
**LINCOLN CENTER'S
SUMMER
FOR THE
CITY**

JUNE 11 – AUGUST 9, 2025

FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA OF LINCOLN CENTER

JONATHON HEYWARD, RENÉE AND ROBERT BELFER MUSIC AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

**TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY
JULY 25 & 26, 2025 AT 7:30 PM**

Run Time: Approximately 1 hour 45 minutes

TIMELESS TRANSFORMATIONS

DAME JANE GLOVER AND STERLING ELLIOTT IN THE AVERY FISHER LEGACY CONCERT

ABELS | TCHAIKOVSKY | MOZART

WU TSAI THEATER, DAVID GEFKEN HALL

DAME JANE GLOVER, *conductor*
STERLING ELLIOTT, *cello*
ERIKA BAIKOFF, *soprano*
ERIC FERRING, *tenor*
BEN STRONG, *bass-baritone*
DENYCE GRAVES, *narrator*

PROGRAM

Michael Abels (b. 1962)	<i>More Seasons</i> (1990)	12 min
Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)	<i>Variations on a Rococo Theme</i> , Op. 33 (1876) Sterling Elliott, cello	8 min

INTERMISSION

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)	<i>Allegro assai</i> from <i>Symphony No. 33 in B-flat Major</i> , K. 319 (1779)	7 min
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)	Act I from <i>Zaide</i> , K. 344 (1780) <i>Sung in German with English narration and English supertitles</i>	35 min
Narration by Kelley Rourke	Scene II – No. 2 Melodrama “Unerforschliche Fügung” Scene III – No. 3 Aria “Ruhe sanft, mein holdes Leben” Scene III – No. 4 Aria “Rase, Schicksal, wüte immer” Scene III – No. 5 Duet “Meine Seele hüpfet vor Freuden” Scene IV – No. 6 Aria “Herr und Freund, wie dank’ ich dir” Scene V – No. 7 Aria “Nur mutig, mein Herze, versuche dein Glück” Scene VI – No. 8 Trio “O selige Wonne” Erika Baikoff, <i>soprano</i> Eric Ferring, <i>tenor</i> Ben Strong, <i>bass-baritone</i> Denyce Graves, <i>narrator</i>	

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Endowment support is provided by the Blavatnik Family Foundation Fund for Dance, The Marie-Josée and Henry R. Kravis Foundation, Oak Foundation, and PepsiCo Foundation

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Programs are made possible, in part, with public funds provided by National Endowment for the Arts, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, Empire State Development, and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor, Mayor of the City of New York, the New York State Legislature and the New York City Council

TIMELESS TRANSFORMATIONS

BY JAMES BENNETT II

It's easy to think of transformations as magical. We see, right before our eyes, a shift from one form or substance to another. But transformation can be deceptively effortless. Because while the change from "A" to "B" may seem as instant as flipping a switch, it's rarely the case: When a species evolves, the changes its descendants exhibit happen ever so incrementally. There's a reason we don't know our chimpanzee-human last common ancestor: chimps and humans didn't spring fully from it. We're an accumulation of changes. Overnight, the blues didn't become jazz; jazz didn't become funk. A series of micro-languages and subgenera exists between them.

Imagine being able to zoom in on time's scale. What you might see is a gap, where something interesting or magical happens during the transition. What does something touch before it becomes something new? We can't know that for sure, but we can think about it tonight.

There might not be a more familiar piece of music associated with transformation than Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*. That set of concerti, ubiquitous in the recording studio and in concert halls, is so evocative of the world around us that it almost invites composers to experiment with it and produce their own interpretations. Piazzolla had his *Estaciones Porteñas* (Four Seasons of Buenos Aires); Max Richter had his *Recomposed by Max Richter: Vivaldi – The Four Seasons*. And tonight, we're hearing Michael Abels take a spin with *More Seasons*.

Some expectation setting: this is not a one-to-one transformation. There aren't four distinct movements that correspond to spring, summer, winter, or fall. And Abels says that's intentional—the single-movement piece was a deliberate shift away from the structure of those concerti. But the inspiration is definite. Abels says that Vivaldi's music has a minimalist quality that existed centuries before "minimalist" even became a word we use in musical discussion. "Because I heard that in the music, I thought, 'wouldn't it be fun if I filtered him through that lens,'" he explained. "So the piece is kind of like Vivaldi in a Mix Master." And now we've got a time-traveling piece of Baroque music, full of relentless, see-sawing violins and the winds that swirl beneath them. And, of course, a dignified harpsichord that coexists with a humor that Abels says is sorely missing from so much concert music.

