



Opening Night Gala

Thursday, September 19, 6pm

ANDRIS NELSONS conducting

Carlos SIMON
(b.1986)

Festive Fanfare and Overture (5')
(world-premiere; co-commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Carnegie Hall to celebrate Andris Nelsons' 10th anniversary season as BSO Music Director. The Boston Symphony Orchestra commission is through the generous support of the Arthur P. Contas Commissioning Fund, and the New Works Fund established by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.)

Maurice RAVEL
(1875-1937)

Tzigane, for violin and orchestra (10')

KEILA WAKAO

Joseph CANTELOUBE
(1879-1957)

Selections from *Songs of the Auvergne* (18')
La delaïssádo [The abandoned girl]
Chut, chut [Hush, hush]
Lou coucut [The cuckoo]
Uno jionto pastouro [A pretty shepherdess]
Malurous qu'o uno fenno [The wretched man]
Brezairola [Lullaby]

SUSAN GRAHAM, mezzo-soprano

Camille SAINT-SAËNS
(1835-1921)

Carnival of the Animals, for pianos and orchestra (20')
1. Introduction and Royal March of the Lion
2. Hens and Cockerels
3. Wild Donkeys
4. Tortoises
5. The Elephant
6. Kangaroos
7. Aquarium
8. Persons with Long Ears
9. The Cuckoo in the Depths of the Woods
10. Aviary
11. Pianists
12. Fossils
13. The Swan
14. Finale


LANG LANG and GINA ALICE REDLINGER

RAVEL

La Valse, Poème choreographique (15')

Notes on the Program

With this season and tonight's sparkling Gala musical program, the Boston Symphony Orchestra celebrates Andris Nelsons' ten years of leadership as the orchestra's music director. Opening the concert is a brand-new work written to mark the occasion by the BSO's first-ever Composer Chair, Carlos Simon, whose much-anticipated tenure in that role begins with the start of this season. The remainder of the program is a nod to the BSO's rich history with the French orchestral repertoire, a profound part of the orchestra's heritage in the last century.



Familiar and new collaborators join us for tonight's performances. Sharing the stage are global phenomenon Lang Lang and his wife, German pianist Gina Alice Redlinger, in her BSO debut, in Camille Saint-Saëns's delightful *Carnival of the Animals*. Also joining us are a frequent guest for many years, superstar mezzo-soprano Susan Graham, and the brilliant young violinist Keila Wakao, winner of the BSO's 2023 Concerto Competition.

Carlos Simon (b. 1986)
Festive Fanfare and Overture


Composition and premiere: Carlos Simon wrote *Festive Fanfare and Overture* on commission from the Boston Symphony Orchestra to celebrate Andris Nelsons' 10th anniversary as BSO Music Director, completing the score in summer 2024. This is the world premiere performance.

Washington, D.C.-born composer, pianist, conductor, and educator Carlos Simon is the first-ever Boston Symphony Orchestra Composer Chair, a position he starts with the beginning of the BSO's 2024-25 season. His wide-ranging musical experience and talents make him an excellent choice to approach the role with expectations beyond composing. In this three-year position he will, of course, write commissioned works for the Boston Symphony Orchestra, but he will also work with the Boston Pops, curate concerts for our various ensembles, and work with the Fellows of the Tanglewood Music Center. This season, he has organized a free Boston Symphony Chamber Players concert of music by Black American composers of his own generation, which takes place at Union United Methodist Church in Boston's South End on September 29. The BSO performs his *Wake Up! Concerto for Orchestra* in Symphony Hall concerts of September 26-28, and his curated program *Coltrane: Legacy for Orchestra* in March 2025.

Simon grew up in Atlanta, where his first practical musical experience was playing piano in the church where his father was pastor. An excellent pianist, he was also drawn toward writing music of his own. His compositional approach encompasses influences from the Western Classical canon, Hollywood film music, and pop music; Gospel music as a constant, though not always obvious, presence. The experience of Black Americans, both historical and current, is a thread running through all of his work.

Among Simon's most personal projects is the eclectic recording project *My Ancestor's Gift* (2018), which blended many of his musical influences and social explorations in a single, genre-fluid concept album. His album *Together* is an equally personal collection of arrangements and original works performed by Simon and a handful of select collaborators. Commissioned by Georgetown University, where he is an associate professor, his *Requiem for the Enslaved* explores the university's slaveholding legacy through individual histories of the enslaved through music both intimate and universal. The Boston Symphony Orchestra commissioned Simon's *Four Black American Dances*, premiering in Symphony Hall under Andris Nelsons' direction and performing it on tour in Europe in 2023. Along with his BSO and Georgetown positions, Simon remains Composer-in-Residence of Washington, D.C.'s Kennedy Center through the 2026-27 season.

