

# MARIE RADER SERIES



## PHILLY POPS

### *Blockbusters in the 'Burbs*

MARCH 14, 2026

3:00 PM | Pfleeger Concert Hall



# Philly Pops

## *Blockbusters in the 'Burbs*

### Chris Dragon, conductor

*Beauty and the Beast* Overture . . . . . Alan Menken,  
orch. Michael Kosarin

Highlights from *Wicked*. . . . . Stephen Schwartz, arr. Ted Ricketts

Theme Song from *Peter Gunn* . . . . . Henry Mancini, arr. Calvin Custer

Escapades from *Catch Me If You Can* . . . . . John Williams

featuring Ron Kerber, saxophonist

007: Through The Years. . . . . arr. Stephen Bulla

*Raider's March* . . . . . John Williams

Theme from *Schindler's List* . . . . . John Williams

featuring Michael Ludwig, violin

Selections from *Encanto* . . . . . Lin-Manuel Miranda,  
arr. Sean O'Loughlin

*The Incredibles*. . . . . Michael Giacchino, arr. Gordon Goodwin

featuring Matt Gallagher, trumpet

Music from *Up* . . . . . Michael Giacchino

*The Magnificent Seven* . . . . . Elmer Bernstein

*The Imperial March* (Darth Vader's Theme). . . . . John Williams

Suite from *Rocky*. . . . . Bill Conti, arr. Vince Leonard

## Chris Dragon | Music Director



Chris Dragon is an Australian conductor and the Music Director of Greensboro Symphony Orchestra, newly appointed Music Director of the Philly Pops and is the Resident Conductor of the Colorado Symphony. He joined the Colorado Symphony in the 2015/2016 Season as Associate Conductor - a position he held for four years. For three years prior, Dragon held the inaugural position of Assistant Conductor with the West Australian

Symphony Orchestra, which gave him the opportunity to work closely with Principal Conductor Asher Fisch.

Dragon has a versatile portfolio ranging from live-to-picture performances including *Nightmare Before Christmas*, *Toy Story* and *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi*, a wide variety of collaborations with artists such as the Wu-Tang Clan, Cynthia Erivo and Joshua Bell, to standard and contemporary orchestral repertoire such as Danny Elfman's *Percussion Concerto*; all areas of which he has become highly sought after. Christopher has become known for his charisma, high energy and affinity for a good costume, consistently delivering unforgettable performances that has made him an audience favourite. Recent highlights include his sold-out symphony tour with Gregory Alan Isakov, which included debuts with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Nashville Symphony, a new orchestral collaboration with Nathaniel Rateliff and his successful German debut with the WDR Funkhausorchester.

In Australia, he has guest conducted the Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and West Australian Symphony Orchestras. His 2015 debut performance at the Sydney Opera House with John Pyke and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra was released on album by ABC Music and won an ARIA the following year. He has also conducted at numerous festivals including the Breckenridge and Bangalow Music Festivals, with both resulting in immediate re-invitations. At the beginning of 2016 Dragon conducted Wynton Marsalis' Swing Symphony as part of the Perth International Art Festival alongside Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra.

## Peter Nero | Music Director Emeritus



Peter Nero's remarkable career spanned nearly six decades, marked by his profound influence as a pianist, conductor, and recording artist. He recorded over 70 albums, including celebrated performances of Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" and "Piano Concerto in F" with Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops. In 1961, Nero won a Grammy Award for "Best New Artist of the Year," establishing him as a leading figure in American music. Throughout his career, he

seamlessly blended classical, jazz, Broadway, and swing into performances that thrilled audiences worldwide. As the founding Music Director of Peter Nero and the Philly POPS, Nero brought a unique style of musical interpretation and humor to the stage, solidifying the orchestra's reputation as one of the premier pops ensembles.

His contributions to Philadelphia's cultural landscape earned him numerous accolades, including lifetime achievement awards from the American Federation of Musicians and the Mario Lanza Award for outstanding musical achievement. In 2013, the Philadelphia City Council honored him for his exceptional contributions to the arts in the city. Among his many honors, Nero received six honorary doctorates, the Pennsylvania Distinguished Arts Award, and a Lincoln Award from the Union League of Philadelphia. He was a staunch advocate for music education and arts funding, championing causes like school music programs and autism research. A Steinway artist for over 60 years, Nero shared the stage with icons such as Herbie Hancock and Michel Legrand at Carnegie Hall, celebrating the 150th anniversary of Steinway pianos.

