



For immediate release
Wednesday, May 28 at 12 p.m.

Tanglewood Presents *Past, Present, and Future: What Is Music For?*, A Humanities Series Created in Partnership with Yo-Yo Ma (August 2–12)

The celebrated summer music and learning campus also announces guests for the TLI Spotlight Speaker Series (August 2, 9 and 23)

Tickets for new events on sale May 30 at 10 a.m. at tanglewood.org



Tanglewood is pleased to announce two upcoming series that enhance the summer festival's musical offerings through deep exploration of the humanities. ***Past, Present, and Future: What Is Music For?***, created in partnership with longtime BSO collaborator Yo-Yo Ma, encompasses four talks and four musical performances with an array of compelling scholars and performers (Aug. 2–12). The annual **Tanglewood Learning Institute (TLI) Spotlight Series** this year features: **Ma** and historian **Heather Cox Richardson** (Aug. 2), art critic **Sebastian Smee** and musicians **Sam Amidon** and **Shahzad Ismaily** (Aug. 9), and violinist **Vijay Gupta**, journalist **Steve Lopez**, and Juilliard's **Lesley Rosenthal** (Aug. 23). Another new addition to the August schedule brings *On Being* podcast host **Krista Tippett** to discuss the impact of artificial intelligence on the humanities with Princeton's **D. Graham Burnett** (Aug. 10).

Quote from Yo-Yo Ma:

"For millennia, the humanities have helped us to navigate through times of creation and times of destruction, to seek truth, and to build trust. It's wonderful to join my friends at the BSO to reflect on why we make music and what makes us human — and how that can be a source of hope for the future."

Quote from BSO President and CEO Chad Smith:

"The Spotlight Series is a cornerstone of TLI's summer season, bringing preeminent thought leaders across disciplines to Ozawa Hall. This August, we are thrilled to partner with the incomparable Yo-Yo Ma, who has curated *Past, Present, and Future: What is Music For?*, a series of concerts and speaking events that weaves together themes in his musical performances at Tanglewood with ideas and questions probed by Spotlight guests historian Heather Cox Richardson, art critic Sebastian Smee, and musicians Sam Amidon and Shahzad Ismaily. We invite you to join us for these and other humanities events this summer and throughout the year that we hope will enrich your concert experience by demonstrating music's power to address timeless human questions."

[Click here](#) for the 2025 Tanglewood press kit, which includes an updated season listing

Past, Present, and Future: What Is Music For?

Tanglewood announces ***Past, Present, and Future: What Is Music For?***, created in partnership with Yo-Yo Ma. Featuring some of today's most inspiring thinkers, this series of talks and concerts explores how yesterday's artists and the innovators of today can help us understand what it means to be human as we face our future.

The series begins with a **TLI Spotlight Series** talk featuring **Yo-Yo Ma** and historian **Heather Cox Richardson** (*Letters from an American* newsletter and podcast), exploring the historical and musical resonance of the year 1803 (Aug. 2, 5 p.m., Ozawa Hall). In this year, Europe was in the middle of the turmoil begun by the French Revolution, the United States concluded the Louisiana Purchase,

and Beethoven composed his Symphony No. 3 *Eroica*. Ma and Richardson will explore the world in which this masterpiece was born, how contemporary events connected with each other in unexpected ways, and how the echoes of that year persist. The following afternoon, Ma will perform a transcription of the symphony for piano quartet as part of an all-Beethoven program with violinist **Leonidas Kavakos**, violist **Antoine Tamestit**, and pianist **Emanuel Ax** (Aug. 3, 2:30 p.m., Shed).

The second weekend of the series explores the exchange of knowledge, skill, and meaning among teachers and students, highlighting the contributions of music educators and anchored by Ma's performance of Saint-Saëns Cello Concerto No. 1 with BSO Assistant Conductor **Samy Rachid** (Aug. 10, 2:30 p.m., with an open rehearsal of the same program Aug. 9, 10:30 a.m., both in the Shed). Pulitzer Prize-winning art critic **Sebastian Sme**e will lead a TLI Spotlight Series ***How Creativity Happens: The Student and Teacher Dynamic*** with singer **Sam Amidon** and multi-instrumentalist **Shahzad Ismaili** (Aug. 9, 5 p.m., Ozawa Hall). Reflecting on connections to the Berkshires and inspired by the pedagogical lineage linking Saint-Saëns through Gabriel Fauré and Nadia Boulanger to Ma's teacher Luise Vosgerchian, the trio will speak personally on learning and lineage, weaving music throughout. This particular chain of musical influence will also be reflected in Friday evening's Prelude Concert, in which Ma joins members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra for an all-French program including music by Saint-Saëns, Fauré, and Boulanger (Prelude Aug. 8, 6 p.m., Ozawa Hall included in ticket to that evening's 8 p.m. Shed concert).

