



2022-23 Season

Osmo Vänskä Leads the Curtis Symphony Orchestra for its First-Ever West Coast Tour of the United States, Beginning with the World Premiere of Composer Dai Wei's *Awakening Lion* at Longwood Gardens

The orchestra and piano soloist Yefim Bronfman ('77) perform in three U.S. West Coast cities from May 16–22, following a performance at Longwood Gardens with pianist Janice Carissa ('22) on May 12.

PHILADELPHIA, PA—April 10, 2023—GRAMMY Award-winning conductor **Osmo Vänskä** teams up with the **Curtis Symphony Orchestra** for the school's first-ever **West Coast tour** of the United States, **May 12–22, 2023**. This ensemble of extraordinarily gifted young musicians from the **Curtis Institute of Music** will kick off the tour at one of the world's premiere horticultural gardens, the stunning **Longwood Gardens** in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, with additional performances in **Prescott, Arizona**; and **Santa Barbara and Davis, California**. These performances are part of **Curtis on Tour**, the Nina von Maltzahn global touring initiative of the Curtis Institute of Music, an embodiment of the school's "learn by doing" philosophy that offers students real-world, professional touring experience alongside celebrated alumni and faculty.

A highlight of the Curtis Symphony Orchestra's tour is the highly anticipated world premiere of *Awakening Lion* by composer **Dai Wei** ('19) at Longwood Gardens on **Friday, May 12**, at **7:00 p.m.** This exciting new work will be performed alongside the sweeping, visceral drama of **Béla Bartók's** virtuosic **Piano Concerto No. 2 in G major, Sz. 95**, and **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's** explosive **Symphony No. 4**, often considered one of the Russian Romantic composer's greatest orchestral works. Subsequent dates will each feature *Awakening Lion*, along with rotating performances of the Bartók concerto, **Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's** intoxicating ***Scheherazade, Op. 35***—inspired by *The Thousand and One Nights*, or *The Arabian Nights*, an anonymous collection of unconnected traditional Arabic, Persian, and Indian fairytales—and **Robert Schumann's** beloved **Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 54**. Pianist **Janice Carissa** ('22), Gilmore Young Artist and winner of Salon de Virtuosi, will perform at Longwood Gardens, and internationally renowned pianist **Yefim Bronfman** ('77), Neubauer Family Chair in Piano Studies at Curtis, will join the orchestra for three performances in Arizona and California.

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Hailed as “impassioned” by the *New York Times*, “with a striking humanity” by the *Washington Post*, composer and vocalist **Dai Wei**’s music navigates in the spaces between east and west, classical and pop, electronic and acoustic, innovation and tradition. She often draws from eastern philosophy and aesthetics to create works with contemporary resonance, that reflect an introspection on how these multidimensional conflicts and tension can create and inhabit worlds of their own. Ms. Dai was awarded the CANOA Commission (Composing a New Orchestra Audience) from the American Composer Orchestra’s Underwood New Music Readings.

Ms. Dai’s new orchestral work, *Awakening Lion*, is inspired by the traditional Cantonese Lion Dance. Customarily performed during the Lunar New Year, the Lion Dance tells the story of a creature named Nian (whose name evokes the Chinese word for “year”) who terrorizes a village. The villagers turn to a lion for help. After a fierce battle, the lion wounds Nian, who flees and promises revenge. The following year, the villagers create a lion mask to scare away Nian. The dance is not only looked upon as a skillful display of strength and artistry but as the conveyance of tradition, skill, collaboration, and relationship, which Ms. Dai likens to a symphony orchestra. Her piece features the use of unpitched percussion in instruments such as Chinese bass drums, which are commonly heard in the accompanying music of the Cantonese Lion Dance. These drums are integrated into the orchestral texture and complemented by other Western instruments, and they play an essential role in the piece, providing a driving and pulsating rhythm that underlies the melodies. The overall effect is a dynamic and rhythmic piece that aims to convey the spirit and energy of the Lion Dance.

“Having my piece performed by the Curtis Symphony Orchestra and as part of Curtis’s West Coast Tour is a great honor for me,” says Ms. Dai. “I am very excited to have my work performed in a new and different context and to see how it resonates with the audiences on the West Coast. It also makes me feel like I am closer to my parents geographically. It is a dream come true to hear my music played by such a talented group of musicians who have dedicated their lives to studying and performing classical music at the highest level.”