If you squint, you can see that this program is built on a linear timeline. We depart Abels's Baroque world and enter that of another composer working with a different aesthetic well out of that time: Tchaikovsky's *Variations on a Rococo Theme* performed by Sterling Elliott in tonight's Avery Fisher Legacy Concert. Unlike Abels, Tchaikovsky's cello showpiece isn't drawing inspiration from a singular piece

of music, but rather the entire rococo aesthetic. And even then, the Rococo period acts as a sort of bridge between the Baroque and Classical eras, a period exemplified by the music of one Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, from whom Tchaikovsky derived a great deal of inspiration for this piece. Here, the Russian composer takes his theme and follows it rising, falling, and gracefully shifting between eight different variations. Hear, for example, how it becomes spritely in its call and response with the orchestra in the second variation, or how, in the sixth variation, the cello relinquishes its duties first to the flute and later to the entire orchestra. The finale, which opens with an aggravated mordent, seems particularly Mozartian, like something right out of that composer's final orchestral acts.

Tchaikovsky has successfully transported us back in time to the 18th century. And now we arrive at Mozart—not as an orchestral composer—but an operatic one. Tonight's fare? *Zaide*, a work unlikely to be named alongside *Don Giovanni* or *The Magic Flute*, in part because the tale of a love between a woman and an enslaved man is incomplete. But it still gives us something: conductor Jane Glover says that here we find one of the best arias Mozart ever wrote. And what's more? This unfinished business may have been his key to unlocking a higher artistic ability. Because, notes Glover, "He was absolutely on the cusp of that total operatic maturity that he reached with *Idomeneo*."

Idomeneo arguably holds more public captivation—after all, this is an opera that Mozart actually finished. But the sense of amazement that comes with listening to an underperformed composition from a cultural powerhouse cannot be overstated. We're journeying to the past, zooming in on that timeline, and filling in a gap on Mozart's creative journey.

MEET THE ARTISTS

PHOTO CREDIT: JIM STEERE



Jane Glover, *conductor*

Acclaimed British conductor Jane Glover, named Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in the 2021 New Year's Honours, is Music Director of Chicago's Music of the Baroque and Principal Guest Conductor of the Fort Worth Symphony. Future and recent-past engagements include returns to the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Helsinki Philharmonic, Florence's Maggio Musicale and Camerata Salzburg, and the Symphonies of Chicago, Houston, Cincinnati, and St. Louis. In opera recent productions include *Magic Flute* at New York's Metropolitan Opera, the Houston Grand Opera, and at the Aspen Music Festival, *Xerxes* with the Detroit Opera and *Albert Herring* at both the Minnesota Opera, as well as Chicago Opera Theater and productions of *Don Giovanni* with the Houston Grand Opera and Cincinnati Opera. Jane Glover's discography includes a series of Mozart and Haydn symphonies with the London Mozart Players and recordings of Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Britten, and Walton with the London Philharmonic, the Royal Philharmonic, and the BBC Singers. She is the author of the critically acclaimed books *Mozart's Women*, *Handel in London*, and *Mozart in Italy*. In 2020 she was awarded the Royal Philharmonic Society's Gamechanger Award for her work in breaking new ground for other female conductors.

PHOTO CREDIT: TITILUO AVANAGADE



Sterling Elliott, *cello*

Acclaimed for his stellar stage presence and joyous musicianship, cellist Sterling Elliott is a 2021 Avery Fisher Career Grant recipient and the winner of the Senior Division of the 2019 National Sphinx Competition. Already in his young career, he has appeared with major orchestras such as the Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. In the 2024/2025 season Elliott debuts with the Atlanta Symphony, Reno Philharmonic, Columbus Symphony, Ann Arbor Symphony, Des Moines Symphony, Winston-Salem Symphony, and returns to the Wilmington Symphony. He joins the Madison Symphony for the Beethoven Triple Concerto with Gil and Orli Shaham and returns to Carnegie

Hall with the Orchestra of St. Luke's led by Louis Langrée. As the YCAT—Music Masters Robey Artist he will tour New Zealand in addition to appearances at Wigmore Hall, Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie, Konzerthaus Berlin, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and others. This season he also begins his tenure as a BBC New Generation Artist with radio appearances and more. Born into a musical household, Sterling initially wanted to play the violin like his older brother and sister. After a bit of encouragement, he completed The Elliott Family String Quartet, an ensemble that enjoyed personalized arrangements of genres such as bluegrass, gospel, and funk music. Sterling is pursuing an Artist Diploma at The Juilliard School under the tutelage of Joel Krosnick and Clara Kim, following completion of his Master of Music and undergraduate degrees at Juilliard. He performs on a 1741 Gennaro Gagliano cello on loan through the Robert F. Smith Fine String Patron Program, in partnership with the Sphinx Organization.

