

Friday, July 8, 8pm

Opening Night at Tanglewood

BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
ANDRIS NELSONS conducting

With great regret, pianist **Jean-Yves Thibaudet** must withdraw from his Tanglewood concert with the Boston Symphony on Friday, July 8 due to a death in the family. Mr. Thibaudet writes that coming to Tanglewood every summer is one of the highlights of his concert season. He looks forward to making music at Tanglewood with his dear friends Andris Nelsons and the Boston Symphony—and to seeing the wonderful Berkshires audience—for many years to come.

Yuja Wang has graciously agreed to step in to perform the Liszt Piano Concerto No. 1 in place of Bernstein's Symphony No. 2, *The Age of Anxiety* that was originally scheduled. The remainder of the Opening Night at Tanglewood program, under the direction of BSO Music Director **Andris Nelsons**, is unchanged.

BERNSTEIN

Opening Prayer (Benediction)
JACK CANFIELD, baritone

LISZT

Piano Concerto No. 1 in E-flat
YUJA WANG, piano

{Intermission}

STRAVINSKY

The Rite of Spring, Pictures from pagan Russia

Part I: The Adoration of the Earth

Introduction—Auguries of spring (Dances of the young girls—

Mock abduction—Spring Khorovod (Round Dance)—

Games of the rival clans—Procession of the wise elder—

Adoration of the earth (The wise elder)—Dance of the earth

Part II: The Sacrifice

Introduction—Mystical circles of the young girls—

Glorification of the chosen victim—The summoning of the ancients—

Ritual of the ancients—Sacrificial dance (The chosen victim)

Notes on the program

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)

Opening Prayer

Composition and premiere: December 15, 1986, Leonard Bernstein leading the New York Philharmonic and baritone Kurt Ollmann at Carnegie Hall, New York City. In the only previous Boston Symphony Orchestra performance of the piece, members of the BSO joined forces with the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra and baritone Sherrill Milnes under conductor Seiji Ozawa as part of the inaugural concert for the opening of Seiji Ozawa Hall on July 7, 1994. *Opening Prayer* has since been performed three times at Tanglewood, all by the TMCO, including once in the Shed, led by Robert Spano and featuring baritone Roberto Servile, for the Leonard Bernstein Memorial Concert on July 15, 2000. Yu-An Chang led the most recent Tanglewood performance with the TMCO in Ozawa Hall on July 9, 2018.

No former Tanglewood student has had so signal an influence on the place as Leonard Bernstein, who arrived here in 1940 as a member of the very first class of what was then called the Berkshire Music Center and who returned—as student, assistant to Serge Koussevitzky, conductor, composer, and teacher—virtually every summer for the remainder of his life. As America's musical icon, Bernstein regularly focused the attention of the artistic world on this place. His 70th birthday celebrations here included four days of astonishing events, some of which were carried by live television to Europe. And it was at two Tanglewood concerts in August 1990—with the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra and the Boston Symphony Orchestra—that Bernstein conducted for the last time, appropriately ending his career at the place where, for all practical purposes, it had begun. In 2018 the BSO and a large roster of special guests including John Williams, Midori, and Michael Tilson Thomas presented a Bernstein Centennial

Celebration at Tanglewood to highlight the great musician's outsized impact on American music generally and on Tanglewood especially.

Bernstein wrote *Opening Prayer* for a gala concert celebrating the reopening of the main auditorium of Carnegie Hall on December 15, 1986. The composer led the New York Philharmonic and baritone Kurt Ollmann in the first performance. A solemn, rugged, brass-centered orchestral introduction is followed by a lovely, songlike melody given primarily to the oboe. This expansive tune is taken over by strings in counterpoint. The solo baritone only appears for the last minute or so, singing a benediction in Hebrew from the Old Testament, *Numbers* 6:24-36:

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee:
The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:
The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

Bernstein, already an up-and-coming conductor and composer, had seen his stock rise considerably when he made his debut with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall in 1943 in relief of an ailing Bruno Walter. In an introduction to a filmed performance of the premiere of *Opening Prayer*, the violinist Isaac Stern—who spearheaded efforts to save Carnegie Hall from destruction in the 1960s—related that Bernstein recalled whispering the benediction to himself as he strode onstage for that auspicious debut.

The basis of *Opening Prayer* is a two-minute piano piece, “For Aaron Stern” (a musician and educator with whom Bernstein worked in the 1980s), one of the solo piano *Thirteen Anniversaries* eventually compiled in 1988. Bernstein used this as the kernel of the six-minute baritone-and-orchestra work, which also became the second movement, renamed “Benediction,” of his *Jubilee Games*, a two-movement work written for the 50th anniversary of the Israel Philharmonic in 1986 and expanded to become the composer's four-movement Concerto for Orchestra, which was premiered by the Israel Philharmonic under the composer's direction in April 1989.