Of his *Festive Fanfare and Overture*, Simon writes, "This piece is written to celebrate the decade of leadership by Maestro Andris Nelsons with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. In his tenure with the orchestra, Nelsons has championed the works of Soviet-Russian composer, Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975). I decided to use melodic material from the *Festive Overture* (one of Shostakovich's most well known works) as a resource. To create a celebratory mood, I have also composed a brass fanfare at the beginning of the work in the style of Shostakovich. The piece moves gallantly with rhythmic syncopation across the various orchestral families before coming to a triumphant close with the entire orchestra. In addition to work celebrating Maestro Nelsons, this composition marks the beginning of my tenure as the inaugural Edmundson Composer Chair." This energetic concert opener is about five minutes long.



Joseph Canteloube (1879-1957)
Selections from *Songs of the Auvergne*

Composition and premiere: Joseph Canteloube composed his thirty folk song arrangements known as *Songs of the Auvergne* at intervals between 1924 and 1955 and published them in five series. They are in the Occitan language, and their original interpreter was the French soprano Madeleine Grey, who began performing them in 1926.

Certain composers have possessed the gift of transforming local and regional music into the property of the whole world. Bartók achieved this for the treasure-store of Hungarian folk song, despite its unfamiliar scales and intervals, and Canteloube achieved something similar in his collections of French folk song. His arrangements of songs from the Auvergne have found a place in the repertoire of many fine interpreters of French song, beginning with Madeleine Grey, to whom many of Canteloube's *Chants d'Auvergne* were dedicated.

Although Canteloube lived for many years in Paris, he was passionate about the mountainous region of France that lies between the rivers Dordogne and Rhône and comprises the Départements of Cantal, Haute-Loire, and Puy-de-Dôme. He prized the dialect, the melodies, and the landscape of this region; he also gathered songs from other parts of France and edited some French-Canadian songs.

His predilections were reinforced when he went to study at the Schola Cantorum in Paris, since Vincent d'Indy, its founder and director, was a strongly committed nationalist who had introduced French folk song into his own orchestral works. D'Indy's teaching, and the companionship of Déodat de Séverac, another enthusiastic regionalist composer, provided Canteloube with the inspiration to embark on his first serious compositions, mostly songs and orchestral works. Two operas, *Mas* and *Vercingétorix*, were staged between the wars at the Paris Opéra, the first extolling French country life and the second recalling the leader of the Gallic nation with undisguised patriotism.

It was the *Chants d'Auvergne* that brought Canteloube's name most prominently before the public. The first two books came out in 1924, containing eleven songs, with an accompaniment for modern orchestra of amply rich coloring.

In his arrangements Canteloube respects the inflections and modal character of the melodies and has preserved their dialect texts. He is fond of drone basses and the characteristic local *la-la-las*, but not afraid to apply chromatic harmony for expressive purposes. He brings out both the sentiment and the humor of the songs. His orchestration is bright and colorful, with a wide sonority and a special fondness for the rustic upper woodwinds.

The country folk who people these songs are rough and tender by turns, obsessed with the follies and delights of love. Their world is made up of the trees and pastures of Auvergne, dotted between the hills and rivers, and their companions are more often birds and animals than their fellow human beings. These songs evoke a French countryside that in its physical aspect is still there to be admired, and in its social milieu has not entirely vanished, even today.

CANTELOUBE Selections from *Songs of the Auvergne*

La delaïssádo


Uno pastourèlo
èser olaï al capt del bouès
lou galan doguélo,
mè né bèn pas!

“Ay! souï delaïssado!
Qué n'aï pas vist lou mio galant;
crésio qué m'aïmábo,
è ton l'aïmé iéu!”

The abandoned girl

A shepherdess
waits there at the top of the wood
for the young man she loves,
but he doesn't come.

“Ay! I am abandoned!
I have not seen the one I love;
I thought that he loved me,
and that I loved him.”



Luziguèt l'estèlo,
aquèlo qué marco la nuèt,
è lo pauro pastourelletto
démourèt à ploura...

Chut, chut

Mon païré mé n'o lougado,
Per ona gorda lo bacado,
Chut, chut, que z'o cal pas diré!
Chut, chut, mènès pas ton dè brut!

Né l'i soui pas to lèu estado,
Què moun golont m'o rencountrado,
Chut, chut...

