originated in my work on ceremonial songs. That enthusiasm had not cooled even now; on the contrary, with *May Night* it led to a series of fantastic operas in which the worship of the sun and of sun-gods was introduced. I did this directly, through subject-matter drawn from the Russian pagan world (as in *Snyegoorochka* and *Mlada*), or indirectly, by reflection, in operas the subject matter of which was taken from later Christian times (as in *May Night* or in *Christmas Eve*).

In act II, scene 2 of *Mlada*, the people gather for the festival of St. John's day; the festival commences with a solemn cortège of the Polabsky Princes, the "Procession of the Nobles," a ternary march that is announced by a trumpet fanfare.

Polovtsian Dance from *Prince Igor*. "The Polovtsian Dances," a collection of oriental dances that occurs towards the end of act II when Khan Kontchak (ruler of Polovsti) entertains his captives, Prince Igor and the prince's sons, with tribal dances, were sketched by Borodin during the winter of 1874-75 and completed by the end of 1877. When he died on 15 February 1887, he had not yet written the score for *Prince Igor*; Borodin had limited himself to a piano-duet version with a few indications as to the eventual instrumentation he had in mind. The only numbers he orchestrated were those that were to be given separate performances at various concerts, before the opera was completed. "The Polovtsian Dances," premièred in 1878, were part of that collection.

The first Polovtsian Dance, "Dance of the Royal Captives," was made popular in 1953 in *Kismet*, "A Musical Arabian Night" when the Borodin theme was used for "Stranger in Paradise."

Dance of the Comedians from *The Bartered Bride*. In Smetana's diary (December 1964) he notes that he has

been working on my opera, to a text by Sabina, in two acts. I have tried to give it a popular character because the plot in which the bridegroom sells his bride is taken from village life and demands a national treatment.

This comic opera, *The Bartered Bride*, was finished on 15 May 1866 and premièred in Prague on 30 May 1866. But the audience found the plot to be "too naïve, even too rustic," and it closed after only two performances. In

the 1869 revision, Smetana expanded the opera to three acts and added the "Dance of the Comedians" to act III, scene 2. The dance, with which acrobats from a traveling troupe of performers entertain Bohemian villagers, is divided into three sections: the first section is performed on tightropes by Esmeralda; the second section is performed on horseback by an Indian; and the third section, the "supreme spectacle," is a dance performed by Esmeralda and an American grizzly bear. On the occasion of its hundredth performance on 5 May 1882, Smetana contended that

The Bartered Bride is only a toy and composing it was merely child's play. . . . At the time of writing *The Bartered Bride* it was my opinion that not even Offenbach could compete with it!"

Sequidilla and La Florista. When Joaquín Turina was studying composition with Vincent d'Indy (1851-1931) at the Schola Cantorum in Paris (1905-13), Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909) encouraged Turina to look for musical material in Spanish folk music. Returning to Madrid in 1914, Turina, associated with Manuel de Falla (1876-1946), worked as a critic, teacher and composer.

A *sequidilla*, a Spanish dance and song that originated about 1590, is set to four-line strophes of alternate long and short lines that are separated by instrumental refrains. The *sequidillas* occur in a moderately fast triple meter. In *La Florista*, Joaquín Turina portrays his impression of beautiful young girls selling flowers in the busy market place.

Pavane pour une Infante défunte. This 1899 elegy for piano was commissioned by Princess Edmond de Polignace. When Ravel was asked what he meant by the title, he replied: "I let myself be led into writing that title because of the pleasure I got from the assonance of the words." The *Pavane*, premièred by Ricardo Vives at a Société Nationale recital on 5 April 1902, contributed to the establishment of Ravel's reputation; yet the striking popularity of the *Pavane* surprised its composer. In the course of a concert review in 1912, Ravel wrote,

I no longer see its good points from such a distance. But, alas, I perceive its faults very clearly: the glaring influence of Chabrier and the rather poverty-stricken form! The remarkable interpretation of this incomplete and unoriginal work contributed, I think, to its success.

Despite Ravel's critique, the *Pavane*, a 5-part rondo, is an early declamation of his harmonic and pianistic style. Ravel orchestrated his slow, stately dance in 1910, and, in its new garb, the *Pavane pour une Infante défunte* became even more popular than in its original form for piano.