STEVEN LEDBETTER/ROBERT KIRZINGER

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

Piano Concerto No. 1 in E-flat

Composition and premiere: Though sketches for the Piano Concerto No. 1 go back to 1830, Liszt drafted both his piano concertos at roughly the same time in 1839. He likely worked on the first again in the late 1840s, in 1853, and following the premiere which took place at Weimar on February 17, 1855, with the composer as soloist and Hector Berlioz conducting. Wilhelm Gericke led the first BSO performances in October 1885 with soloist Adèle Margulies in the old Boston Music Hall. The most recent Tanglewood performance on August 18, 2000, featured Jean-Yves Thibaudet with Adam Fischer conducting, and the most recent BSO performances took place in January 2013 with soloist Stephen Hough and Charles Dutoit on the podium.

For all his self-assurance at the piano, Franz Liszt was insecure as a composer. He would rework old compositions repeatedly, often at the dubious advice of random acquaintances. Many of his compositions went through stages of creation and exist in two different “finished” forms.

In 1839, when he was known primarily as a touring virtuoso, Liszt sketched both of his piano concertos as showpieces, but the pressure of touring caused him to put both works aside for a decade.

Even after Liszt “finished” the Piano Concerto No. 1 in 1849, he was in no rush to present it to the public. Only on May 12, 1853, did Liszt write to Hans von Bülow, “I have just finished reworking my two concertos and the *Totentanz* in order to have them copied definitively.”

A comparative study reveals that Liszt simplified the work over time. In his touring days, his compositions approached the technical limits of pianistic virtuosity. Later, that virtuosity more often served poetic expression.

The First Concerto garnered some initial poor reviews. The conservative critic Eduard Hanslick called the piece Liszt's “Triangle Concerto,” deriding the composer for his supposedly crass instrumentation while ignoring prominent precedents by Beethoven and Mozart. More daringly, Liszt cast his work in one large movement, subsuming the traditional fast-slow-fast sections into the overall span unified by the transformation of themes into a well-organized whole. He reworked the assertive opening figure and translated the poetic Adagio theme into a march-like finale. Béla Bartók hailed the E-flat concerto as “the first perfect realization of cyclic sonata form.”

By the 1890s the Boston Symphony was regularly programming the work as a feature attraction when it toured, suggesting that audiences had long since come round and accepted the view of an English critic in 1903 that the E-flat concerto was “quite the most brilliant and entertaining of concertos.” The same writer added, “No person genuinely fond of music was ever known to approach it with an unprejudiced mind and not like it.”

STEVEN LEDBETTER

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

La Sacre du printemps, Pictures from pagan Russia

Composition and premiere: Sergei Diaghilev commissioned *Le Sacre du printemps* (*The Rite of Spring*) on August 8, 1911. Stravinsky quickly finished Part I by early January 1912 and completed the sketch score on November 17. Diaghilev’s Parisian *Ballet Russes* premiered the work at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on May 29, 1913, with Pierre Monteux conducting. Leopold Stokowski led the first American performance on March 3, 1922, with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Monteux also led the first BSO performances in January 1924. The most recent BSO subscription performances came in April 2019 under Gustavo Dudamel and Ken-David Masur. Serge Koussevitzky led the BSO’s first Tanglewood performance on August 12, 1939, and Charles Dutoit led the most recent on August 4, 2013, as well as a Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra performance in Ozawa Hall in August 2016.

The impresario Sergei Diaghilev almost singlehandedly imported the riches of Russian art, music, theater, and ballet to the West. After arranging a successful Russian art exhibit and presenting a popular series of concerts featuring Russian music, he brought to Paris, in 1909, a complete troupe of set designers, costumers, choreographers, dancers, and composers to introduce the French to *Ballet Russes* (Russian ballet). Diaghilev was adept at finding and nurturing artistic talent, and his ballet troupe included such luminaries as Mikhail Fokine, Vaslav Nijinsky, Leon Bakst, Alexandre Benois, and a young Igor Stravinsky, whom Diaghilev first encountered in 1909 when he attended the premiere of the composer’s dazzling orchestral works *Scherzo fantastique* and *Fireworks*.

