

Boston Symphony Orchestra and Music Director Andris Nelsons open 2023–24 season tonight

Highlights of Nelsons and the BSO's tenth season together include 11 programs conducted by Nelsons, repertoire focuses on Shostakovich, Beethoven, and Ligeti, 14 works by living composers, exciting artist debuts, and performances commemorating the 150th anniversary of Serge Koussevitzky's birth and 100 years since his appointment as BSO Music Director



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The Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) and Music Director Andris Nelsons open their 2023–24 season with two distinct programs, running from Thursday, October 5 through Saturday, October 7.

The celebratory weekend kicks off Thursday and Friday with a two-night program of Beethoven's *Consecration of the House Overture*, a Suite from Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Tango* by Arturs Maskats, and Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23, featuring soloist Rudolf Buchbinder.

The festivities continue on Saturday, October 7 with Opening Night at Symphony, a concert that places the Mozart and Beethoven pieces from the prior two nights in conversation with music inspired by Black American musical traditions. In this program, Nelsons will conduct Duke Ellington's *New World A-Coming*, featuring the Aaron Diehl Trio in their Symphony Hall debut; also appearing on the program is *Tonk*, a piano four-hands piece written with Ellington's longtime collaborator Billy Strayhorn, performed here by Buchbinder and Diehl side by side. The program concludes with Carlos Simon's *Four Black American Dances*, a BSO commission which was a centerpiece of the recent European tour programs.

An iconic institution whose local presence stretches from Boston Harbor to the Berkshires, the Boston Symphony Orchestra has formed a vital part of America's cultural fabric for 142 years. The BSO's 2023–24 season builds on the Symphony's place as a major cultural hub within a city of cultural hubs, nestled amongst the world's most respected educational institutions, some of America's finest conservatories, and in the heart of American history itself.

Over eleven weeks of concerts conducted by Music Director Andris Nelsons, fourteen works by living composers including five BSO co-commissions, and appearances by 32 guest artists and twelve guest conductors, The BSO and Andris Nelsons celebrate their tenth season together—and their first with CEO Chad Smith. Highlights include a season-long commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Serge Koussevitzky's birth as well as the 100th anniversary of his appointment as the BSO's Music Director; Nelsons-led concert performances of the complete cycle of Beethoven piano concertos with pianist Paul Lewis; the conclusion of the Symphony's complete performance cycle of the works of Dmitri Shostakovich, including performances of both the composer's cello concertos by Yo-Yo Ma; six programs in celebration of the 100th anniversary of György Ligeti's birth; and two themed series: *Music of the Midnight Sun*, featuring classic and new works by Nordic composers, and *Music for the Senses*, which highlights works influenced by the five senses.

"Serge Koussevitzky envisioned the BSO as an orchestra at the vanguard, with seasons rich in festivals, commissioned works, and major symphonic cycles," says Boston Symphony Orchestra CEO Chad Smith. "As we commemorate the 150th anniversary of

his birth, and 100th of his Music Directorship, we also recommit ourselves to his radical notion of orchestras as generative engines of new work."



Photo © Winslow Townson

Wide-Ranging Repertoire Conducted by Andris Nelsons

From October 12–15, Andris Nelsons leads Yo-Yo Ma in both of Shostakovich's powerfully emotional cello concertos, which will be recorded for future release by

Deutsche Grammophon as part of the BSO's ongoing Shostakovich recording series; the final installment of the Grammy Award-winning recordings of the composer's symphonies, featuring Nos. 2, 3, 12, and 13, will be released October 20. Nelsons will also conduct Haydn's Symphony No. 22, "Philosopher," and Canadian-Iranian composer Iman Habibi's *Zhiân*, a BSO commission.

Fall programs conducted by Nelsons conclude October 19–21 with a three-concert series in which British pianist Paul Lewis, acclaimed as one of the world's great Beethoven interpreters, plays all five Beethoven piano concertos. Beethoven's commitment to humanism and personal freedom are reflected in the program's other orchestral works: Hannah Kendall's *The Spark Catchers*, inspired by Lemn Sissay's poem about the women who labored at the Bryant and May match factory in 19th-century East London, and James Lee III's *Freedom's Genuine Dawn*, a BSO co-commission that sets text by Frederick Douglass, narrated by Thomas Warfield.

