

2024–2025 | 125th Season
Marian Anderson Hall

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Wednesday, June 25, at 7:00

Thursday, June 26, at 7:00

Friday, June 27, at 7:00

Joe Hisaishi Conductor and Piano
Choong-Jin Chang Viola

Hisaishi Symphony No. 2
I. What the World Is Now?
II. Variation 14
III. Nursery Rhyme
First Philadelphia Orchestra performances

Intermission

Hisaishi *Viola Saga*
Movement I
Movement II
First Philadelphia Orchestra performances

Hisaishi *Spirited Away* Suite
First Philadelphia Orchestra performances

This program runs approximately 1 hour, 50 minutes.

These concerts are part of the **Ellenberg Philadelphia Orchestra Soloist Spotlight Series**.

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.



Jeff Flacco

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 and furthering the place of the arts in an open and democratic society. 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 13th 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 embraced 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, around 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 initiatives engage over 50,000 students, families, and community members of all ages through programs such as PlayINs; side-by-sides; PopUP concerts; Our City, Your Orchestra Live; the free annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Tribute Concert; School Concerts; sensory-friendly concerts; open rehearsals; the School Ensemble Program; All-City Orchestra Fellowships; and residency work in Philadelphia and abroad.

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 was the first American orchestra to perform in the People's Republic of China, launching a now-five-decade commitment of people-to-people exchange.

Under Yannick's leadership, the Orchestra returned to recording with 14 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.

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Yannick Nézet-Séguin · Music & Artistic Director

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Conductor and Piano

Nick Rutter



Composer, conductor, and pianist **Joe Hisaishi** 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 and the Studio Ghibli films, he has won international awards for his scores. His popular soundtracks capture his sensitive and imaginative amalgamation of the symphonic, jazz, electronic, 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, and Olympic Hall in Munich.

Mr. Hisaishi's 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; conducting engagements with the Toronto, Chicago, and Vienna symphonies and the Helsinki Philharmonic; and a week-long residency with the Seattle Symphony. This season he debuted with the San Francisco Symphony and, after a successful debut at the Hollywood Bowl in 2023, returned to the Los Angeles Philharmonic for the world premiere of his Harp Concerto, commissioned by the orchestra and performed by its harpist, Emmanuel Ceysson. Mr. Hisaishi is a Deutsche Grammophon exclusive artist and most recent recording, *Joe Hisaishi in Vienna*, features the world premiere recordings of two of his compositions, Symphony No. 2 and *Viola Saga* with the Vienna Symphony and soloist Antoine Tamestit.

Mr. Hisaishi 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. He is a music partner with the New Japan Philharmonic and, since 2021, principal guest conductor with the Japan Century Symphony where he is music director-designate for the 2025–26 season. He was also appointed as composer-in-association of the Royal Philharmonic in April 2024. He makes his Philadelphia Orchestra debut with these performances.

Soloist



Jessica Griffin

A native of Seoul, Korea, **Choong-Jin (C.J.) Chang** has been principal viola of The Philadelphia Orchestra since 2006, having joined the ensemble in 1994 as associate principal; he holds the Ruth and A. Morris Williams, Jr., Chair. He made his performance debut at age 12 with the Seoul Philharmonic. In 1981, at age 13, he moved to the United States to attend the Juilliard School of Music. He later studied at Temple University's Esther Boyer College of Music and the Curtis Institute of Music, earning degrees in both violin and viola

under the tutelage of Jascha Brodsky and former Philadelphia Orchestra Principal Viola Joseph dePasquale.

Mr. Chang made his solo recital debut at Carnegie Hall in 2007 and has since performed in numerous recitals across the United States and South Korea. In 2008 he was a featured soloist with The Philadelphia Orchestra during its Asian Tour, performing in Seoul and Shanghai, and at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center. He made his subscription solo debut with the Orchestra in 2009 and has been a frequent soloist, including a notable performance of Bruch's Concerto for Clarinet and Viola in 2022. In 2013 he curated the Bach and Hindemith Project, performing all 19 viola pieces by both composers in four recitals at the Kuhmo Arts Hall in Seoul. As a chamber musician, he collaborates with renowned artists at prestigious festivals worldwide.

Mr. Chang was one of the founding members of the Johannes String Quartet, which debuted to critical acclaim at Philadelphia's Ethical Society and Carnegie Hall. Since 1997 the Quartet has performed extensively across the United States, premiering works such as Esa-Pekka Salonen's *Homunculus* and William Bolcom's Double Quartet with the Guarneri Quartet.

