



2023-24 Season

Curtis Symphony Orchestra Presents "Spectacular Strauss" on October 22 at Verizon Hall, Kimmel Center

Yannick Nézet-Séguin leads the Curtis Symphony Orchestra and rising stars of the Curtis Opera Theatre in a tribute to the last of the great Romanticists

PHILADELPHIA, PA—October 4, 2023—The **Curtis Symphony Orchestra** and members of the **Curtis Opera Theatre** kick off the 2023–24 season on Sunday, October 22, at 7 p.m. in Verizon Hall at the Kimmel Center with a tribute to **Richard Strauss**. "**Spectacular Strauss**" features performances by Curtis's extraordinarily gifted young musicians under the batons of **Yannick Nézet-Séguin**, internationally renowned music director of New York's Metropolitan Opera and The Philadelphia Orchestra, and mentor conductor at the Curtis Institute of Music, and **Micah Gleason**, second year Rita E. Hauser Conducting Fellow at the school. Often heralded as one of the greatest of all composers for the human voice, Strauss's stunningly expressive tone poems and deeply moving operas dominated the classical music scene of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, leaving a profound impact in their wake, and this soaring program is a celebration of the German Romantic composer's life and legacy.

The evening opens with a dramatic instrumental interpretation of the composer's "Dance of the Seven Veils" from his harrowing psychodrama *Salome*. Based on the scandalous play by Oscar Wilde, this one-act masterpiece recounts the biblical story of a princess who becomes infatuated with Jokanaan (John the Baptist), imprisoned for blasphemy by her stepfather, King Herod. When the prophet denies her advances, she agrees to dance for the king but demands that Jokanaan's head be delivered on a silver platter. Beneath the iconic scene's lush chromaticism is a discordant waltz that builds to a feverish frenzy as Salome removes each of her veils in sensuous dance and spirals deeper into madness.

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This striking, early 20th-century classic is followed by three riveting performances featuring rising stars of the Curtis Opera Theatre from two of Strauss's most popular operatic works. His satirical 1912 opera within an opera, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, is a theatrical battle between lighthearted comedy and dramatic tragedy. In the quintet, "Die Dame gibt mit trübem Sinn," the commedia dell'arte troupe of Brighella, Truffaldino, Scaramuccio, and Harlequin attempt to lift the spirits of saucy comedienne Zerbinetta with a charming song and dance number. This moment of comic levity is followed by the Act II opening of Strauss's most celebrated of operas, *Der Rosenkavalier*, featuring the ceremonious presentation of a silver rose and a rapturous love duet. The set concludes with the opera's sublime Act III trio, "Hab mir's gelobt," as the Marschallin blesses the union of young lovers Octavian and Sophie.

The concert closes with Strauss's final tone poem, *An Alpine Symphony* (*Eine Alpensinfonie*), Op. 64, presented in one uninterrupted, fifty-minute-long movement. Maestro Nézet-Séguin and the Curtis Symphony Orchestra scale the spectacular heights of this breathtaking work, depicting a perilous, eleven-hour mountain-climbing expedition from the composer's early adolescence. This Herculean piece captures the brilliance of a blazing sunrise over the Alps, the wonder of cascading waterfalls, the pastoral sounds of bleating sheep, and the terrifying violence of a raging storm. Composed while Strauss was living in the southern Bavarian town of Garmisch-Partenkirchen at the foot of Germany's highest peak, the towering Zugspitze, this virtuosic work features the sheer force and splendor of the entire Curtis Symphony Orchestra, unleashing the raw power of the entire brass and percussion sections, and featuring a celesta, a wind and thunder machine, cowbells, the booming tam-tam, two sets of timpani, and the world's largest mechanical action pipe organ, the Fred J. Cooper Memorial Organ, in Verizon Hall.

Yannick Nézet-Séguin is music director of The Philadelphia Orchestra and Montreal's Orchestre Métropolitain; in September 2018, he began his tenure as music director of the Metropolitan Opera. Widely recognized for his musicianship, dedication, and charisma, Mr. Nézet-Séguin has established himself as a musical leader of the highest caliber and one of the most exciting talents of his generation. His highly collaborative style, deeply rooted musical curiosity, boundless enthusiasm, and fresh approach to programming have been heralded by audiences and critics alike.

Mr. Nézet-Séguin has appeared with most of the world's leading orchestras. He enjoys close collaborations with the Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, and Chamber Orchestra of Europe. He is honorary conductor of the Rotterdam Philharmonic after serving as its music director from 2008 to 2018 and was principal guest conductor of the London Philharmonic from 2008 to 2014. He has repeatedly appeared at the BBC Proms and many European and North American festivals, among them Edinburgh, Grafenegg,

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Lanaudière, Lucerne, Mostly Mozart, Salzburg, Saratoga, and Vail. He has conducted annually at the Metropolitan Opera since 2009 and has led productions at Teatro alla Scala in Milan; the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden in London; Netherlands Opera; and the Vienna State Opera. He records for Deutsche Grammophon.

