



JAAP VAN ZWEDEN
MUSIC DIRECTOR

EARTH

Thursday, June 8, 2023, 7:30 p.m.
16,904th Concert

Friday, June 9, 2023, 11:00 a.m.
16,905th Concert

Saturday, June 10, 2023, 8:00 p.m.
16,906th Concert

Jaap van Zweden, Conductor
Robert Langevin, Flute
(The Lila Acheson Wallace Chair)
New York Philharmonic Chorus
Malcolm J. Merriweather, Director

Wu Tsai Theater
David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center
Home of the New York Philharmonic

This program will last approximately one and three-quarters hours, which includes one intermission.



June 8–10, 2023

EARTH

Jaap van Zweden, Conductor

Robert Langevin, Flute

(The Lila Acheson Wallace Chair)

New York Philharmonic Chorus

Malcolm J. Merriweather, Director

BRITTEN

(1913–76)

Four Sea Interludes from Peter Grimes,

Op. 33a (1943; 1944–45)

Dawn

Sunday Morning

Moonlight

Storm

TAKEMITSU

(1930–96)

I hear the water dreaming for Flute and
Orchestra (1987)

ROBERT LANGEVIN

Intermission

John Luther ADAMS
(b. 1953)

Become Desert (2017; New York
Premiere—New York Philharmonic
Co-Commission with the Seattle
Symphony, San Diego Symphony,
and Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra)

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Notes on the Program

Four Sea Interludes from *Peter Grimes*, Op. 33a

Benjamin Britten

Benjamin Britten was born by the sea, in Lowestoft, on the eastern rim of England, and spent nearly all his adult life in the same coastal region. In 1942 he and his partner, the tenor Peter Pears, returned there following a three-year stay in the United States, in part so he could be on home territory while composing an opera based on “Peter Grimes,” a narrative poem by George Crabbe (1754–1832) set in a similar east-coast fishing town. Britten owned a house nearby and soon moved to Aldeburgh, where he would live the rest of his life. Besides that geographic serendipity, there was the chord struck by Crabbe’s tale itself. Peter Grimes, a fisherman who is an outsider in a community that is remote and revolving around itself, is destroyed by gossip, irrational fear, misunderstanding, and hypocrisy.

His story, as told in Britten’s opera *Peter Grimes*, is partly mirrored in the moods of the sea as depicted in two interludes from the First Act and in the preludes to the Second and Third Acts. Britten altered that order when he assembled these orchestral instalments into the *Four Sea Interludes*.

The sequence begins appropriately with *Dawn*, which in the opera follows a duet for Peter and his close friend Ellen Orford, in which he complains of wagging tongues and she attempts to reassure him. A spanning melody suggests the wide horizon and emerging light; answering arpeggios depict early sunbeams reflected on the waves, to which the brass-led lower instruments respond with swelling calm. The music works as a

nature picture, but as these elements are repeated, more is at stake. The melody also sounds like an effort to soothe, and the arpeggios take on the shape of slanders being passed on, unsettling the calm.

Sunday Morning opens with church bells and bird song. In the opera this music anticipates Ellen’s scene with Peter’s new apprentice, and the orchestra conveys something of her anxiety, and, once again, the slippery ease with which rumor communicates itself.

Innocent nature and disturbed humanity are again illustrated in *Moonlight*. The dragging rhythm and restless harmony speak of the ebb and flow of the waves, with flashes of light reflected in the

In Short

Born: November 22, 1913, in Lowestoft, Suffolk, England

Died: December 4, 1976, in Aldeburgh, Suffolk

Work composed: the opera, 1943; the suite, January 1944–February 1945

World premiere: the opera, June 7, 1945, at Sadler’s Wells Opera Theatre, London, Reginald Goodall conducting; the *Four Sea Interludes*, June 13, 1945, by the London Philharmonic Orchestra at the Cheltenham Festival, with the composer conducting

New York Philharmonic premiere: March 1, 1973, Leonard Bernstein, conductor

Most recent New York Philharmonic performance: January 31, 2020, Simone Young, conductor

Estimated duration: ca. 16 minutes

breaking surf — and perhaps the great globe of the moon comes into view when the music arrives at its rounded climax. However, there is no real serenity. The dragging and restless music suggests the human tragedy about to reach its conclusion, and the flashes of light could just as well be socially inflicted wounds.

In *Storm* the tensions that have been under the surface break out. In the opera, this music follows a scene in which Balstrode, a retired merchant captain and the only man sympathetic to Peter, has advised him to leave the town. But Peter will not do this. The coming storm is more than a meteorological phenomenon: Peter is dooming himself. At the end of their dialogue, Peter has an aria — “What harbour shelters peace?” — whose arching melody is recalled in this interlude.

However, the storm music wins out, especially in the emphatic conclusion of Britten’s concert version.

Instrumentation: two flutes (both doubling piccolo), two oboes, two clarinets (one doubling E-flat clarinet), two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, tam-tam, xylophone, bells, tambourine, harp, and strings.

Britten’s *Four Sea Interludes* from *Peter Grimes* is presented under license from Boosey & Hawkes, copyright owners.

— Paul Griffiths, a music critic for many years and the author, most recently, of *Mr. Beethoven* (New York Review Books)

Sources and Inspirations

George Crabbe’s poem “Peter Grimes” concerns not so much the sea as the human tragedy. However, other poems in the same collection, *The Borough*, are splashed with salt, and may have helped Britten find his sea music. This example is from a storm scene in the opening “General Description”:

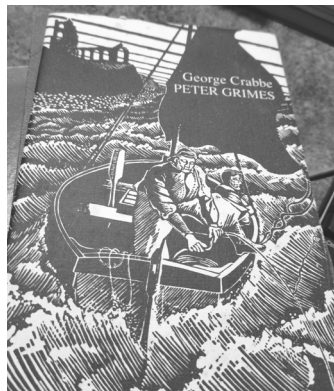
View now the Winter-storm! above, one cloud,
Black and unbroken, all the skies o’ershroud:

All where the eye delights, yet dreads to roam,
The breaking billows cast the flying foam
Upon the billows rising — all the deep
Is restless change; the waves so swell’d and steep,
Breaking and sinking ...