The next talk of the series, on the same day as Ma's performance of Saint-Saëns' Cello Concerto No. 1, is ***On Being Live: Krista Tippett in Conversation with D. Graham Burnett*** (Aug. 10, 10:30 a.m., Linde Center Studio E). The groundbreaking public radio show and podcast *On Being* takes up the big questions of meaning at the center of human life: What does it mean to be human, and how do we want to live? Its founder **Krista Tippett** is a Peabody Award-winning broadcaster, National Humanities Medalist, and *New York Times* bestselling author. In her Tanglewood debut, Tippett will interview Princeton professor, historian, artist, and Friends of Attention founder **D. Graham Burnett** whose recent *New Yorker* article "Will the Humanities Survive Artificial Intelligence?" explores the complexities and possibilities of teaching, learning, and growing in this transformative time.

Tanglewood collaborates with the Clark Art Institute to offer an additional companion event, ***French Art and Music: An Evening with Tanglewood and Sebastian Sme**e* (Aug. 12, 7 p.m., Clark Institute, Williamstown). Located in the museum's auditorium, the program celebrates French music and art of the late 19th century, ranging from the Romantic period into early Modernism. **Fellows from the Tanglewood Music Center** (TMC) will present a performance of chamber music featuring Fauré's Piano Quartet No. 1 in C minor, Op. 15 along with **Ed Gazouleas**, Director of the TMC, who will introduce selected excerpts from the piece highlighting key musical ideas and themes. Following their performance, **Sme**e explores the art and artists who were so central to this period, notably many of the French artists whose works are at the heart of the Clark's collection, which attendees can view in the galleries prior to the event. Tickets are available through the [Clark's website](#).

TLI Spotlight Series

The **Tanglewood Learning Institute (TLI) Spotlight Series** features some of the world's greatest thinkers in the humanities, who dive into the big ideas of our time through dynamic presentations that investigate a diverse array of subjects and perspectives. Each talk illuminates the enduring vitality of music and uniquely contextualizes the themes of Tanglewood's concert repertoire. Past Spotlight Series speakers have included Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Doris Kearns Goodwin, David Pogue, Tracy K. Smith, and Isabel Wilkerson.

This year's series begins with an exploration of 1803, the year of Beethoven's *Eroica* symphony with **Yo-Yo Ma** and **Heather Cox Richardson**, followed by a dialogue on *How Creativity Happens: The Student and Teacher Dynamic* with **Sebastian Smee**, **Sam Amidon**, and **Shahzad Ismaily** (Aug. 2 & 9, 5 p.m., Ozawa Hall; see above section for more details).

The series concludes with a conversation on music and service between innovative violinist **Vijay Gupta** and award-winning journalist **Steve Lopez** (Aug. 23, 5 p.m., Ozawa Hall). Violinist, speaker, and author **Gupta** is a nationally celebrated leader in how music can be a transformative force for humanity, connection, and hope. He is Founder and Artistic Director of Street Symphony, a nationally recognized pioneer in creating musical experiences for people in reentry from homelessness, addiction, and incarceration. **Lopez** has been a *Los Angeles Times* columnist since 2001, has won more than a dozen national journalism awards, and is a four-time Pulitzer finalist. His book *The Soloist* is a story of a broken dream, an unlikely friendship, and the redemptive power of music. **Lesley Rosenthal**, Chief Operating Officer and Corporate Secretary of The Juilliard School, who co-led the daring rescue of the Afghanistan National Institute of Music from Taliban danger in 2021, will moderate the conversation.

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How to Buy Tickets

Tickets for newly announced speaker events go on sale Friday, May 30 at 10 a.m. (tickets for the *French Art and Music* program at the Clark Art Institute are currently available [on their website](#)). Tickets for Yo-Yo Ma's previously announced musical performances at Tanglewood are currently on sale at [bso.org](https://www.bso.org).

[Tanglewood.org](https://www.tanglewood.org) is the official site for all Tanglewood tickets. Tickets also may be purchased by calling 888-266-1200 on Monday-Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturday 12:30-4:30 p.m. Tickets may be purchased at the Symphony Hall Box Office. The Tanglewood Box Office opens for the season on June 14 (see [Box Office hours](#) for both locations).

Accessibility Services

The BSO is committed to providing access to Tanglewood for everyone. For information about accessible seats, parking, programs, and other accommodations, call 617-638-9431, email access@bso.org, or [visit our website](#).

About Tanglewood

Tanglewood, one of the country's premier summer music festivals and summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra since 1937, is in the Berkshire Hills of Lenox and Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Tanglewood is also the home of the [Tanglewood Music Center](#), the acclaimed summer music academy founded by Serge Koussevitzky in 1940. Launched in 2019 with the opening of the Linde Center for Music and Learning, the [Tanglewood Learning Institute](#) in collaboration with the newly announced Humanities Institute offer dynamic and leading-edge performances and events connecting audiences with musicians, artists, students, scholars, and cultural leaders through wide-ranging humanities-focused programs. Tanglewood also presents an annual [Popular Artist Series](#) in the Koussevitzky Music Shed (1938) and recital and chamber music concerts in Ozawa Hall (1997).

Sponsorships

The BSO is proud to welcome back [Genesis](#) as the Official Vehicle of Tanglewood and [Berkshire Health Systems](#) as the Official Health System of Tanglewood.

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More BSO News

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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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