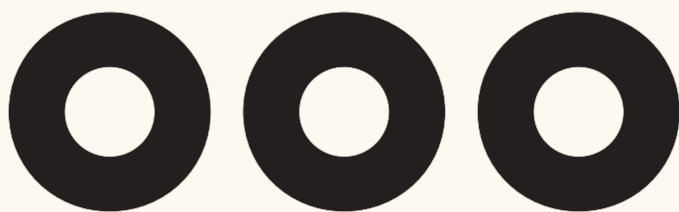


PHILADELPHIA/ORCHESTRA

Yannick Nézet-Séguin · Music & Artistic Director



Inspired by a 1932–33 Orchestra program cover

PLAYBILL®

NOVEMBER 2025

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A program book cover from the 1932–33 season that
was the inspiration for this month's program cover

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From the President and CEO



Jeffrey

Dear Friends:

The Philadelphia Orchestra celebrates its 125th anniversary on November 16, an incredible milestone that has us reflecting on our rich history. Who better to help us recall the key memories and milestones than the artists, patrons, staff, and supporters who were part of these seminal moments? We have embarked on an oral history project to help us capture, for posterity, the stories of our history. These video anecdotes and blog posts will be featured on a special 125th anniversary section of our website, on social media, and in *Playbill*. It's been fascinating to hear

directly from so many people who had front-row seats to the magic, from stories about Leopold Stokowski to the 9/11 Tribute Concert to the creation of the Kimmel Center. I hope you will find them as enjoyable and eye-opening as I have.

Another topic addressed in the oral histories is the Orchestra's role as a global cultural ambassador, which has been an important part of our identity from the earliest days. This season the ensemble undertakes three tours of America—beginning this month in North Carolina and continuing throughout the season in Florida and the Midwest—not only to celebrate our own birthday but also in honor of the country's upcoming 250th anniversary.

And last month several Orchestra musicians traveled to China for our 2025 Residency, continuing the unique relationship we have built with the people of China for over half a century, starting in 1973 when we became the first American orchestra to perform there. I first traveled to China with the Orchestra in 2012, shortly after joining the staff. The visit marked the start of our residency program there, a concerted effort to connect more deeply with the people of China in their communities, through music lessons in schools, performances in hospitals, master classes, events with diplomats and business leaders, and pop-up performances. It was a tremendous success and has informed every return visit since.

The Orchestra's activities on tour are just a microcosm of everything we do at home through both The Philadelphia Orchestra and Ensemble Arts, from world-class performances that span genres and interests to education and community programs that nurture the next generation of artists and audiences. As we celebrate the diversity of our vibrant community, we are proud to be a convener of creativity and a hub for civic participation—roles that are vital to our existence and our identity.

At the heart of what we do is our mission to share the transformative power of the performing arts with the widest possible audience. We are committed to ensuring that everyone feels welcome, inspired, and connected to the magic that happens here as we build a bright future for Philadelphia and shape the next 125 years of The Philadelphia Orchestra.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ryan Fleur".

Ryan Fleur
President and CEO

The Philadelphia Orchestra

2025–2026 Season

Yannick Nézet-Séguin

Music and Artistic

Director

Walter and Leonore

Amnenberg Chair

Marin Alsop

Principal Guest Conductor

Ralph and Beth Johnston

Muller Chair

Joe Hisaishi

Composer-in-Residence

Naomi Woo

Assistant Conductor

Joseph Conyers

Education and

Community Ambassador

Mark and Tobey Dichter

Chair

Charlotte Blake Alston

Storyteller, Narrator,

and Host

Osagie and Losenge

Imasogie Chair

First Violins

David Kim, Concertmaster

Dr. Benjamin Rush Chair

Juliette Kang, First

Associate Concertmaster

Joseph and Marie Field

Chair

Christine Lim, Associate

Concertmaster

Marc Rovetti, Assistant

Concertmaster

Dr. James F. Dougherty

Chair

Barbara Govatos

Robert E. Mortensen Chair

Jonathan Beiler

Hirono Oka

Richard Amoroso

Robert and Lynne Pollack

Chair

Yayoi Numazawa

Jason DePue

Larry A. Grika Chair

Jennifer Haas

Miyo Curnow

Elina Kalendarova

Daniel Han

Julia Li

William Polk

Mei Ching Huang

Second Violins

Kimberly Fisher, Principal

Peter A. Benoliel Chair

Paul Roby, Associate

Principal

Sandra and David

Marshall Chair

Dara Morales, Assistant

Principal

Anne M. Buxton Chair

Philip Kates

Peter A. Benoliel Chair

Davyd Booth

Paul Arnold

Joseph Brodo Chair; given

by Peter A. Benoliel

Boris Balter

Amy Oshiro-Morales

Volunteer Committees

Chair

Yu-Ting Chen

Jeoung-Yin Kim

Willa Finck

John Bian

MuChen Hsieh

Eliot Heaton

Violas

Choong-Jin Chang,

Principal

Ruth and A. Morris

Williams, Jr., Chair

Kirsten Johnson,

Associate Principal

Kerri Ryan, Assistant

Principal

Burchard Tang

Renard Edwards

Anna Marie Ahn

Petersen

Piasecki Family Chair

David Nicastro

Che-Hung Chen

Rachel Ku

Marvin Moon

Meng Wang

Hsiang-Hsin Ching

Cellos

Hai-Ye Ni, Principal

Priscilla Lee, Associate

Principal

Yumi Kendall, Assistant

Principal

Elaine Woo Camarda and

A. Morris Williams, Jr.,

Chair

Richard Harlow

Kathryn Picht Read

John Koen

Derek Barnes

Alex Veltman

Jiayin He

Michael Katz

Eugene Lin

Basses

Joseph Conyers,

Principal

Carole and Emilio

Gravagno Chair

Gabriel Polinsky,
Associate Principal
Tobias Vigneau, Assistant
Principal
David Fay
Duane Rosengard
Nathaniel West
Michael Franz
Christian Gray

