

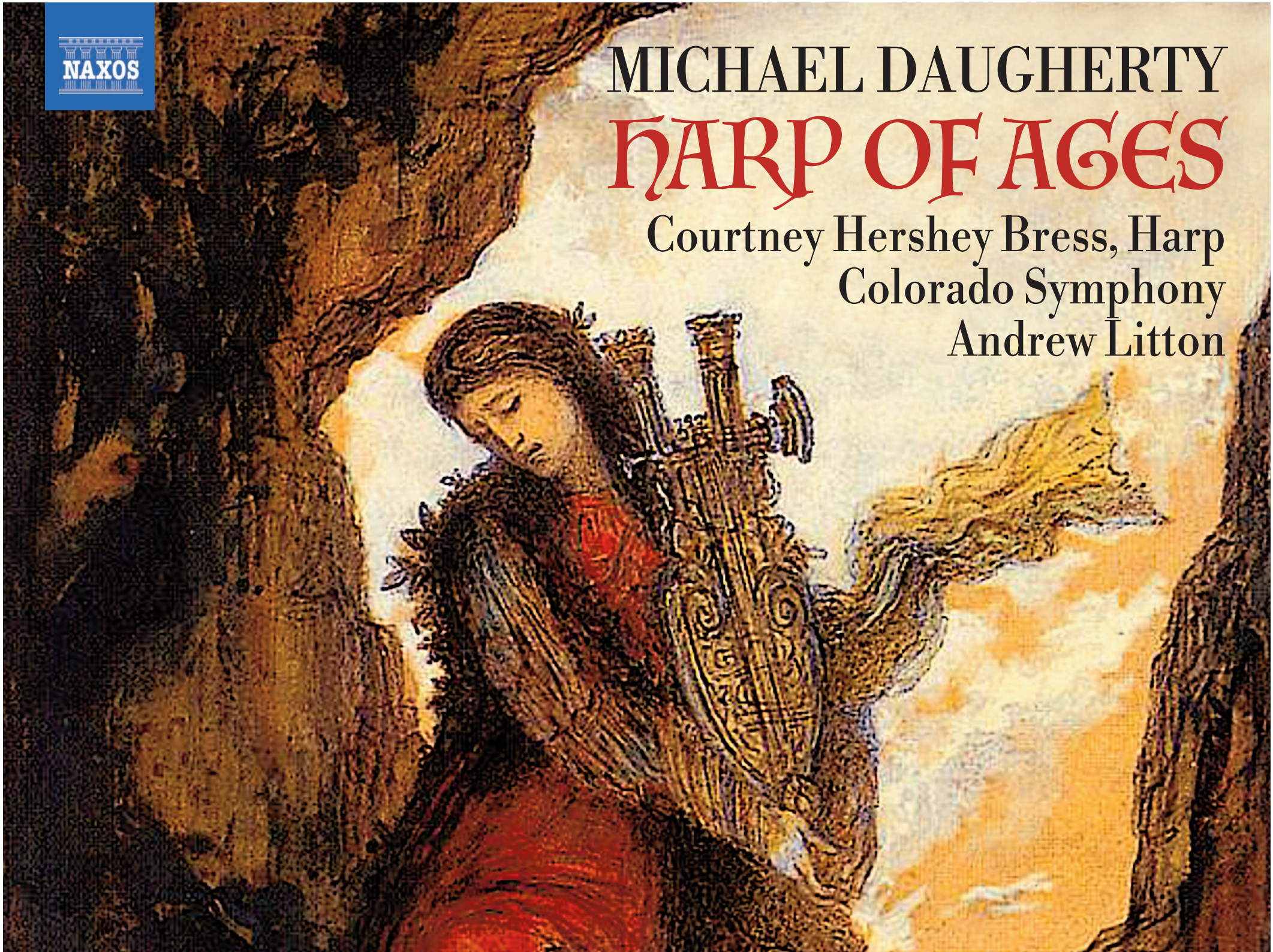
The NAXOS logo is located in the top left corner, featuring the word "NAXOS" in white capital letters on a blue rectangular background. Above the text are three stylized white columns.

