



Ravishing Rhapsodies

October 3, 2026 - 7:30pm

Program

Saturday, October 3, 2026 at 7:30pm
Mary W. Sommervold Hall, Washington Pavilion

South Dakota Symphony Orchestra
Delta David Gier, *conductor*
Gabriela Martinez, *piano*

John Stafford Smith
(1750 - 1836) Star Spangled Banner

Maurice Ravel
(1875 - 1937) Rapsodie Espagnole
I. Prélude à la nuit
II. Malagueña
III. Habanera
IV. Feria

Sergei Rachmaninoff
(1873 - 1943) Rhapsody on a Theme of *Paganini*,
Op. 43
Gabriela Martinez, piano

INTERMISSION

George Enescu
(1881 - 1955) Romanian Rhapsody No. 2 in D
Major, Op. 11

Xavier Beteta
(b. 1980) *La Danza de los Volcanoes:*
A Guatemalan Rhapsody
(The Dance of the Volcanoes)

I. View from the City
II. Guatemalan Son
III. The Descent of the Night
IV. The City Transfigured
V. Mysterious Dance
VI. Eruption

(world premiere)

Franz Liszt
(1811 - 1886) Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2



Ravishing Rhapsodies

October 3, 2026 - 7:30pm

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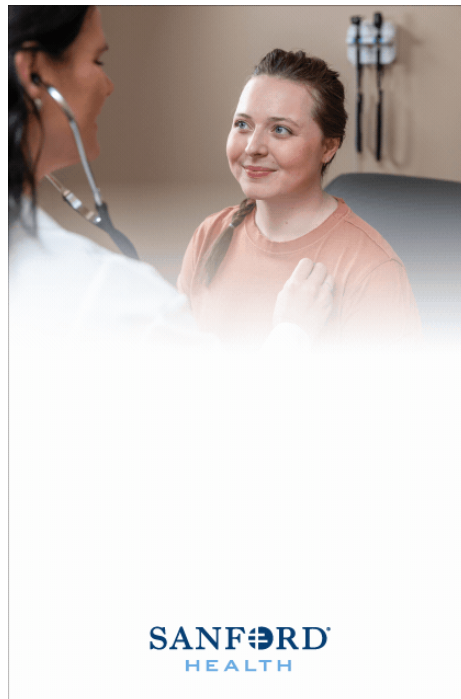


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Ravishing Rhapsodies

October 3, 2026 - 7:30pm





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October 3, 2026 - 7:30pm



Program Notes

Rapsodie Espagnole

Maurice Ravel

Written by Anna Vorhes

Born

March 7, 1875, Ciborne, Basses-Pyrénées

Died

December 28, 1973, Paris

Duration

16 minutes

Composed

1907 - 1908

World Premiere

The work was first performed in Paris on March 15, 1908 by the Orchestre des Concerts Colonne under Édouard Colonne, conductor.

Instrumentation

four flutes (two doubling piccolo), three oboes (one doubling English horn), two clarinets and bass clarinet, three bassoons and contra bassoon, four French horns, three trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, snare



Ravishing Rhapsodies

October 3, 2026 - 7:30pm

drum, triangle, tamonbourine, tamtam, xylophone, two harps, celeste, strings.

Something interesting to listen for

Ravel is a master of instrumentation, choosing just the right instruments to depict the picture he is creating. Listen to how he begins the work with the first movement using a repeated descending ostinato. Ostinato means stubborn in Italian, and in music it is a pattern that repeats often enough to become background rather than important melody. By changing instruments the character of the movement changes. The whole work is filled with the careful consideration of timbre to create the engrossing sense of a Spanish rhapsody. This is a good place to discuss what a rhapsody is in music. In the Merriam Webster Dictionary, there are several meanings. The fourth one is specifically musical: "a musical composition of irregular form having an improvisatory character". But the third definition speaks to the rhapsodies we hear in tonight's concert "effusively rapturous or extravagant discourse" or "a highly emotional utterance".