Anitra's Dance from Peer Gynt. Henrik Ibsen's "dramatic poem" based on the Peer Gynt legends was published in 1867. In January 1874 Ibsen commissioned Grieg to write "a few fragments" of incidental music for the stage version of *Peer Gynt*. The "few fragments" number about twenty and some of them have been arranged into two different *Peer Gynt Suites*, op. 46 (1888) and op. 55 (1891). "Anitra's Dance," a *Tempo di mazurka*, occurs as the third movement in op. 46 and in act IV of the play; it is performed for Peer by the daughter of a Bedouin chief during his adventures in Morocco.

Morning Dance from *Romeo and Juliet*. *Romeo and Juliet*, one of Prokofiev's greatest successes, was composed in 1935 for the Bolshoi Theatre, but was rejected for performance. Convinced of its musical merit, Prokofiev made two symphonic suites, op. 64-bis and op. 64-ter, in 1936. The ballet, finally staged in Moscow in 1940, is one of the few in dance history in which the ballet's music was heard in concert before it was staged. In 1946 Prokofiev made a third suite (op. 101) from the ballet, which was premièred in Moscow on 8 March 1946. The music of "Morning Dance," the second movement of op. 101, vividly describes the scene of Verona's bustling marketplace at dawn.

Hungarian Dance No. 5. Between 1853 and 1869, Johannes Brahms wrote four sets of twenty-one dances for piano, four-hands; the first two sets of duets were published in 1869 and the last two appeared in 1880. Brahms was introduced to Hungarian folk music in 1852 when he was touring with the Hungarian violinist, Eduard Reményi. No. 5 in f# minor, one of the most popular, is based on the melody *Bartfai-Emlék* attributed to Kéler-Béla. Brahms, who has preserved the characteristic melody, harmony and rhythm of the song, wrote about his dances, "I offer them as genuine Gypsy children which I did not beget, but merely brought up with bread and milk."

Slavonic Dance No. 8. Immediately after Brahms had suggested to Simrock that he should publish Dvořák's *Moravian Duets*, the Berlin publisher asked Dvořák to write a set of Slavonic Dances that would be similar in style to Brahms' *Hungarian Dances*. Dvořák wrote his first set of dances for piano duet (op. 46) between 18 March and 7 May 1878. Louis Ehlert, the music critic for *Die Neue Musikzeitung* in Berlin, established Dvořák's reputation in Germany when he wrote,

Here at last is a hundred percent talent and, what is more, a completely natural talent. I consider the *Slavonic Dances* to be a work which will make its triumphant way through the world in the same way as Brahms' *Hungarian Dances*. There is no question here of some kind of imitation; his dances are not in the least Brahmsian. Divine Providence flows through this music and that is why it is altogether popular. Not a trace of artificiality or constraint. . . . Whoever finds a jewel on the public highway is under obligation to report his find. I beg the reader to look upon these lines from that point of view

This dance, the last one of the first set, is "a splendid example of a *furiant*, and here the normal metrical pattern of this dance is presented at the outset." Dvořák arranged the dances for orchestra and Fritz Kreisler transcribed *Slavonic Dance No. 8* for violin and piano.

Wedding Dance and Troika from *Lt. Kijé*. In 1933 Prokofiev was commissioned to write the music for the film *Lieutenant Kijé*, which was a satire on militarism in Czarist Russia. The Lieutenant, a mythical character, is created by Czar Nicholas I when he misreads a military report. To avoid embarrassment (and possible execution), the courtiers invented a life history for the non-existing officer. The music, a combination of satire and sentiment, follows the "hero" from his birth to

his death on the battlefield. The "Wedding Dance" and the "Troika" (a ride on the horse-drawn sleigh) are the third and fourth sections of the orchestral suite, which was premièred on 20 February 1937 in Paris. In the film, the text for the "Troika" was, "A woman's heart is like an inn; / All those who are about, / Keep going in and coming out, / Night and day they roam about."