Far off the Petrel in the troubled way
Swims with her brood, or flutters in the spray;
She rises often, often drops again,
And sports at ease on the tempestuous main ...

Darkness begins to reign; the louder wind
Appals the weak and awes the firmer mind ...

Hark! to those sounds! they’re from distress at sea;
How quick they come! What terrors may there be!
Yes, ‘tis a driven vessel: I discern
Lights, signs of terror, gleaming from the stern ...



James Dodds’s lino cut illustration
for the cover of George Crabbe’s
Peter Grimes

I hear the water dreaming for Flute and Orchestra

Tōru Takemitsu

Tōru Takemitsu is generally considered to be the leading Japanese composer of the 20th century. The path to that bright outcome appeared in a miraculous moment amid the hardships of his childhood. After enduring the Japanese invasion of Manchuria (where his family lived at the time) and the Second Sino-Japanese War, he was drafted during World War II. He was 14. In a dugout fortress west of Tokyo, an officer played him a record on a windup phonograph with a homemade bamboo needle. It was the beautiful 1930 Lucienne Boyer performance of the French popular song *Parlez-moi d'amour* (*Speak to Me of Love*). He had discovered music.

After the war Takemitsu dove into the sounds of pop, jazz, and classical music broadcast on the US Armed Forces Radio Network, listening in bed while being treated for tuberculosis. He also listened to Debussy, Schoenberg, Messiaen, and others. In 1946, at age 16, he began composing in what now seems pure *shoshin*, “beginner’s mind,” the Zen attitude of openness that Takemitsu would embody his whole life. Indeed, aside from brief studies with Yasuji Kiyose in 1948 and film composer Fumio Hayasaka in the early ’50s, he was self-taught. (Takemitsu retained his connection to film, composing more than 100 film scores over the course of his career, including for Kurosawa’s *Ran* and other postwar masterpieces.)

In 1957 Takemitsu composed *Requiem* for String Orchestra in homage to Hayasaka. (The *Requiem* is both the first work by Takemitsu that the NY Phil performed, in 1965, and the most recent, in 2011, in concerts dedicated to the people of

Japan in the wake of the accident at the Fukushima nuclear power plant caused by a powerful tsunami.) The following year Igor Stravinsky traveled to Japan. As part of his tour, the Japan Broadcasting Corporation played him recordings of recent Japanese music. An engineer put the *Requiem* on by mistake, but Stravinsky wanted to hear it till the end. He later praised it publicly, and soon after, Takemitsu received a commission from the Koussevitzky Foundation. Thanks to this happy accident — again presaging a principle Takemitsu would espouse years later through aleatory (chance) and other indeterminate music — his career and reputation were established.

Of all the composers Takemitsu admired and by whom he was inspired, his “great mentor” was Debussy, and *I hear the water dreaming*, with its languid flute solo and shimmering splashes of vivid orchestral color, will likely remind you of *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*. Their long, poetic titles betoken an additional similarity: being inspired by a work of art from another genre, Debussy a poem, Takemitsu a painting by an Aboriginal Australian.

In Short

Born: October 8, 1930, in Tokyo, Japan

Died: February 20, 1996, in Tokyo

Work composed: 1987, commissioned by flutist Paula Robison, to whom it is dedicated

World premiere: April 3, 1987, by the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, John Nelson, conductor, Paula Robison, soloist

New York Philharmonic premiere: these performances

Estimated duration: ca. 11 minutes

(The connections ramify: Debussy's *La Mer* was inspired by the Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai's woodblock print *Under the Wave off Kanagawa*.) Both works paint images with sound; in his composer's note Takemitsu writes that the main theme, introduced by the solo flute, depicts the painting's "water icon," and the piece evolves into "numerous melodic subspecies and colorful embellishments derived from this theme."

I played *I hear the water dreaming* for my seventh-grade daughters and asked for one-word impressions. "Mysterious," said one. "Enticing," said the other (the first time I'd heard her use that word). The mystery starts with the title: who is *I*? Takemitsu, the painter, and the flute are all artistically valid and fruitful answers. The ethereal, protean orchestral sounds — from hazy muted strings to percussive slams suggesting a fleeting moment of dark drama — reflect the mystery of dreams and "Dreamtime, a myth handed down among the [Aboriginal Australians]," Takemitsu writes in his note.

"Enticing" resonates in Takemitsu's sheer delight in sound. A sense of luxuriating in finely crafted sonorities is reinforced by the slow tempo typical of most of his music. The flute itself — the

most ancient wind instrument, so rich in overtones — fits the painting's theme of mythic time. And its half-step *portamentos* evoke the *shakuhachi*, a Japanese flute, echoing Takemitsu's fusion of Western and Japanese music from earlier in his career. Not just sound but silence, too. The concept of *ma* — what he called the "powerful silence" — is present in several pauses, "like intakes of breath," as music critic Alex Ross has written. Ross adds:

his enveloping textures are mists in which one can easily become lost, in a way both pleasant and eerie; they have the unnerving potency of dreams.