Osmo Vänskä has a longstanding relationship with Curtis, and previously led the Curtis Symphony Orchestra on a nine-city European tour in 2017 and its first-ever U.S. tour in 2020, culminating in a performance at New York’s Carnegie Hall. Conductor Laureate of the Minnesota Orchestra, where he held the Music Directorship for 19 years, and Music Director of Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra from 2020 to 2023, Mr. Vänskä is recognized for his compelling interpretations of repertoire of all ages and an energetic presence on the podium. His democratic and inclusive style of work has been key in forging long-standing relationships with many orchestras worldwide.

With the Minnesota Orchestra he undertook five major European tours, as well as an historic trip to Cuba in 2015—the first visit by an American orchestra since the two countries re-established diplomatic relations. They also made a ground-breaking tour to South Africa in 2018 as part of celebrations of Nelson Mandela’s centenary—also the first visit by an American orchestra—drawing together South African and American performers in musical expressions of peace, freedom, and reconciliation on a five-city tour.

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He returned this season to the symphony and philharmonic orchestras of Bamberg, Chicago, Los Angeles, Helsinki, Israel, Houston, Montreal, and Pittsburgh. Past guest conducting invitations include Cleveland, Philadelphia, and San Francisco Symphony orchestras; Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Iceland Symphony, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, and London Philharmonic Orchestra. He is regularly invited to guest conduct in Asia including with Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, and the China, Hangzhou, Hong Kong, and Taiwan philharmonic orchestras.

Mr. Vänskä studied conducting at Finland's Sibelius Academy and was awarded first prize in the 1982 Besançon Competition. He began his career as a clarinetist, occupying the co-principal chair of Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra and is currently recording several duos for clarinet and violin which he has commissioned with his wife, violinist Erin Keefe.

Mr. Vänskä is the recipient of a Royal Philharmonic Society Award, the Finlandia Foundation's Arts and Letters award, and the Pro Finlandia medal awarded to him by the State of Finland. He holds honorary doctorates from the universities of Glasgow and Minnesota and was named Musical America's 2005 Conductor of the Year.

Internationally recognized as one of today's most acclaimed and admired pianists, **Yefim Bronfman** stands among a handful of artists regularly sought by festivals, orchestras, conductors and recital series. His commanding technique, power and exceptional lyrical gifts are consistently acknowledged by the press and audiences alike.

His 2022–23 season included summer festival appearances in Verbier and Salzburg, a tour with mezzo-soprano Magdalena Kozena, and performances with the Chicago, Pittsburgh, Pacific, Madison, Toronto, and Montréal symphony orchestras; the Houston, New World, and New Jersey symphonies; the New York Philharmonic, and The Philadelphia Orchestra. In Europe, he also tours with the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra and appears with the Berlin Philharmonic, Bayerischer Rundfunk (Munich), Bamberg Symphony, Staatskapelle Dresden, Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, and Zurich Philharmonic.

Born in Tashkent in the Soviet Union, Mr. Bronfman immigrated to Israel with his family in 1973, where he studied with pianist Arie Vardi, head of the Rubin Academy of Music at Tel Aviv University. In the United States, he studied at the Juilliard School, Marlboro School of Music, and the Curtis Institute of Music, under Rudolf Firkusny, Leon Fleisher, and Rudolf Serkin. A recipient of the prestigious Avery Fisher Prize, one of the highest honors given to American instrumentalists, in 2010 he was further honored as the recipient of the Jean Gimbel Lane prize in piano performance from Northwestern University and in 2015 with an honorary doctorate from the Manhattan School of Music.

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A Gilmore Young Artist and winner of Salon de Virtuosi, **Janice Carissa** has “the multicolored highlights of a mature pianist” (*Philadelphia Inquirer*) and “strong, sure hands” (*Voice of America*) that “convey a vivid story rather than a mere showpiece.” (*Chicago Classical Review*) She has garnered great acclaim at renowned concert halls and institutions, including the Sydney Opera House, Carnegie Hall, United Nations, Kennedy Center, Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park, Louis Vuitton Foundation, Saratoga Performing Arts Center.

Following her Philadelphia Orchestra debut at age sixteen, Ms. Carissa has substituted for Andre Watts as soloist with Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and gone on to perform with the Kansas City, Amarillo, Des Moines, John Hopkins, Symphony in C, Eastern Wind, Bay Atlantic, and Midwest Young Artist symphonies. This season, she is a featured soloist with Sacramento Philharmonic, Promusica Chamber Orchestra, and the Tacoma and Battle Creek symphonies.

Ms. Carissa’s passion for chamber music has led her to performances with Brooklyn Chamber Music Society and Jupiter Chamber Concert Series; collaborations with Vadim Gluzman, Miriam Fried, Paul Neubauer, Lucy Shelton, Marcy Rosen, David Shifrin, Jennifer Cano, Peter Wiley, among other distinguished musicians; and appearances at Marlboro, North Shore, Ravinia, Caramoor, and Kneisel Hall festivals.

