

Eastman Musica Nova

with guests from
Ensemble Signal

Brad Lubman,
music director

Peiwen Zou,
assistant conductor

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

Kilbourn Hall

7:30 PM



Eastman School of Music

~ PROGRAM ~
Eastman Musica Nova
Brad Lubman, *music director*
Peiwen Zou, *assistant conductor*

Two Organa (1995)

1. Notre Dame des Jouets
2. Organum

Brad Lubman, *conductor*

Oliver Knussen
(1952-2018)
6'

Ophelia Dances (1975)

Peiwen Zou, *conductor*

Oliver Knussen
8'

Songs Without Voices (1992)

- I. Fantastico (*Winter's Foil*)
- II. Maestoso (*Prairie Sunset*)
- III. Leggiero (*First Dandelion*)
- IV. Adagio (*Elegiac Arabesques*)

Brad Lubman, *conductor*

Oliver Knussen
12'

~ INTERMISSION ~

May 18 - June 7, 2025 (2025)

Brad Lubman, *conductor*

world premiere

Brad Lubman
(b. 1962)
13'

Pitches, rhythms, counterpoint, orchestration: a reflection on the music of Oliver Knussen

For me, pitches contain so many captivating and amazing worlds in and of themselves, they contain some kind of “meaning”, they bring me into a special place. I’m referring to pitch in the abstract sense, not necessarily in relation to tonal or atonal music (though I love both). It’s similar to certain colors or to the abstract use of color (for example in certain paintings) in that I can get lost in the world of pitch, in the world of color. I feel so lucky that I have been able to enjoy that for as long as I can remember, from way back in early childhood to the present.

Similarly, the music of Oliver Knussen gives us these kinds of worlds in which we can enter. His brilliant and amazingly crafted music draws us in, enticing and beguiling us. Olly (as he was called by all who knew him) was a master at using pitches, rhythms, counterpoint, and orchestration, in a way that Debussy, Ravel, and Stravinsky were: their music enchants and entices the listener. Olly was also a master of brevity. He used to say that he’d rather be enchanted for a few minutes than hypnotised for an hour. Indeed many of his works are in the category of 6 to 15 minutes, yet they seem to encompass a deep and meaningful world all their own, they have an allure which is very fulfilling, even though the works themselves are relatively brief.

Consequently, I wonder sometimes if there are people who think that craft and skill are items that might produce dry, ineffective works. However, the opposite is true: craft and skill are essential. The composer Steven Sondheim, someone of whom one might only think of wonderful Broadway “tunes”, studied with none other than Milton Babbitt. Many of the lessons focused on analyzing works by Bach. Sondheim can be seen in a video interview saying that he learned from Babbitt that the way to the heart is through the head. From Olly I learned that the way to enchant and entice the listener is through knowledge, skill, and craft.

So it is with Olly’s music that one enters a kind of crystalline utopia. I can very well remember my first encounter with his music. It was the summer of 1989 at Tanglewood, the first of several summers that I was Olly’s assistant conductor there. Almost every morning I would go to the Tanglewood Music Center Library to look for recordings to listen to (there were many LPs, they did not yet have CD players or CDs there). I figured I ought to get to know some of Olly’s music (aside from my interest in listening to lots of music as a general part of my existence). There were three LPs of his music. I took them all to the listening area and decided to start with “Ophelia Dances”. From the first few seconds of music (literally just from hearing the first measure of the piece) I was enraptured and blown away at the same time. I was a fan of many works by Boulez, Carter, Wuorinen, late Stravinsky and Webern, but here was something in a world all its own. Yes, one could write music in a non-tonal idiom, but with Olly there was much more that jumped off the page, so to speak, so magical, resonant, scintillating and wonderful in a very special way. I remember sitting there a bit stunned, and thinking to myself “I must figure out how to do something similar in my music!” Olly was, in so many ways (as composer, conductor, teacher, and human) absolutely brilliant.

– Brad Lubman

~ PROGRAM NOTES ~

Two Organa

These two short pieces approach the same idea in quite different ways. The 12th century organa of the Notre Dame School (e.g. Perotin) employ plainchant tones as the slow foundation for rapid, ecstatic, dance-like melismata. In June 1994 I used this technique to write a very short piece for a Dutch “music box” project in which thirty-two composers wrote for a two-octave musical box using only white notes. I dedicated the resulting Notre Dame des Jouets to Sir Peter Maxwell Davies on his 60th birthday and orchestrated it in February this year. The second Organum, dedicated to Reinbert de Leeuw, brings the same technique into a less “innocent” world employing the total chromatic in elaborate polyrhythmic layers. It should be listened to with half and ear on the foreground activity (which is partly defined by specific musical identities) and the other half on the extremely slow cantus firmus which defines its scale and resonances. The second Organum was first performed by the Schonberg Ensemble under Reinbert de Leeuw at its 20th anniversary concert in Utrecht in September last year.