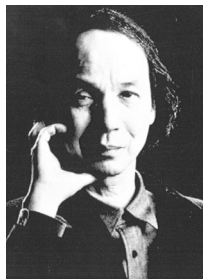
Instrumentation: two flutes (one doubling alto flute and piccolo), two oboes (one doubling English horn), two clarinets (one doubling bass clarinet), two bassoons (one doubling contrabassoon), two horns, three trumpets, two trombones, vibraphone, orchestra bells, antique cymbals, suspended cymbals, tam-tams, bass drum, two harps, celesta, and strings, in addition to the solo flute.

— Edward Lovett, Associate Director, Publications, at the New York Philharmonic

In the Composer's Words

Tōru Takemitsu provided the following description of his *I hear the water dreaming*:

This work was inspired by a painting entitled *Water Dreaming*, by an artist of Papunya, a desert area of Western Australia. *Water Dreaming* was based on "Dreamtime," a myth handed down among the Australian aborigines. Though simple, the painting is filled with mythological signs and symbols. Its unique image completely captured my heart. Following a short prelude, the melodious theme played by the flute is a musical adaptation of the water icon in the painting. The entire work is composed of numerous melodic subspecies and colorful embellishments derived from this theme.



Takemitsu in the 1980s

Become Desert

John Luther Adams

Program notes often note a living composer's place of residence. However, John Luther Adams, whose *Become Desert* receives its New York premiere in these concerts, is purposefully vague as to where one might find his home and studio.

"That's because I'm in the witness protection program," he kids on the phone over a crackling wi-fi connection, which cuts out three times during an hour-long conversation. He describes his whereabouts as "off the grid" and "in the middle of nowhere." He eventually lets slip that he lives in a mountain bowl, at an elevation of 6,000 feet, in the extreme north of the Chihuahuan Desert, which stretches from north of Mexico City across parts of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas and is the largest desert in North America.

Physical geography may have little to no bearing on much contemporary music, but Adams has long been known as an Alaskan composer. A graduate of CalArts, he moved to a cabin on the tundra in 1978 as an environmental activist working for the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.

His compositions have been fundamentally concerned with those lands. For example, *Earth and the Great Weather* (1990–93) grew out of field recordings made with a kit he carried on hikes through the wilderness. *The Place Where You Go To Listen* (2006), an installation at the Museum of the North (in Fairbanks), translates real-time data captured by seismological, meteorological, and geomagnetic stations across Alaska into sound and light. And *Inuksuit* (2009) stations up to 99 percussionists outdoors in geographic space, like the Inuit stone sentinels from which it takes its name.

Adams wrote about his life in the rapidly warming North in a recent memoir, *Silences So Deep: Music, Solitude, Alaska*. He and his wife, Cindy, thought that they would stay there forever. Adams explains:

For years, people would ask me, "Isn't the cold hard?" I'd say, "It's not the cold, it's the dark." In my early 60s, I had two detached retinas, and my best friend died suddenly without asking my permission. The winter darkness just became more than I could bear.

Since leaving Alaska in 2014, Adams has lived in three deserts: the Sonoran, which crosses the US–Mexico border on the edge of the Pacific; the Atacama in Chile, which stretches 1,000 miles in the shadow of the Andes Mountains; and the Chihuahuan, where he settled in his present undisclosed location. During this period of transition, Adams's music shifted from

In Short

Born: January 23, 1953, in Meridian, Mississippi

Resides: in New Mexico

Work composed: 2017, co-commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, Seattle Symphony, San Diego Symphony, and Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra

World premiere: March 29, 2018, by the Seattle Symphony, Ludovic Morlot, conductor, at Benaroya Hall in Seattle, Washington

New York Philharmonic premiere: these performances, which mark the work's New York premiere

Estimated duration: ca. 40 minutes

exploring physical, acoustical space to *becoming* place with a trilogy of works: *Become River* (2010), *Become Ocean* (2013), which won the Pulitzer Prize, and *Become Desert* (2017).

“I composed *Become Desert* in the Sonoran Desert at the edge of the Pacific,” Adams remembers.

But then we moved to Chile for two years. Aside from the Arctic coastal plain, no landscape has ever sung to me the way the Atacama does. It was an uncanny experience. The first time we rolled into that great red expanse, I realized that this was the desert I had been composing.

Adams’s *Become* works share rippling textures created by layers of instrumental groups moving in different tempos — essentially ensembles within the ensemble, acting independently. *Become Desert* uses the largest orchestra of the three; it contains five distinct “choirs” of instruments and voices, each inhabiting its own harmonic, melodic, and temporal space and positioned in specific locations around the concert hall.

“I couldn’t hear a note until I knew where the instruments would be,” Adams explains. “Then it was almost like making sculpture. I’d work with the instruments and what I know of their weight, texture, and color, feeling those sounds in space.”

In the Composer’s Words

The recording of *Become Desert*, released on Cantaloupe Records, features this comment by John Luther Adams:

I’m drawn to the desert because, like the tundra, most deserts are places in which there are few people. But for me, the essence of the desert is not absence. It is presence.

In the desert there are moments when, as Octavio Paz writes [in his poem “Piedra nativa,” which Adams includes in the score], you sense that “there is no one, not even yourself.” These moments are invitations to surrender our expectations, to lose ourselves in listening to the music of the present.

My own deserts are in Mexico and South America. However, *Become Desert* is not a painting of any particular landscape. I imagine this music as a landscape of its own, a landscape that extends beyond the place in which it was composed. In the ears and the imagination of the listener, I hope this becomes a private desert of your own.

Living in Alaska for almost 40 years, I experienced first-hand the accelerating effects of anthropogenic climate change on the tundra, the forest, the glaciers, the plants, animals, and people of the Far North. While composing *Become Ocean*, I was haunted by the image of the melting of the polar ice and the rising of the seas.