Program Notes

Maurice Ravel was very close to his mother, perhaps his strongest emotional connection through life. She was a Basque, from the region where France and Spain meet and where the composer himself was born. She had spent many of her young adult years in Madrid, and shared her love of Spanish music with her son. His father was Swiss and encouraged the young composer as well, with the Spanish influence pervading much of Ravel's music.

Ravel attended the Paris Conservatoire from the age of fourteen. One of the most prestigious competitions for young composers at the Conservatoire was the Prix de Rome which awarded four years of support in Rome and either Germany or Austria. Ravel was establishing himself as a composer with a public following. He tried for the Prix de Rome four times. The public watched intently as he was rejected. Admittedly if one follows the rules of traditional composition, especially formal counterpoint, Ravel made some obvious errors. The first lessons of counterpoint include avoiding parallel fifths (that is following C and G with D and A for instance), and Ravel used them for effect. But this was a n academic prize.

When Ravel was denied the prize four times the public interest turned the process into a scandal. Newspapers wrote articles about the competition. And the fact that all the other entrants were students of one teacher who also served as a judge became so scandalous that it led to resignations at the Conservatoire. Ravel's name became a household word with this scrutiny of the *Prix*.



Ravishing Rhapsodies

October 3, 2026 - 7:30pm

Soon after this public outcry, Ravel presented *Rhapsody espagnole*. He composed with the rhythm and atmosphere of three Spanish traditional dances-the malaguena, the habanera, and the feria-along with an introductory movement titled *Prelude a la nuit (Prelude of the Night)*. The reaction was like that to his compositions for the *Prix de Rome*. Some listeners loved it and others found it lacking in skill. Its enduring place in the symphonic repertoire demonstrates the work's innate worth.

The *Prelude a la nuit (Prelude of the Night)* begins with an ostinato descending four note figure that permeates the movement. In a demonstration of his awareness of the abilities of different instruments Ravel creates a sense of a night filled with both calm and the animals and night creatures one might see.

The second movement sounds like it is going to be a dance but doesn't stay with the steady rhythm that a true dance requires.

Indeed, the whole work feels like a walk in a Spanish village, starting with coming into the village at night. Each of the subsequent movements includes a bit of dance rhythm but without the feeling you should get up and join the dance. Instead you're observing from a distance, still taking in the village around you as well as the dance.

The rhythm of the second movement suggests a malaguena, a triple meter dance from Andalusia. In its fold music form there is a common harmonic pattern, which doesn't really intrigue Ravel. Snatches of melody suggest the dance without becoming a steady rhythm.

The third movement suggests a habanera, that dance made famous by Bizet in *Carmen*. This version is a mere suggestion, however. The harp and the percussion, especially create atmospheric moments while the strings offer the habanera rhythm in short bursts.

The final movement is a feria. In Seville this is an annual dance festival occurring about two weeks after Easter and lasting about a week. It includes parades, traditional costumes, and dance events. Flamenco highly influences the dance patterns. As you hear the sections in strong dance rhythm, imagine the feet of the flamenco dancers emphasizing the first beat of each bar. This movement is the most consistently dance-like of the work. It ends with an excellent sense of celebration, though the harmony is definitely Ravel's.

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43

Sergei Rachmaninoff



Ravishing Rhapsodies

October 3, 2026 - 7:30pm

Written by Anna Vorhes

Born

April 1, 1873, Semyonovo, Russia

Died

March 28, 1943, Beverly Hills, CA

Duration

24 minutes

Composed

July 3 - August 18, 1934

World Premiere

November 7 1934, at the Lyric Opera House in Baltimore, Maryland, with the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski with the composer at the piano.

Instrumentation

three flutes, one doubling piccolo, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba timpani, snare drum, triangle, cymbals, bass drum, glockenspiel, harp, strings

Something to listen for

This work comes from the last few years of Rachmaninoff's life, and his skills were at their peak. This set of variations was built on two themes, one from Paganini and the other from Gregorian Chant. It has a structure that recalls the construction methods of a concerto, with a fast section, then a slow section, and finally another fast section. Few people can count the twenty-four variations as the work is performed because they do not follow a pattern of similar length and ways of exploring sound that a classical era set of variations would. So, what do we listen for? The virtuosic piano skills required lead the list. The methods used to vary the sound throughout the orchestra are intriguing. One variation requires the strings to turn their bows upside down and play with the wood. And the way the *Dies irae* is woven into the mix, starting with the seventh variation, is definitely worth listening for. This chant is a favorite of many composers, often used to indicate the presence of something supernatural at the least and often evil.