N'ài pas ièu fatso de fuzados,
Cou m'o fat guel de poutounados!
Chut, chut...

Sé n'io bè de miliour couóifado
N'io pas de miliour embrassado!
Chut, chut...

Lou coucut

Lou coucut oqu'os un áuzel
Que n'io pas capt plus de to bel
Coumo lou coucut qué canto,
Lou mió coucut, lou tió coucut,
è lou coucut dès autrès!
Dió? Obès pas èntendut canta lou coucut?

Per obal, found del prat,
Sé n'io un áubré flourit è gronat,
Qué lou coucut l'i canto.
Lou mió coucut, lou tió coucut,
E lou coucut des autrès.
Dió? Obès pas èntendut canta lou coucut?

E se toutse les coucuts
Bou liou pourta souneto,
ô! foriú çin cent troumpetoï!
Lou mió coucut, lou tió coucut,
E lou coucut des autrès.
Dió? Obès pas èntendut canta lou coucut?

Uno jionto pastouro

Uno jionto pastouro
Un d'oquécé motis,
Ossitado su l'erbèto,
Plouro soun bel omi!

"Garo, sério bé ouro
Qué fougesso tournat!
Cáuco pastouro mayto
Soun cur auro dounat!

"Ah! pauro pastourèlo!
Délayssado soui yèn
Coumo lo tourtourèlo
Qu'ò perdu soun poriou!"

The star sparkles,
this star that marks the night,
and the poor little shepherdess
stays to weep...

Hush, hush

My father has found me a job;
It is to go and guard the cows.
Hush, hush! Mustn't speak!
Don't make so much noise!

No sooner had I arrived
Than my sweetheart met me.
Hush, hush!...

I didn't do much spinning
But I did get kissed and kissed!
Hush, hush!...

There may be girls with better hairdos,
But it is better to get more kisses.
Hush, hush!...

The cuckoo

The cuckoo is a beautiful bird;
there are none more beautiful
than the cuckoo that sings,
than my cuckoo, than your cuckoo,
than anybody's cuckoo!
Say, have you not heard the cuckoo sing?

Yonder, at the bottom of the meadow,
stands a scarlet flowering tree,
And there the cuckoo sings.
He's my cuckoo, he's your cuckoo,
he's everybody's cuckoo.
Say, have you not heard the cuckoo sing?

And certainly if all the cuckoos
chose to wear bells,
They would sound like five hundred trumpets!
He's my cuckoo, he's your cuckoo,
he's everybody's cuckoo.
Say, have you not heard the cuckoo sing?

A pretty shepherdess

A pretty shepherdess
one morning
was sitting on the grass
crying for her sweetheart.

"He should have returned
before now!
He must have fallen in love
with another shepherdess!

"Ah! poor shepherdess!
I have been abandoned
like a dove
who has lost her mate!"

Malurous qu'ò uno fenno

Malurous qu'ò uno fenno,
Malurous qué n'ò cat!
Qué n'ò cat n'en bou uno,
Qué n'ò uno n'en bou pas!
Tradèra, ladèri dèrèro...

Urouzo lo fenno
Qu'ò l'omé qué li cau!
Urouz' inquèro maito
O quèlo qué n'ò cat!
Tradèra, ladèri dèrèro...

Brezairola

Soun, soun, bèni, bèni, bèni;
Soun, soun, bèni, bèni doun!
Soun, soun, bèni, bèni, bèni;
Soun, soun, bèni, d'èn docon!
Lou soun, soun bouol pas bèni, pècairé!
Lou soun, soun bouol pas bèni,
Lou néni s'en bouol pas durmi! Oh!

Soun, soun, bèni, bèni, bèni;
Soun, soun, bèni, bèni doun,
Lou soun, soun bouol pas bèni.
L'èfontou bouol pas durmi!
Soun, soun, bèni, bèni, bèni;
Soun, soun, bèni, o l'èfon! Oh!

Soun, soun, bèni etc.
Atso lo qu'ès por oqui, pècairé!
Atso lo qu'ès por oqui,
Lou néni s'en boulio durmi... Ah!

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Tzigane, Concert Rhapsody for violin and orchestra

Composition and premiere: Ravel wrote the violin and keyboard version of *Tzigane* shortly before its April 26, 1924, premiere in London by violinist Jelly d'Arányi and piano-luthéalist Henri Gil-Marchex. The first performance of the orchestral version was on November 30, 1924, at the Concerts Colonne, Paris, Gabriel Pierné conducting and Jelly d'Arányi, soloist.