Now in my new home, far to the south, I’ve become aware of a very different manifestation of global warming — desertification. Rampant wildfires in California, the rapid evaporation of Lake Poopó in the Bolivian *altiplano*, deep droughts in the Sahel of Africa and in large parts of Australia are signs of what is to come. And as human population continues to explode, it seems likely that vast regions all over the earth will soon become desert.

Become Desert is both a celebration of the deserts we are given and a lamentation of the deserts we create.



The forces Adams convenes recreate an experience of vastness — and stillness — that one can find only in unbroken terrain. Bell tones and harps mark the entrance of each choir. Woodwinds, strings, or brass add flesh to these frequencies, becoming the body of those sounds until their inevitable decay. Although some of Adams’s previous compositions rely on mathematically precise tuning, here small pitch discrepancies give the illusion of tones merging and separating, a musical manifestation of the desert’s grit and shimmer.

The choir intones a single word throughout: *luz*, Spanish for light. It is drawn from a line in Mexican poet Octavio Paz’s “Piedra nativa,” which is printed

in Adams’s score: “Close your eyes and listen to the singing of the light ...”

Instrumentation: The performers are broken into five “choirs,” each placed in a different location in the hall. Choir I features four flutes, four oboes, four clarinets, four bassoons, and crotales; Choir II, eight horns and chimes; Choir III, four trumpets, four trombones, and chimes; Choir IV, four-part chorus and handbells (generously provided by Malmark Bells, Inc.); and Choir V, crotales, bass drums, timpani, four harps, and strings.

— Lara Pellegrinelli, a Harvard Ph.D.
in music and a contributor to
National Public Radio

On *EARTH*

With *Become Desert*, John Luther Adams joins a long tradition of orchestral composers whose work, in some form or other, has reflected their unique observations of the natural world. Vivaldi’s *The Four Seasons*, of course, is a familiar early example requiring no explanation. In the following century, while composing his Sixth Symphony — commonly known as the *Pastoral* Symphony — Beethoven found inspiration in his nature walks, part of his routine during his retreats from Vienna to the countryside. Debussy, decades later, evoked his boyhood memories of the seaside for his Impressionist masterpiece *La Mer*. And, for his epic tone poem *Eine Alpensinfonie* (*An Alpine Symphony*), Richard Strauss sought to replicate in musical language the experience of being caught in a snowstorm during a treacherous mountain climb.

Today’s composers continue to do so — think of Crumb’s *Vox Balaenae* (*Voice of the Whale*). Even more recently, Angélica Negrón composed *For Those ...*, a work engaging with today’s climate crisis, for an NY Phil Young People’s Concert titled *Our Community, Our Earth*, premiered in January 2023. On this very concert you hear two 20th-century musical reflections on the watery parts of the world: Takemitsu’s *I hear the water dreaming* and Britten’s *Four Sea Interludes* from *Peter Grimes*. And just last week, in the opening week of *EARTH*, Jaap van Zweden conducted the NY Phil in the World Premiere of Julia Wolfe’s *unEarth*, her own examination of humanity’s impact on the planet.



A vista in the Chihuahuan Desert

— The Editors

New York Philharmonic

2022–2023 SEASON

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E-FLAT CLARINET

Pascual Martínez

Forteza

(Continued)

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players who are listed
alphabetically in the roster.

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The Artists



Jaap van Zweden became Music Director of the New York Philharmonic in September 2018. Also Music Director of the Hong Kong Philharmonic, he will become Music Director of the Seoul Philharmonic in 2024. He has appeared as guest with the Orchestre de Paris and Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Vienna Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, London Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland, Los Angeles Philharmonic orchestras, and other distinguished ensembles.

In October 2022 Jaap van Zweden and the NY Phil reopened the renovated David Geffen Hall with *HOME*, a monthlong housewarming for the Orchestra and its audiences. Season highlights include musical explorations of *SPIRIT*, featuring Messiaen's *Turangalila-symphonie* and J.S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, and *EARTH*, featuring Julia Wolfe's *unEarth* and John Luther Adams's *Become Desert*. He conducts repertoire ranging from Beethoven and Bruckner to premieres by Marcos Balter, Etienne Charles, Caroline Shaw, and Carlos Simon.

In February 2020 van Zweden premiered the first three works commissioned through *Project 19* — which marks the centennial of the 19th Amendment with new works by 19 women composers, including Tania León's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Stride*. In the 2021–22 season, during the David Geffen Hall renovation, the Music Director led the Orchestra at venues

across New York City, including his first-ever Philharmonic appearances at Carnegie Hall.

Jaap van Zweden's NY Phil recordings include David Lang's *prisoner of the state* and Julia Wolfe's Grammy-nominated *Fire in my mouth* (Decca Gold). Other recordings include first-ever performances in Hong Kong of Wagner's *Ring Cycle* (Naxos) and Wagner's *Parsifal*, which received the 2012 Edison Award for Best Opera Recording.

Born in Amsterdam, Jaap van Zweden was appointed the youngest-ever concertmaster of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra at age 19. He began his conducting career almost 20 years later, in 1996. Recently named Conductor Emeritus of the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra, he is Honorary Chief Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, where he was Chief Conductor (2005–13); served as Chief Conductor of the Royal Flanders Orchestra (2008–11); and was Music Director of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra (2008–18), where he is now Conductor Laureate. He was named *Musical America's* 2012 Conductor of the Year and in 2018 was the subject of a CBS *60 Minutes* profile. Under his leadership the Hong Kong Philharmonic was named *Gramophone's* 2019 Orchestra of the Year, and in 2020 he was awarded the prestigious Concertgebouw Prize.