- Oliver Knussen

Ophelia Dances

Why is Ophelia dancing? Partly as an instrumental response to Shakespeare’s description of her chanting ‘snatches of old tunes/ As one incapable of her own distress’, and partly because I wanted to write a piece whose light-headed and giddy qualities would suggest a crossing of the line that divides laughter from tears. The ‘old tunes’ in this piece are Schumann’s Carnival, whose mottos provided much of its melodic and harmonic material, and two late works of Debussy, *La boîte à joujoux* and *Gigues*. There is an introduction, four dances (which become more and more compressed) and a long slow coda, all played continuously. *Ophelia Dances* was commissioned by the Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation and first performed in New York in May 1975 by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

- Oliver Knussen

Songs Without Voices

Songs Without Voices is a collection of short, self-contained compositions for flute, cor anglais, clarinet, horn, violin, viola, cellos and piano. Over the past few years I recovered an old enthusiasm for writing songs, and it occurred to me to try to apply this to the instrumental sphere. Three of the present pieces are, literally, songs without voice – that is, a complete poem is ‘set’ syllable for instruments in the course of a movement; and one is from a more private lyrical impulse – a cor anglais melody written upon hearing of the death of Andrzej Panufnik, a person I much admired. I hope it won’t be thought coy if I allow the music to speak on its own terms apart from those few indications of stimulus. I began composition in Aldeburgh in October 1991 and completed it in New York in April 1992, when it was first performed by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, which commissioned *Songs Without Voices* as part of the Elise L. Stoeger Composer’s Chair Award. It is doubly dedicated to Fred Sherry (cellist and then Artistic Director of the Society) and to Virgil Blackwell for this fiftieth birthday.

- Oliver Knussen

May 18 - June 7, 2025

~ MEET THE ARTISTS ~

The composer Brad Lubman interviewed by Charles Dektweiler-Stedlink:

CDS: Mr. Lubman, could you tell us something about your music, perhaps some brief things that pop up to the surface of your music?

BL: Certainly. Sometimes there are fun moments, maybe even funny or silly moments, and sometimes moments of reflection or melancholy. And yet, I manage to always get in some bits that I might consider to be “serious contemporary music”, stuff with dense counterpoint. The thing is, my music might not be “about” anything in particular, but it might be “about” everything and nothing at the same time. In some works of mine, and maybe I’m referring to the pieces that were written within short periods of time, the piece might be seen as a journal of my life during the period of composition. Maybe. One thing is certain: I like pitches, rhythms, counterpoint, and orchestration very much.

For me, pitches contain so many captivating and amazing worlds in and of themselves, they contain some kind of “meaning”, they bring me into a special place. I’m referring to pitch in the abstract sense, not necessarily in relation to tonal or atonal music (though I love both).

CDS: Can you tell us a bit about what we might expect to hear tonight in your new piece, May 18 - June 7, 2026?

BL: No. (pauses, laughs)

CDS: Well, can you give us some kind of guide points?

BL: I would almost give you the same answer again (laughter), not to be difficult, but it’s just that I feel we are all too often looking (or hoping) to be told how or what we should think, what things are about, or how we should perceive something, the notion of “should” or “supposed to”. For me, I think people should learn to think for themselves, to find their reactions and even to find their own rationale for each reaction. We must learn again how to think, how to reason, how to think critically and logically. I say “we must learn again”, but maybe we never really learned, but whatever the case might be, we are in a time where fewer and fewer people actually think, or think for themselves, than ever before. You should try to come to the music on your own terms, look for something with which you might connect, even if it’s only the surface of the piece (maybe an element about the orchestration), or maybe you liked a chord or two, or maybe a 5-note sequence enticed you, even if it’s only very small details, see if there are any with which you might connect or to which you might relate.

CDS: What is the meaning of the title?