Peter Nero lived in the Philadelphia area and cherished time with his two children, Beverly and Jedd, and his three grandchildren. His legacy endures through his recordings, performances, and lasting impact on the world of music

# Standout Musicians

## Matt Gallagher | Trumpeter

Matt Gallagher is enjoying a career as one of the most sought after lead trumpet players in Philadelphia, PA and the east coast. Gallagher earned his undergraduate degree in Music Education from West Chester University in 1997 and earned a Master of Music degree in Jazz Studies from the University of the Arts in 2001. Matt is the prototypical lead trumpet player with extensive credits with professional bands and orchestras up and down the east coast. He has performed with several Broadway show productions and artists including The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Boston Symphony, The Baltimore Symphony, Peter Nero and the Philly Pops, Diana Krall, Hugh Jackman, Michael Bubl , Jamie Cullum, Aretha Franklin, Barry Manilow, Randy Brecker, The Temptations, The Four Tops, Lou Rawls, Bernadette Peters, The O'Jays, The Stylistics, Harold Melvin's Blue Notes, Teddy Pendergrass, and many others. Matt is currently the principal trumpet player for the reborn Philly Pops and has been a featured lead trumpet player with The Philadelphia Orchestra. In addition, Matt is a studio lead trumpet player at NFL Films in Mt. Laurel, NJ, and has recorded for Celine Dion, Jennifer Lopez, R. Kelly, Jennifer Hudson, and LL Cool J. Matt is equally committed to both performing and teaching. Matt was the chair of the trumpet department, "Z" Big Band director, and music education professor at The University of the Arts in Philadelphia, PA.

## Ron Kerber | Saxophonist

As a Philadelphia based saxophonist, woodwind specialist, and arranger, Ron Kerber's career has crossed genres and styles. Ron was formerly saxophonist, composer and producer for recording artists "Pieces of a Dream". He has also recorded with Melody Gardot, Patti LaBelle, Vanessa Williams, Bruno Mars, Lou Rawls, Kool & The Gang, and Teddy Pendergrass among others. He has toured with Burt Bacharach, Rod Stewart and Diana Ross, and has performed with Elton John, Joni Mitchell, Aretha Franklin, Andrea Bocelli, Herbie Hancock, Hugh Jackman, Ben Folds, Natalie Cole, Elvis Costello, Tony Bennett, Lang Lang, Manhattan Transfer, Rufus Wainright, Randy Brecker, Michael Buble, Idina Menzel, Kristen Chenoweth, Leslie Odom Jr., Jennifer Hudson, Jane Monheit, New York Voices, Kurt Elling, The Temptations and Johnny Mathis among others. Ron is a member of The

No Name Pops, after performing with Peter Nero and the Philly POPS for twenty-five years. He has performed with The Philadelphia Orchestra, Opera Philadelphia, The Philadelphia Ballet Orchestra, The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, The Delaware Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra 2001, The Royal Ballet, The Russian National Orchestra, and is a member of the Philadelphia saxophone quartet. Ron was a faculty member for the University of the Arts' School of Music for 35 years, having also served as Associate Dean of Performing Arts. He is a founding board member of the No Name Pops. Ron has served on the Board of Trustees of The National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, and as President of the Philadelphia Chapter. He continues to be active in the Grammy process serving on several committees for the Academy.

## **Michael Ludwig | Concertmaster**

Michael Ludwig's multi-faceted musical career has taken him across four continents, appearing as solo violinist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, The Philadelphia Orchestra, Boston Pops, KBS Symphony in Seoul, Korea, Beijing Symphony, and Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra amongst others, joining illustrious conductors such as Sir Georg Solti and John Williams. Michael has recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Buffalo Philharmonic, Virginia Symphony, and Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra. As a chamber musician, Michael has shared the stage with numerous acclaimed artists, such as Christoph Eschenbach, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Yefim Bronfman, Sarah Chang, and Jean-Yves Thibaudet and he has appeared at numerous music festivals, including the Prague Spring Music Festival and the New Hampshire Music Festival. As an orchestral musician, Michael served as Associate Concertmaster of The Philadelphia Orchestra and Concertmaster of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. Michael's discography includes recordings of the Beethoven Violin Concerto, Bruch Scottish Fantasy, and Dvorak Romance with the Virginia Symphony, as well as the Wieniawski Concerto No. 2, Corigliano Red Violin Concerto, and Sibelius Concerto with the Buffalo Philharmonic. Ludwig's recording of the Corigliano Red Violin Concerto with the Buffalo Philharmonic is "hot, sharp, and close to the edge," writes critic Norman Lebrecht. His recording of the rarely performed Dohnanyi Violin Concertos with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra has received extraordinary reviews worldwide, and has revived interest in these neglected romantic works. Ludwig's discography has drawn critical acclaim from both sides of the Atlantic.