In 1997 Jaap van Zweden and his wife, Aaltje, established the Papageno Foundation to support families of children with autism. In 1995 the Foundation opened the Papageno House — with Her Majesty Queen Maxima in attendance — where young adults with autism live, work, and participate in the community. Today, the Foundation focuses on the development of children and young adults with autism by providing in-home music therapy; cultivating funding opportunities to support autism programs; and creating a research center for early diagnosis and treatment of autism and analyzing the benefits of music therapy. The Foundation app TEAMPapageno allows children with autism to communicate with each other through music composition.



Robert Langevin joined the New York Philharmonic as Principal Flute, The Lila Acheson Wallace Chair, in the 2000–01 season, having previously held seats

with the Pittsburgh and Montreal Symphony Orchestras. He made his NY Phil solo debut in the May 2001 North American Premiere of Siegfried Matthus's Concerto for Flute and Harp with Principal Harp Nancy Allen and then Music Director Kurt Masur. His October 2012 solo performance in Nielsen's Flute Concerto, conducted by then Music Director Alan Gilbert, was released by Dacapo Records.

As a member of Musica Camerata Montreal and l'Ensemble de la Société de Musique Contemporaine du Québec, Langevin premiered many works, including the Canadian premiere of Pierre Boulez's *Le Marteau sans maître*. In addition, Langevin has performed as soloist with Quebec's most distinguished ensembles and has recorded many recitals and chamber music programs for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Born in Sherbrooke, Quebec, Robert Langevin began studying flute at age 12. He graduated from the Montreal Conservatory of Music in 1976 with two first prizes, one in flute, the other in chamber music. He later won the prestigious Prix d'Europe, enabling him to work with Aurèle Nicolet at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg, Germany, where he graduated in 1979. He then studied with Maxence Larrieu, in Geneva, winning second prize at the Budapest International Competition in 1980. Langevin is a member of the Philharmonic Quintet of New York, and has given

recitals and master classes throughout the United States and around the world. He is currently on the faculties of The Juilliard School, Manhattan School of Music, and Orford International Summer Festival.

The New York Philharmonic established the **New York Philharmonic Chorus** to mark the opening of the new David Geffen Hall in the 2022–23 season. The ensemble of New York-based, professional vocalists appears in four of the Orchestra's programs over the season under the direction of Malcolm J. Merriweather: the two Opening Galas, Adolphus Hailstork's *Done Made My Vow*, *A Ceremony*, in March, and the New York Premiere of John Luther Adams's *Become Desert*, a work co-commissioned by the Orchestra. For these performances of *Become Desert*, the chorus was prepared by Merriweather and choral associate Michele Kennedy.

Malcolm J. Merriweather, a Grammy-nominated conductor and baritone, has prepared the New York Philharmonic Chorus for all of its appearances in the Orchestra's 2022–23 season. He is music director of New York City's The Dessoff Choirs, an associate professor at Brooklyn College, and on the faculty at Manhattan School of Music. He has conducted ensembles in venues including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Madison Square Garden in New York, as well as at Westminster Abbey in London and the Vatican, before Pope Francis. Merriweather's repertoire ranges from J.S. Bach to the world premiere recording of Margaret Bonds's *The Ballad of the Brown King* (AVIE Records). As a baritone, Merriweather, who studied with Rita Shane, has appeared as soloist throughout the

United States and premiered dozens of contemporary solo works. He was a fellowship recipient at Tanglewood and earned degrees from the Eastman School of Music, Manhattan School of Music, and Syracuse University.

New York Philharmonic Chorus

SOPRANOS	ALTOS	TENORS	BASSES
Meg Dudley	Jennifer Borghi	Charles Curtis	Blake Burroughs
Halley Gilbert	Alison Cheeseman	Andrew Fuchs	Roderick Gomez
Laura Jobin-Acosta	Hai-Ting Chinn	Brandon	Martin Hargrove
Danya Katok-Ahlbin	Caitlyn Douglas	Hornsby-Selvin	Dominic Inferrera
Mithuna Sivaraman	Katherine Morse Doe	John Kawa	Angelo Johnson
Elisa Strom	Guadalupe Peraza	Wilson Nichols	Andrew Jurden
Amaranta Viera	Mary Rice	Michael Steinberger	Charles Sprawls
Elena Williamson	Carla Wesby	Edward Washington II	
Maggie Woolums			
Elizabeth van Os			

(Current as of May 24, 2023)

New York Philharmonic

The **New York Philharmonic** plays a leading cultural role in New York City, the United States, and the world. Each season the Orchestra connects with millions of music lovers through live concerts in New York and around the world, as well as broadcasts, recordings, and education programs.

The 2022–23 season marks a new chapter in the life of America's longest living orchestra with the opening of the new David Geffen Hall and programming that engages with today's cultural conversations. The NY Phil explores its newly renovated home's potential through repertoire that activates the new Wu Tsai Theater, and by launching new presentations, including at the intimate Kenneth C. Griffin Sidewalk Studio. The season began with *HOME*, a monthlong festival introducing the hall and its new spaces. Later, the Philharmonic is examining *LIBERATION*, a response to cries for social justice; *SPIRIT*, a reflection on humanity's relationship with the cosmos; and *EARTH*, which reflects on the climate crisis. Over the season the Orchestra gives World, US, and New York Premieres of 16 works and builds on impactful partnerships forged over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic through the launch of NY Phil Bandwagon — free, outdoor, “pull-up” concerts that brought live music back to New York City.

In the 2021–22 season the NY Phil presented concerts at Alice Tully Hall and the Rose Theater at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Frederick P. Rose Hall, and gave World, US, and New York premieres of ten commissions. Programming highlights included *Authentic Selves: The Beauty Within*, featuring then Mary and James G. Wallach Artist-in-Residence Anthony

Roth Costanzo, and *The Schumann Connection*, conducted by Gustavo Dudamel.