NAXOS

# MICHAEL DAUGHERTY

# HARP OF AGES

Courtney Hershey Bress, Harp  
Colorado Symphony  
Andrew Litton





## **Michael Daugherty (b. 1954)**

Multiple GRAMMY Award-winning composer Michael Daugherty is one of the most commissioned, performed and recorded composers on the international concert music scene today. His music is rich with cultural allusions and bears the stamp of classic modernism, with colliding tonalities and blocks of sound; at the same time, his melodies can be eloquent and stirring. Hailed by *The Times* (London) as “a master icon maker” with a “maverick imagination, fearless structural sense, and meticulous ear,” Daugherty’s unique musical style combines elements of American popular culture, art, literature and history resulting in a diverse and captivating body of work that is enthusiastically performed by orchestras, wind ensembles and performers around the world. His music, recorded by Naxos over the last two decades, has received six GRAMMY Awards, including Best Contemporary Classical Composition in 2011 for *Deus ex Machina* for piano and orchestra (8.559635) and in 2017 for *Tales of Hemingway* for cello and orchestra (8.559798).

Born in 1954 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Daugherty is the son of a dance band drummer and the oldest of five brothers, all professional musicians. As a young man, Daugherty studied composition with many of the preeminent composers of the 20th century including Jacob Druckman, Earle Brown, Bernard Rands and Roger Reynolds at Yale (1980–1982), Pierre Boulez at IRCAM in Paris and Betsy Jolas at the Paris Conservatory (1979), and György Ligeti in Hamburg (1982–1984). Daugherty was also an assistant to jazz arranger Gil Evans in New York from 1980–1982. Since 1991, Daugherty has been professor of composition at the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance, where he is a mentor to many of today’s most talented young composers. He is also a frequent guest of professional orchestras, festivals, universities and conservatories around the world.

Daugherty’s music is published by Peermusic Classical/ Faber Music, Boosey & Hawkes and Michael Daugherty Music.

[www.michaeldaugherty.net](http://www.michaeldaugherty.net)

## **Harp of Ages (2023) for harp and orchestra**

*Harp of Ages* was commissioned by the Kenneth and Myra Monfort Charitable Foundation and the Colorado Symphony for Courtney Hershey Bress, principal harpist. The world premiere was given by Courtney Hershey Bress, solo harp, with the Colorado Symphony conducted by Andrew Litton, at Boettcher Concert Hall, Denver Performing Arts Complex on 12 May 2023.

The harp is one of the oldest and most beautiful instruments, from early civilizations to the present. Like the seven pedals on the modern harp, my concerto is divided into seven movements that reflect on genres and memorable figures associated with the harp throughout the ages:

### **1 Sappho Leaps**

Sappho (7th century BC): Greek lyric poet who played the lyre and, according to ancient lore, leaped from a cliff to her death

### **2 Sister Juana's Hymn**

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648–1695): Mexican nun who became famous as a poet, scholar and composer of music accompanied by harp

### **3 Uhura's Song**

Nyota Uhura (c. 23rd century): fictional character from Africa, and communications officer on the USS Enterprise, who sang and played the harp on the original *Star Trek* television series (1964–67)

### **4 David's Prayer**

David (c. 1000 BC): young shepherd from the Old Testament who played the harp to soothe the spirits of King Saul

### **5 Harpo Speaks**

Harpo Marx (1888–1954): mute member of the Marx Brothers comedy team who played the harp in their numerous Hollywood films of the 1930s and 1940s

### **6 Detroit Blues**

Dorothy Ashby (1932–1986) and Alice Coltrane (1937–2007): innovators of the jazz harp from Detroit, Michigan

### **7 Irish Wedding**

Since the 13th century, the Irish harp has been associated with songs of war, dance and weddings. As the heraldic symbol of Ireland, the harp has been championed by generations of Irish harpists from Turlough O' Carolan (1670–1738) to Mary O'Hara (b. 1935). This movement is also in celebration of the wedding of my daughter Evelyn Daugherty and Ivan Tibavinsky on 30 July 2022.

**Michael Daugherty**

## **Courtney Hershey Bress**

Courtney Hershey Bress joined the Colorado Symphony as principal harp in 2001 after a celebrated freelance career that took her all over the world, including engagements in Asia with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra and in the United States with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the United States Army Field Band. She has also been principal harpist of the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music and guest principal harpist with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. Bress teaches at the Lamont School of Music (University of Denver), Lamont Summer Academy, and the University of Wyoming, and has been visiting professor of harp at the Eastman School of Music. Bress was a 2005 GRAMMY nominee for her performance of George Crumb's *Ancient Voices of Children* and her album *Night Music and Fantasies*, a collaboration with violinist Andrés Cárdenes, was released in December 2022 to great acclaim. Bress studied at the Eastman School of Music and the Chicago College of Performing Arts (Roosevelt University). The author of *For Love of the Harp* (Veritas Musica Publishing), she owns and performs on a rare Lyon & Healy Style 3 gold harp.