In addition to his performing career, Mr. Chang is a respected educator in both violin and viola. His former students include members of The Philadelphia Orchestra and the Cleveland Orchestra, as well as winners of major competitions. He currently serves as a viola professor at Johns Hopkins University's Peabody Conservatory of Music and is an artist/faculty member at the Aspen Music Festival and School during the summer.

The Music

Joe Hisaishi

Born December 6, 1950, in Nakano, Japan

Nick Rutter



Symphony No. 2 and *Viola Saga*

Joe Hisaishi recently built himself a small studio outside Tokyo, inspired by Gustav Mahler, who in the late 19th century liked to work in “composing huts” at scenic locations around Austria. “It was 2020, just as COVID was beginning,” Hisaishi said in a recent interview for Deutsche Grammophon.

“Up until then, I’d been using things like synths and had been working with an assistant, but during that period I had no choice but to go [to the studio] alone. ... I ended up

composing two symphonies in two years.”

His Symphony No. 2 is the first of the pair (his Symphony No. 1 was completed in 2016) and was premiered by the New Japan Philharmonic World Dream Orchestra at Kyoto Concert Hall in April 2021. In March 2023 he led a performance with the Vienna Symphony that was recorded and later released on Deutsche Grammophon. The first movement, **What the World Is Now?**, is perhaps an allusion to COVID, while the second movement, **Variation 14**, includes 14 cheerful variations on a prodding theme. The finale, **Nursery Rhyme**, is based on an old Japanese children’s song, first presented in the double basses and then subtly layered on top of itself as the orchestral weight piles up.

Viola Saga, from 2023, is a two-movement concerto for an instrument Hisaishi hears as especially similar to the human voice. He premiered it in July of that year with the French violist Antoine Tamestit and Future Orchestra Classics in Tokyo. Liner notes for its Deutsche Grammophon release describe the piece as “dancing light-footedly from its delicate opening in frequently startling directions, its emotional punch as powerful as the enriching reiteration of its themes.”

Spirited Away Suite

Hayo Miyazaki made *Spirited Away* for a generation of Japanese children he thought had grown dull and unimaginative with ever-increasing commercialism. “If you let me have my own way, I’d first reduce the amount of manga, video games, and weekly magazines,” Miyazaki said in a 2001 press interview. “If we let children have more of their own time and have their own way, they’ll become more lively.”

Chihiro, the main character, is an ordinary 10-year-old girl who grows independent and confident when transported into a colorful and frightening spirit world. After her parents are turned into pigs, she goes to work at a magnificent bathhouse that was partly modeled on Studio Ghibli itself. “For us, Ghibli is a familiar place, but it would look like a labyrinth to a girl coming here for the first time, a scary place,” Miyazaki said. He introduces a

memorable cast of characters: the dragon-boy Haku, the six-armed boilerman Kamaji, the witch Yubaba, the sisterly Lin, and the enigmatic No Face.

Hisaishi's *Spirited Away* Suite weaves together a handful of important cues from the soundtrack. "One Summer's Day" begins with the first sounds heard in the movie—three descending major ninth chords on the piano, which then rise slightly into a ghostly, unnamable chord of stacked fourths—a perfect harmonic representation of Chihiro's transition into the liminal world.

"The Gods" accompanies the procession of spirits within the bathhouse with plucked strings and deep brass tones. The scholar Kyoko Koizumi has pointed out this melody uses an Okinawan scale "thought to be exotic in Japan for both historical and cultural reasons ... [resembling] Indonesian music more than that of Japan's adjacent regions." This helps to "draw a line between Chihiro's life in Japan and the mysterious magic kingdom, a world *somewhere else* from everyday space."

The serene "View of the Morning" and clanging dissonance of "The Bottomless Pit" accompany Chihiro's awakening for her first full day in the bathhouse and her battle with Yubaba's giant-baby son. The silvery harp and chirping winds of "Dragon Boy" represent Haku, while the percussive thump and clang of "No Face" underscore the spirit's transformation into a ravenous monster. "The Sixth Station" brings back the solo piano theme for Chihiro's haunting train journey across a shallow ocean. The lush, cyclic melody of "Reprise" scores Chihiro's flight and skydive with Haku after she realizes their shared past, and "Return" brings back the "Summer" theme as she rescues her parents and reenters the normal world.

—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 the Melbourne Symphony.

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