The New York Philharmonic has commissioned and / or premiered works by leading composers from every era since its founding in 1842, from Dvořák's *New World* Symphony and Gershwin's Concerto in F to two Pulitzer Prize winners: John Adams's *On the Transmigration of Souls* and Tania León's *Stride*, commissioned through *Project 19*, which marks the centennial of the 19th Amendment with commissions by 19 women composers. The NY Phil, which has released more than 2,000 recordings since 1917, recently announced a partnership with Apple Music Classical, the new standalone music streaming app designed to deliver classical music lovers the optimal listening experience. The Orchestra's extensive history is available free online through the New York Philharmonic Shelby White & Leon Levy Digital Archives.

A resource for its community and the world, the Orchestra complements annual free concerts across the city with education projects, including the famed Young People's Concerts and Very Young Composers Program. The Orchestra has appeared in 436 cities in 63 countries, including Pyongyang, DPRK, in 2008, the first visit there by an American orchestra.

Founded in 1842 by local musicians, the New York Philharmonic is one of the oldest orchestras in the world. Notable figures who have conducted the Philharmonic include Tchaikovsky, Richard Strauss, Stravinsky, and Copland. Jaap van Zweden became Music Director in 2018–19, succeeding musical leaders including Bernstein, Toscanini, and Mahler. He will be succeeded by Gustavo Dudamel (as Music Director Designate in 2025–26, Music and Artistic Director beginning in 2026–27).

MILESTONES: Jubilees and Retirees

Once a year the New York Philharmonic family — active and retired Musicians, Board Members, and Staff — gather at David Geffen Hall for a concert and post-concert reception to honor their colleagues who are retiring or marking milestone anniversaries.

This year's celebration, on June 8, honors two musicians and three Staff members who are retiring after decades of service: violinist **Marilyn Dubow**, Associate Principal Bassoon **Kim Lasowski**, Assistant to the President & CEO **Susan O'Dell**, David Geffen Hall Project Executive **Bill Thomas**, and Human Resources Director **Catherine Williams**. Those being saluted on their 25th NY Phil anniversaries are violist **Vivek Kamath** and Assistant Controller **Miriam Kimyagarova** (who celebrated 25 years in 2022). Learn more about them in these pages.

Vivek Kamath, *Viola*, 25th Anniversary



Although Vivek Kamath has spent a quarter-century with the New York Philharmonic — performing under four Music Directors — to him that time has flown by. “It feels like just yesterday I was the new 23-year-old kid,” he says, “and now there are people in the Orchestra who weren’t even born yet when I joined!”

Nevertheless, it’s indeed been a long journey for Vivek, one that began in Rochester, New York — where he grew up and attended the Eastman School of Music — and led to the NY Phil viola section.

He cites his fellow violists as major influences: “What I noticed immediately when I joined the Orchestra was that every Philharmonic violist is a unique musician. We all play very differently from one another. I’m grateful that we all have very different musical personalities, but can still come together beautifully to make things work as a section.”

Vivek does not hesitate to name the performances that stand out in his memory: “The last two concerts we played under Kurt Masur as Music Director,” at Tanglewood, in 2002. “The soloists were our very own [then] Concertmaster Glenn Dicterow and Principal Cello Carter Brey, in Brahms’s Double Concerto, and Yefim Bronfman, in Beethoven’s *Emperor* Concerto. It felt like the entire Orchestra and the soloists reached a spiritual level through the music. It was a feeling of our souls being touched by the music — a feeling I will never forget.”

Having helped to inspire that same feeling in Philharmonic audiences for decades, we can only hope for many more!

Marilyn Dubow, *Violin, The Sue and Eugene Mercy, Jr. Chair, Retiring After 52 Years*



Marilyn Dubow has always balanced her love of music with seemingly competing interests. She took to the violin before her fourth birthday — by five, giving recitals as a scholarship student at the New York College of Music — but she loved academic studies. Her mother, who trained at Juilliard, was her first violin teacher; her father, a high-school French teacher, supported her scholastic endeavors. During her childhood in the Bronx, where she attended PS 70 and Elizabeth Barrett Browning Junior High, she toured as a soloist and appeared on *The Bell Telephone Hour* radio program. She made her New York Philharmonic debut at age 11 performing Vieuxtemps's Fifth Concerto on a Young People's Concert, and returned three years later to play Wieniawski's Second Concerto at Lewisohn Stadium.

Hunter College High School allowed her to carve out time during the school day for the extensive practice necessary for a professional performer. Sarah Lawrence College granted her a year off to participate in the Tchaikovsky Violin Competition; she won the award for Best Performance of Soviet Music, leading to a tour of the Soviet Union. After returning to college and receiving a bachelor's degree in literature, she earned a master's of music from Manhattan School of Music, where she studied with Raphael Bronstein, whom she described as "an extraordinary teacher, musician, and human being."

Marilyn's solo career flourished, earning international acclaim, such as "A real virtuoso and her performance was, without exception, splendid" (*The Washington Post*), and "Her natural feeling for the violin was obvious from the program she chose. And with how much virtuosic brilliance, passionate sweep, and temperament this all was played!" (Amsterdam's *Het Parool*).

She auditioned for the NY Phil in 1971, when Pierre Boulez was Music Director. Knowing that he was an esteemed composer as well as conductor, she avoided the standard audition fare, opting instead for Ives's Second Sonata, a work she recorded alongside Ives's Third Sonata with pianist Marsha Cheraskin Winokur. It did the trick — she became the first woman in the Philharmonic's violin section. The Orchestra made accommodations to allow her to continue her solo career while raising her beloved children, Matthew and Alicia.