As a twenty-first century listener, the eighteenth variation has the familiarity of having been borrowed for popular use in music, in film, and in other media which makes this entire work have a sense of familiarity.

Program Notes



Ravishing Rhapsodies

October 3, 2026 - 7:30pm

Rachmaninoff's life changed radically after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. He had been building a career as a world-famous pianist and composer, always holding his home base in Russia. His family estate was destroyed in the revolution, and he fled the country using a concert in Sweden as the mechanism to escape. His family followed quickly. The economic impact of losing his home base changed the composer's life, and he wrote very little from 1917 until the time the family built a new refuge in Switzerland in the early 1930s. Instead, Rachmaninoff undertook a grueling performance schedule as a conductor and piano soloist. Finally, after settling in his new estate, in 1934 he offers this set of variations, showing all the skills of his piano virtuosity.

For this work, Rachmaninoff used as inspiration a set of violin pieces written by Nicolo Paganini. Written from 1801-1807, **24 Caprices for violin had started the revolution in violin performance that increased the skill level of the usual violinist.** The *Caprices* intrigued a number of composers including Brahms and Liszt and others.

The music of the *Caprices* is captivating and progressive for a musician hoping to increase their skills. Probably the most intriguing part of this whole discussion was the connection to the Faust legend retold by Goethe during Paganini's lifetime.

The original German legend was about an alchemist who sold his soul to the devil to get the formula to turn lead to gold. With Paganini coming on the scene with his slender build, pale complexion, and incredible violin skills, rumors started that perhaps he had sold his soul to obtain his wondrous skills. The rumors were strong enough that the Catholic Church would not allow Paganini to be buried in a Catholic cemetery.

The rumor was extended to the skills of other players over the nineteenth century. Liszt was one of the other performers who was rumored to have made the same bargain.

By the time Rachmaninoff became popular, the rumors had gone out of fashion. There is perhaps a hint of the idea in the use of the *Dies irae* as a secondary melody in Rachmaninoff's work. It was no longer the titillating gossip it had been a century earlier.

Rachmaninoff begins the Rhapsody with the skeleton of the melody of the final *Caprice*, No. 24, that some listeners find analogous to the way Beethoven began the *Eroica*. The actual theme follows, and we are off. The first six variations are treatments of the original theme. At the end of the sixth variations there comes a more reverent treatment of the theme as there is a pause leading to the seventh variation. With the seventh variation, the *Dies irae* sneaks in to add to the conversation. Listeners have to be especially attentive to hear it. The next few variations are rather menacing, but that



Ravishing Rhapsodies

October 3, 2026 - 7:30pm

changes with the cadenza-like character of variation eleven. Variations twelve through eighteen Rachmaninoff called the "love variations" when he was working on a ballet project. The fifteenth variation shows a bit of jazz influence, acknowledging the style of Art Tatum. The eighteenth variation is the most well known due to its use in various contexts outside the concert hall. You may have a bit of a question about how this relates to the other presentation of the melody since it sounds so different. Rachmaninoff transposes the variation to a higher key, and then inverts the whole theme. For musicians this means that the melody is upside down. When it originally went down, now it goes up, and when it went up now it goes down. The last six variations become increasingly more virtuosic for the pianist. The ending is a bit surprising. Pianist Jon Kimura Parker says Rachmaninoff ends with a "wink and a question mark".

Soon after the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* premiered, choreographer Mikhail Fokine approached Rachmaninoff about using the work to create a new ballet they would call Paganini. The premise was about Paganini's rumored deal with the devil. *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* has remained a favorite of virtuoso pianists and their audiences since it was written.