BL: Ah yes, titles (pauses thoughtfully). I’m not good at coming up with titles. Nor am I good at coming up with program notes. I mean, I can certainly do both things, but then I feel that it might mask the music or steer people in a certain direction rather than give them the freedom to come to the music on their own terms. So I decided with two pieces I wrote last summer to simply use the actual dates of composition as the titles. Hence my thought that the piece might be seen as a journal of my life during the period of composition. Maybe.

Born in 1952, **Oliver Knussen** studied composition with John Lambert in London and Gunther Schuller at Tanglewood. He was just fifteen when he wrote his First Symphony (later conducting its premiere with the London Symphony Orchestra) whilst his Third Symphony (1973-9), dedicated to Michael Tilson Thomas, is now widely regarded as a twentieth-century classic. A number of dazzling ensemble works, including *Ophelia Dances* (a Koussevitzky centennial commission, 1975) and *Coursing* (1979), cemented Knussen’s position at the forefront of contemporary British music.

In the 1980s, Knussen collaborated with Maurice Sendak on an operatic double-bill – *Where the Wild Things Are* (1979-83) and *Higgelty Pigglety Pop!* (1984-5, rev. 1999). Originally produced by Glyndebourne Festival Opera, these works have been performed extensively in both Europe and the USA and have been recorded on CD and video.

Knussen’s ebullient concert opener *Flourish with Fireworks* (1988) quickly entered standard orchestral repertoire, as did his concertos for horn and violin. The latter, written in 2002 for Pinchas Zukerman and the Pittsburgh Symphony, has received close to 100 performances worldwide under conductors including Barenboim, Dudamel, Eschenbach and Salonen. Recent works include *Ophelia’s Last Dance* (2010) for piano, *Reflection* (2016) for violin and piano and *O Hototogisu!* for soprano, flute and ensemble. Knussen’s music was the subject of a BBC Symphony Orchestra ‘Total Immersion’ festival at the Barbican in 2012 – one of many events organised to celebrate his 60th birthday.

As one of the foremost composer-conductors in the world, Knussen was renowned for his unfailing advocacy across a wide range of contemporary music. He recorded prolifically and presided over numerous premieres, including important works by Carter, Henze and Anderson. Recipient of the Royal Philharmonic Society’s Conductor Award in 2009, he was Artist in Association with the BBC Symphony Orchestra (2009-2014), Music Director of the London Sinfonietta (1998-2002), Head of Contemporary Music at the Tanglewood Music Center (1986-93) and Artist in Association with the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group. He was Artistic Director of the Aldeburgh Festival from 1983 to 1998, and in 1992 established the Britten-Pears Programme’s Contemporary Composition and Performance Courses in collaboration with Colin Matthews.

Knussen lived in Snape, Suffolk, and was appointed a CBE in 1994. In 2014 he became the inaugural Richard Rodney Bennett Professor of Music at the Royal Academy of Music, London. Other accolades included the Ivor Novello Award for Classical Music, the ISM Distinguished Musician Award, and the 2015 Queen’s Medal for Music.

Ensemble Signal is a NY-based ensemble dedicated to offering the broadest possible audience access to a diverse range of contemporary works through performance, commissioning, recording, and education. Signal was founded by Co-Artistic/Executive Director Lauren Radnofsky and Co-Artistic Director/Conductor Brad Lubman. Signal regularly performs with Lubman and features a supergroup of independent artists from the modern music scene. Since its debut at the Bang on a Can Marathon in 2008, Signal has performed over 350 concerts, premiered numerous works, and co-produced over ten recordings. Signal has appeared at Lincoln Center Festival, the Los Angeles Philharmonic's Series at Walt Disney Concert Hall, BIG EARS Festival, Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall, Lincoln Center American Songbook, The Library of Congress, Washington Performing Arts, Cal Performances, Tanglewood Music Festival of Contemporary Music, Ojai Music Festival, the Guggenheim Museum (NY), NPR Tiny Desk Concerts and the Bang on a Can Marathon. They've regularly worked directly with nearly all the composers they perform in order to offer the most authentic interpretations, a list that includes Hans Abrahamsen, Unsuk Chin, Luca Francesconi, Michael Gordon, Georg Friedrich Haas, Oliver Knussen, Helmut Lachenmann, David Lang, George Lewis, Hilda Paredes, Augusta Read Thomas, Steve Reich, Kaija Saariaho and Julia Wolfe. Their recording of Reich's Music for 18 Musicians released in May 2015 on harmonia mundi received a Diapason d'or and appeared on the Billboard Classical Crossover Charts. Recent highlights include the world premiere and 130 performances of Reich's Reich/Richter for large ensemble, with artwork and film by Gerhard Richter for the inaugural season of New York's The Shed, and the US premieres of Reich's Runner at venues across the US. In the fall of 2026, Ensemble Signal in collaboration with the Bang on a Can All-Stars will give the US Premiere of a New Work by Steve Reich as part of Reich's 90th Birthday Celebration presented by Carnegie Hall.