*Some members of the string
sections voluntarily rotate
seating on a periodic basis.*

Flutes

Jeffrey Khaner, Principal
*Paul and Barbara Henkels
Chair*
Patrick Williams,
Associate Principal
*Rachelle and Ronald
Kaiserman Chair*
Olivia Staton
Erica Peel, Piccolo

Oboes

Philippe Tondre, Principal
Samuel S. Fels Chair
Peter Smith, Associate
Principal
Jonathan Blumenfeld
Edwin Tuttle Chair
Elizabeth Starr
Masoudnia,
English Horn
*Joanne T. Greenspun
Chair*

Clarinets

Ricardo Morales,
Principal
*Leslie Miller and Richard
Worley Chair*

Samuel Caviezel,
Associate Principal
*Sarah and Frank Coulson
Chair*
Socrates Villegas
Paul R. Demers, Bass
Clarinet
*Peter M. Joseph and Susan
Rittenhouse Joseph Chair*

Bassoons

Daniel Matsukawa,
Principal
Richard M. Klein Chair
Mark Gigliotti,
Co-Principal
Angela Anderson Smith
Holly Blake,
Contrabassoon

Horns

Jennifer Montone,
Principal
*Gray Charitable Trust
Chair*
Jeffrey Lang, Associate
Principal
*Hannah L. and J. Welles
Henderson Chair*
Victoria Knudtson, Assistant
Principal
Christopher Dwyer
Chelsea McFarland
Ernesto Tovar Torres

Trumpets

(position vacant)
Principal
*Marguerite and Gerry
Lenfest Chair*
Anthony Prisk
Sam Huss

Trombones

Nitzan Haroz, Principal
*Neubauer Family
Foundation Chair*

Matthew Vaughn,
Co-Principal
Jack Grimm
Blair Bollinger, Bass
Trombone
*Drs. Bong and Mi Wha
Lee Chair*

Tuba

Carol Jantsch, Principal
*Lyn and George M. Ross
Chair*

Timpani

Don S. Liuzzi, Principal
Dwight V. Dowley Chair
Angela Zator Nelson,
Associate Principal

Percussion

Christopher Deviney,
Principal
Charlie Rosmarin,
Associate Principal
Angela Zator Nelson

Keyboards

Davyd Booth

Harp

Elizabeth Hainen,
Principal

Librarians

Nicole Jordan, Principal
Holly Matthews

Stage Personnel

Dennis Moore, Jr.,
Manager
Francis “Chip” O’Shea III
Aaron Wilson

Music and Artistic Director



London Neudeman

Canadian-born conductor and pianist **Yannick Nézet-Séguin** is currently in his 14th season with The Philadelphia Orchestra, serving as music and artistic director. An inspired leader, Yannick is both an evolutionary and a revolutionary, developing the mighty “Philadelphia Sound” in new ways. His collaborative style, deeply rooted musical curiosity, and boundless enthusiasm have been heralded by critics and audiences alike. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* has said that under his baton the Orchestra is “at the top of its considerable form”; the Associated Press has called it “a premier orchestra at its peak”; and the *New York Times* wrote, “the ensemble, famous for its glowing strings and homogenous richness, has never sounded better.”

Yannick has established himself as a musical leader of the highest caliber and one of the most thrilling and sought-after talents of his generation. He became the third music director of New York’s Metropolitan Opera in 2018. In addition, he has been artistic director and principal conductor of Montreal’s Orchestre Métropolitain since 2000. In 2017 he became the third-ever honorary member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. He served as music director of the Rotterdam Philharmonic from 2008 to 2018 (he is now honorary conductor) and was principal guest conductor of the London Philharmonic from 2008 to 2014. He has made wildly successful appearances with the world’s most revered ensembles and at many of the leading opera houses.

Yannick has shown a deep commitment to expanding the repertoire by embracing an ever-growing and diverse group of today’s composers and by performing and recording the music of underappreciated composers of the past, including Florence Price, Clara Schumann, William Dawson, Lili Boulanger, Louise Farrenc, and William Grant Still. In 2018 he signed an exclusive recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon. Under his leadership The Philadelphia Orchestra returned to recording with 15 releases on that label, including *Florence Price Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3*, which won a GRAMMY® Award for Best Orchestral Performance in 2022.

A native of Montreal, Yannick studied piano, conducting, composition, and chamber music at Montreal’s Conservatory of Music and continued his studies with renowned conductors, most notably Carlo Maria Giulini; he also studied choral conducting with Joseph Flummerfelt at Westminster Choir College. Among Yannick’s honors are an appointment as Companion of the Order of Canada; Companion to the Order of Arts and Letters of Quebec; an Officer of the Order of Quebec; an Officer of the Order of Montreal; an Officier de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres; *Musical America*’s 2016 Artist of the Year; ECHO KLASSIK’s 2014 Conductor of the Year; a Royal Philharmonic Society Award; Canada’s National Arts Centre Award; the Prix Denise-Pelletier; the Oskar Morawetz Award; and honorary doctorates from the University of Quebec, the Curtis Institute of Music, Westminster Choir College of Rider University, McGill University, the University of Montreal, the University of Pennsylvania, Laval University, and Drexel University.

To read Yannick’s full bio, please visit philorch.org/conductor.