Romanian Rhapsody No. 2 in D Major, Op. 11

George Enescu

Written by Anna Vorhes

Born

August 19, 1881, Liveni (now renamed Enescu), Russia

Died

May 4, 1955, Paris, France

Duration

11 minutes

Composed

1901

World Premiere

The two Romanian Rhapsodies that form Opus 11 were premiered together in Bucharest on February 23, 1903, with the composer conducting.

Instrumentation

three flutes, one doubling piccolo, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, triangle, snare drum, castanets, tambourine, cymbals, bass drum, two harps, strings



Ravishing Rhapsodies

October 3, 2026 - 7:30pm

Something interesting to listen for

Enescu had an amazing sense of instrumentation along with his other myriad of talents. He had mastered both the violin and the piano at a very young age. When you listen to this Rhapsody you will hear his love for the emotion a large string section can evoke. He uses the ability to create long phrases without pause to open this work. This lovely string melody is supported by the rest of the orchestra through the opening section. About four minutes into the work the strings subside, and the winds create an exotic conversation. There are abundant solo passages highlighting the winds and allowing the brass the fanfares they excel at producing. Listen especially at the end of the work. We are suddenly in a completely new mood with a violin solo that evokes a folk dance. One of the best descriptions of this music, albeit a little condescending toward listeners, was written for the Cincinnati Post in 1949 by Eleanor Bell reviewing Enescu's guest conducting appearance where he led his own Suite No. 2 in C-major and Second Romanian Rhapsody:

"Both of these works were ingeniously orchestrated so that there was never any doubt as to the intended mood, and the musical ideals were skillfully projected through the language by one who is by all standards more fluent than most. Aside from their remarkable craftsmanship, however, both the Rhapsody and the Suite had flashes of humor and contrasting moments of pathos that were meant to be enjoyed by the least informed layman."

Program Notes

George Enescu was an eighteenth-century prodigy, building his career as a student in Vienna at the age of 7. He continued his studies at the Paris Conservatoire, and between the two schools, his teachers and co-students are a who's who of the musical greats of the time. The result produced a composer of stunning natural abilities honed to incredible skills. During his lifetime he was an esteemed composer, conductor and performer, touring the world including much time in the United States. He never lost his ties with his homeland Romania, spending summers there and enjoying the patronage of the royal family. He founded a prize for Romanian composers in 1912. He also founded a symphony orchestra and an opera company in his homeland. During World War II he remained in Romania and turned his goals to recording. He finally left his homeland in 1949 and lived in exile the remainder of his life. Despite his failing health he continued conducting and performing. In the *Grove Music Online* entry about Enescu, written by Noel Malcolm and revised by Valentina Sandu-Dediu, Enescu's relationship with the music he performed by



Ravishing Rhapsodies

October 3, 2026 - 7:30pm

other composers and his own works is described:

"His humility towards the music of other composers was matched by modesty about his own works, and his career as a composer suffered from his dignified but damaging reluctance to engage in any form of self-promotion."

Enescu's Rhapsodies were popular with the public from the time they were premiered. At the time the composer led the premier, he played the second Rhapsody first, followed by the more energetic Rhapsody No. 1. He always presented them in this order if they were both performed at the same event.

True to the nature of rhapsodies, these works give a sense of improvisation. Program annotator for the Boston Symphony Orchestra Jean-Pascal Vachon explains the term rhapsody:

"The word 'rhapsody' comes from the Greek rhapsodos, composed of the words 'rhapstein' (to sew, to mend) and 'odein' (to sing). Thus, a 'rhapsodie' was one who 'sewed together' various songs and the most diverse epic narratives, and 'patched together' disparate things. To put it casually, a rhapsody is thus a musical patchwork."

The Romanian songs stitched into this work begin with a popular ballad *Pe o stînc? neagr?, într-run vechi castel* (On a dark rock, in an old castle). Other folk songs that loan their melodies to this work include *V?leu, lupu m? m?nînc?l Aiee*, ("Oh my, the wolf is eating me here) and *Sîrba lui Pompieru* (Sîrba of the Firemen). Woven between Enescu's own music, these themes add to the sense of Romanian origin. The rhythms and harmonies (neither clearly major or minor at times) make for a work that expresses a beloved culture offered in its best light by a young composer at the early stages of his career.