Fanfare magazine writes: "His phrasing is so sensitive—it could serve as an object lesson to every budding violinist." And BBC Music Magazine praises his "persuasive playing, silky tone, sensitivity to colour and flair for golden-age' style." Michael Ludwig has been featured numerous times on *Performance Today*, a program that reaches approximately 1.2 million listeners on 230 radio stations nationwide. He has been featured on Bulgarian National Radio, Balkan Bulgarian Television, and the Korean Broadcasting System. As a teacher, Michael has served as Artist-in-Residence Professor of Violin at the John J. Cali School of Music at Montclair State University and Adjunct Professor of Music (Violin) at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University. Michael studied violin with his father, Irving Ludwig, who was a violinist in The Philadelphia Orchestra and Music Director of the Lansdowne Symphony Orchestra. Michael also studied with the legendary pedagogues Josef Gingold and Raphael Bronstein. An accomplished conductor, Michael has served as Music Director of the Roxborough Orchestra in Philadelphia since 2015. Michael is also the Director and Conductor of Prysm Strings New Jersey, one of the newest programs of the Philadelphia Youth Orchestra Music Institute. His guest conducting appearances include performances with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Bismarck-Mandan Symphony Orchestra, Delaware County Symphony, and Lansdowne Symphony Orchestra. He also regularly appears as a guest conductor of the Orchestra Society of Philadelphia. Devoted to education, Ludwig has conducted the Skidmore College Orchestra, the All Catholic High School Orchestra of Philadelphia, and the Luzerne Music Center String Orchestra. He has conducted the South Jersey Honors Orchestra, as well as the New Jersey All State Intermediate Orchestra. Ludwig studied conducting privately with Gustav Meier, and participated at workshops in Bulgaria, Ukraine, New York City, and South Carolina with Gustav Meier, Larry Rachleff, Donald Schleicher, Donald Portnoy, and Maurice Peress. Michael and his wife Rachael Ludwig are the Founding Artistic Directors of the Stella Schaevitz Concert Series, based at the Katz JCC in Cherry Hill, NJ, and together maintain a private teaching studio in Cherry Hill, teaching violin and viola lessons in studio as well as online.

# Philly Pops Musician Roster

## Flute

Brendan Dooley, principal  
Ron Kerber, alto saxophone  
Kim Trolier, piccolo

## Oboe

David Schneider, principal  
Geoff Deemer  
Evan Ocheret, english horn

## Clarinet

Sean Bailey, principal  
Kaj Hansen, alto saxophone  
Mark Allen, bass clarinet,  
baritone saxophone

## Bassoon

Norman Spielberg, principal  
Colleen Hood

## Tenor Sax

Chris Farr, saxophone

## Horn

John David Smith, principal  
Dana Cullen  
Todd Williams  
Martina Adams

## Trumpet

Matt Gallagher, principal  
Bob Gravener  
George Rabbai  
Ed Jakuboski, assistant

## Piano/Keyboard

Jeff Smith

## Guitar

Dave Cullen

## Bass Guitar

Steve Beskrone

## Drum Set

Joe Nero

## Violin 1

Michael Ludwig, concertmaster  
Rachael Ludwig  
Robert Vieira  
Carlos Rubio  
Alexandra Cutler-Fetkewicz  
Gabriela Mandescu  
Rachel Segal  
Magee Capsouto  
Mary Loftus  
Christine Shieh Lucero

## Violin 2

Michelle Bishop  
Yu-Hui Tamae Lee  
Greg Teperman  
Kate Suk  
Diane Barnett  
Alberta Douglas  
Eliso Gegeshidze  
Vilme Joselin