Buckaroo Holiday from *Rodeo*. In 1942 the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo wanted an American ballet on an American theme by an American composer. Written for Agnes de Mille, *Rodeo* was produced at the Metropolitan Opera House on 16 October 1942, and de Mille received twenty-two curtain calls. Irving Kolodin reported in the *Sun*, "The Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo awoke to find itself with a genuine American ballet today, and is it surprised!" According to Copland,

It seemed fitting to extract an orchestral suite from the ballet--*Four Dance Episodes from Rodeo* was published in 1943. . . . The first section, 'Buckaroo Holiday' is the most complex of the four. Included are variations on two folk tunes, 'If He Be a Buckaroo by His Trade' and 'Sis Joe.' I used a rhythmic device to achieve a lilting effect that, together with some unprepared key changes, make for a comic touch Extended pauses further exaggerate the syncopation. 'Sis Joe' also undergoes rhythmic transformation before both tunes blend in a canonic treatment for full orchestra.

Simple Gifts. Based on a poem by Hart Crane, Aaron Copland wrote *Appalachian Spring* as a ballet for Martha Graham on a commission from the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation. It was premièred by Miss Graham and her company on 30 October 1944 in the Library of Congress and won the Pulitzer Prize for music in 1944. The action of the ballet concerns "a pioneer celebration in spring around a newly-built farmhouse in the Pennsylvania hills in the early part of the last century. The bride-to-be and the young farmer-husband enact the emotions, joyful and apprehensive, their new domestic partnership invites." Scene VII presents the Shaker melody *The Gift to be Simple* (1840s) as the theme for a set of five different textural variations. Copland also made a setting of this melody for baritone and piano in his collection of *Old American Songs*, Vol. 1. The Empire Brass version combines the vocal setting with some of the variations from *Appalachian Spring*.

Street Song (1988). "The founding members of the Empire Brass Quintet are some of my earliest musical friends. Our meeting dates back to student days at Tanglewood when we discovered that we had knowledge and reverence for good notes, good tunes and good licks whether from organum, gamelan, serialism or latter-day be-bop.

"These guys were persistent. Over the years I have casually played for them portions of some of the musical journal I keep for myself and my friends. They've always said, 'So write a piece for us.' In a weak moment on a vacation in Laguna, California, they finally got to me. So, it is Rolf's refusal to take 'no' for an answer, and Sam's incredible patience in realizing the parts that my short score (and making corrections via telephone calls

from never less than 300 miles away) that are responsible for this work's existence.

"*Street Song* is a simple, nostalgic, street corner sort of piece. It is the riffs of five guys from a neighborhood somewhere midway between Bali and Bulgaria. It has no special effects, it has only the notes which are the souvenirs of real places and real people" (Michael Tilson Thomas).

Summertime from *Porgy and Bess*. Gershwin's opera *Porgy and Bess*, based on Dubose Heywood's novel *Porgy* about life among black inhabitants of "Catfish Row" in a ghetto in Charlestown, South Carolina, was composed in eleven months. The opera develops the story of a crippled beggar, Porgy, and his love for Bess. Although the score contains some of Gershwin's most memorable music, the music critics panned it when it opened in New York City on 10 October 1935 because it was a music drama stripped of every artificiality of the operatic convention. There were no stilted recitatives; . . . no chorus that came and departed when the performance needed a change of pace; no music composed to sweep audiences off their feet into an emotional never-never-land.

Gershwin believed he had created a work of lasting value and vindication came with the revival by the Houston Opera in 1976.

America from *West Side Story*. As originally conceived by choreographer Jerome Robbins, *West Side Story* was to have been a musical version of *Romeo and Juliet* set on the lower East Side of New York City, but the headlines in 1955 made the religious issue extraneous--juvenile delinquency was the problem. *West Side Story* opened on 26 September 1957 with music that powerfully underscored the drama. As Brooks Atkinson, drama critic of *The New York Times*, wrote,

Mr. Bernstein's third city score . . . was *sui generis*, a harsh ballad of the city, taut, nervous and flaring, the melodies chocked apprehensively, the rhythms wild, swift and deadly.

The vernacularly inspired rhythmic dash and syncopated swagger in this tune reveal Bernstein as a composer of undeniable gift and popular appeal.

The Ellington Suite. For decades "Duke" Ellington was one of the leading figures in big-band jazz. Ellington, who taught himself harmony at the piano, wrote his first composition, "Soda Fountain Rag," ". . . just before I went to high school." Ellington became a leading figure in jazz when he was engaged at the Cotton Club (1927-31). His composition "Mood Indigo" (1930) made him world renowned. Ellington, who played at Carnegie Hall annually in 1943-48, was the first black composer to write a sound track, *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959), for Hollywood, and he was one of first to concern himself with jazz compositions that had a definite form, texture and style. The suite heard this evening contains three tunes Ellington wrote during the 30s and 40s: "Caravan" (1937), "Sophisticated Lady" (1932), and "Take the 'A' Train" (written in 1941 in collaboration with Billy Strayhorn).

