


BOULDER PHILHARMONIC

‘Visions of a Brighter Tomorrow’

Concert casts light on 75 years of the Boulder Star with premiere of ‘Beacon’ and performance by 3rd Law Dance/Theater group





Argentinian composer and bandoneon soloist Richard Scofano will perform his original musical composition titled “La Tierra Sin Mal” alongside the Boulder Philharmonic Orchestra as a part of “Visions of a Brighter Tomorrow,” on Sunday at Macky Auditorium. GUILLERMO GARCIA — COURTESY PHOTO



A performance by 3rd Law Dance/Theater will take place during Boulder Philharmonic Orchestra’s upcoming Masterworks Series concert, “Visions of a Brighter Tomorrow.” BOULDER PHIL — COURTESY PHOTO



Craig Reynolds tightens a cable that holds up a section of the Boulder Star on Flagstaff Mountain in 2009. FILE PHOTO



Boulder's Flagstaff Star will be lit on Saturday and the Boulder Philharmonic will dedicate a concert to the Boulder landmark at Macky Auditorium on Sunday. FILE PHOTO

BY ELLA COBB

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November can be a tough time of year for many, as the ever-obsolete ending to daylight savings time takes place and plunges Americans into the depths of darkness beginning around 4:45 p.m. each evening.

However, Boulderites need only endure a couple of days of total darkness. On Veterans Day each year, 365 low-energy LED light bulbs in the shape of a massive star bring the city to life, pulling many residents and visitors alike out of seasonal despair.

Like a festive Eye of Sauron, the Boulder Star towers over the city, reminding us that it's time to have our winter coats on standby and get on our holiday shopping.

This year, the Boulder Star is celebrating an important birthday: The formation of lights on Flagstaff Mountain is turning 75 years old. To commemorate the occasion, the Boulder Philharmonic Orchestra is throwing a birthday bash like no other.

On Sunday, in conjunction with the lighting of the star, Boulder Phil is presenting "Visions of a Brighter Tomorrow." The second concert of the orchestra's 2023-2024 season, Boulder Phil Music Director Michael Butterman will bring to life the hope, unity and community spirit that the Boulder Star has come to represent with a program featuring three poignant musical compositions.

Butterman said he was inspired by the star's lasting legacy as a symbol of hope within the Boulder community.

"Music and the arts do a lot of things," Butterman said. "They can express the inexpressible, they can deal with ideas that are very troubling and painful, but they can also transport us to another state of mind. Music can allow us to exist on another plane, especially in times where we have to deal with the annoyances of daily life. But it's important for those things not to consume us. I really think the Boulder Star is meant as a signifier to remind us of that spiritual space in the same way that music does."

Butterman added: "Here, the star is visible for miles and miles and miles, and it is just a quick little reminder of that spiritual space in which we should be spending our emotional energy."

The evening will feature the world premiere of "Beacon," a sweeping piece written by University of Colorado Boulder professor of composition Jeffrey Nytech. Nytech, who is also an acclaimed performer, was moved to write a piece of music after attending a lighting ceremony at the Boulder Star for the first time last year.

Nytech heard first-hand testimonials from other attendees describing how the star had inspired and uplifted them in times of strife. Typically, the Boulder Star is lit from Nov. 11 and is illuminated through the first week of January. However, in specific times of trouble — during the pandemic, after 9/11, after the Table Mesa King Soopers shooting and after the Marshall Fire — the Boulder Star was lit, acting as a beacon of hope for the community. It was while listening to stories and remembering these key moments that Nytech started hearing music.

"I immediately had the idea of writing a piece of music to celebrate that," Nytech said. "Literally by the time I got home, I already knew that the piece was going to be titled 'Beacon.' But as I was actually composing this piece, I kept thinking about the fact that if you write a piece that is just hopeful and sparkly and fun and upbeat, that doesn't really have anything to say. Those celebratory emotions only really are significant because life also has struggles and tragedies. It is those two things in tension with each other, and I got to thinking especially about the King Soopers shooting."

Nytech said he recalled hearing CU Boulder student and survivor of the King Soopers shooting Louis Saxton playing the cello outside of the grocery store the days after the tragedy.

"I looked up some of the news reports of Saxton, and one of the pieces he played was the Bach," Nytech said. "As I was composing 'Beacon,' I kept getting

pulled back to this powerful statement about the ability of art to bring people together, to give expression to the depths of human experience that words cannot fathom. Eventually, I realized that Bach would serve as the key pivot of the entire work — the moment when we turn away from darkness and despair...and return to the light."

"Looking back on the last four years of strife, loss, and social disruption, I believe we could all use an occasion to contemplate our own beacons, and perhaps find a little healing—a little hope—for ourselves," he added.

“Visions of a Brighter Tomorrow” will also feature a piece from world-renowned Argentinian composer and bandoneon soloist, Richard Scofano. Scofano will bring his mastery of the concertina to the stage with his composition titled “La Tierra Sin Mal.”

The composition draws from Guaraní mythology, vividly depicting a “world without evil” with its intricate melodies and harmonious arrangements.

Enhancing this performance is the distinctive choreography of 3rd Law Dance/Theater, a renowned local contemporary dance company led by choreographer Katie Elliott.

Bringing to life Elliott’s own vision of a “world without evil” is dancer Kristi Ann Schopfer. Schopfer will be performing a 15-minute solo performance personifying the themes explored in Scofano’s piece.

“Dance is an embodiment of music: It is the visual representation of each note and intended feeling behind the notes,” Schopfer said. “We, as dancers, utilize our athleticism and musicality to be so integrated that if you were to extract the audio, we would be able to bring the audience a visceral experience of the music.”

Schopfer added: “By dancing simultaneously with the live orchestra, I hope to offer a visual and dimensional work of art that deepens the audience’s experience and memory of absorbing Richard Scofano’s composition and performance.”

The concert will wrap with a fresh performance of the timeless Brahms’ Symphony No. 1, sending audiences off with a classical performance that seamlessly characterizes the theme of this concert: Finding light in the darkness.

See and hear the magic inspired by the Boulder Star at “Visions of a Brighter Tomorrow” at 7 p.m. Sunday at Macky Auditorium in Boulder. For more information and ticket prices, visit boulderphil.org.