During one of Maurice Ravel's visits to London, following a private musicale during which the Hungarian violinist Jelly d'Arányi performed the composer's recent Sonata for Violin and Cello with the cellist Hans Kindler, Ravel asked Mlle. d'Arányi—who was a grandniece of the famed Austro-Hungarian violinist-composer-conductor-teacher Joseph Joachim—to play him some Gypsy melodies. This went on until five in the morning and presumably was the first event in the history of Ravel's *Tzigane* for violin and orchestra. Ravel completed the *Tzigane* (which means “Gypsy”) just shortly before its premiere in April 1924; the orchestral version was given for the first time half a year later. On both these occasions, the soloist was Mlle. d'Arányi, who was dedicatee of the violin sonatas by Vaughan Williams and Bartók as well as of the present work. It was also she who spurred the unearthing of Robert Schumann's Violin Concerto in 1937 by claiming the composer's spirit had visited her.

When it was new, a striking feature of *Tzigane* in its original violin-and-piano version was Ravel's use of the recently devised *piano-luthéal*, a modified grand piano that allowed the player to alter the timbre of the instrument by employing harmonium-like stops set above the keyboard to produce a variety of sounds (lute- and harpsichord-like, as well as the normal timbre of the piano). One of these stops—fittingly, for *Tzigane*—created a sound similar to the Hungarian cimbalom, a hammered dulcimer whose use in that country is

The wretched man

Wretched the man who has a wife,
Wretched the man without one!
He who hasn't got one, wants one,
He who has one, doesn't!
Tradèra, ladèri dèrèro...


Happy is the woman
Who has the man she needs!
But happier still is she
Who's managed to stay free!
Tradèra, ladèri dèrèro...

Lullaby

Come, come, sleep descend upon these eyes,
Come, sleep, oh come!
Come, come, sleep descend upon these eyes,
Come from wherever you will!
Sleep will not come, the lazy one!
Sleep will not come,
The baby will not sleep! Oh!

Sleep, come, hurry up!
Sleep, oh, do come here!
It doesn't want to come,
The baby will not sleep!
Sleep, come, hurry up!
Sleep, come to the baby! Oh!

Sleep, sleep, come etc.
It is coming at last, the lazy one!
It is coming, here it is!
And the baby is going to sleep... Ah!



traceable back to the 16th century. Ravel also called for this instrument in his opera *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* (“The Child and the Magic Spells”), completed in 1925.

In any event, the first performance of *Tzigane* astounded both the composer and the audience, especially given the limited rehearsal time. Ravel’s ability to write for an instrument he had never studied also attracted notice. The reviewer for the *London Times*, however, was skeptical. Describing the piece as “rhapsodical in the literal meaning of the word, being a series of episodes in the Hungarian manner strung together,” he was “puzzled to understand what M. Ravel is at. Either the work is a parody of the Liszt-Hubay-Brahms-Joachim school of Hungarian violin music...or it is an attempt to get away from the limited sphere of his previous compositions to infuse into his work a little of the warm blood it needs.” Such commentary seems superfluous. *Tzigane* is, simply and straightforwardly, a virtuoso showpiece, opening with an extended “quasi cadenza” for the soloist and, along the way, using just about every violinist trick in the book.

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)

Carnival of the Animals, for two pianos and orchestra

Composition and premiere: Camille Saint-Saëns composed *Carnival of the Animals* in February 1886 and stipulated that it be published posthumously. The first performances were at private gatherings, beginning with one on March 3, 1886, organized by cellist Charles Lebouc. The first public performance was given on February 25, 1922—two months after the composer’s death—by Concerts Colonne, Gabriel Pierné conducting.

Camille Saint-Saëns was a child musical prodigy (he played all of Beethoven’s piano sonatas from memory by the age of ten) with wide-ranging interests both in and out of music. His major compositions are symphonies, concertos, and operas, but he also composed a substantial body of chamber music, including a group of late sonatas for solo winds with piano that prefigure the neoclassical movement of the 1920s. He also had a wry sense of humor, nowhere more apparent than in the satirical *Carnival of the Animals* for two pianos with chamber orchestra.


The animals in question include some of the more common occupants of Noah’s Ark, characterized with gestural music that almost paints their pictures. But some of the animals are depicted through satiric references to earlier music of the 19th century, including the Tortoises (who attempt to dance to Hector Berlioz’s feather-light “Ballet of the Will-o’-the-wisps” from *The Damnation of Faust*—played by a heavy double-bass at a fraction of the original tempo) and the Elephants (galumphing through Jacques Offenbach’s sassy can-can). Less expected among the wild animals are the Pianists (whose wild cry is the kind of five-finger exercise many of us suffered through in piano lessons) and even Fossils (their “dry bones” represented by the xylophone, and their music including a tune from Gioachino Rossini’s *Barber of Seville*, as if to indicate that Saint-Saëns considered Rossini to be antediluvian!). The finale brings the entire menagerie together for a high-spirited final procession.