**Trombone**

Paul Arbogast, principal  
Brian Pastor  
JJ Cooper

**Tuba**

Brian Brown

**Harp**

Andre Tarantiles

**Timpani**

Bill Wozniak

**Percussion**

Bill Kerrigan, principal  
Ralph Sorrentino  
Brenda Weckerly

**Viola**

Davis Barnett  
Marjorie Goldberg  
Scott Wagner  
Sarah Sutton  
Gerry Rice  
Nina Cottman

**Cello**

Uli Boeckheler  
Jonathan Fink  
Brooke Beazley  
George Atanasiu  
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Kevin Lucero

**Bass**

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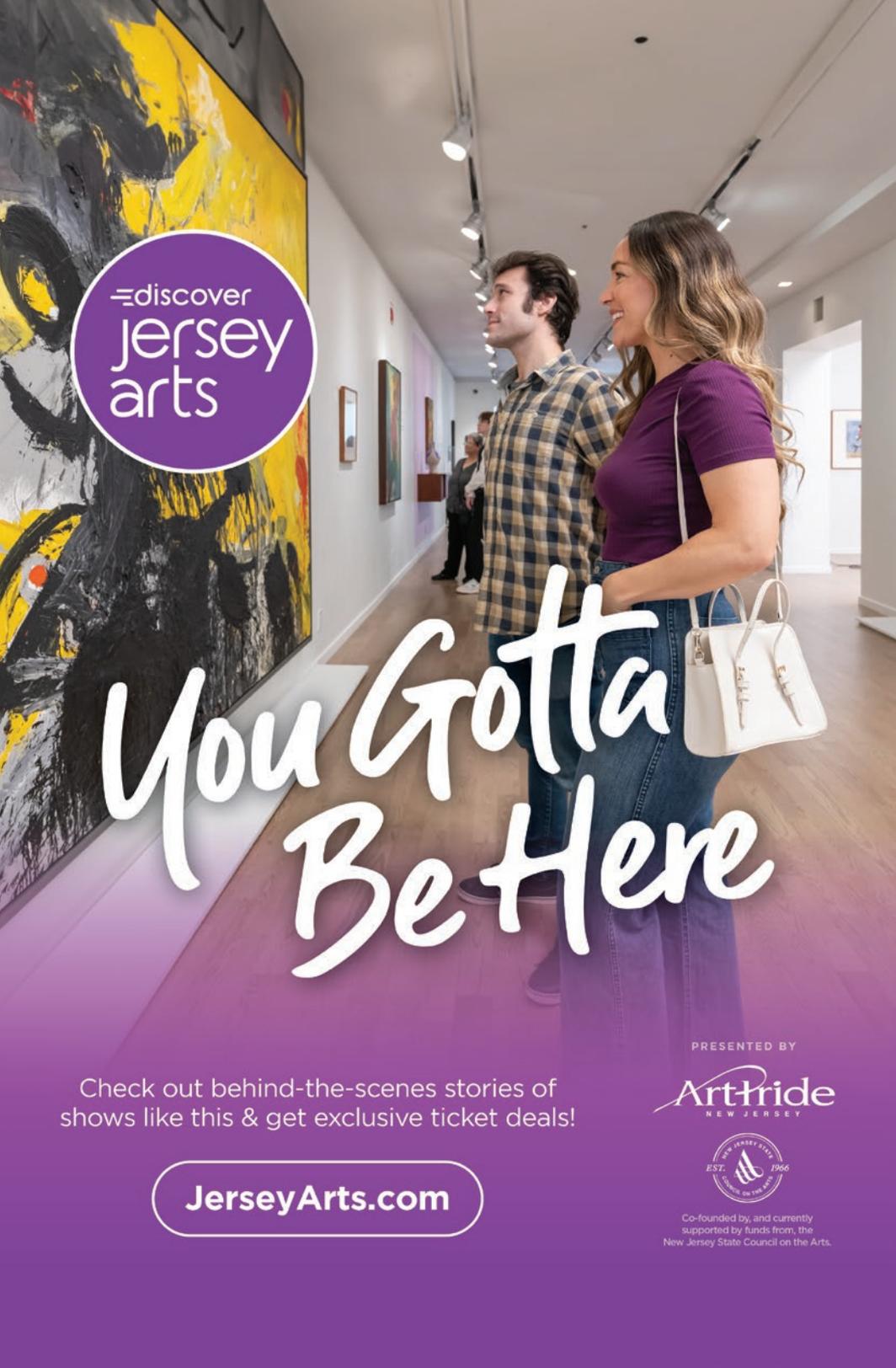
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