EMPIRE BRASS

The Empire Brass enjoys an international reputation as North America's finest brass quintet, renowned for its virtuosity, charisma, and the unparalleled quality and diversity of its repertoire. Winner of the Naumburg Chamber Music Award, the quintet performs over 100 concerts a year in such cities as New York, Boston, Chicago, Washington, D.C., London, Paris, Oslo and Tokyo. The Empire Brass has introduced an even larger audience worldwide to the excitement of brass music through its radio and televised appearances and its best-selling recordings on Telarc, Angel/EMI and CBS/Sony.

The Empire Brass tours annually in Europe, South America, and the Far East and has recently performed to sell-out crowds in the Soviet Union, where its concert was broadcast on Soviet television. Orchestras with which the Empire Brass has performed include the Chicago Symphony, Boston Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony, Detroit Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, and Minnesota Orchestra. A popular attraction at summer music festivals, the Empire Brass has visited Ravinia, Caramoor, Saratoga, Chautauqua, and Tanglewood, where it continues to lead the Empire Brass Seminar at the Boston University Tanglewood Institute.

Since 1976 the Empire Brass has recorded over 20 albums. Now under exclusive contract with Telarc records, the group's most recent releases include *Class Brass* (Telarc), *Music for Organ, Brass and Percussion* (Telarc), *Empire Brass [plays] Bernstein, Gershwin [and] Tilson Thomas* (Telarc), *Music of Gabrieli* (Telarc), *Joy to the World* (Angel/EMI), *Fireworks* (Angel/EMI), and *A Bach Festival* (Angel/EMI). *Empire Brass in Japan*, a collection of highlights of a three week tour of Japan, is available on Sony video and CBS/Sony compact disc.

The Quintet is a regular guest on public radio with repeat performances on the nationally syndicated programs *St. Paul Sunday Morning* and *Good Evening*, among many others. On television, the Empire Brass appearances have ranged from *Good Morning, America* to *Mr. Roger's Neighborhood*.

Dedicated to expanding the brass quintet repertoire, the Empire Brass has commissioned works from such leading composers as Leonard Bernstein, Michael Tilson Thomas, Sir Peter Maxwell Davis, and Michael Torke. In 1991 the Empire Brass premieres a commissioned work by Joan Tower with the New York Philharmonic on the occasion of the Carnegie Hall centennial. In addition to commissioning new music, the Empire Brass also researches and performs rare musical manuscripts, such as its recording of unpublished works of Gabrieli.

The original members of the Empire Brass first met as students at Tanglewood, where they were introduced to each other by Michael Tilson Thomas. Two years later Leonard Bernstein chose three of them to play in

the world première of his *Mass* written for the opening of the Kennedy Center. Since then, the Empire Brass has given a command performance for Queen Elizabeth II, performed at a Presidential Inaugural concert, participated in the opening concerts of the newly-renovated Carnegie Hall, and been the recipient of the Harvard Music Association Award.

This season marks the fifteenth consecutive year that the Empire Brass has been Faculty Quintet in Residence at Boston University. In addition to offering an annual concert series in Boston, the quintet leads the Empire Brass Symposium at Boston University's Tanglewood Institute, where it frequently performs. The quintet also leads an annual series of college clinics sponsored by the Selmer Company, maker of all of the Empire Brass' instruments.

ROLF SMEDVIG, Trumpet. A founding member of the Empire Brass, Rolf Smedvig has performed as principal trumpet of the Boston Symphony Chamber Players. Born in Seattle, he made his debut with the Seattle Symphony before traveling east to attend Boston University. After performing at Tanglewood, Mr. Smedvig was engaged by Leonard Bernstein to perform as soloist for the world première of his *Mass* at the opening of the Kennedy Center.

Mr. Smedvig has performed with the National Symphony and NHK Orchestra, and appears in 1991 with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra on its American tour. With the Cambridge Chamber Orchestra, he recorded two albums on which he is featured as conductor and soloist. His compact disc of trumpet concerti with The Scottish Chamber Orchestra (Telarc), was released in 1990, with a second album scheduled for release in 1991. He currently serves on the faculties of Boston University and the Boston University Tanglewood Institute.