Violinist Matitiahua Braun (NY Phil 1969–2006) spoke from Orlando, Florida: "Marilyn and I played chamber music together even before either of us joined the Philharmonic. She is a wonderful



violinist — so conscientious and dedicated as well as talented. She is also brilliant, such a reader, and did you know she speaks French very well? It's a privilege that she chose me as a friend. She is very lovable, with a refined mind but also a great sense of humor. I wish her happiness in the years to come!"

Of her time in the Orchestra, Marilyn says that her colleagues "are all so fantastic — their musicality, expressiveness, and musicianship," and expresses gratitude: "The New York Philharmonic has given me such lovely experiences and so many wonderful concerts."

Marilyn Dubow's New York Philharmonic debut, November 28, 1953, in Carnegie Hall, conducted by Wilfrid Pelletier

Kim Laskowski, Associate Principal Bassoon *Retiring after 20 years*



What defines the New York Philharmonic to Kim Laskowski? “Musical expression. Every rehearsal and concert, this orchestra puts itself out there. To create great musical interpretation you need to take big chances, and that’s something this orchestra has been doing for a long time.”

She joined relatively late in life, at age 48, after having lived many musical lives. “I played in Europe, on Broadway, in the New York City Ballet Orchestra, Mostly Mozart Festival, a lot of great stuff!” Kim says. “When I joined the Philharmonic, it was a dream come true to follow in the footsteps of Harold Goltzer, who was my teacher and served as NY Phil Associate Principal Bassoon from 1958 to 1983.”

She cites many of her great colleagues and musical memories as embodiments of the New York Philharmonic’s commitment to musical expression. Legendary former Principal Clarinet Stanley Drucker, whom Kim sat beside for several years, once said to her, “If you’re not enjoying every moment, it’s time to pack it in.”

Kim’s musical journey to the Philharmonic began, she says, “before I was born,” as her mother played classical music constantly. “We were very working class, but my mother saved money and took me to performances at the old Met, sitting on her lap in the limited-view seats.” She started piano lessons at age four, and at age eleven tried the bassoon. “That was it,” she recalls, “I knew from that moment I wanted to play bassoon.” She credits her parents, but especially her late husband, Zaharis Kalaitzis, for his support: “I couldn’t have done it without him.”

What’s next for Kim? She will continue her active teaching schedule at Juilliard and Manhattan School of Music. And, with her children, Lana and Theo, she will help manage her husband’s family farm on his native Greek island of Patmos, complete with “goats and chickens.”

Looking back, Kim is particularly proud of the sound of the NY Phil bassoon section that she was able to share with great colleagues and friends over 20 years. Principal Judith LeClair says: “It has been a privilege and an honor to have Kim as Associate Principal Bassoon for the last 20 years. Her artistry, organization, and above all, friendship, have meant the world to me!”

You will still see Kim around Geffen Hall for years to come as, she says, “before becoming a member myself I was always a big fan of the NY Phil, and I’m already planning to attend concerts next year.” She has been a longtime fan of Gustavo Dudamel, and she loves the new David Geffen Hall, whose transparent acoustics make it “a joy to play in. The sound you are creating with your colleagues onstage translates everywhere in the hall — it’s all you can ask for!” Kim concludes, “I’m retiring as a member of the Orchestra, but you can never retire from being a musician.”



*Kim Laskowski with Principal Bassoon Judith LeClair
in front of St Martin-in-the-Fields church,
London, on a 2017 NY Phil tour*

Susan O'Dell, Assistant to the President & CEO, Retiring After 26 Years



She is the nexus between Deborah Borda and the rest of the New York Philharmonic world — the staff, of course, and also the Board and donors, Borda's peers at other cultural organizations in the city and around the globe, and more. Yet despite her pivotal role at the NY Phil; despite her palpable concern for the lives of the dozens of people she speaks with daily; despite her warmth, wit, and acuity, many people don't know her story. Her retirement gives us an opportunity to introduce you to Susan O'Dell.

After graduating from Vassar College, where she majored in music and drama, Susan met actor K. Lye O'Dell at Princeton's McCarter Theatre. They were, she says, "a bit of a mismatch, the 'airhead ingenue' (*his words!*) and the serious character actor — sort of Polly Peachum meets Macbeth." Nevertheless, the two married, and were very happy for almost 30 years, until his passing in 2017.

Susan's Philharmonic career began in the 1980s, with a temp job in what was then the Audience Services (now Customer Relations) Department. She moved on to roles in the Development Department at Manhattan School of Music and the Women's Health and Development program for Sub-Saharan Africa at the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which she describes as "a life-changing experience." In 1997 she returned to the New York Philharmonic as Deborah Borda's executive assistant, and the rest is history. After Borda departed for Los Angeles in 2000, Susan supported NY Phil Presidents Zarin Mehta and Matthew VanBesien, and then, she says, "the amazing Deborah once again." Through these transitions Susan was able to support decades of efforts to renovate David Geffen Hall, and be part of the unveiling of its transformation.

Deborah Borda said: "How lucky I was to have found such a special human being, who combines incredible warmth, people skills, and knowledge. She is a gifted writer, with an uncanny ability to write in 'Borda-ese,' and knows just the right moment to interrupt me. Having the privilege to manage an iconic institution such as this, one invariably encounters both treacherous shoals and moon shots. We've survived both! Susan was a critical behind-the-scenes player, and her loyalty to the Philharmonic has never wavered. A requirement for NY Phil President's Executive Assistant is a sense of humor — she certainly has one! I will never have another professional partner like her."

Beyond the world of the Philharmonic, Susan is a parishioner at St. Paul the Apostle church



and serves as a volunteer Catholic cantor at St. Patrick's Cathedral. Her fellow staff members know another interest, having seen medals around her neck on many a November morning after she's completed a marathon. She's run eleven of them — seven in New York, two in Berlin, and one each in New Jersey and Chicago. "Hoping for one or two more, but we'll see..." she says.