Marian Anderson Hall

Adrian Segel Collection/Philadelphia Orchestra Archives



Marian Anderson with Music Director Eugene Ormandy during a Philadelphia Orchestra rehearsal at the Academy of Music in December 1938

On June 8, 2024, Verizon Hall at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts was officially rededicated as Marian Anderson Hall in honor of the legendary Black contralto, civil rights icon, and Philadelphian. The first major concert venue in the world to honor Marian Anderson—85 years after she was barred from performing at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C., because of her race—the hall is a permanent monument to its namesake’s artistry and achievements, a reflection of the inclusive future she helped to engender, and an active testament to the intersection of music, art, and positive social impact. We look forward to honoring Marian Anderson in perpetuity with a venue that reflects the ideals by which she lived her life: equity, justice, freedom, and the belief that the arts are for everyone.

Marian Anderson Hall was named in her honor by a visionary \$25-million philanthropic gift from Richard Worley and Leslie Miller. Worley has been a member of The Philadelphia Orchestra’s Board of Trustees since 1997 and served as board chair from 2009 to 2019. Miller is a former Kimmel Center trustee and previous acting president of the Kimmel Center. They are among the largest donors in Philadelphia Orchestra history. Additional generous support for Marian Anderson Hall was given by Sidney and Caroline Kimmel.

Witness to History: Carole Haas Gravagno

Part of a season-long series of oral histories

By Judith Kurnick



Kelly & Massa

Carole Haas Gravagno at the opening of the Kimmel Center on December 15, 2001, with Philadelphia Orchestra Music Director Wolfgang Sawallisch (left) and her husband, Philadelphia Orchestra bass player Emilio Gravagno

It would be tough to find someone who has worn more hats at The Philadelphia Orchestra than Carole Haas Gravagno. Officially, she has been a Board member, a major philanthropic supporter, and a tireless advocate for music education. But it was Gravagno's unofficial role as "harmonizer" that led to her least expected hat: that of Orchestra spouse.

Growing up in Philadelphia and North Carolina, music was ever present, Gravagno remembers. Her parents, who sang in a chorus, kept their five kids quiet on long car trips by singing in harmony. Her surgeon father would come home at night, put on the latest recording by Eugene Ormandy and The Philadelphia Orchestra, and conduct along with the music. "He was so excited, the happiest you ever saw," she recalls. A piano student, Gravagno was thrilled when her mother's twin cousins came to visit. "They were concert pianists. They would play our piano and they'd play together and then one would get up and they'd swap places; they'd play the other part. It was such fun. I always got inspired to practice more when they would come to town."

Most important to her later work, "When I lived in Philadelphia, from the first to the fourth grade," she continues, "we had music in school every day. We weren't doing instrumental music, but we sang every single day. There was a piano in the classroom. They would open all the doors between the different classrooms, and we'd all sing together."

When Gravagno married and moved back to Pennsylvania in 1965, she attended Orchestra concerts until children and work kept her too busy. Fast forward to 1989, when a request from a friend set her on a path toward the orchestra world. She was asked to help with a presentation of the American Soviet Youth Orchestra. “They were bringing 50 Soviets and 50 American musicians,” Gravagno explains, “to play together on the Mann Music Center stage. [First ladies] Mrs. Bush and Mrs. Gorbachev were the honorary sponsors. My job was to help raise money and to find placements; they were going to stay in homes, one Soviet and one American in each of the homes. I thought, how am I going to do this? So I called The Philadelphia Orchestra. I don’t even remember who I talked to. I just said, ‘I need somebody to help me.’”

The Orchestra lent a staff member, and the event was successful on multiple levels. “There were 5,000 people in the audience, from all walks of life. It was just the kind of place that I enjoyed being. It was wonderful to see these musicians, Soviets and Americans. Even though they didn’t speak each other’s language, they did speak the music. And you could tell how they used the music to help them communicate.”

After this success, Philadelphia Orchestra Board Chair Peter Benoliel invited Gravagno to join the Board. Unfortunately, her husband, Otto Haas, had recently been diagnosed with prostate cancer, so the answer was “yes, but not now.” Meanwhile, Gravagno had become a performing arts champion. An early project helped create what became the Kimmel Center. “I was asked by Tony Checchia to help the Chamber Music Society buy the Prince Theater. There had been a big fire across the street and that whole block was a mess. So I went to [Philadelphia’s then-mayor] Ed Rendell and said, ‘I’m interested in doing something on Chestnut Street because there is no performing space for a small group, like chamber music, in the city.’ That was just important. And he said, ‘Well, if you’ll give us that money so we can buy the property at Broad and Spruce, I’ll assure you that we will build a space for chamber music.’” After discussing it with her husband, Gravagno went ahead with the gift for the land.

Otto Haas died in January 1994. In 1995, Benoliel repeated his invitation. “He was such a persuasive gentleman,” Gravagno recalls. “And I said, ‘Sure, I’d be happy to do that.’” Naturally, she was asked to serve on the New Hall Committee. But her heart lay in her second assignment. “The Artistic Committee was fascinating,” she recalls. “It was really the Artistic and Education Committee because they were all in one. I did not understand why there weren’t two committees, because artistic took up the whole time and a very little bit of time was devoted to education. Finally, after many years, I convinced [Orchestra President] Joe Kluger that it would be better to have two different committees, one for each. It was a long process to get that moving. Today, I’m so glad that that attitude has changed.”

