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BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA CANCELS ITS UPCOMING EUROPEAN TOUR

The **Boston Symphony Orchestra** regrets to announce the cancellation of their European tour to Vienna, Leipzig, Hamburg, and Paris, May 15–24. The cancellation is due to growing concerns over the recent rise in COVID-19 numbers in Europe and the United States and the potential for travel disruption during a multi-city overseas tour, as well as an increase in cases among the members of the orchestra and Tanglewood Festival Chorus following recent Symphony Hall performances.

The BSO's European performances were to have been part of a unique Strauss-focused tour partnership with the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig (GHO), May 9–31, under the direction of **Andris Nelsons**, who is the music director of both ensembles. The GHO's performances will continue as scheduled.

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“Given the ongoing presence of COVID, brought home by its unfortunate impact on a significant number of our own artists, we must keep as our first priority the health and safety of everyone involved with the Boston Symphony

Orchestra. Sadly, the only prudent and responsible course of action is, with deep regret, to cancel the European tour,” said BSO President and CEO **Gail Samuel**.

“All of us at the Boston Symphony Orchestra offer sincere thanks to those who have tirelessly worked to organize our performances in Europe and wish Andris Nelsons and our Alliance partners, the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, great success with their tour performances. We look forward to returning to our devoted audiences in Europe when conditions allow.”

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“The tour of both the BSO and Gewandhausorchester Leipzig in Europe was an immense, unique, and innovative undertaking. I was deeply passionate and excited to share this international alliance—a musical and human bond between exceptional orchestras on two continents—with our audiences. I am so very sorry for all presenters and audience members who were looking forward to the BSO’s performances, and to all the wonderful teams who spent so much time and energy on making this dream a reality. Of course, I respect the decision and the circumstances surrounding it,” said BSO Music Director **Andris Nelsons**.

“I am thrilled about the completion of our joint recordings of Richard Strauss’ symphonic works with the BSO and the Gewandhausorchester under the Deutsche Grammophon label. This achievement, largely completed during the years of coronavirus standstill, is a product of international cooperation and teamwork between two wonderful orchestras that makes me very proud. We look forward to better times when we can reunite the BSO with its many fans throughout Europe as soon as is reasonably possible.”

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“We are of course very disappointed to not be able to perform this tour, and wish that the ongoing COVID pandemic was not a factor,” said **James Markey**, BSO Bass Trombonist and Chair of the BSO Players’ Committee. “We feel a strong kinship with our colleagues in the GHO as a result of our recent partnership, and know this would have been a wonderful opportunity to continue and expand that relationship. We sincerely hope to see this tour happen in the future, and look forward to performing for our European audiences again when the time comes.”

Health and Safety Measures at Symphony Hall

The Boston Symphony successfully initiated pandemic protocols when it resumed performances with audiences at Tanglewood in July 2021 and continued effective implementation of its protocols through the BSO’s 2021-22 season at Symphony Hall, all informed by recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the City of Boston, and the BSO’s own team of advisors and medical experts, including 9 Foundations.

All performers are required to be vaccinated and boosted and all members of the chorus and wind and brass instrumentalists are tested daily; string players are tested twice per week. The HVAC system at Symphony Hall has been enhanced (higher outdoor air ventilation rates, MERV-14 filters or higher, and supplemental portable air cleaners), meeting or exceeding healthy building standards. Patrons are required to show proof of full vaccination or a negative test result to enter Symphony Hall and must remain masked.

Despite these best efforts, like the rest of the population, some of our performers—31 onstage musicians—were affected by the recent surge in COVID-19 cases. Though this was a stark reminder that this highly transmissible coronavirus variant remains a tenacious reality, the entire organization is thankful that no severe cases have been reported among these musicians. The BSO will continue to assess its protocols and make any necessary adjustments to best ensure the health and safety of everyone at Symphony Hall.

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