

An abstract painting of a field of flowers. The background is a mix of light blue, green, and yellow, suggesting a sky or distant hills. The foreground is filled with various flowers in shades of pink, red, orange, and white. A large white daisy with a yellow center is prominent in the lower right. The painting style is expressive, with visible brushstrokes and a vibrant color palette.

APPALACHIAN SPRING

Sat.
OCT. 17
at 7:30pm

Sun.
OCT. 18
at 2:30pm

Ent Center for the Arts at UCCS

Aku Sorensen *conductor*
Max Shulman *director*
Abner Genece *actor*
Claylish Coldiron *actor*

A journey across a growing nation, from coast to coast, city to frontier. Counterpoint opens its first season by putting some of America's great composers in conversation with some of its great writers. They all share the stage — new arrivals and Native voices, frontier settlers and modern masters — all telling the story of a country still becoming itself.

Music:

Aaron Copland *Appalachian Spring Suite*
Charles Ives *Three Places in New England*
II. Putnam Camp
Steve Reich *Different Trains*
I. "America – Before the War"
Theresa Carreño *Serenade for String Orchestra*
IV. Tempo di Marcia

John Adams *Shaker Loops*
II. Hymning Slews
Florence Price *Suite of Dances for Orchestra*
Adolphus Hailstork *Symphony No. 1*
II. Adagio
IV. Rondo

Pre-recorded material from Steve Reich's *Different Trains* performed by the Kronos Quartet (Nonesuch Records 79176-2)

Excerpts from:

"Nature" by **Ralph Waldo Emerson** (1836)
A Tree Grows in Brooklyn by **Betty Smith** (1943)
The Piano Lesson by **August Wilson** (1987)
"Warrior's Daughter" from *Indian Stories*
by **Zitkala-Sa** (1921)
A River Runs Through It by **Norman McLean** (1976)

"Eagle Poem" by **Joy Harjo** (1990)
Their Eyes Were Watching God
by **Zora Neale Hurston** (1937)
Butcher's Crossing by **John Williams** (1960)
Train Dreams by **Denis Johnson** (2011)

Season presented by:



Series sponsored by:

**GARBEE
FAMILY**

Lodging provided by:

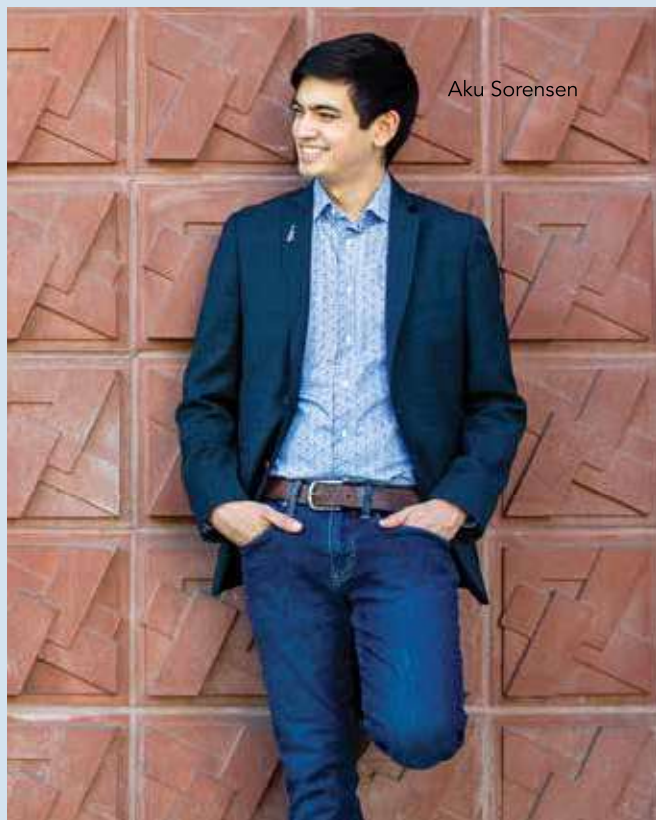


Jim and Carol Montgomery

Glenn and Elizabeth Conklin • Dave and Leah Niedringhaus • Pamela Shockley-Zalabak

Dr. Karl and Margaret Larsen • Greg and Vicky Manlove • Susie Ramsay
Lt Col (Ret) Mike Russo • Rob and Maureen Taylor





CONDUCTOR

Aku Sorensen

Aku Sorensen (b. 1997) is a Finnish-American conductor, born in California and based in Finland for the last ten years. A sought-after guest conductor, his career has seen him as a regular guest of orchestras throughout Finland, with frequent collaborators including the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra, Tapiola Sinfonietta, Oulu Sinfonia, and Finnish National Opera and Ballet.

In the Spring of 2026, Sorensen won the Siemens-Hallé International Conductors Competition and was subsequently named the Assistant Conductor of The Hallé and Music Director of the Hallé Youth Orchestra for a three-year contract from 2026-2029. Prior to this, Aku served as the 20th principal conductor of the historic Ylioppilaskunnan Soittajat in Helsinki from 2022-2026, leading the ensemble through a critically acclaimed centennial season.

Sorensen has a keen interest in programming and curation, with a specific focus on integrating lesser played and contemporary repertoire into concept programs. He has conducted numerous Finnish, European, and World premieres of repertoire both of our time and found forgotten in the archives.