La Danza de los Volcanes: A Guatemalan Rhapsody

Xavier Beteta

Written by composer, Xavier Beteta

La Danza de los Volcanes (The Dance of the Volcanoes) was commissioned by the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra. Written as a rhapsody, the work brings together contrasting themes, rhythms, and textures that converge to create a piece filled with fantasy and an improvisatory spirit.

The inspiration for this work comes from the landscapes of Guatemala, particularly its magnificent volcanoes. Guatemala is home to approximately 35 volcanoes, and in many parts of the country, a volcano is almost always within sight-some of them still active. Growing up, I would see Volcan de Pacaya



Ravishing Rhapsodies

October 3, 2026 - 7:30pm

every morning as my father drove me to school. That image has remained with me throughout the years and became the starting point for this orchestral work.

The piece can be understood as a musical canvas composed of six interconnected scenes:

1. View of the Volcanoes from the City
2. Guatemalan Son
3. The Descent of Night
4. The City Transfigures
5. Mysterious Dance
6. Eruption

The opening section, "View of the Volcanoes from the City," has a rhythmic, almost mechanical character, portraying the everyday movement of a busy city. It also evokes my childhood memory of gazing at the volcanoes as my father drove me to school. The marimba-the national instrument of Guatemala-introduces an ostinato that creates a sense of constant motion.

Little by little, a son, a traditional Guatemalan rhythm in 6/8, begins to emerge as a second section. Here, contrapuntal gestures intertwine with echoes of Spanish-influenced scales. I imagine the "son" as an intrinsic part of the natural landscape, as though the volcanoes themselves could feel and embody its rhythm.

The third section, "The Descent of Night," portrays night gradually settling over the volcanoes. The music takes on an ethereal and mysterious quality, with gestures inspired by the sounds and atmosphere of the nocturnal landscape.

The fourth section, "The City Transfigured," functions as a kind of recapitulation of the opening material. The city returns, but it has been altered. Themes that were only hinted at in the beginning now emerge more fully and clearly. From here, the music leads into "Mysterious Dance," a slower and more enigmatic section.

Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2

Franz Liszt

Written by Anna Vorhes

Born

October 22, 1811, Raiding (then Doborján)

Died

July 31, 1889, Bayreuth



Ravishing Rhapsodies

October 3, 2026 - 7:30pm

Duration

11 minutes

Composed

The first fifteen of the Hungarian Rhapsodies were composed for piano between 1851-1853. This rhapsody, *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2*, was orchestrated by Franz Doppler with Liszt's direction and approval, soon after it was written. In the 1880s, Liszt added four more rhapsodies to his collection making a total of nineteen Hungarian Rhapsodies.

Instrumentation

three flutes (one doubling piccolo, two oboes, three clarinets (one a d clarinet), two bassoons, four French horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, cymbal, triangle, strings.

Something to listen for:

This composition is based on a form found in Magyar and Roma (Gypsy) music that is basic to the music widely considered Hungarian. *Verbunkos* is a form that contrasts a slower section, called *lassú* followed by an energetic section, *friss*. (These terms are often used to describe sections of another Hungarian composition known as *czardas*). Liszt often uses accelerando passages to introduce new sections of melody. The other thing to listen for involves how this composition has been used through the twentieth century. If you were a fan of cartoons created in the early days of television, especially Tom and Jerry, this piece will have many moments that sound familiar.

Program Notes

Franz Liszt was born in Hungary, though his family moved to Vienna by the time he was twelve in order to be sure he had the best teachers available. As he developed his career, he became a truly international phenomenon rather than a composer of one area. He had a strong following among music lovers and those intrigued by his striking good looks. He took the stage comfortably as a concerto soloist in front of an orchestra. He was also the first one to do a solo recital where he played every piece. He was popular and respected. He was recognized as a philanthropist as well as a musician.