Gravagno threw herself into developing and supporting music education projects. A major one was a collaboration among the Orchestra, Settlement Music School, and the School District of Philadelphia. The goal was to bring musicians to certain schools four times a year to show students what was possible with instruments. If students then wanted lessons, the school music teachers would teach them. When Orchestra musicians hesitated based on past concerns, Gravagno convened a



Students at a Jane H. Kesson School Concert in 2023



Carole Haas Gravagno with Philadelphia Orchestra Music and Artistic Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin following a rehearsal with students led by Yannick at KIPP West Philadelphia Preparatory Charter School

lunch and pleaded with them. “We used to have one of the most phenomenal music programs in the country,” she said. “A lot of you came from our schools, and then those programs were dismantled because of money. Some places still have music, but the places that really need it do not. You are the star musicians in the city, and if you aren’t doing something to help the people here learn about music, who is?”

The musicians agreed to participate, and the program had some wonderful response but kept facing challenges in the public schools. Gravagno eventually moved it to St. Francis de Sales, a Catholic school, where it thrived for several years.

So, what about that Orchestra spouse hat? It all started in 1996, when the Orchestra musicians were on strike, a miserable experience for everyone involved. After a contentious Board meeting, Gravagno went downstairs to leave and saw the picket line. “It was freezing cold, and these musicians were out there in their parkas. They had their signs, and this nice man walked up to me and said, ‘Would you sign my petition?’” She later learned he was Emilio “Lee” Gravagno, one of the bass players.

It wasn’t until months later that the encounter took on new meaning. “After the strike was over, the tension among the musicians, the staff, and the Board was awful.” Gravagno decided to travel on the upcoming tour and try to “figure out what I could do as a Board member to help heal some of these wounds.” She planned to “just listen,” and ask for any ideas people thought could bring positive change. “I got a tap on my shoulder, and it was Emilio. He said, ‘Would you have lunch with me? There are a few things I could tell you about the Orchestra that I think would be helpful.’ So I had lunch with him. Years later he told me, ‘I had ulterior motives.’”

When they got home, Gravagno debriefed with the musicians after a rehearsal. Emilio was distressed because his car was missing. “I gave him a lift home, and we went to dinner. That was the beginning. After we got married, we had a reception for everybody in the Academy Ballroom: musicians and their spouses, Board members, ushers, staff, everybody connected with the Orchestra. We had dinner, we had a band, we had a wonderful time, all together. We tried to show how opposites could attract, how we could all work and be constructive together.”

Thirty years on, Emilio has passed, but Carole Haas Gravagno is still harmonizing.

Judith Kurnick has written about music for the New York Times, the Philadelphia Inquirer, and media outlets in Europe. She was The Philadelphia Orchestra’s vice president for communications from 1983 to 1989 and 2000 to 2005, and held the same role at the League of American Orchestras from 2008 to 2013.



Scan the QR code to visit the Orchestra’s special 125th anniversary website, including more oral histories.

I Knew a Man Who Knew Brahms

Nancy Shear's new memoir provides a rare, behind-the-scenes look at the inner workings of The Philadelphia Orchestra and her time as Leopold Stokowski's musical assistant

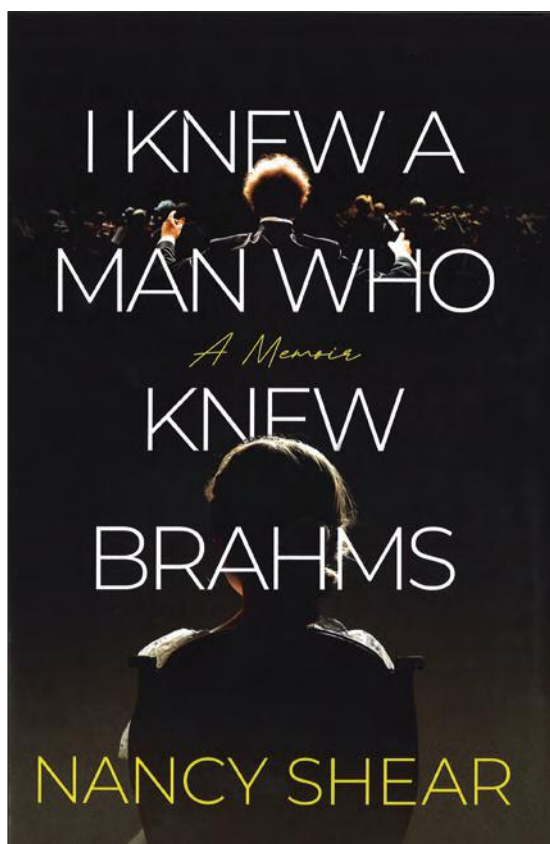
Nancy Shear was only 15 when she began sneaking into Philadelphia Orchestra concerts through the stage door, and 17 when she was hired as a member of the Orchestra's library staff to help prepare the music; one year later, she became Leopold Stokowski's musical assistant. Being young and female, she was a pioneer in both positions.

Her new memoir, *I Knew a Man Who Knew Brahms*, published by Regalo Press this past May, is a vivid personal account of a Golden Age in classical music—the 2nd half of the 20th century. It takes readers into the homes, studios, and minds of legendary artists with whom Shear shared close personal relationships, including Mstislav Rostropovich, Eugene Ormandy, and members of The Philadelphia Orchestra.

"A fascinating, superbly written coming-of-age saga."—Words and Music blog, B.A. Nilsson

"Shear contributes many a keen personal anecdote... [Her] book is as honest and unassuming as [Leopold] Stokowski was evasive and flamboyant."

—*The Wall Street Journal*



Noted in Passing

The Philadelphia Orchestra mourns the passing of former assistant head usher Antoinette DuBiel on September 8, former Orchestra violinist Yumi Ninomiya Scott on September 10, and former Orchestra violinist Vladimir Shapiro on August 19.



