

# BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

2023-24 SEASON  
ANDRIS NELSONS MUSIC DIRECTOR



**For immediate release**  
October 12, 2023 at 3 p.m.

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**ANDRIS NELSONS AND THE BOSTON SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA RELEASE THE HIGHLY ANTICIPATED FINAL  
INSTALLMENT OF THEIR GRAMMY AWARD-WINNING  
TRAVERSAL OF SHOSTAKOVICH'S SYMPHONIES FOR  
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON**

**Russian composer's Symphonies Nos. 2, 3, 12, and 13  
available on October 20 as a three-disc set or digital  
download; pre-order available at [Deutsche Grammophon  
website](#)**

The BSO's Shostakovich project continues this season with performances and recordings of the cello concertos with **Yo-Yo Ma** and the trailblazing 1934 opera ***Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk***



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After eight years, three Grammy Awards, and a mountain of rave reviews, **Andris Nelsons** and the **Boston Symphony Orchestra** conclude their visionary cycle of the 15 symphonies of Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975) on the Deutsche Grammophon label with a new three-disc set.

The recording, scheduled for release in physical and digital formats on October 20, 2023, traces with the Symphonies Nos. 2, 3, 12, and 13 a 35-year arc in the Russian composer's creative and personal evolution: from youthful idealism to mature disillusionment and resignation living and working under the Soviet regime. The cycle's latest addition was recorded live during performances given at Boston's Symphony Hall between November 2019 and May 2023, with No. 13 (*Babi Yar*) featuring bass-baritone **Matthias Goerne**, the **Tanglewood Festival Chorus** (who also sing in Nos. 2 and 3), and the tenors and basses of the **New England**

**Conservatory Philharmonic Choir**, led by **James Burton** and **Erica J. Washburn**, respectively.

Since his appointment as the orchestra's music director in 2014, Maestro Nelsons and the BSO have continued to develop and share their deepened understanding of Shostakovich's music. Their recording of the composer's Tenth Symphony, released the following year, was greeted by *Gramophone* magazine as "the most electrifying ... we've had in half a century." It established a Grammy Award-winning benchmark for the complete cycle. Four subsequent double-disc albums have confirmed the special qualities of Nelsons' remarkable Shostakovich performances and attracted a new audience to the composer's symphonies.

For Nelsons, Shostakovich's music runs deep. He was born in November 1978 in Riga, capital of what was then the Soviet Socialist Republic of Latvia. Lenin and the dogma of dialectical materialism still governed the school curriculum and society was still haunted by a sense of fear, though times had changed considerably since the period of Stalinism experienced by Shostakovich. Nelsons grew up listening to Shostakovich's music on records in the family home and began playing the piano at the age of five. "Shostakovich believed in the Soviet regime," says Nelsons. "You can hear this at the beginning of his career. He believed in Communism—so did I! We all did. Shostakovich was a very patriotic Russian and Soviet citizen. He wanted to live in the USSR, he wanted to be a Soviet artist. He was disappointed and unlucky that things turned out the way they did."

In the wildly experimental Second and Third Symphonies of 1927 and 1930 (employing factory siren, propagandistic choruses, and stretches of atonality), the young Shostakovich loudly proclaims his faith in the new Soviet society, and his apparent conviction that "there can be no music without an ideology." The Twelfth Symphony, composed more than three decades after the Second, also commemorates the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, but in more orthodox Socialist Realist fashion. Just one year later, however, in the Thirteenth Symphony, *Babi Yar*, Shostakovich changed course dramatically.

For in 1960, in what would be a major turning point in his life, Shostakovich (under intense pressure) reluctantly joined the Communist Party, to the dismay of friends. The poem "Babi Yar," a powerful denunciation of anti-Semitism by Soviet poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko (1933-2017), provided Shostakovich with creative inspiration during this challenging time. Eventually, he used this and four other Yevtushenko poems for the five-movement Thirteenth Symphony (for orchestra, bass solo, and male chorus) that carries the weight of a requiem. All the poems pointedly criticize failings of the

totalitarian Soviet system (anti-Semitism, enforced political orthodoxy, chronic consumer shortages, fear of denunciation, and stifling of imagination).

The resulting creation is among the Russian composer's most powerful works, poignantly capping off the BSO's epic journey with the Shostakovich symphonies. "Andris Nelsons presided over a boldly drawn reading that was expansive in its sweep and gratifyingly detailed in its execution," wrote Boston Globe classical music critic Jeremy Eichler in a May 5, 2023, review. "At the very end of the Thirteenth, Nelsons held the hall in a pristine, capacious silence that seemed to last an eternity. If it was, perhaps, a private moment of silence for Ukraine, it became a beautifully communal moment, one created by a composer's stentorian conscience, voiced for his own time, returning through his art to both chasten, and illuminate, ours."

This season, live audiences will again be able to experience the compelling partnership of Andris Nelsons, Shostakovich, and the BSO when they perform the Russian composer's two cello concertos with **Yo-Yo Ma** from Oct. 12–15. Nelsons will also lead concert performances of Shostakovich's landmark 1934 opera ***Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk***, starring soprano **Kristine Opolais**, at Symphony Hall on Jan. 25 and 27, 2024 and New York's Carnegie Hall on Jan. 30, 2024. Tickets are available at [bso.org](https://www.bso.org) and [carnegiehall.org](https://www.carnegiehall.org). Both programs will be recorded for future release by Deutsche Grammophon as part of the BSO's ongoing Shostakovich recording series.

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## Information About the BSO

Led by Music Director Andris Nelsons since 2014, the Boston Symphony Orchestra gave its inaugural concert in 1881 and opened Symphony Hall—widely acclaimed as one of the greatest concert halls in the world—in 1900. Today, the BSO reaches millions of listeners through not only its concert performances in Boston and at Tanglewood—the orchestra's summer home in Lenox and Stockbridge, Massachusetts—but also through educational and community programs, radio, television, recordings, and tours. Click [here](#) for further information about the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Symphony Hall.

## Sponsorships

Longstanding major corporate partner **Bank of America** returns as the BSO Lead Season Sponsor for the 2023–24 season. The BSO is pleased to have **Fairmont Copley Plaza** begin its 22nd season as the Official Hotel of the BSO, and to welcome

back **Genesis Motor America** as a season sponsor and the Official Vehicle of the BSO.

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