



Boston Symphony
Orchestra



2024-25 Season

For immediate release
Tuesday, Oct. 1 at 12 p.m.

**Boston Symphony Orchestra,
Greater Roxbury Arts & Cultural Center
and Boston's Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help
Present**

A Tribute to Duke Ellington (Free Concert)
**Led by BSO Youth & Family Concerts Conductor Thomas
Wilkins with Vocalist Renese King**
at
Boston's Basilica in Mission Hill
Friday, November 8 at 7 p.m.

Free tickets are available to reserve at [bso.org](https://www.bso.org)



The **Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO)**, the **Greater Roxbury Arts & Cultural Center (GRACC)** and **Boston's Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help** jointly announce ***A Tribute to Duke Ellington (Free Concert)*** on Friday, November 8 at 7 p.m. The performance will take place at Boston's Basilica in the Mission Hill neighborhood. The all-Duke Ellington program, to be conducted by BSO Artistic Partner, Education and Community Engagement **Thomas Wilkins**, marks the 50th anniversary of Ellington's death with a selection of the jazz great's most seminal works, including excerpts from his three Sacred Concerts, featuring vocalist **Renese King** and a specially formed ensemble of singers.

Three extraordinary pieces by Ellington are represented on the program for this special community presentation, including two of the American musical genius' symphonically ambitious "Tone Parallels" (his personal take on the tone poem): *Three Black Kings* and *Night Creature*. Ellington's three Sacred Concerts of 1965, 1968, and 1973, conceived as a parallel to traditional European church music, feature styles at the core of jazz, including gospel, the blues, and spirituals in a multidimensional, oratorio-like presentation. A veteran of many Gospel Night performances with the Boston Pops and a featured guest with the Pops at the BSO's most recent *Concert for the City*, King will perform for the first time with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in selections from Sacred Concerts, alongside Wilkins and a specially formed ensemble of 12 singers from local churches and the community.

The Ellington tribute will be the BSO's first-ever performance at Boston's Basilica. Built in the late 19th century in the Romanesque Revival style, The Mission Church, as it is informally known, is a Roman Catholic basilica located at 1545 Tremont Street in Boston. The Redemptorists priests of the Baltimore Province have ministered to the parish since the church was first opened in 1870. The shrine is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title of Our Mother of Perpetual Help. Boston Basilica is a diverse and inclusive parish that offers worship, service, and spiritual growth.

Statement from Chad Smith, BSO President and CEO:

"We are very pleased to offer this tribute to the legendary Duke Ellington as a free community program in partnership with GRACC and Boston's Basilica and are honored to perform Ellington's sacred music in this historic setting. We extend a warm welcome to residents of all Boston's neighborhoods and beyond to join us for what promises to be an inspirational evening of music-making."

Statement from Thomas Wilkins, BSO Artistic Partner, Education and Community Engagement, and Germeshausen Youth and Family Concerts Conductor:

"I am delighted to work again with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in a program that pays tribute to indisputably one of America's greatest composers.

"The opportunity to present this incredible music in an historic church with such deep and longstanding ties to Boston's Black community is both a gift and an honor.

"The players, Renese, and I are grateful to the many who make this free program

for the community possible, especially our co-presenters, the Greater Roxbury Arts & Cultural Center (GRACC) and the clergy and staff at Boston's Basilica. This concert will make all spirits soar!"

Statement from Greater Roxbury Arts and Culture Center Inaugural President and CEO Taneshia Nash Laird:

"The Greater Roxbury Arts & Cultural Center is thrilled to partner with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Boston Basilica to celebrate the transformative power of music. By paying homage to Duke Ellington's work in the Sacred Concerts, we not only honor a groundbreaking moment in music history but also affirm our shared commitment to cultural expression and community empowerment. Ellington's Sacred Concerts defy traditional boundaries, blending jazz, gospel, and spirituals in a way that resonates deeply with the cultural roots of our community. This collaboration reflects GRACC's mission to uplift diverse talent, celebrate the richness of the African diaspora, and use the arts as a catalyst for positive change in Nubian Square and beyond. We are proud to be part of this incredible event, and I look forward to enjoying these performances alongside our community."

