2024–2025 SEASON

Boston Symphony Orchestra

Andris Nelsons
Music Director

WHERE
MUSIC
LIVES

DECODING SHOSTAKOVICH
April 26 & 27

ANDRIS NELSONS conducting
TANGLEWOOD FESTIVAL CHORUS,
JAMES BURTON, conductor

Aleksandra VREBALOV
Igor STRAVINSKY
Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH

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Welcome!


Kayana Szymczak

As the BSO enters the exciting final month of our 2024-2025 season, we continue to celebrate Andris Nelsons' tenth anniversary as Ray and Maria Stata Music Director with concerts at Symphony Hall and Carnegie Hall as well as a European tour before we shift gears for Spring Pops and Tanglewood. Our annual, eagerly anticipated performances at Carnegie Hall (with which we have a uniquely longstanding relationship dating to its opening in 1893) and our international tours are great opportunities to reinforce the BSO's reputation as one of the world's great orchestras. They also serve to strengthen and showcase the remarkable chemistry Andris and the orchestra have developed over the course of their artistic partnership.

This month's Symphony Hall and Carnegie Hall programs are a culmination of Andris and the BSO's decade-long exploration of the music of Dmitri Shostakovich, one of several major, season-spanning endeavors resulting from that partnership. These performances anticipate our mid-May tour to four European cities, including the BSO's first trip to Riga, Latvia, Andris's hometown, and Leipzig, Germany, where we will join forces with our sister ensemble, the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig (GHO), for a three-week festival marking the 50th anniversary of Shostakovich's death with performances of all fifteen symphonies, the six concertos, the opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, and programs of chamber, choral, and cabaret-style music, along with discussions and films.

Our "Decoding Shostakovich" programming this month also includes eight programs encompassing talks, musical performances, and film exploring the composer's relationship to and impact on Russian culture and Soviet politics, an artist's position in wider society, and how his life and art are relevant in our own world. As we expand our important partnerships with local and regional cultural institutions, we're thrilled to bring these events to Greater Boston venues and organizations including Boston's City Hall, Vilna Shul on Beacon Hill, Coolidge Corner Theatre in Brookline, and Boston Youth Symphony Orchestras in Christian Science Plaza. We look forward to seeing you at these events, most of which are free to attend.

Earlier this year, Deutsche Grammophon released as a box CD set our live recordings of Shostakovich's fifteen symphonies and six concertos along with the searing opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, featuring some of our most treasured collaborators including Yo-Yo Ma, Yuja Wang, and our own Tanglewood Festival Chorus. These terrific performances are the result of Andris and the BSO's intense artistic focus over the course of a decade and add to the singular recorded legacy of the Boston Symphony.

With ongoing gratitude,

Chad Smith
Eunice and Julian Cohen President and Chief Executive Officer

Thank You!

The Friday concert series is sponsored by the Brooke family.

Concertmaster Nathan Cole performs on a Stradivarius violin, known as the “Lafont,” generously donated to the Boston Symphony Orchestra by the O’Block Family.

First Associate Concertmaster Alexander Velinzon performs on a 1754 J.B. Guadagnini violin, the “ex-Zazofsky,” and James Cooke performs on a 1778 Nicolò Gagliano violin, both generously donated to the orchestra by Michael L. Nieland, M.D., in loving memory of Mischa Nieland, a member of the cello section from 1943 to 1988.

Todd Seeber performs on an 1835 Kennedy bass, the “Salkowski Kennedy,” generously donated to the orchestra by John Salkowski, a member of the bass section from 1966 to 2007.

Steinway & Sons Pianos, selected exclusively for Symphony Hall.

The program books for the Friday series are given in loving memory of Mrs. Hugh Bancroft by her daughters, the late Mrs. A. Werk Cook and the late Mrs. William C. Cox.

The BSO’s Steinway & Sons pianos were purchased through a generous gift from Gabriella and Leo Beranek.

Special thanks to Bank of America, Lead Season Sponsor of the BSO; Genesis, Official Vehicle of the BSO; Arbella Insurance Foundation, BSO Supporting Sponsor; Fairmont Copley Plaza, Official Hotel of the BSO; and Turkish Airlines, BSO Winter Season Sponsor.

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Program book design by Fenway Group/BSO Creative Services

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The BSO’s 2024-25 season is supported in part by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, which receives support from the State of Massachusetts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

WHEN DO I CLAP?

Acknowledging the performers is an important part of any live event. If you’re unsure when to applaud, watch the conductor for visible cues. Often the conductor will pause at the end of a work to let things sink in and will visibly relax when they feel the effect is achieved. But don’t stress out about it!