JEFFREY CURNOW, Trumpet. A native of Easton, Pennsylvania, Jeffrey Curnow studied applied trumpet at Temple University with Seymour Rosenfeld. His extensive chamber music experience includes membership in the New York Trumpet Ensemble, Eastern Brass Quintet, and Wichita Brass Quintet. A former member of the Wichita Symphony and New Haven Symphony, Mr. Curnow served on the teaching staff at Wichita University.

ERIC RUSKE, French Horn. Winner of the 1986 Young Concert Artists International Auditions, Eric Ruske has performed with the Cleveland Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Orchestre National de Toulouse in France, and has appeared in recital at the 92nd Street Y and the Kennedy Center.

A former member of the Cleveland Orchestra, Mr. Ruske is the first prize winner of the 1987 American Horn Competition and the 1988 Concours International d'Interpretation Musicale in Reims, France.

Mr. Ruske is in residence at the Cleveland Institute of Music.

SCOTT A. HARTMAN, Trombone. Scott A. Hartman has played with such noted orchestras as the Rochester Philharmonic, the Phoenix Symphony and the Eastman Philharmonic. He has performed at the Heidelberg Opera Festival in Germany, the Chautauqua Festival, and the Spoleto Festival in Spoleto, Italy and Charleston, South Carolina. A native New Yorker, he earned his Bachelor's and Master's Degrees at the Eastman School of Music. Mr. Hartman is on the faculties of Boston University and the Boston University Tanglewood Institute.

J. SAMUEL PILAFIAN, Tuba. In 1967, Samuel Pilafian won the Concerto Competition at the National Music Camp at Interlochen, Michigan, becoming only the second tuba soloist in 50 years ever to do so. He was awarded fellowships from Dartmouth College in 1969, and from the Tanglewood Music Center in 1970 and 1971.

Mr. Pilafian has performed and recorded with the Boston Symphony, the New York Philharmonic, the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the American Ballet Theatre Orchestra, composer Philip Glass, the Duke Ellington Orchestra, and Pink Floyd. He has also recorded for every major label and television network in the United States. A founding member of the Empire Brass, Mr. Pilafian was heard in performance at Tanglewood by Leonard Bernstein, who engaged him as soloist for the world premiere of *Mass* at the opening of the Kennedy Center. Mr. Pilafian serves on the faculties of Boston University and the Boston University Tanglewood Institute.

CONCERT CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

- | | | |
|----|------|---|
| 8 | 8:15 | Faculty Recital, Robert Schmidt, Clarinet |
| 16 | 3:00 | Faculty Recital, David Parks, Tenor |
| 16 | 8:15 | Faculty Recital, Georgetta Maiolo, Flute |
| 24 | 8:15 | Faculty Recital, Wendy Mehne, Flute |
| 27 | 8:15 | Faculty Recital, Chamber Music |

OCTOBER

- | | | |
|----|------|---|
| 2 | 8:15 | Wind Ensemble, Rodney K. Winther, Conductor |
| 3 | 8:15 | Percussion Ensemble, Gordon Stout, Conductor |
| 4 | 8:15 | Faculty Recital, Lee Goodhew, Bassoon |
| 7 | 3:00 | Choral Collage |
| 11 | 8:15 | Ithaca College Concerts 1990-91*
Sergio and Odair Assad, Duo-Guitarists |
| 12 | 8:15 | Orchestra and String Orchestra
Pamela Gearhart, Conductor |
| 14 | 3:00 | Concert Band, Mark Fonder, Conductor
Wind Ensemble, Rodney K. Winther, Conductor |
| 15 | 8:15 | Faculty Chamber Music Series
Ithaca Brass |
| 16 | 8:15 | Vocal Jazz Ensemble, David Riley, Conductor
Symphonic Band, Henry G. Neubert, Jr., Conductor |

There are many additional concerts presented by talented students which also should be of great interest. Media announcements and the Concert Line (274-3356) will provide additional information.

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ITHACA COLLEGE CONCERTS 1990-91*

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|-------------------|---|
| September 7, 1990 | Empire Brass |
| October 11, 1990 | Sergio and Odair Assad
Duo-Guitarists |
| February 22, 1991 | Verdehr Trio
Violin, Clarinet, and Piano |
| March 21, 1991 | King's Singers |

* admission charge