Nelsons returns to Symphony Hall January 11–13, leading pianist Seong-Jin Cho in Ravel's Piano Concerto for the left hand. Also on the program are Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* and Tania León's *Stride*. Taking inspiration from both Susan B. Anthony and the composer's grandmother, and drawing upon the wealth of Black American musical traditions, *Stride* earned the composer the 2021 Pulitzer Prize for Music. Writing for [*The New York Times*](#), Zachary Woolfe highlighted the piece's "unsettled understatement and quietly ominous power." In addition to the Symphony Hall performance, Nelsons, Cho, and the BSO will perform this program at Carnegie Hall on January 29.

On January 25 and 27, Nelsons continues his commitment to presenting opera at Symphony Hall with a concert performance of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. A masterpiece of the 20th century, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* stars soprano Kristine Opolais in a cast that also includes tenors Brendan Gunnell and Peter Hoare, and bass Günther Groissböck; joining them will be the Tanglewood Festival Chorus under James Burton. These performances will bring the orchestra's Grammy award-winning performance and recording cycle to a dramatic close with one of the composer's most radical and politically consequential works. Nelsons and the BSO will also perform this program at Carnegie Hall on January 30.

From February 2–3, Nelsons will lead soloist Randall Goosby—a recipient of the 2022 Sphinx Medal of Excellence—in Max Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 2. Also on the program are the overture to Dame Ethel Smyth's *The Wreckers* and Medelsohn's Symphony No. 5, *Reformation*.

In April, Nelsons leads the BSO in *Music for the Senses*, a two-week series that spotlights works influenced by synesthesia and experiences of color, taste, smell, and sight. *Music for the Senses* begins April 4–6 with a program centered on Scriabin's *Prometheus, Poem of Fire*. A massive piece composed for piano, color organ, chorus, and orchestra, this piece will feature the talents of pianist Yefim Bronfman as well as lighting research and design by Anna Gawboy and Justin Townsend; the Tanglewood Festival Chorus joins the BSO under James Burton. Also appearing on this program are British contemporary composer Anna Clyne's *Color Field*; the Prelude and Liebestod from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*; and Liszt's *Prometheus*. *Music for the Senses* continues April 11–14 with Messiaen's *Turangalila-Symphonie*, with pianist Yuja Wang and ondist Cécile Lartigau. The BSO premiered the piece, which was commissioned by Serge Koussevitzky, in 1949 under Leonard Bernstein.

Nelsons and the BSO's Spring programming continues April 18–20, with a program of Mozart's Symphony No. 33, Anna Thorvaldsdottir's *Archora*, and Brahms's Violin Concerto with soloist Hilary Hahn. Nelsons then leads the American premiere of Sofia Gubaidulina's BSO co-commissioned *Prologue* April 25–27, on a program that also features Detlev Glanert's Trumpet Concerto, with soloist Thomas Rolfs, and Prokofiev's Symphony No. 4. Like its companion piece *The Wrath of God*, *Prologue* is dedicated to Beethoven, and finds inspiration in a phrase from the composer's final string quartet as well as the philosophies of Martin Buber.

Nelsons and the BSO's 2023–24 season draws to a close May 2–4, with a performance of Berlioz's large-scale dramatic symphony *Roméo et Juliette* featuring mezzo-soprano J'Nai Bridges, tenor Lawrence Brownlee, bass-baritone John Relyea, and the Tanglewood Festival Chorus under James Burton.



Andris Nelsons conducts Yo-Yo Ma and the BSO in 2018

Photo © Robert Torres

Guest Artists, Conductors, and Soloists

The BSO is joined by numerous guest artists this season. Among them are pianists Rudolf Buchbinder, Paul Lewis, Anna Vinnitskaya, Kirill Gerstein, Seong-Jin Cho, Yunchan Lim, Leo Genovese, Yefim Bronfman, and Yuja Wang; cellists Yo-Yo Ma, Alisa Weilerstein, Blaise Déjardin, and Pablo Ferrández; violinists Leonidas Kavakos, Randall Goosby, Pekka Kuusisto, and Hilary Hahn; saxophonists Steven Banks and Dayna Stephens; bassist esperanza spalding; drummer Terril Lyne Carrington; trumpeter Thomas Rolfs; ondist Cécile Lartigau, and the Aaron Diehl Trio.

Several guest vocalists also make appearances this season. Among them are soprano Kristine Opolais, tenors Brendan Gunnell and Peter Hoare, and bass Günther Groissböck (*Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, January 25–27); mezzo-soprano Karen Cargill and bass-baritone Johannes Martin Kränzle (*Bluebeard's Castle*, February 8–10); soprano Georgia Jarman (*Peer Gynt*, March 7–9); esperanza spalding (*Celebrating the Symphonic Legacy of Wayne Shorter*, March 21 & 23); and mezzo-soprano J'Nai Bridges, tenor Lawrence Brownlee, and bass-baritone John Relyea (*Roméo et Juliette*, May 2–4).