Ms. Carissa came to the Curtis Institute of Music in 2013 from Indonesia to study with Gary Graffman and Robert McDonald. After receiving her bachelor’s degree from Curtis in 2022, she is now pursuing her master’s degree at the Juilliard School, studying with Robert McDonald.

Curtis on Tour is the Nina von Maltzahn global touring initiative of the Curtis Institute of Music. Grounded in the school’s “learn by doing” philosophy, tours feature extraordinary emerging artists alongside celebrated alumni and faculty. In addition to performances, musicians offer master classes, educational programs, and community engagement activities while on tour. Curtis on Tour also manages solo engagements for Curtis artists with professional orchestras and presenters. Since the program was established in 2008, Curtis on Tour ensembles have performed more than 375 concerts in over 100 cities in Europe, Asia, and the Americas.

Acclaimed for its “otherworldly ensemble and professional level of sophistication” (*New York Times*), the **Curtis Symphony Orchestra** offers a dynamic showcase of tomorrow’s exceptional young talent. Each year the 100 extraordinary musicians of the orchestra work with internationally renowned conductors, including Osmo Vänskä, Vladimir Jurowski, Marin Alsop, Simon Rattle, Robert Spano, and Yannick Nézet-Séguin, who also mentors the early-career conductors who hold Rita E. Hauser Conducting Fellowships. This professional training has enabled Curtis alumni to assume prominent positions in America’s leading orchestras, as well as esteemed orchestral, opera, and chamber ensembles around the world.

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**About the Curtis Institute of Music**

The **Curtis Institute of Music** educates and trains exceptionally gifted young musicians to engage a local and global community through the highest level of artistry. For nearly a century Curtis has provided each member of its small student body with an unparalleled education alongside musical peers, distinguished by a “learn by doing” philosophy and personalized attention from a faculty that includes a high proportion of actively performing musicians. With admissions based solely on artistic promise, no student is turned away due to financial need. Curtis invests in each admitted student, ensuring no tuition is charged for their studies and they enter the profession free from educational debt. In a typical year, Curtis students hone their craft through more than 200 orchestra, opera, and solo and chamber music offerings in Philadelphia and around the world. Learn more at **Curtis.edu**.

CURTIS ON TOUR**Curtis Symphony Orchestra West Coast Tour 2023****May 12–22, 2023**

Curtis Symphony Orchestra
Osmo Vänskä, conductor
Yefim Bronfman ('77), piano
Janice Carissa ('22), piano

PROGRAM

DAI WEI	<i>Awakening Lion</i>
ROBERT SCHUMANN	Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 54
BÉLA BARTÓK	Piano Concerto No. 2 in G major, Sz. 95
NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV	<i>Scheherazade</i> , Op. 35
PYOTR ILLICH TCHAIKOVSKY	Symphony No. 4

KENNETT SQUARE, PA**Friday, May 12, 2023, at 7 p.m.**

Longwood Gardens (Outdoors)

Dai Wei: *Awakening Lion*

Bartók: Piano Concerto No. 2 in G major, Sz. 95

Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 4

Presented by Longwood Gardens. For tickets and information, visit www.longwoodgardens.org.

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PRESCOTT, AZ

Tuesday, May 16, 2023, at 7 p.m.

Yavapai College, Performing Arts Center

Dai Wei: *Awakening Lion*

Schumann: Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 54

Rimsky-Korsakov: *Scheherazade*, Op. 35

Presented by Yavapai Symphony Association. For tickets and information, visit www.ycpac.com.

SANTA BARBARA, CA

Thursday, May 18, 2023, at 7:30 p.m.

The Granada Theatre

Dai Wei: *Awakening Lion*

Schumann: Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 54

Rimsky-Korsakov: *Scheherazade*, Op. 35

Presented by Community Arts Music Association. For tickets and information, visit www.granadasb.org.

DAVIS, CA

Sunday, May 21, 2023, at 2 p.m.

Mondavi Center, Jackson Hall

Dai Wei: *Awakening Lion*

Bartók: Piano Concerto No. 2 in G major, Sz. 95

Rimsky-Korsakov: *Scheherazade*, Op. 35

Presented by Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts. For tickets and information, visit www.mondaviarts.org.

Curtis on Tour is the Nina von Maltzahn Global Touring Initiative of the Curtis Institute of Music.

Awakening Lion by Dai Wei was commissioned by the Curtis Institute of Music for Curtis on Tour, with the support of Allen R. and Judy Brick Freedman.

Orchestral concerts are supported by the Jack Wolgin Curtis Orchestral Concerts Endowment Fund.

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