Antoinette DuBiel was born into a music-loving Italian-American family in South Philadelphia and grew up in Chestnut Hill. She started taking piano lessons at a young age and said that “music was like part of breathing.” She first attended a Philadelphia Orchestra concert around the age of 12. Life took her down a non-musical path for a time, working in real estate, getting married, and having a family. But music continued to be a big part of her life, and she decided to enroll at Chestnut Hill College where she graduated with a performance degree. The opportunity to usher presented itself in 1994. Both her husband and daughter were ushers at the Academy of Music. One day she went with them to hear a Philadelphia Orchestra concert and it turned out they were hiring. With her love of music and her people skills, it was a natural fit.

With over 30 years of dedicated service first at the Academy of Music and then at the Kimmel Center, Antoinette was a fixture at concerts. She took her job seriously, not wanting anything to interfere with the audience’s enjoyment of the performance. Over the course of her long tenure, she became friends with audience members, musicians, and staff. Her devotion to her job and to the Orchestra was unparalleled. As she said back in 2018 when asked how she felt about being an usher: “It makes my heart wiggle just talking about it; it’s just where I need to be!”

Yumi Ninomiya Scott began playing the violin at the age of four in her native Japan. After several years of study at the Toho Conservatory in Tokyo, she was accepted, in 1961, as a pupil of Ivan Galamian at the Curtis Institute of Music. She made her solo debut with The Philadelphia Orchestra as a winner of its Senior Student Competition (later renamed the Albert M. Greenfield Competition) in 1966, playing Bruch's First Violin Concerto. She joined The Philadelphia Orchestra in 1984 and performed frequently on its chamber music series before retiring in 2016. She was concertmaster of the Main Line Symphony from 1981 to 2013 and was a participant in the Casals Festival for many years starting in 1994. She was also a member of the Chamber Symphony of Philadelphia, the Curtis String Quartet, and the Concerto Soloists of Philadelphia (now the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia). She was on the faculties of the Curtis Institute of Music, Temple University, and Temple Music Prep.

Yumi was a beloved member of the second violin section. She was married to former Orchestra bass player Henry Scott, with whom she had two sons, Kenji and Kohji.

Vladimir Shapiro was born in Odesa, Soviet Union (now Ukraine), in 1952, and received his training at the Leningrad State Conservatory. He played with the Leningrad State Philharmonic Orchestra under Chief Conductor Evgeny Mravinsky from 1974 to 1978 and with the Leningrad Chamber Orchestra from 1974 to 1977. He emigrated to the United States in 1978 and joined The Philadelphia Orchestra the following year. He left the Orchestra in 2006.



Justin Griffin



Joan Brenkner

2025–2026 | 126th Season
Marian Anderson Hall

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Thursday, November 13, at 7:00

Friday, November 14, at 7:00

Joe Hisaishi Conductor and Piano

Hisaishi Symphonic Variation “Merry-Go-Round,” from *Howl’s Moving Castle*
First Philadelphia Orchestra performances

Britten Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell, Op. 34 /●

Intermission

Hisaishi *DA-MA-SHI-E*
First Philadelphia Orchestra performances

Hisaishi Symphonic Suite *Castle in the Sky*
First Philadelphia Orchestra performances

This program runs approximately one hour, 45 minutes.

/● designates a work that was given its world or United States premiere by The Philadelphia Orchestra, part of the Orchestra’s 125th anniversary celebration.

Philadelphia Orchestra concerts are broadcast on WRTI 90.1 FM on Sunday afternoons at 1 PM and are repeated on Monday evenings at 7 PM on WRTI HD 2. Visit www.wrti.org to listen live or for more details.

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA/125

Yannick Nézet-Séguin
Music & Artistic Director

125 YEARS. COUNTLESS MOMENTS.

Share Yours.



@philorch

#PhilOrch125



Photo: Pete Checchia



The Philadelphia Orchestra

The world-renowned Philadelphia Orchestra strives to share the transformative power of music with the widest possible audience, and to create joy, connection, and excitement through music in the Philadelphia region, across the country, and around the world. Through innovative programming, robust education initiatives, a commitment to its diverse communities, and the embrace of digital outreach, the ensemble is creating an expansive and inclusive future for classical music. In June 2021 the Orchestra and its home, the Kimmel Center, united. Today, The Philadelphia Orchestra and Ensemble Arts brings the greatest performances and most impactful education and community programs to audiences in Philadelphia and beyond.

Yannick Nézet-Séguin is now in his 14th season with The Philadelphia Orchestra, serving as music and artistic director. His connection to the ensemble's musicians has been praised by both concertgoers and critics, and he is esteemed by the musicians of the Orchestra, audiences, and the community. In addition to expanding the repertoire by embracing an ever-growing and diverse group of today's composers, Yannick and the Orchestra are committed to performing and recording the works of previously overlooked composers.

Your Philadelphia Orchestra takes great pride in its hometown, performing for the people of Philadelphia year-round, at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, throughout the community, over the airwaves, and online. The Kimmel Center has been the ensemble's home since 2001, and in 2024 Verizon Hall at the Kimmel Center was officially rededicated as Marian Anderson Hall in honor of the legendary

contralto, civil rights icon, and Philadelphian. The Orchestra's award-winning education and community programs connect, uplift, and celebrate nearly 40,000 Philadelphians and 250 schools from diverse communities annually, through inclusive arts education and vibrant engagement that reflect our city's voices and expand access to creative opportunities. Students, families, and other community members can enjoy free and discounted experiences with The Philadelphia Orchestra through programs such as the Jane H. Kesson School Concerts, Family Concerts, Open Rehearsals, PlayINs, and Our City, Your Orchestra community concerts.