In addition to Andris Nelsons, eleven guest conductors will lead the BSO this season.

They are, in order of appearance: Joana Mallwitz (November 2–4), Hannu Lintu (November 9–11), Thomas Adès (November 16–18), BSO Assistant Conductor Earl Lee (November 24 & 25), Karina Canellakis (Feb 8–10), Tugan Sokhiev (February 15–18), John Storgårds (February 29–Mar 2), Dima Slobodeniouk (March 7–9), Sir Mark Elder (March 14–16), Clark Rundell (BSO debut, March 21 & 23), and Domingo Hindoyan (BSO debut, March 28–30). Germeshausen Youth and Family Concerts Conductor Thomas Wilkins will also lead the BSO in the Youth and Family Concert program *May I Have Your Attention Please* October 25–28.



Carlos Simon introduces his BSO co-commissioned piece *Four Black American Dances* in February 2023

Photo © Aram Boghosian

New Works by Contemporary Composers

The 2023–24 season will feature thirteen works by living composers, including three USA premieres and six works commissioned by the BSO. Andris Nelsons leads Arturs Maskats's *Tango* October 5 and 6, during the BSO's opening weekend. One of the most significant Latvian composers, Maskats shares a personal connection with Andris Nelsons, having mentored him at the Latvian National Opera. Carlos Simon's *Four Black American Dances*—a BSO co-commission most recently performed during the European tour—appears on the Opening Night program. Iman Habibi's *Zhiân*, programmed

October 12–15, is a BSO commission. Praised for its “sincerity and emotional inspiration” by *The Boston Globe* after this summer’s Tanglewood premiere, *Zhiân* was composed following 22-year-old Mahsa Amini’s death at the hands of the Iranian morality police in 2022 and the resulting wave of mass protests.

Hannah Kendall’s *The Spark Catchers*, programmed October 19–21, is inspired by Lemn Sissay’s poem of the same name. It is joined on October 21 by James Lee III’s BSO commissioned-work *Freedom’s Genuine Dawn*. Thomas Adès leads his own *Tevot* November 16–18. Tania León’s Pulitzer Prize–winning composition *Stride* receives its Boston premiere January 11–13; the BSO then brings the piece to Carnegie Hall January 29. Outi Tarkiainen’s *Midnight Sun Variations* appears on the February 29 and March 2 program, part of the two-week series *Music of the Midnight Sun*, which celebrates music by Nordic composers.

Elena Langer’s BSO co-commission *The Dong with a Luminous Nose* receives its American premiere March 14–16; another BSO co-commission, Roberto Sierra’s *Symphony No. 6*, also receives its USA premiere March 28–30. Anna Clyne’s *Color Field* appears on the April 4–6 program, part of the *Music for the Senses* series. Anna Thorvaldsdottir’s sensational *Archora* is programmed April 18–20. Sofia Gubaidulina’s BSO co-commissioned piece *Prolog* receives its USA premiere April 25–27; Detlev Glanert’s *Trumpet Concerto* appears on the same program.



Serge Koussevitzky

Commemorating Koussevitzky's Legacy

This season marks the 150th anniversary of former BSO Music Director Serge Koussevitzky's birth, as well as the 100th anniversary of his appointment to the position of Music Director. In commemoration, the Boston Symphony Orchestra has programmed several works which were either commissioned by or premiered by Koussevitzky. Among these are Scriabin's *Prometheus*, which Koussevitzky premiered in 1911; Prokofiev's Symphony No. 4, which Koussevitzky premiered in 1930; and Messiaen's *Turangalila*, which Koussevitzky commissioned and which the BSO premiered under the baton of Leonard Bernstein in 1949. All will be conducted by Nelsons.

"As a figure of inspiration to me and so many musicians of our time, Koussevitzky is an enduring presence in the rich history that continues to inspire the BSO," says Nelsons. "As we look forward to celebrating him, we reflect on the BSO's ability to touch so many lives with the power of music. This is always our mission and hope as we create and immerse ourselves in every new season."

In recognition of Koussevitzky's enduring impact on the institution, three new works performed during the 2023–24 season will receive the designation "Koussevitzky 150 commission." They include Elena Langer's *The Dong with a Luminous Nose*, for cello, chorus, and orchestra, March 14–16; Roberto Sierra's Symphony No. 6, March 28–30; and Sofia Gubaidulina's *Prologue*, April 25–27. The Koussevitzky 150 celebration will continue through the Tanglewood 2024 season and into the BSO's 2024–25 season with the programming of additional music influenced by the legendary Russian-born conductor, composer, and double-bassist.



