



Boston Symphony
Orchestra



2024-25 Season

For immediate release

Friday, February 28, 9 a.m. EST



Boston Symphony
Orchestra



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**Yo-Yo Ma Joins the Boston Symphony Orchestra and
Andris Nelsons to Record the Shostakovich Cello
Concertos**



***Shostakovich: The Cello Concertos* will be released on
April 25**

Listen to the first movement of Concerto No. 1 [here](#)

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The two concerto recordings are also included in the BSO's monumental Shostakovich anthology, it too coming soon as part of the commemorations surrounding the 50th anniversary of the composer's death

"I think Shostakovich's artistic truth was to represent the voice of the
voiceless"
-Yo-Yo Ma

In October 2023, cellist **Yo-Yo Ma** returned to Boston's Symphony Hall to play Shostakovich's two cello concertos with the **Boston Symphony Orchestra** and its Music Director **Andris Nelsons**. Recorded by a team headed by legendary Hollywood producer **Shawn Murphy** and BSO lead recording engineer **Nick Squire**, their performances of these two very different works are now set to be released this spring by **Deutsche Grammophon** to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the composer's death in 1975.

Shostakovich: The Cello Concertos will be issued as a standalone digital, CD, and vinyl album on **April 25**. The opening Allegretto of the First Concerto will be available to stream or download from **February 28**. Yo-Yo Ma's recordings are also included in the anthology bringing together the BSO's decade-long, GRAMMY Award-winning Shostakovich project. This contains all 15 symphonies, key incidental works, new recordings of the complete cello, piano, and violin concertos—the latter with soloists **Yuja Wang** and **Baiba Skride** respectively—and the first commercial audio release in more than 20 years of the composer's only full-length opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. It will be released digitally and as a 19-CD box set on **March 28**.

Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No. 1 in E flat major dates from 1959. Cast in four movements, it was dedicated to and premiered by the composer's old friend Mstislav Rostropovich. Yo-Yo Ma has played the work many times, and here brings out the contrasting moods of its writing, from dark irony to poignant lyricism, with his signature virtuosic brilliance. In many places he creates an eloquent dialogue with BSO principal horn **Richard Sebring**.

Reviewing the First Concerto performance, the *Boston Globe* wrote, "In the second movement's eerie duet between the cello and celesta, the high-pitched sound of Ma's cello harmonics was so thin and crystalline that they sounded like a

wind instrument. The extended cadenza was pensive, slowly ramping into the sardonic burlesque of the finale, which sent the orchestra hurtling to the finish line with Ma clinging to his cello as if for dear life.”

Rostropovich premiered the Second Cello Concerto in G major in Moscow on September 25, 1966, Shostakovich’s 60th birthday. He was also the soloist for the BSO’s first performance of the work, which, by sad coincidence, took place on August 10, 1975, the day after the composer’s death.

The Second begins in a melancholy vein, with a sighing phrase for the solo cello. After the extended Largo, the second and third movements are played without a break. Shostakovich mimics a street song from Odessa in the central Allegretto. That tune is dramatically restated in the finale, which begins with a horn fanfare and eventually ends with wood block, tom-tom, snare drum, and xylophone (part of the orchestra’s huge percussion section) punctuating a long-held drone note from the cellist.

This more reflective, inward-looking work is less frequently performed than its predecessor. As noted by the *Boston Globe*, however, “One could scarcely have asked for a better trail through [this less familiar territory] than the path Ma charted with Nelsons and the BSO ... Here the cello brooded resolutely ... there it raged in dark outbursts only to be answered by explosive thuds from the bass drum.”

“Having Yo-Yo Ma, one of the greatest cellists of our time, join us on our journey through Shostakovich’s music, has been an immense privilege and a joy for all of us at the BSO,” says Nelsons. “Yo-Yo has a totally unique imagination which infects everyone around him. His incredible range and depth and his humanity are ever present when performing Shostakovich’s demanding cello concertos. We are very proud to present this recording with Deutsche Grammophon, including as part of our complete Shostakovich box set, and I look forward to reprising the First Cello Concerto with Yo-Yo in Boston and at Carnegie Hall later this spring.”

Yo-Yo Ma will be reunited with the BSO and Nelsons at Symphony Hall on April 11 (sold out) and at New York’s Carnegie Hall on April 24. Together they will perform the First Cello Concerto as part of an all-Shostakovich program, which will also feature the composer’s Symphony No. 11 “The Year 1905.”

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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, Mass.—but also via educational and community programs, radio, television, recordings, and tours. Celebrated for its diverse programs, passionate performances, and tradition of innovation, the BSO is one of the world’s most

accomplished and versatile ensembles, attracting world-renowned guest artists and players, composers, and conductors. More information about the BSO and Andris Nelsons may be found at [bso.org](https://www.bso.org).

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