PHOTO CREDIT: DARIO ACOSTA



Erika Baikoff, *soprano*

Russian American soprano Erika Baikoff is a Metropolitan Opera Lindemann Young Artist Development Program graduate and has performed Xenia in *Boris Godunov* and Barbarina in *le nozze di Figaro* on the Met's mainstage. Recent orchestral highlights include Bach's B minor mass with Orchestre Métropolitain (Yannick Nézet-Séguin); Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra's tour of *Das Rheingold*; Mahler's Symphony No. 4 with the Ulster Orchestra, Taipei

Music Academy & Festival and Orchestre National de Lyon; Britten's *Les Illuminations* with Detroit Symphony, Nunes Garcias' Missa di Requiem with BBC Symphony Orchestra; Galuppi's *La Caduta di Adamo* with Helsinki Baroque and concert performances of Jano (*Jenůfa*) with the London Symphony Orchestra (Simon Rattle). Upcoming, she performs with Atlanta Symphony, SWR Stuttgart, and Brahms's Requiem at the Hauptkirche St. Michaelis Hamburg. Notable recent opera performances include Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*) at Houston Grand Opera, the four heroines (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*) at Palm Beach Opera, and multiple returns to the Bayerische Staatsoper. Erika will sing Gretel (Hansel und Gretel), Oscar (*un Ballo in Maschera*), and Belinda (*Dido and Aeneas*) at the Bayerische Staatsoper; Zerlina at Opera Omaha, and makes her house and role debut as Veremonda in Gasparini's *Amleto* at Theater an der Wien. A former member of the opera studio at the Opéra National de Lyon (2018–20), Erika debuted multiple main stage roles including Le Feu/Princesse/Rossignol (*L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*), and as an alumnus of the prestigious Atelier Lyrique at Verbier Festival, she sang Musetta (*La bohème*) under the baton of James Gaffigan. An acclaimed recitalist, Erika has appeared at the Circolo de Lied series (Madrid), Schubertiade Hohenems and Schwarzenberg, Heidelberg Frühling

Festival, Palau de la Música (Catalana), Alice Tully Hall (New York), and Klassinen Hietsu (Helsinki). Her next seasons see significant recital debuts at London's Wigmore Hall, Oxford International Festival, Sag Harbor Festival, and Leeds Lieder Festival.



Eric Ferring, *tenor*

Tenor Eric Ferring, a native of Dubuque, IA, graduated magna cum laude from Drake University with his Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance, and The Boston Conservatory with his Master of Music in Opera Performance. He trained with Lyric Opera of Chicago's Ryan Opera Center and the Pittsburgh Opera's Resident Artist Program, was a 2022 George London Foundation Award Winner, and the Top Prize Winner of the 2022 Gerda Lissner Foundation

International Vocal Competition. Ferring's 2024–2025 season includes performances with conductor Emmanuelle Haim and Le Concert d'Astrée, and a program of Rameau and Handel in Paris, Lille, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic (debut). He sings Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the Portland Orchestra and Mozart's Requiem with the North Carolina Symphony. With Haymarket Opera, he performs as Artabano in *Artaserse*, and sings Oronte in *Alcina* at the Ravinia Festival. The 2023–24 season featured Eric's house debut with Opéra de Lille as Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, a role he also performed in his return to Opéra de Rouen. He made debuts with the Seattle Symphony for Handel's Messiah, and the Insula Orchestra in Paris, France for Mozart's Requiem. With the English Concert, he made his role debut as Grimoaldo in *Rodelinda* conducted by Harry Bicket.



Ben Strong, *bass-baritone*

Ben Strong, bass-baritone, is an emerging operatic talent praised for his powerful voice, commanding stage presence, and musical sensitivity. He was recently named Second Place Winner in the 2025 Vero Beach Opera Rising Stars Competition and was nominated for the Sara Tucker Study Grant for the Richard Tucker Music Foundation. He is making his Lincoln Center debut as Allazim in Mozart's *Zaide*. Strong joined Des Moines Metro Opera as an Apprentice Artist, where he debuted as Harašta in

The Cunning Little Vixen and covered the role of The Dutchman in *Der Fliegende Holländer*. This year he completed an apprenticeship with Palm Beach Opera,

where he appeared as Marchese D'Obigny in *La Traviata* and Paris in *Roméo et Juliette*. Strong's previous performances include leading roles in Figaro in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (2024) and *Don Giovanni* (2023) at Prague's Estates Theatre, a Carnegie Hall debut in the Rachmaninoff 150th Anniversary Concert, and Dvořák's *Te Deum* at the Rudolfinum. He is a graduate of the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University (M.M., 2023), where he studied under Peter Volpe. Strong also holds a B.A. in Voice from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He has received accolades from the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition as a National semi-finalist, George and Nora London Foundation, and Houston Grand Opera's Concert of Arias.