Born and raised in San José, Costa Rica, **Adrián Sandí** began his clarinet studies in 1997 at the National Institute of Music of Costa Rica. He obtained his BM magna cum laude from Virginia Commonwealth University, his MM with distinction from DePaul University, and his Doctorate in Musical Arts from the Eastman School of Music. His main professors have included Ken Grant, Jon Manasse, Larry Combs, Julie DeRoche, Dr. Charles West, and Jose Manuel Ugalde. Adrián Sandí is currently a freelancer based in San José, Costa Rica. Hailed by the New York Times as “a brilliantly cool yet tender soloist”, he is an active solo recitalist and has given chamber music and solo performances throughout his musical career in different cities in Costa Rica, Panama, USA, Canada, China, Mexico, Germany, Belgium, Guatemala, Thailand, England and Chile.

As an avid performer of new music, Adrián is currently a member of loadbang, Ensemble Signal, founder of Ensamble ECO and has performed with groups such as New York New Music Ensemble, SEM Ensemble, Mimesis Ensemble, Numinous, and has toured with Bang on a Can All-Stars. Regularly performing works of rising and living composers, he has had the opportunity to collaborate with composer/conductors Oliver Knussen, Tristan Murail, Steve Reich, Charles Wourinen, Hilda Paredes, Anna Clyne, David Lang and John Zorn.

He served on the faculty of Wichita State University from 2011-2012 as Assistant Visiting Professor of Clarinet. As an orchestral musician, Adrián has performed as the principal clarinetist of Wichita Symphony Orchestra for their 2011-2012 season, has performed with ensembles such as the Princeton Symphony Orchestra, Lake Placid Sinfonietta, Binghamton Philharmonic Orchestra, Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de Costa Rica, Symphony Orchestra Academy of the Pacific and is currently a member of Orquesta Sinfónica de Heredia.

Some of his recording projects include albums such as Ensemble Signal's Harmonia Mundi release of Reich: Double Sextet / Radio Rewrite, the album “Dying will be easy” with the Richmond VA based improvisatory ensemble Fight the Big Bull, a solo work by Hilda Paredes in her album Señales and the music of mexican composer Juan Pablo Contreras in “Silencio en Juárez” by Albany Records.

Adrián has won numerous awards, including First Place and Honorable Mention in the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) State and Regional Chamber Music Competitions respectively, a Semifinalist at the International Clarinet Association Young Artist Competition, First Place winner of the MTNA Young Artist Competition at the State Level and also a winner of the Virginia Commonwealth University Concerto Competition. While pursuing his DMA at Eastman School of Music and working as a Graduate Assistant, he was awarded the “2010-2011 Teaching Assistant Prize for Excellence in Teaching”.

David Friend has been described by *The New York Times* as “[one] of the finest, busiest pianists active in New York’s contemporary-classical scene.” With a primary focus on new and experimental music, he has performed at major venues in the U.S. and abroad including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Disney Hall, Royal Festival Hall (London), Museo Reina Sofia (Madrid), the Chan Centre (Vancouver), and the National Centre for the Performing Arts (Beijing). He has also performed extensively in alternative, underground, and DIY venues including (le) poisson rouge, Glasslands, Issue Project Room, Roulette Intermedium, National Sawdust, MoMA P.S. 1, St. Ann’s Warehouse, REDCAT, Betalevel (Los Angeles), Constellation (Chicago), LiteraturHaus (Copenhagen), Music Gallery (Toronto), and Logos Tetrahedron (Ghent), and has appeared in major festivals including Lincoln Center, Mostly Mozart, Aspen, Gilmore, Beijing Modern, Next on Grand (LA Phil), Prague Spring, Ecstatic Music, Long Play, TIME:SPANS, Rewire (the Hague), Bang on a Can Marathon, CTM (Berlin), Big Ears, June in Buffalo, and Ultima (Oslo), as well as at the Whitney and Venice Biennales. He has recorded for the New Amsterdam, Harmonia Mundi, Albany, Cedille, Dacapo, Innova, a wave press, New World, and Naxos labels, and his playing has been heard on radio stations across the country, including on National Public Radio’s *Performance Today*, WQXR’s *Hammered!*, and WNYC’s *New Sounds*. He is a co-founder of Bent Duo, a boundary-defying experimental project focused on queer aesthetics and practices, and is a founding member of Grand Band, the United States only professional piano sextet. He is a member of Ensemble Signal, and performs regularly as a guest artist with leading contemporary music ensembles including Talea Ensemble, Alarm Will Sound, Bang on a Can All-Stars, and International Contemporary Ensemble, among many others. His album with Jerome Begin, *Post-*, is an electroacoustic reimagining of what solo piano music can be in the 21st century and was a critical favorite, receiving a 4-star review from *The Guardian* and a pick as “best contemporary classical album” from Bandcamp. He records frequently with a wide variety of collaborators and is featured on Third Coast Percussion’s album of music by Steve Reich, which won the Grammy Award for best chamber music performance.