Nowhere is Aku's interest in programming as obvious as at the festival "The Sounds of Luosto", which he has served as artistic director of since 2019. Tied together with a tight theme and strong concept concerts, a weekend of music both chamber

and orchestral played on a fell in Finnish Lapland sets contemporary music with well-known classics, forgotten names with household ones. The programming has proven popular, with an increasingly international audience, and Finnish composer Kalevi Aho has said the festival "has an attraction much in the way of the Savonlinna Opera Festival or the Salzburg Festival." Sorensen completed his Master's of Music in Orchestral Conducting at the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts, Helsinki under the tutelage of Professor Sakari Oramo. He has also received tuition from conductors such as Jorma Panula, Paavo Järvi, Hannu Lintu, Johannes Schlaefli, Sir Roger Norrington, Peter Eötvös, and Jukka-Pekka Saraste.

Aku also holds a Bachelor of Music from the Sibelius Academy in violin performance, completed under the guidance of Merit Palas.



DIRECTOR

Max Shulman

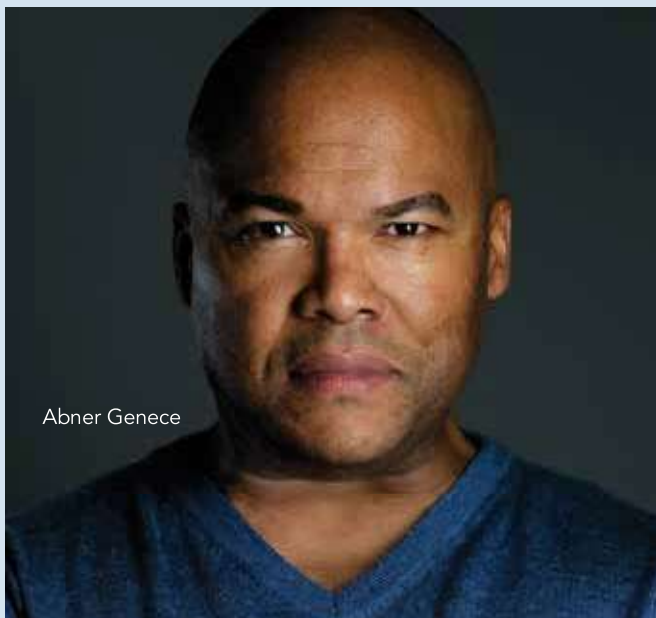
Max Shulman is an associate professor in the Theatre and Dance Program and the artistic director of Theatreworks, a professional, Equity theatre company housed in the Ent Center for the Arts. As a scholar, his area of expertise is 19th and early 20th Century U.S. theater with a focus on the formation of national identity. He is the author of *The American Pipe Dream: Performance of Drug Addiction, 1890-1940*, with the

University of Iowa Press, which traces the formation of the addict in the U.S. imaginary. He is the co-editor of *Performing the Progressive Era: Immigration, Nationalism, and Urban Life*, also with Iowa. His work has appeared in *Theatre Survey*, *Modern Drama*, *Theatre Topics*, *Theatre Annual*, *Studies in American Jewish Literature*, and on *HowlRound.com*. He is also a member of the Eugene O'Neill Review editorial board.

Max founded the HomeFront Theatre Project in 2016, which creates events around issues facing our veteran and active-duty military community. Through this work, Max was awarded the National Endowment for the Humanities grant "Dialogues on the Experience of War" in 2020.

Max teaches the theatre history course series as well as VAPA classes such as "American Identity on Stage and Screen," and "All Arts Excursions." He teaches performance-based classes including "Scene Study" and "Performing Greeks and Shakespeare."

Max maintains an active directing practice. Recent credits include *Marie Antoinette* (UCCS), *Henry IV/V* (Theatreworks), *Pericles* (Theatreworks), *Indecent* (UCCS), *Everybody* (UCCS), *An Iliad* (Theatreworks), *Awake and Sing!* (Quintessence Theatre), and *Ugly Lies the Bone* (UCCS).



Abner Genece

ACTOR

Abner Genece

Abner has performed widely in New York and regional theaters around the United States. His New York credits include *Othello*, *Tartuffe*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Hamlet*, *Waiting For Godot* (Jean Cocteau Rep). His regional credits include *Twelfth Night* (Will Geer Theatre); *The Meeting* (Stella Adler); *The Bluest Eye* (Moxie Theatre); *Gem of the Ocean*, *Arabian Nights* (Aurora Fox); *Measure For Measure*, *Around The World in 80 Days*, *King Hedley II* (Theatreworks CS); *Sense and Sensibility*, *The Electric Baby*, *All My Sons*, *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Arvada Center); *Theatre of the Mind* (Denver Off-Center).



Claylish Coldiron

ACTOR

Claylish Coldiron

Claylish Coldiron is a multi-hyphenated artist local to the Denver area. Past roles include Ophelia/Horatio in *Hamlet*, Miranda/Ariel in *The Tempest*, Hero/Verges in *Much Ado* (Colorado Shakespeare Festival), Jo March in *Little Women* (Firehouse Theatre), Emily Webb in *Our Town* (Arvada Center), and June in *Late: A New Musical* (Centerstage Theatre Company). Claylish is also newly the Artistic Director of the Piknik Theatre in Steamboat Springs, CO.

A Note from Max

Aaron Copland's "Appalachian Spring" has inspired visions of America and its past since it premiered in 1944. The choreographer Martha Graham found in the music visions of majestic landscapes, small-town life, love, faith, and even of violence. Musically, it is a stunning accomplishment of storytelling. For this debut Counterpoint performance, *Appalachian Spring* serves as an inspiring foundation to explore the American landscape and those authors that have been inspired by its grand hills and valleys. This performance is a journey across the United States of the past, featuring some of our nation's greatest writers.