Stravinsky’s first ballet for Diaghilev—*The Firebird* (*L’Oiseau de feu*), based on a Russian fairytale—garnered rave reviews after the premiere in June 1910, and raised Stravinsky’s clout in Parisian artistic circles. The music of *Firebird* is rooted in 19th-century compositional practice but offers glimpses of Stravinsky’s later scores—with exotic and symmetrical scales to signal the supernatural and syncopations and cross accents to enliven the rhythm, all rendered with brilliant textures and striking orchestration. These qualities grew more prominent in Stravinsky’s next ballet for Diaghilev, *Petrushka* (1911), a vivid kaleidoscope of Shrovetide bustle featuring, in Stravinsky’s words, “a puppet, suddenly endowed with life.”

With his third ballet, *Le Sacre du printemps*, Stravinsky secured his place as the foremost composer of his day. He took two years to prepare his daring score, following a vision the composer had in 1911 of a young girl in pagan Russia, dancing herself to a ritual death surrounded by village elders. The composer’s friend Nikolai Roerich, a painter and scholar of ancient Russia, designed the sets, and Vaslav Nijinsky, the star dancer in the Ballets Russes, choreographed the ballet.

The riot that erupted at the 1913 premiere is infamous, beginning with isolated laughter and mild protests during the Introduction and growing as the curtain rose. Opposing factions, pro versus contra, bickered, while Diaghilev frantically flicked the lights off and on. Meanwhile Nijinsky screamed the count to the dancers from backstage through the cacophony. The police were called, Stravinsky stormed out, and the the brawl made the front pages of the Parisian papers.

Why such a commotion? Perhaps the *Rite* introduced too much novelty at once. The theatrical components—scenario, choreography, sets, costumes—feature unfamiliar styles, and the score is no different. Stravinsky drew heavily on folk song, though he treated it as raw material, cutting, pasting, repeating, and reorganizing gestures, fragments, and patterns to create something new with endless potential for rhythmic manipulation. *The Rite* is, at times, highly dissonant, but more than the dissonant chords themselves the syncopations and metric shifts with which he set these chords were genuinely unique. Time has not dulled its cutting-edge quality. Indeed, the *Rite* sounds radically new, even to our 21st-century ears.

ELIZABETH SEITZ

Elizabeth Seitz is a faculty member at The Boston Conservatory at Berklee, a frequent guest speaker for the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Boston Lyric Opera, and a musicologist whose interests range from Mozart, Schubert, and Mahler to Falla and Tito Puente.

Artists

Baritone **Jack Canfield**, making his Boston Symphony Orchestra debut in this concert, is one of Opera Idaho's "Emerging Artists" for the 2021-2022 season. Originally from Atlanta, GA, he studied with John T. Gates at Lawrence University in Appleton, WI, and Peter Volpe at Indiana University in Bloomington, IN. In July 2021, he sang the role of Hannah (Before) in Laura Kaminsky's *As One* with Opera Maine. Other recent roles include Count Almaviva in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Papageno in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, and John Brooke in Adamo's *Little Women*. In 2015, he was a recipient of the Thomas J. Watson Fellowship, which allowed him to study indigenous song traditions in the Republic of Congo, Papua New Guinea, Australia, Norway, and Russia.

Pianist **Yuja Wang** is celebrated for her charismatic artistry, emotional honesty, and captivating stage presence. She has performed with the world's most venerated conductors, musicians, and ensembles, and is renowned not only for her virtuosity but her spontaneous and lively performances. She recently demonstrated this skill and charisma in her performance of Shostakovich Piano Concerto No. 2 at Carnegie Hall's Opening Night Gala in October 2021 following its historic 572 days of closure. Wang was born into a musical family in Beijing. After childhood piano studies in China, she received advanced training in Canada and at the Curtis Institute of Music under Gary Graffman. Her international breakthrough came in March 2007 when she replaced Martha Argerich as soloist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Charles Dutoit. Two years later, she signed an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon and has since established her place among the world's leading artists with a succession of critically acclaimed performances and recordings. She was named *Musical America's* Artist of the Year in 2017 and in 2021 received an Opus Klassik Award for her world-premiere recording of John Adams's *Must the Devil Have all the Good Tunes?* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Gustavo Dudamel. As a chamber musician, Wang has developed long-lasting partnerships with several leading artists, notably violinist Leonidas Kavakos, with whom she has recorded the complete Brahms violin sonatas and performed duo recitals in America. In 2022 Wang embarked on a highly anticipated international recital tour which saw her perform in world-class venues across North America, Europe, and Asia, astounding audiences once more with her flair, technical ability, and exceptional artistry in a wide-ranging program that included Ligeti, Beethoven, and Kapustin. Yuja Wang has been a frequent guest of the BSO since her 2007 debut described above, most recently in October 2019, Andris Nelsons conducting. Her first Tanglewood appearance was in August 2011 under Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, her most recent in July 2018 with Maestro Nelsons.