Focus on Shostakovich

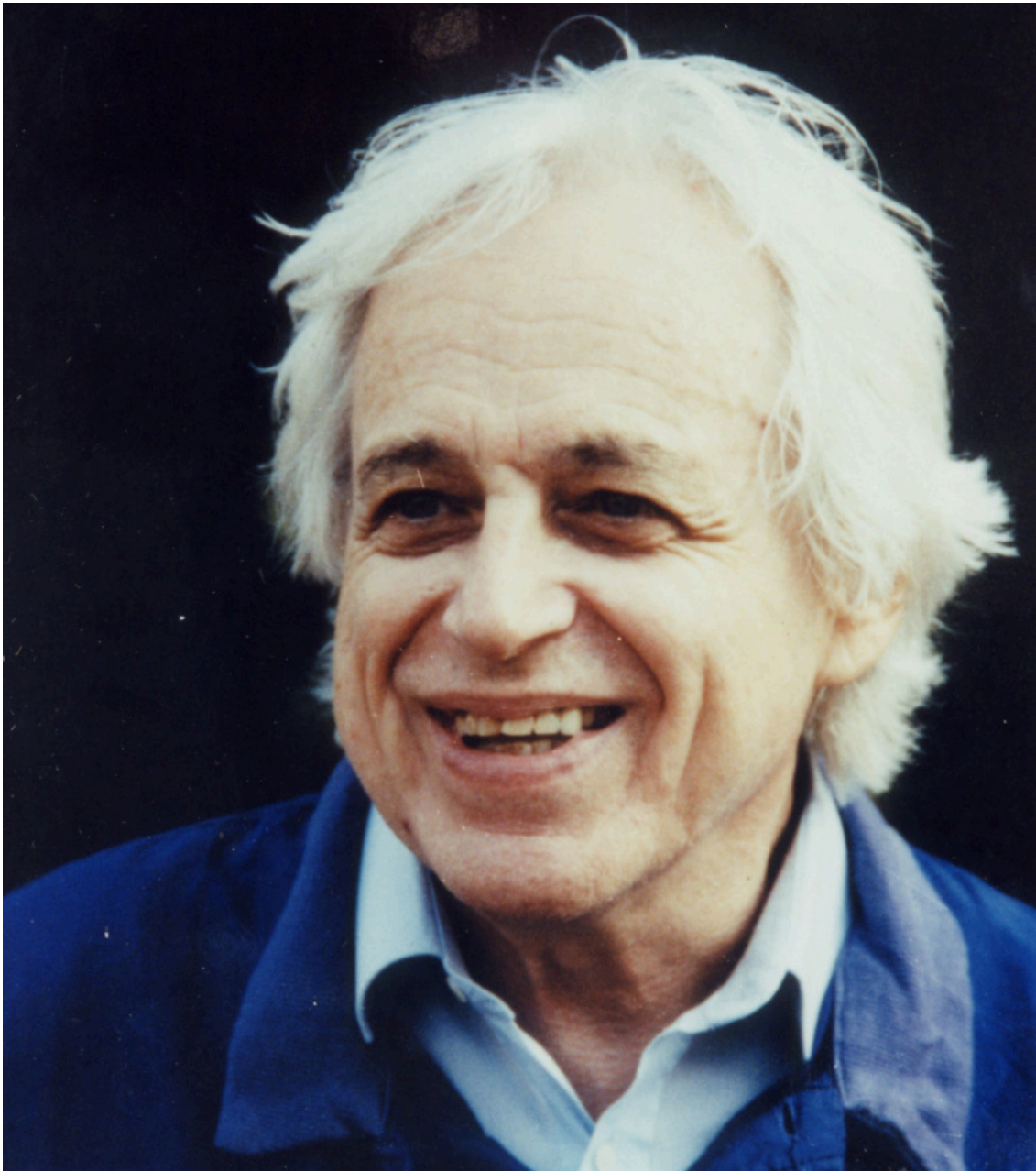
The Boston Symphony Orchestra concludes its multi-season performance cycle of the complete works of Dmitri Shostakovich this season with the performance of three works, all conducted by Andris Nelsons: Cello Concertos Nos. 1 & 2, with Yo-Yo Ma (October 12–15), and a concert performance of the opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, with soprano Kristine Opolais, tenors Brendan Gunnell and Peter Hoare, and bass Günther Groissböck, and the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, among others (January 25 & 27).