In the late 1840s, Hungary started a movement to get free of the Hapsburg rule that had controlled their country for generations. Part of that movement was recognizing forms of art that were particularly Hungarian. The Hungarian cultural heritage included the upper classes that were associated with the Hapsburg rule, the indigenous Magyar community and the wider Roma culture that drew much interest. The Roma are a traveling culture that moves through the world by their own



Ravishing Rhapsodies

October 3, 2026 - 7:30pm

choice. The culture has various names in various places. In Liszt's time they were called Gypsies. Their cultural practices seemed exotic and fascinating.

As the interest in all things Hungarian grew, Liszt returned to the land of his birth. He listened to music intently, and emulated it in the Hungarian Rhapsodies. He began with the common form of Magyar music, the Verbunkos. The composition begins with a slow section called the *lassú*. The harmony features a scale that has been called Hungarian, Magyar, and Gypsy by various music writers. The scale features two occurrences of a step and a half (or three half steps) between scale notes. It sounds very interesting to our ears. The rhythm of the *lassú* is slower and lends itself to complex ornamentation.

Following the *lassú*, the energetic second section is the *friss*. Overall, this second section is faster, and in Liszt's hands includes several animato sections followed by new melodies.

As Hungarians listened to the *Verbunkos*, the basic form of the Magyar culture was not as popular as the more ornamental and virtuosic Roma versions of the works. Virtuosity was highly prized in nineteenth century Europe and Liszt was undoubtedly one of the most talented pianists who performed. He remains one of the top pianists who will ever live.

The Hungarian Rhapsodies became an orchestration exercise for Liszt's pupil, Franz Doppler. He set the task of orchestrating six of the works. Liszt supervised closely and edited them as they went to the printer. The master ensured that his pupil was always given credit for his work, even going so far as to leave a clause in his will indicating Doppler was to be recognized in the orchestral version.



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Ravishing Rhapsodies

October 3, 2026 - 7:30pm

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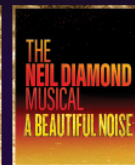


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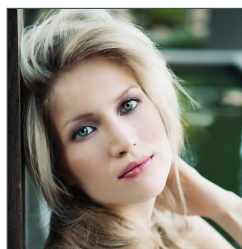
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Guest Artist



Ravishing Rhapsodies

October 3, 2026 - 7:30pm



Gabriela Martinez

piano

Venezuelan pianist Gabriela Martinez has a reputation for the lyricism of her playing, her compelling interpretations, and her elegant stage presence. She has been described as "magical...a remarkable pianist, with a cool determination, a tone full of glowing color and a seemingly effortless technique" (Mark Swed/LA Times) and "compelling...versatile, daring and insightful" (New York Times).

Martinez has performed with over 100 orchestras including the San Francisco, Chicago, Houston, San Diego, New Jersey, Pacific and Fort Worth symphonies; Germany's Stuttgarter Philharmoniker, MDR Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra, Nurnberger Philharmoniker; the Costa Rica National Symphony, and the Simon Bolivar Symphony Orchestra in Venezuela. She has performed with Gustavo Dudamel, James Gaffigain, James Conlon, JoAnn Falletta, Micahel Francis, Marcelo Lehninger and Guillermo Figueroa, among many others.

She has also commissioned and premeired works by many composers including Mason Bates, Sarah Kirkland Snider, Paola Prestini, Jessica Meyer, and Dan Visconti. Gabriela's debut album, "Amplified Soul", was released in the Delos label, and was recognized with a GRAMMY Award for Producer of the Year, David Frost.

Martinez has performed at such venues as Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, Merkin Hall and Alice Tully Hall; San Diego's The Rady Shell, Canada's Glenn Gould Studio; Salzburg's Grosses Festspielhaus; Dresden's Semperoper; Copenhagen's Tivoli Gardens; and Paris's Palace of Versailles. She has performed at Ravinia, Mostly Mozart, Colorado and Rockport festivals in the United States; Germany's Dresden Music Festival' Italy's Festival dei Due Mondi (Spoleto); Switzerland's Verbier Festival and Snow and Symphony Festival; the Festival de Radio France et Montpellier; and Japan's Tokyo International Music Festival.



Ravishing Rhapsodies

October 3, 2026 - 7:30pm

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October 3, 2026 - 7:30pm

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