Through concerts, tours, residencies, and recordings, the Orchestra is a global ambassador and one of our nation's greatest exports. It performs annually at Carnegie Hall, the Mann Center, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, and the Bravo! Vail Music Festival. The Orchestra also has a rich touring history, having first performed outside Philadelphia in its earliest days. In 1973 it became the first American orchestra to perform in the People's Republic of China, launching a now-five-decade commitment of people-to-people exchange through music.

Under Yannick's leadership, the Orchestra returned to recording with 15 celebrated releases on the Deutsche Grammophon label, including the GRAMMY® Award-winning *Florence Price Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3*. The Orchestra also reaches thousands of radio listeners with weekly broadcasts on WRTI-FM and SiriusXM. For more information, please visit www.philorch.org.

Conductor and Piano



Composer, conductor, and pianist **Joe Hisaishi** is composer-in-residence of The Philadelphia Orchestra. He has established himself as a formidable force in contemporary music for his delicately crafted symphonic and solo works, as well as his globally successful film music. He is greatly in demand as a conductor performing with the most notable symphony orchestras across the globe. With nearly 40 solo albums and over 100 film scores to his name, he is one of the most celebrated composers of our time. Renowned for his longstanding collaboration with Japanese anime director Hayao Miyazaki, he has won international awards for his

scores. His popular soundtracks for *Spirited Away* and *My Neighbor Totoro*, among others, captures his sensitive and imaginative amalgamation of the symphonic and Minimalist genres. Many of these iconic works have been brought to huge live audiences in his recent sold-out performances at Madison Square Garden in New York, La Defense in Paris, Olympic Hall in Munich, and the Tokyo Dome.

Mr. Hisaishi made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut in June 2025. In addition to these current performances, season highlights include returns to the Chicago and Toronto symphonies and the premiere of his Concerto for Orchestra with various partners globally. Recent performance highlights include a two-day residency at Royal Albert Hall in London for his “Hisaishi Symphonic” live shows, which included the *Princess Mononoke* Suite, his Symphony No. 2, and Britten’s Four Sea Interludes from *Peter Grimes* with the Royal Philharmonic; a week-long residency with the Seattle Symphony; and, after a successful debut at the Hollywood Bowl in 2023, a return to the Los Angeles Philharmonic for the world premiere of his Harp Concerto, commissioned by the orchestra. A Deutsche Grammophon exclusive artist, he has released the titles *Merry-Go-Round of Life*, *A Symphonic Celebration*, and *Joe Hisaishi in Vienna*, featuring the world premiere recordings of two of his compositions, Symphony No. 2 and *Viola Saga* with the Vienna Symphony and soloist Antoine Tamestit. His most recent recording, *Joe Hisaishi Conducts*, was released in August and includes the music of Steve Reich alongside Hisaishi’s *The End*.

A passionate pioneer of contemporary music, Mr. Hisaishi collaborates with similarly experimental artists including Nico Muhly, Bryce Dessner, Nadia Sirota, Philip Glass, David Lang, and Terry Reilly. Since 2014 he has been presenting “MUSIC FUTURE” concerts in Tokyo, bringing together the works and talents of these notable collaborators. He also holds a Young Composer’s Competition every year to inspire and empower young composers. He is the recipient of both the Medal of Honor with Purple Ribbon and the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette, given by the government of Japan. Beginning this season, he is music director of the Japan Century Symphony. He was also appointed composer-in-association of the Royal Philharmonic in 2024.

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Photos: Allie Ippolito

The Music

Joe Hisaishi

Born December 6, 1950, in Nagano, Japan



Symphonic Variation “Merry-Go-Round,” from *Howl’s Moving Castle*

The “Merry-Go-Round of Life” is Joe Hisaishi’s main theme for *Howl’s Moving Castle*, the 2004 Studio Ghibli film directed by Hayao Miyazaki. Early in the film, the young hatmaker Sophie is cursed by the Witch of the Waste and transformed into a 90-year-old woman. The music seems to underscore how in this fantasy world, age and the passage of time are not quite so linear as in ours.

The “Merry-Go-Round” theme recurs throughout the score but is substantially varied depending on the scene. In arranging the Symphonic Variation “Merry-Go-Round” from *Howl’s Moving Castle*, Hisaishi rewove elements from the original score to make an organic whole for a concert setting. He has recorded it with the New Japan Philharmonic World Dream Orchestra.

The Symphonic Variation begins with a low note in the basses, over which the higher strings circle and flourish. After an atmospheric transition comes the theme played by the strings as a pizzicato waltz, which grows more grand (in the film, this accompanies the young Sophie walking through the sky with the wizard Howl). Next, we hear the theme fragmented over raspy percussion (the elderly Sophie cleaning Howl’s messy home). A lush, descending theme in the strings evokes the beautiful Star Lake, where Sophie finds refuge. More sneaky pizzicato further fragments the theme (Sophie’s exhausting ascent to the Royal Palace). An extended interlude featuring trumpet (a time-travel vision of Howl’s childhood, where he eats a fallen star) leads back to the main theme in its purest form, played by Hisaishi at the piano.

DA-MA-SHI-E

In Japanese, *damashie* means “trompe-l’œil” or “optical illusion.” For Hisaishi, the title *DA-MA-SHI-E* is a tribute to the Dutch artist M.C. Escher (1898–1972), known for his math-inspired illustrations of impossible objects and other visual trickery. The piece is not a musical adaptation of a particular Escher picture, but rather a take on his “very logical” sensibility “with some essence of humor,” as Hisaishi puts it.