Nelsons and the BSO also conclude their Grammy Award-winning recording cycle of Shostakovich's symphonies this season, with the October 20 release of Symphonies Nos. 2, 3, 12, and 13 on Deutsche Grammophon. These four works explore the composer's shifting identity and political convictions under the Soviet regime, tracing a

35-year span in the composer's creative and personal evolution from youthful idealism to mature disillusionment and resignation. All four works were recorded live at Symphony Hall between November 2019 and May 2023, with No. 13 featuring bass-baritone Matthias Goerne, the Tanglewood Festival Chorus (who also sing in Nos. 2 and 3), and the New England Conservatory Philharmonic Choir.

Launched in 2015 as the first installment of a new partnership with Deutsche Grammophon, Nelsons and the BSO's Shostakovich recording cycle has earned numerous accolades, including three Grammy Awards for Best Orchestral Performance and one for Best Engineered Album, Classical. Central to the cycle is the historical survey *Shostakovich: Under Stalin's Shadow*, which focuses on works composed during the period of the composer's difficult relationship with Stalin and the Soviet regime—starting with his fall from favor in the mid-1930s and the composition and highly acclaimed premiere of his Fifth Symphony, through the premiere of the composer's Tenth Symphony, purportedly written as a response to Stalin's death in 1953. Joining the recordings are an [archival companion piece](#) detailing the circumstances under which Shostakovich lived, composed, and was heard, and an [interview with Nelsons](#) on Shostakovich, life, and music in the post-Stalinist Soviet Union.

Both the BSO and Nelsons have a longstanding relationship with the works of Shostakovich. His symphonies have been a frequent part of the BSO's repertoire ever since the inaugural performances of No. 1 in November 1935, less than ten years after the work was premiered. Nelsons became familiar with the composer's work as a young conservatory student at age 6; as an orchestral trumpeter, he often performed Shostakovich's symphonies in his youth, and conducted an orchestration of his Eighth String Quartet during his first-ever professional conducting engagement.



György Ligeti

Photo © Peter Andersen

Ligeti 100

The Boston Symphony Orchestra celebrates the 100th anniversary of composer György Ligeti's birth with seven engagements this season, presented in partnership with a variety of local ensembles. The *Ligeti 100* series begins November 12 with a free performance by Lorelei Ensemble and organist Heinrich Christensen at Santa Cecilia Church. This concert will feature Ligeti's *Idegen Földön*, *Ricercare*, *Négy lakodalmi tánc*, and two etudes for organ; also appearing will be works by Okeghem, Dufay, and Kurtág.

Ligeti 100 continues November 13 with a free performance by Calithumpian Consort at Symphony Hall, joined by soprano Nina Guo, mezzo-soprano Thea Lobo, baritone Corey Gaudreau, the New England Conservatory's [nec]shivaree ensemble, and other students from the New England Conservatory. This all-Ligeti program will feature the composer's String Quartet No. 1, Chamber Concerto, *Aventures*, and *Nouvelles Aventures*.

Pianists Stephen Drury and Yukiko Takagi, horn player Sarah Sutherland, and violinist Lilit Hartunian come together November 15 at the Goethe-Institut Boston for a free performance of Ligeti's Trio for violin, horn, and piano and selections from Book I of the composer's Etudes for piano. Drury then joins choreographer and dancer Elisabeth Schilling at the Goethe-Institut November 17, playing selections from Ligeti's Etudes for piano while Schilling performs her work *PRISMA*. This free performance will also include a discussion with Schilling on her choreographic process, including excerpts from her work *HEAR EYES MOVE. Dances with Ligeti*.

Thomas Adès leads the BSO in a subscription concert dedicated to Ligeti on November 16–18, centered on the composer's Piano Concerto with Kirill Gerstein. Also appearing on the program are Liszt's *Les Préludes*, Stravinsky's *Orpheus*, and Adès's own *Tevot*. *Ligeti 100* comes to a close on November 19, when the Boston Symphony Chamber Players open their 2023–24 season at New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall with a program dedicated to Ligeti. In addition to performing the composer's early work for winds, *Bagatelles*, the ensemble will be joined by Adès and Gerstein, who will perform Ligeti's 1976 work for two pianos, *Monument – Self Portrait – Movement*. The program will also include the American premiere of Adès's song cycle *Növények*, featuring mezzo-soprano Katalin Károlyi, and Mozart's String Quintet No. 3.