Statement from Very Rev. Philip Dabney, C.Ss.R., Rector/Pastor of the Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help:

"As a church deeply rooted in the Mission Hill community, we are honored to host this extraordinary event that celebrates the life and legacy of Duke Ellington, whose music transcends genres and unites people in spirit. To welcome the Boston Symphony Orchestra and collaborate with the Greater Roxbury Arts & Cultural Center for such a significant performance, particularly Ellington's Sacred Concerts, speaks to the power of music to uplift and inspire. We look forward to sharing this historic evening with our neighbors, opening our doors to all who wish to experience the profound beauty of his work in this sacred space."

A Tribute to Duke Ellington (Free Concert)

Friday, November 8, 2024
7 p.m.
Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help
1545 Tremont St., Boston

Boston Symphony Orchestra
Thomas Wilkins, conductor
Renese King, vocalist
Vocal Ensemble

All-Ellington Program
Three Black Kings
Night Creature
Selection from the Sacred Concerts

How to Reserve Free Tickets

General admission tickets are available to reserve at no charge through [bso.org](https://www.bso.org), by calling 888-266-1200, or by visiting the Symphony Hall Box Office ([see hours](#)). Doors open at 6:00 p.m. Advance registration is appreciated.

Accessibility & Transit

Accessible seating will be available. The church building is fully accessible. The Basilica does not have guest parking, but there are some nearby private lots and garages. The location is served by the Green Line (take the E line to the Brigham Circle stop) and the MBTA 39 bus on Huntington Ave.

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Sponsorships

The Boston Symphony Orchestra is grateful to our 2024–25 season sponsors including Lead Season Sponsor **Bank of America**, Official Vehicle **Genesis Motor America**, Official Hotel **Fairmont Copley Plaza**, and supporting season sponsor **Arbella Insurance Foundation**.

About the Greater Roxbury Arts & Cultural Center (GRACC)

The Greater Roxbury Arts & Cultural Center (GRACC) is committed to supporting and presenting innovative performing arts, cinema, visual art, and humanities that honor the cultural roots and diverse talent emerging from the African diaspora. With plans for a state-of-the-art visual and performing arts center to be constructed in Nubian Square, GRACC aims to serve as a catalyst for social justice, economic development, and community empowerment through the arts. GRACC elevates underrepresented voices and fosters meaningful dialogue through dynamic cultural programming that enriches the community. More information: www.graccboston.org

About the Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help

The Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, also known as Mission Church, is a prominent Roman Catholic basilica located in the Mission Hill neighborhood of Boston, MA. Established in 1870, the church is run by the Redemptorist Fathers, a Catholic religious congregation dedicated to preaching the Gospel and serving the poor. The basilica features magnificent stained glass windows, intricate stone carvings, and a soaring interior that draws visitors from across the region. It is named after the revered icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, which has been a source of devotion for many pilgrims seeking solace and healing.

The church was elevated to the status of a basilica in 1954 by Pope Pius XII. Being designated as a basilica is a rare honor granted by the Pope to churches of great historical, architectural, or spiritual significance. There are only 93 minor basilicas in the United States, making this distinction particularly notable.

As a Redemptorist parish, the basilica places a strong emphasis on pastoral care, community outreach, and religious education, remaining a vibrant center of faith and a key part of Boston's spiritual and cultural heritage. More information: www.bostonsbasilica.com

Titles for BSO Artistic and Executive Leadership

Andris Nelsons, Ray and Maria Stata BSO Music Director and Head of Conducting at Tanglewood

Chad Smith, Eunice and Julian Cohen BSO President and CEO

Keith Lockhart, Julian and Eunice Cohen Boston Pops Conductor

Thomas Wilkins, Artistic Partner, Education and Community Engagement / Germeshausen Youth and Family Concerts Conductor

James Burton, Alan J. and Suzanne W. Dworsky BSO Choral Director and Conductor of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus

Carlos Simon, Deborah and Philip Edmundson Composer Chair

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More BSO News

For more news about the BSO and Boston Pops, [read our recent press releases](#) or follow us on social media.



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Tanglewood | 297 West Street | Lenox, MA 01240 | [Box Office Hours](#)

Symphony Hall | 301 Massachusetts Avenue | Boston, MA 02115 | [Box Office Hours](#)

Ticketing & Customer Service | 617.266.1200 (M-F: 10-4pm & Sat: 12:30pm-4:30pm) Service & Tickets | Subscriptions 888.266.7575

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