DA-MA-SHI-E was composed in 1985 for the solo album *a-BET-CITY*. Originally scored for a small ensemble, Hisaishi recomposed it for orchestra for a concert with the New Japan Philharmonic in 1996 and recorded it for the 2009 album *Minima_Rhythm* with the London Symphony Orchestra. It shows his interest in “minimal music,” more widely

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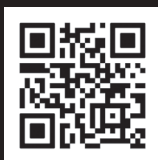
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known as Minimalism (a term some practitioners reject)—including the music of American composers Steve Reich and Philip Glass.

Hisaishi provided the following description of *DA-MA-SHI-E*, which is based on slowly evolving repetitions:

This piece is structured by eight different phrases. Those are born from the first violin motives, which are performed in the very beginning of this piece. It changes the color of the entire piece by the brass instruments hitting very strong notes and going between A major and B-flat major. In the last half, the chorales of the brass instruments join playing the eight motives. It makes the ending long blessed, and this piece became very joyful and positive.

Symphonic Suite *Castle in the Sky*

Castle in the Sky was director Miyazaki's third feature film, the second scored by Hisaishi, and the first produced by Studio Ghibli. It's a terrific adventure that blends a classic treasure-hunt story with comic-book action, coming-of-age romance, and a steampunk aesthetic—truly a film for the ages.

The original 1986 soundtrack relied largely on synthesizers, but Hisaishi gave it a full orchestral treatment for Disney's 2003 English dub. In 2018 he recorded the standalone Symphonic Suite *Castle in the Sky* with the New Japan Philharmonic World Dream Orchestra.

In the film, the orphan Pazu plays a trumpet fanfare each morning atop his home in Slag Ravine (an example of diegetic music—scoring that is part of the fictional world and performed or heard by its characters). This solo, slightly reminiscent of 18th-century trumpet works by Handel or Haydn, also opens the Symphonic Suite. From there, Hisaishi transitions to the young princess Sheeta's gentle descent from the sky, right into Pazu's arms. The following numbers hit on key elements from the movie (spoilers ahead)—the brawl between pirates and townspeople, robots from the mysterious island Laputa, the discovery of the Castle in the Sky, and its final destruction that shakes loose a giant flying tree. The penultimate movement, "Innocent," again features the melancholy, jazz-inflected tones of Hisaishi's piano.

—Benjamin Pesetsky

Benjamin Pesetsky is a composer and writer. He serves on the staff of the San Francisco Symphony and also contributes program notes for the St. Louis Symphony and Melbourne Symphony.

The Symphonic Variation "Merry-Go-Round" was composed in 2005; DA-MA-SHI-E was composed in 1986; and the Symphonic Suite Castle in the Sky was composed in 2017.

These are the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of all three pieces.

"Merry-Go-Round" is scored for three flutes (III doubling piccolo), three oboes (III doubling English horn), three clarinets (III doubling bass clarinet), three bassoons (III doubling contrabassoon), four horns, three trumpets, four trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, bell tree, cabasa, cymbals, glockenspiel, güiro, marimba, sleigh bells, snare drum, suspended cymbal, tam-tam, tambourine, triangle, xylophone), harp, piano (doubling celesta),

and strings. DA-MA-SHI-E is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, marimba, snare drum, suspended cymbal, tam-tam), harp, piano, and strings. The Symphonic Suite Castle in the Sky is scored for three flutes (III doubling piccolo), two oboes, English horn, three clarinets (III doubling bass clarinet), three bassoons (III doubling contrabassoon), four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, chimes, cymbals, glockenspiels, marimba, snare drum, suspended cymbal, tambourine, triangles (small and large), vibraphone, wind chimes, wood block, xylophone), harp, piano (doubling celesta), and strings.

Performance time for the Symphonic Variation “Merry-Go-Round” is approximately 14 minutes, for DA-MA-SHI-E is approximately eight minutes, and for the Symphonic Suite Castle in the Sky 27 minutes.

The Music

Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell

Benjamin Britten

Born in Lowestoft, England, November 22, 1913

Died in Aldeburgh, December 4, 1976



There could hardly be a more ideal medium for a set of variations than the symphony orchestra. Where else do we find so many opportunities for richness of texture and for variety of color—qualities that are, after all, the very essence of “variation”? For more than two centuries composers have delighted in exploiting this. Already in 1792 Haydn was showcasing various sections of the expanded London orchestra he relished at his disposal in the famous “Surprise” movement of his Symphony No. 94, which is a set

of variations. A decade later Beethoven created one of his most original orchestral pieces as the last movement of the “Eroica” Symphony, which is a set of variations on an original theme that he also used in his ballet *The Creatures of Prometheus* and for a set of keyboard variations. Brahms perhaps had his eye on Beethoven’s example when he crafted the finale of his Fourth Symphony, a magnificent set of variations on the ground bass of a Bach chorale. He also pioneered the idea of free-standing variations for orchestra in his richly hued “Haydn” Variations, highly influential for 20th-century composers.

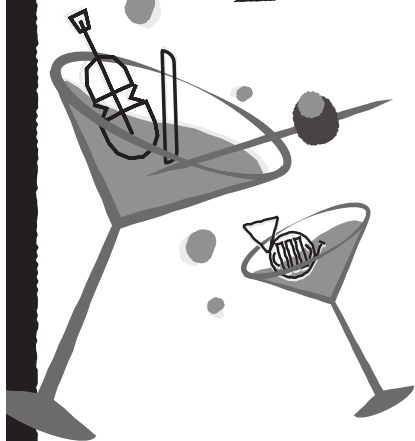
Orchestral Variations in the 20th Century Among the first to take up Brahms’s example in the next century was Arnold Schoenberg, whose densely Serialist Variations for Orchestra, Op. 31, was only one of a number of pieces he based on variation techniques. Other composers took up the procedure as well, including Ralph Vaughan Williams (*Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*), Max Reger (who wrote a series of elaborate variations sets on themes by Mozart, Beethoven, and Johann Adam Hiller), Anton Webern (*Passacaglia*, Op. 1), Luigi Dallapiccola (*Variations*), Paul Hindemith (*The Four Temperaments*, for piano and orchestra), and Igor Stravinsky (*Octet for Winds*, *Variations in Memoriam Aldous Huxley*, and other compositions).