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

La Valse, Choreographic poem

Composition and premiere: Ravel composed *La Valse* in 1919 and 1920, basing it on sketches he made before the World War I for a symphonic poem with the intended title *Wien* (“Vienna”). Ravel and Alfredo Casella performed a two-piano version of *La Valse* in November 1920 at a concert of Arnold Schönberg’s Society for Private Musical Performances in Vienna. The orchestral version was given its premiere by Camille Chevillard and the Lamoureux Orchestra of Paris on December 12 that year.

Ravel found it difficult to return to normal work after the ravages of the First World War. Quite aside from the long interruption in his compositional activity and the loss of many friends, he was suffering from a recurring insomnia that plagued him for the rest of his life and played a considerable role in the dramatic reduction of new works. He had already started sketching a symphonic poem that was intended to be a musical depiction of



Vienna; naturally it was a foregone conclusion to cast the work as a grand orchestral waltz. Ravel had never yet visited the Austrian capital, but he “knew” Vienna through the composers, going back to Schubert and continuing with the Strauss family and many others who had added a special Viennese lilt to the waltz.

The first sketches for *Wien* apparently date from 1907, when Ravel was completing another musical travelogue, the *Rapsodie espagnole*. He began orchestrating the work during 1914 but ceased after the outbreak of hostilities; he complained in his letters that the times were not suitable for a work entitled “Vienna.” After the war, Ravel was slow to take up the composition again. Only a commission from Serge Diaghilev induced him to finish it, with the new title *La Valse*, Poème chorégraphique, and intended for production by the Russian Ballet. When the score was finished, however, Diaghilev balked. He could see no balletic character in the music, for all its consistent exploitation of a dance meter, and he refused to produce the ballet after all. (This marked the end of good relations between the composer and the impresario.)

So *La Valse* was first heard in concert form; only in 1928 did Ida Rubenstein undertake a ballet production of the score, for which Ravel added a stage direction: “An Imperial Court, about 1855.” The score bears a brief scenic description: Clouds whirl about. Occasionally they part to allow a glimpse of waltzing couples. As they gradually lift, one can discern a gigantic hall, filled by a crowd of dancers in motion. The stage gradually brightens. The glow of chandeliers breaks out fortissimo. The hazy beginning of *La Valse* perfectly captures the vision of “clouds” that clear away to reveal the dancing couples. The piece grows in a long crescendo, interrupted and started again, finally carried to an energetic and irresistible climax whose violence hints at far more than a social dance.

Ravel’s date of “1855” for the *mise-en-scène* was significant. It marked roughly the halfway point of the century of Vienna’s domination by the waltz—the captivating, carefree, mind-numbing dance that filled the salons, the ballrooms, and the inns, while the whole of Austrian society was slowly crumbling under an intensely reactionary government, the absolutism of Emperor Franz Joseph, who was 25 in 1855 and reigned until the middle of the First World War. The social glitter of mindless whirling about concealed the volcano that was so soon to explode. Ravel’s *La Valse* has the captivating rhythms in full measure, but the music rises to an expressionistic level of violence, hinting at the concealed rot of the society. Would *La Valse* have been different if composed before the horrors of the war? Who can tell? In any case, consciously or not, Ravel’s brilliantly orchestrated score captures the glitter and the violence of a society that, even as he was composing, had passed away.

From notes by Robert Kirzinger (Simon), Hugh Macdonald (Canteloube), Marc Mandel (Ravel *Tzigane*), and Steven Ledbetter (Saint-Saëns; Ravel *La Valse*)

Robert Kirzinger is the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s Director of Program Publications.

Hugh Macdonald taught music at the universities of Cambridge and Oxford and was Professor of Music at Glasgow and at Washington University in St Louis. His books include those on Scriabin, Berlioz, Beethoven, and Bizet, and was general editor of the 26-volume New Berlioz Edition. His *Saint-Saëns and the Stage* was published in 2019 by Cambridge University Press.

Marc Mandel joined the staff of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1978 and managed the BSO’s program book from 1979 until his retirement as Director of Program Publications in 2020.

Steven Ledbetter, a freelance writer and lecturer on music, was program annotator of the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 1979 to 1998.