Just last month Susan married Anthony Viola, a fellow St. Paul's parishioner and a longtime Philharmonic subscriber, a tradition the couple will happily continue in 2023-24 and beyond!

Susan O'Dell after completing the New York City Marathon in 2018

Bill Thomas, *David Geffen Hall Project Executive*, *Retiring After 24 Years*



We would not be here in the beautiful new David Geffen Hall to honor Bill Thomas without — Bill Thomas. While his title and duties have changed over the years, the hall renovation, which he guided to its glorious completion, “was on my plate since my first day in 1999,” he says. Deborah Borda, in her first stint as head of the Philharmonic, hired Bill as Chief Financial Officer after his successful tenures at Brooklyn Public Library, the City of New York, and elsewhere. When Borda left not long after, Thomas became Acting Executive Director for almost a year, before Zarin Mehta arrived. “It was a crash course in what it takes to manage the Philharmonic,” Bill recalls. “Ever since, my role has combined finance and hands-on administration, culminating in leading the renovation.” As he departs, the hall gives him the most vivid “feeling of legacy. It’s visible to all — musicians, staff, audience. That makes me feel good.”

Bill’s devotion to the Philharmonic stands out all the more for his having left, briefly, when he held senior roles at The Metropolitan Opera, 2006–08. “It was great, but when the opportunity to return arose, it was an easy decision. I missed my colleagues and the work.”

The highlights of this work? First, creating a new ticket system from the ground up that allowed online ticket exchanges for subscribers — an industry first. “Others may find it boring, but for me personally, it’s significant. Other orchestras really struggled with it,” he says. Thanks to Bill’s leadership, the Philharmonic didn’t.

He also built the contractual and technological infrastructure for the NY Phil to expand its recording and broadcasting, restoring its role as an industry pioneer in media and technology. “I’m particularly proud of building the capacity to do things like the Apple Music Classical collaboration,” he says. It wouldn’t have been possible without the trust and respect Bill had from the Orchestra’s musicians, earned over the years as the administration’s lead labor negotiator. “We were able to achieve mutually agreeable deals while maintaining harmony,” he says. He remains a trustee of the American Federation of Musicians Pension Fund. (In fact, going forward he plans to serve on nonprofit boards and as a consultant to arts organizations.)

Yet, it’s the intangibles that he came to value the most. “I have felt a sense of comradeship with the players and colleagues that doesn’t always happen in a job,” he says. “I will miss that. In any job, after many years it’s possible to feel jaded, but I feel the opposite.”

The feeling is certainly mutual. Because he’s overseen and worked with so many areas of the organization — Finance, Operations, Human Relations, Digital, Marketing, Customer Relations, IT — Bill is as well known by the staff as anyone. His gravel-voiced good humor and broad and deep care for the institution will be deeply missed.

Speaking for all of us, Bill’s fellow retiree and longtime colleague Cathy Williams said, “Anyone who has worked with Bill knows that he’s a smart, collaborative problem-solver. These qualities, and his extensive knowledge of the Orchestra and its operations, made him uniquely qualified to oversee the David Geffen Hall project — a remarkable accomplishment! I’ve learned so much working with Bill these past 20+ years, and I’m grateful to call him my friend.”



Bill Thomas, onstage in the new David Geffen Hall

Catherine Williams, *Director of Human Resources, Retiring After 27 Years*



How did a girl from Greenpoint, Brooklyn, end up spending decades helping the New York Philharmonic enter the 21st century?

Classical music was not part of Cathy Williams's household. In high school she wanted to be a psychologist, but family finances couldn't support pursuing an advanced degree. At Queens College she discovered industrial psychology, which focuses on employee behavior — the precursor to Human Resources. After working in the for-profit world she decided to make a change. On seeing a *New York Times* ad for a parttime HR director at a nonprofit organization she applied, and, "Lo and behold," she recalls, "it was at the Philharmonic!"

At first the NY Phil's one-woman Personnel Department was dedicated to benefits administration. Individual departments handled hiring, and there were no organizational standards or processes, nor any interaction with Orchestra Personnel, which works directly with the musicians. Cathy centralized hiring and compliance, and started a close collaboration with the Orchestra Personnel office. Needless to say, she eventually worked full time while raising her two daughters (Carrie and Jennifer, 17 and 15, respectively) with her husband, Mark, a (now retired) firefighter.

We think we know what HR is, but how does this expert see it? "Some perceive it as enforcement of the rules; others think of it as employee protector," Cathy says. "It can be a bit of both at times, but it's not that simple. Ninety-nine percent of the time the employees' and company's needs align, but when they don't, it is HR's job to help find the best solution for the problem at hand. The answer is always situational. Most of it is listening. That's the 'human' part of it."

Is HR different at the Philharmonic? "There are two distinct workforces, with entirely different work structures. The musicians come from all over the world and bring their own unique backgrounds and experiences to the Orchestra. The staff members are equally talented in their chosen professions — it's the greatest staff in the world! — and they also bring their different perspectives to the workplace. There isn't a 'one size fits all' way to how we approach situations. It can be complicated, but it's always interesting."

Staff member Monica Parks said: "Cathy is a rare combination of empathy, no-nonsense practicality, and clear-eyed honesty. A therapist for the entire organization, who has tried



to fight the industry-wide presumption that we all have to work 24 / 7. Add to that her tough love, irreverence, and hearty laughter, and you get a true friend. I shall miss her terribly."

Cathy doesn't yet have a plan for her retirement. "I've been working in HR for 40 years, and it's time to do something new." Nevertheless, she adds, "I still refer to myself as an 'HR person.' I guess I always will."

Cathy Williams (far right) with her husband, Mark, and their daughters, Jennifer and Carrie, at a family wedding in 2022

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