But perhaps the most playfully colorful set from the 20th century is Benjamin Britten’s Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell, best known under the title *The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra*. This is an unusual piece serving dual purposes in the orchestral repertory: Under the serious formal name it falls in with the illustrious tradition of symphonic variations, while as the *Young Person’s Guide*, with narration, it serves as a marvelous introduction for listeners of all ages to the instruments of the orchestra.

This was not Britten’s first or only excursion into the idea of variations for orchestra—in fact it was something of a fascination for him, as attested by the Variations on a Theme of

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Frank Bridge, the Passacaglia from his opera *Peter Grimes*, and the Diversions for Piano (Left Hand) and Orchestra. But none of these is as extravagant in its use of the orchestra as the Purcell Variations, the piece that one writer has characterized as being “at once a tour of the forces and a *tour de force*.”

A Closer Look *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* began as a commission from the British Ministry of Education, which asked Britten in 1945 to compose music for *Instruments of the Orchestra*, a film designed to acquaint young people with the various “choirs” of the modern orchestra. Using a theme from Henry Purcell’s incidental music to a 1695 play called *Abdelazer, or The Moor's Revenge*, Britten wrote an instructional “excursion” of the orchestra that also functioned as an independent piece. In the original version, the piece included the spoken text provided by the poet Eric Crozier (who later served as librettist for several of Britten’s operas), and in this guise the work received its concert premiere in October 1946 in Liverpool, several weeks before the film appeared in London.

Before the variations even begin, Purcell’s theme is presented as a sort of orchestral showcase of its own, given first to full orchestra, then winds, brass, strings, and finally the percussion section. Thirteen variations follow, which show not only a great variety of instrumental color but of tempo and mood as well. First the flutes and piccolos are highlighted, then oboes, clarinets, bassoons, violins, violas, cellos, double basses, harp, horns, trumpets, trombones, and tuba, and finally the listener is treated to a display of percussion. The xylophone leads into the brilliant concluding fugue, in which the orchestra is “reassembled” instrument by instrument, until the final bars—in which Purcell’s theme (heard in the brass) joins the fugue (in the strings and woodwinds) for a rich and extroverted tutti.

—Paul J. Horsley

Paul J. Horsley is performing arts editor for The Independent in Kansas City. Previously he was program annotator and musicologist for The Philadelphia Orchestra and music and dance critic for the Kansas City Star.

Britten composed the Purcell Variations in 1945.

On December 13, 1947, The Philadelphia Orchestra presented the United States premiere of the work, in the version without narration, on a Children's Concert with Eugene Ormandy conducting. The Orchestra's first performance with a narrator occurred in November 1952, on a Student Concert with Ormandy and Harl McDonald. The work's most recent appearance on subscription concerts was with Bramwell Tovey in December 2018, in which he also spoke the narration.

The Orchestra recorded the work twice, both times in its version without narration: in 1957 with Ormandy for CBS and in 1974 with Ormandy for RCA.

The score calls for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, castanets, Chinese blocks, cymbals, gong, side drum, tambourine, triangle, whip, xylophone), harp, strings, and optional narrator.

Performance time is approximately 17 minutes.

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Musical Terms

GENERAL TERMS

Chorale: A hymn tune of the German Protestant Church, or one similar in style. Chorale settings are vocal, instrumental, or both.

Chord: The simultaneous sounding of three or more tones

Fugue: A piece of music in which a short melody is stated by one voice and then imitated by the other voices in succession, reappearing throughout the entire piece in all the voices at different places

Ground bass: A continually repeated bass phrase of four or eight measures

Harmonic: Pertaining to chords and to the theory and practice of harmony

Harmony: The combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes to produce chords and chord progressions

Legato: Smooth, even, without any break between notes

Meter: The symmetrical grouping of musical rhythms

Minimalism: A style of composition characterized by an intentionally simplified rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic vocabulary

Op.: Abbreviation for opus, a term used to indicate the chronological position of a composition within a composer's output. Opus numbers are not always reliable because they are often applied in the order of publication rather than composition.

Passacaglia: An instrumental musical composition consisting of variations usually on a ground bass in moderately slow triple time

Pizzicato: Plucked

Polyphony: A term used to designate music in more than one part and the style in which all or several of the musical parts move to some extent independently

Scale: The series of tones which form (a) any major or minor key or (b) the chromatic scale of successive semi-tonic steps

Serialism: Music constructed according to the principle pioneered by Arnold Schoenberg in the early 1920s, whereby the 12 notes of the scale are arranged in a particular order, forming a series of pitches that serve as the basis of the composition and a source from which the musical material is derived

Suite: During the Baroque period, an instrumental genre consisting of several movements in the same key, some or all of which were based on the forms and styles of dance music. Later, a group of pieces extracted from a larger work, especially an opera or ballet.

Tempo: The speed of music

Timbre: Tone color or tone quality

Tonality: The orientation of melodies and harmonies toward a specific pitch or pitches

Tonic: The keynote of a scale

Tutti: All; full orchestra



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Wister Society member



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