PHOTO CREDIT: DEVON GASS



Denyce Graves, *narrator*

Renowned for her distinctive voice and captivating stage presence, Denyce Graves has established herself as one of the most celebrated mezzo-sopranos of our time. Beyond her storied career as a performer, she has also made a profound impact as an educator and stage director, inspiring the next generation of opera artists and reshaping the field with her creative vision. As a teacher, Graves serves as a dedicated mentor, guiding young singers to

develop not only their vocal artistry but also their interpretive depth and professionalism. Drawing upon her four and a half decades of extensive experience performing on the world's premier stages, including The Metropolitan Opera, Royal Opera House, and La Scala, she equips performing artists with the tools to navigate the complexities of a modern operatic career. Known for her nurturing yet exacting approach, she is a sought-after faculty member and masterclass clinician at leading conservatories and training programs worldwide. In her role as a stage director, Graves brings her deep understanding of character and dramatic storytelling to the forefront. Her productions are characterized by their emotional authenticity, innovative staging, and sensitivity to the nuances of both music and text. As a director, she is deeply invested in creating inclusive narratives, ensuring that opera remains relevant and accessible to contemporary audiences. In April 2025, Graves directed the world premiere of the operatic retelling of the groundbreaking United States Supreme Court case centered around the interracial marriage of Mildred and Richard Loving in a co-commission of *Loving v. Virginia*. As founder and artistic director of The Denyce Graves Foundation, Graves continues to leave an indelible mark on the operatic landscape, fostering excellence while championing the transformative power of the art form.



Photo By Lawrence Sumulong

FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA OF LINCOLN CENTER

Jonathon Heyward, Renée and Robert Belfer Music and Artistic Director

Violins

Ruggero Alliffranchini
(Concertmaster)

Emily Nebel
(Associate
Concertmaster)

Laura Frautschi
(Principal Second)

Martin Agee

Lilit Gampel

Michael Gillette

Suzanne Gilman

Amy Kauffman

Sophia Kessinger

Siwoo Kim

Katherine Livolsi-Landau

Kayla Moffett

Maureen Nelson

Ronald Oakland

Michael Roth

Deborah Wong

Violas

Shmuel Katz
(Principal)

Chihiro Allen

Meena Bhasin

Danielle Farina

Elzbieta Weyman

Cellos

Ilya Finkelshteyn
(Principal)

Ted Ackerman

Ann Kim

Alvin McCall

Double Basses

Jeffrey Turner
(Principal)

Lou Kosma

Flutes

Jasmine Choi
(Principal)

Tanya Dusevic Witek

Oboes

Ryan Roberts
(Principal)

Nick Masterson

Clarinets

Jon Manasse
(Principal)

Christopher Pell

Bassoons

Marc Goldberg
(Principal)

Tom Seĉovic

Horns

Lawrence DiBello
(Principal)

Richard Hagen

Trumpets

Neil Balm
(Principal)

Timpani

David Punto
(Principal)

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FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA OF LINCOLN CENTER

The Festival Orchestra of Lincoln Center is a chamber orchestra that comes together during Lincoln Center's *Summer for the City* to celebrate and share the beauty of classical music. The ensemble, formerly the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra, is comprised of world-class musicians who perform year-round as soloists, as chamber musicians, and in other ensembles across Lincoln Center's campus and around the globe.

LINCOLN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

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LINCOLN CENTER'S *SUMMER FOR THE CITY*

Summer for the City welcomes all New Yorkers and visitors from around the world to a season grounded in the city's global cultural traditions, innovative spirit, and deep sense of community—all for free or Choose-What-You-Pay. Now in its fourth year, this highly anticipated summer tradition has served more than 1 million people since launching in 2022. The 2025 festival offers a bold lineup of multidisciplinary performances across the Lincoln Center campus, including world and New York premieres, participatory events, and more—all within transformed outdoor spaces that are destinations for a range of artistic experiences and spaces for respite for New Yorkers during the summer months. [SummerfortheCity.org](https://www.SummerfortheCity.org)