[www.courtneyhersheybress.com](http://www.courtneyhersheybress.com)

## **Colorado Symphony**

The Colorado Symphony Association is the region's only full-time professional orchestra committed to artistic excellence and ensuring the future of live, symphonic music. Performing over 150 concerts annually at Boettcher Concert Hall in Denver and across Colorado, the Colorado Symphony is home to 80 full-time musicians, representing more than a dozen nations, and regularly welcomes the most celebrated artists from all genres of music. Recognized as an incubator of innovation, creativity and excellence, the Colorado Symphony continually expands its impact through education, outreach, and programming, and partners with the state's leading musical artists, cultural organizations, corporations, foundations, sports teams, and individuals to expose diverse audiences to the power of symphonic orchestral music.

[www.coloradosymphony.org](http://www.coloradosymphony.org)

## **Andrew Litton**

Andrew Litton, music director of the New York City Ballet since 2015, is also the former principal guest conductor of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, conductor laureate of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and music director laureate of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra. Honours include the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit, Yale's Sanford Medal, the Elgar Society Medal, and an honorary doctorate from Bournemouth University. Litton was principal conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra from 1988 to 1994 and music director of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra from 1994 to 2006. His discography boasts over 135 recordings. An avid opera conductor with a keen theatrical sense, Litton has led major opera companies such as The Metropolitan Opera, The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Opera Australia and Deutsche Oper Berlin. In Norway, he was key to founding the Bergen National Opera, where he led numerous acclaimed performances. An accomplished pianist, Litton performs as a soloist, conducting from the keyboard. He is also an acknowledged expert on and performer of Gershwin's music and serves as advisor to the University of Michigan Gershwin Initiative.

[www.andrewlitton.com](http://www.andrewlitton.com)





Courtney Hershey Bress

Photo: Michael Daugherty









Andrew Litton

Photo: Steve J Sherman





Michael Daugherty

Photo: Yopie Prins



Michael  
**DAUGHERTY**  
(b. 1954)

**Harp of Ages (2023)**  
for harp and orchestra

- |   |                     |      |
|---|---------------------|------|
| 1 | Sappho Leaps        | 4:28 |
| 2 | Sister Juana's Hymn | 4:08 |
| 3 | Uhura's Song        | 3:25 |
| 4 | David's Prayer      | 5:13 |
| 5 | Harp Speaks         | 3:12 |
| 6 | Detroit Blues       | 3:28 |
| 7 | Irish Wedding       | 6:23 |

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

**Courtney Hershey Bress, Harp**  
**Colorado Symphony**  
**Andrew Litton**

Recorded live: 12–14 May 2023 at Boettcher Concert Hall,  
Denver Performing Arts Complex, Denver, Colorado, USA

Producers: Silas Brown, Michael Daugherty

Engineers: Silas Brown, Kimberly Egan, Dustin Knock

Mixing and mastering: Silas Brown

Booklet notes: Michael Daugherty

Publisher: Michael Daugherty Music (BMI)

Sponsored by the Kenneth and Myra Monfort  
Charitable Foundation

Cover image: *Sappho on the Cliff* (1872)  
by Gustave Moreau (1826–1898)

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AMERICAN CLASSICS

GRAMMY Award-winning composer Michael Daugherty's *Harp of Ages* pays homage to the illustrious history and enduring beauty of the harp, an instrument that has enchanted listeners from ancient civilizations to the modern era. Divided into seven movements, the concerto evokes genres and memorable figures associated with the harp, from the poetic lyre of Sappho in classical Greece, to the wild glissandos of Harpo Marx in 1930s Hollywood, and the jazz harp of Dorothy Ashby and Alice Coltrane in 1950s Detroit. Through intricate orchestrations and evocative melodies, *Harp of Ages* showcases Daugherty's unique ability to blend tradition with innovation, creating a work that is both timeless and contemporary. Under the brilliant baton of conductor Andrew Litton, the renowned Colorado Symphony is joined by their principal harpist Courtney Hershey Bress, who breathes life into every note with extraordinary sensitivity and virtuosity.

[www.naxos.com](http://www.naxos.com)

Playing  
Time:  
**30:39**