davidfriendpiano.net

Lauren Radnofsky is founding co-artistic/executive director and cellist of Ensemble Signal. In Radnofsky’s triple role, she is responsible for program curation, general management, and also serves as the main producer, in addition to being a regular performer in the ensemble. Under her leadership, she has overseen Signal distinguish itself as an ensemble of exceptional versatility, its range of activities including over 350 performances, ten recordings, and numerous premieres since 2008.

She has performed as cellist in addition to producing/managing projects for Ensemble Signal presented by venues and festivals including Lincoln Center Festival, Carnegie Hall, LA Phil/Walt Disney Concert Hall, BIG EARS, The Shed, Cal Performances, Washington Performing Arts, The Library of Congress, Tanglewood Festival of Contemporary Music, Ojai Music Festival, The Guggenheim Museum (NY), EMPAC, NPR Tiny Desk Concerts, and the Bang on a Can Marathon and LONG PLAY.

As a cellist with Signal, Radnofsky has worked with composers including Hans Abrahamsen, Luca Francesconi, Michael Gordon, Oliver Knussen, Helmut Lachenmann, David Lang, George Lewis, Hilda Paredes, Steve Reich, Kaija Saariaho and Julia Wolfe.

She has performed as cellist with Signal in the world premiere of Steve Reich’s Reich/Richter 129 times as part of the Shed’s Reich Richter Pärt project, the US premieres of Reich’s *Runner*, and the world premieres of Hilda Paredes’ *Señales* (dedicated to Ensemble Signal & Irvine Arditti) and Luca Francesconi’s *Trauma Etudes* (dedicated to Lauren and Brad Lubman). Upcoming projects include a collaboration with Signal and Bang on a Can including the US Premieres of a new work by Steve Reich, presented by Carnegie Hall for Reich’s 90th birthday year.

Radnofsky’s recordings with Signal include Glass’s *Glassworks* (Orange Mountain); music by Lachenmann, with the composer as soloist in “...*Zwei Gefühle...*” including Radnofsky performing Pression for solo cello (Mode); Gordon/Lang/ Wolfe’s *Shelter* (Cantaloupe); and Reich’s *Music for 18 Musicians* (which received a Diapason d’or and appeared on the Billboard classical crossover charts) (harmonia mundi).

~ **PERSONNEL** ~
Eastman Musica Nova

Flute

Kaja Hammerschmidt
Maya Stock

Oboe

Kayla Miller
Siena Stevens

Clarinet

Victor Ni
Adrián Sandí*

Bassoon

Adrian Lau

Horn

Andrew Foster
Miles Woods

Trumpet

Jacob Hunkins

Trombone

Charley Hibscheiler

Percussion

John Dawson
Sammy DeAngelis
Andrew Lauler
Michael Smith

Keyboard

David Friend*
Irene Huang
Endong Li
Taya Promreuk

Harp

Viviana Alfaro

Violin

Sophia Klin
Zihua Ma
Victoria Zhao

Viola

Anna Denfeld
Sujin Kim

Violoncello

Aaron Lieberman
Kristi Roller
Lauren Radnofsky*

Double Bass

Lindsey Joslin

* Ensemble Signal

We acknowledge with respect the Seneca Nation, known as the “Great Hill People” and “Keepers of the Western Door” of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. We take this opportunity to thank the people whose ancestral lands the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester currently occupies in Rochester, New York.



For the most up to date information on Eastman concerts and events, scan this code to visit our online calendar.



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