A native of Montreal, Mr. Nézet-Séguin studied piano, conducting, composition, and chamber music at the Conservatoire de music du Québec. He continued his studies with renowned conductor Carlo Maria Giulini and studied choral conducting with Joseph Flummerfelt at Westminster Choir College. His honors include Musical America’s Artist of the Year (2016), the Royal Philharmonic Society Award, Canada’s National Arts Centre Award, and the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres du Québec. He holds honorary doctorates from multiple institutions, including the University of Québec in Montreal, Westminster Choir College, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Curtis Institute of Music, where he has served on the faculty as mentor conductor since 2013.

The Curtis Symphony Orchestra returns to Verizon Hall at the Kimmel Cultural Campus on Saturday, January 27, at 2 p.m. for “Beethoven, Ortiz, and Barber” with conductor Michael Stern (’86) and internationally renowned violinist Pamela Frank (’89). The final orchestra concert of the season concludes on Saturday, March 9, at 3 p.m., with “Ra, Mackey, and Tchaikovsky,” featuring conductor Robert Spano (’85), the world premiere of *Te Deum* by James Ra (’04), and Steven Mackey’s Concerto for Electric Guitar, featuring jaw-dropping virtuosity of guitarist JIJI (’15). To learn more about these performances, as well as the Curtis Opera Theatre, Ensemble 20/21 concerts, Curtis Recital Series, and more, visit [Curtis.edu/Calendar](https://www.curtis.edu/Calendar).

Single tickets for “**Spectacular Strauss**” start at \$19 and are available for purchase at [Curtis.edu](https://www.curtis.edu). Subscriptions are now on sale for Curtis’s 2023–24 season. The flexible Choose Your Own subscription option offers 25% off ticket prices when purchasing tickets to two or more performances. For the 2023–24 season, Curtis also offers a Season Pass, with access to all events for \$179 per person. Each Season Pass is valid for one best-available ticket to each paid season performance. To order a subscription, visit [Curtis.edu/Subscribe](https://www.curtis.edu/Subscribe), call (215) 893-7902, or email tickets@curtis.edu.

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CURTIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Spectacular Strauss

Sunday, October 22, at 7 p.m.

Verizon Hall, Kimmel Center; Broad and Spruce Streets, Philadelphia

Yannick Nézet-Séguin, conductor

Micah Gleason, Rita E. Hauser Conducting Fellow

John Giampietro, stage director

Members of the Curtis Opera Theatre

PROGRAM

RICHARD STRAUSS Select Opera Excerpts (*Sung in German*)

Dance of the Seven Veils from *Salome*

Quintet: "Die Dame gibt mit trüben Sinn" from *Ariadne Auf Naxos*

Brighella: Hongrui Ren

Scaramuccio: Jackson Allen

Harlequin: Erik Tofte

Truffaldino: Morgan-Andrew King

Zerbinetta: Maya Mor Mitrani

Opening of Act II through the **Presentation of the Rose** from *Der Rosenkavalier*

Faninal: Nathaniel Schludecker

Marianne: Kylie Kreucher

Der Haushofmeister: Landry Allen

Sophie: Juliette Tacchino

Octavian: Zhihui Zhuo

Act III trio from *Der Rosenkavalier*

Octavian: Katie Trigg

Marschallin: Emily Damasco

Sophie: Sarah Fleiss

—Intermission—

An Alpine Symphony (*Eine Alpensinfonie*), Op. 64

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

Guest conductor appearances for each Curtis Symphony Orchestra performance are made possible by the Rita E. and Gustave M. Hauser Chair in Conducting Studies.

The Curtis Opera Theatre is generously supported by the Ernestine Bacon Cairns Trust, the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, and the Wyncote Foundation.

About the Curtis Symphony Orchestra

Acclaimed for its "otherworldly ensemble and professional level of sophistication" (*The 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.

About the Curtis Opera Theatre

The Curtis Opera Theatre has become known for imaginative productions, bold concepts, and absorbing theatre. Under the artistic direction of Eric Owens and the Hirsig Family Chair in Vocal Studies, Miloš Repický, promising young singers work alongside established professional directors and designers, resulting in fresh interpretations of standard repertoire and contemporary works. All of Curtis's students in vocal studies are cast regularly throughout each season, receiving a rare level of performance in fully staged productions, in recitals at Field Concert Hall, and as soloists with Curtis on Tour and the Curtis Symphony Orchestra. Curtis's educational approach opens professional opportunities for Curtis graduates, who sing with top opera companies across the United States and Europe, including La Scala, Covent Garden, the Vienna Staatsoper, Houston Grand Opera, the San Francisco Opera, and the Metropolitan Opera.

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](https://www.curtis.edu).

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