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The April 27 performance will include a pre-concert talk, 12:30-1:15 with composer Aleksandra Vrebalov and BSO Director of Program Publications Robert Kirzinger.

Please silence and darken the screens of any electronic devices. Photos, video, and audio recordings are prohibited during the performance. Feel free to take photos before and after the concert and during intermission.

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Boston Symphony Orchestra

Andris Nelsons, Ray and Maria Stata Music Director, endowed in perpetuity, and Head of Conducting at Tanglewood

144th Season, 2024–2025

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Andris Nelsons

Ray and Maria Stata Music Director, endowed in perpetuity, and Head of Conducting at Tanglewood


Robert Torres

In the 2024-2025 season, Andris Nelsons celebrates ten years as the Boston Symphony Orchestra's Ray and Maria Stata Music Director. Nelsons became the fifteenth music director in the BSO's history at the start of the 2014-2015 season. He made his debut with the orchestra at Carnegie Hall in March 2011, his Tanglewood debut in July 2012, and his Symphony Hall debut in January 2013. In January 2024, Head of Conducting at Tanglewood was added to his title to reflect his expanded commitment to pre-professional training.

Andris Nelsons' eleventh season as music director features several major projects, including performances of Mahler's Eighth Symphony in October, the full cycle of Beethoven's nine symphonies in January, concert performances of Erich Korngold's opera *Die tote Stadt*, and performances of BSO-commissioned works by BSO Composer Chair Carlos Simon, Kevin Puts, and Aleksandra Vrebalov. Nelsons' and the BSO's annual two-concert series at Carnegie Hall in April features pianist Mitsuko Uchida performing Beethoven and cellist Yo-Yo Ma performing Shostakovich. The BSO season culminates in a European tour with performances in Vienna and Prague, as well as the orchestra's first appearance in Nelsons' native Riga. The tour concludes in Leipzig, where the Boston Symphony Orchestra joins the Gewandhausorchester for the Shostakovich Festival Leipzig, a comprehensive and globally unique celebration of the composer's music, marking the 50th anniversary of his death. As both Music Director of the BSO and "Gewandhauskapellmeister" of the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig (GHO), a position he has held since 2018, Nelsons conducts both orchestras as they present the composer's symphonies, concertos, and other orchestral and chamber works—and, as in November 2019 at Symphony Hall in Boston, both the BSO and the GHO merge together for a joint performance, this time of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 7. During the festival, Nelsons also conducts the GHO in performances of Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* at the Leipzig opera house. This festival project stems from a unique partnership, initiated by Nelsons—the BSO/GHO Alliance.

Andris Nelsons has previously led the BSO on four European tours, most recently in August and September 2023, where the BSO closed the prestigious international Salzburg Festival summer season in Austria, and two tours to Japan, which included numerous appearances at Tokyo's renowned Suntory Hall.

Andris Nelsons and the BSO's ongoing series of recordings of the complete Shostakovich symphonies for recording label Deutsche Grammophon has earned three Grammy Awards for Best Orchestral Performance and one for Best Engineered

Album. A box set of the complete BSO Shostakovich recordings including the symphonies, the concertos for piano, violin, and cello, and his opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* was released this spring. Other releases in the 2024-25 season include his recordings with the BSO of Messiaen's *Turangalîla-symphonie* with Yuja Wang and Cécile Lartigau and the Ravel piano concertos with Seong-Jin Cho. As part of the BSO/GHO Alliance, Nelsons recorded the major orchestral works of Richard Strauss for a 2022 7-CD Deutsche Grammophon release featuring both orchestras. Under exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon, he has recorded the complete symphonies of Beethoven with the Vienna Philharmonic and of Bruckner with the GHO.

Nelsons continues his collaborations with the Berlin Philharmonic and Vienna Philharmonic during this season. Since Nelsons' first conducting position as Music Director of the Latvian National Opera from 2003-2007, opera has played a prominent role in his career, with frequent performances at the Royal Opera House in London and the Bayreuth Festival. Born in Riga in 1978 into a family of musicians, Nelsons began his career as a trumpeter at the age of 17 in the Latvian National Opera Orchestra. Andris Nelsons practices taekwondo in his spare time and holds a second-degree black belt.

Winslow Townson

Visit our online exhibit celebrating Andris Nelsons' tenth anniversary as BSO Music Director, "Andris and the BSO: Ten Years and Counting!"

bso.org/exhibits/andris-nelsons-and-the-bso-ten-years-and-counting

Boston Symphony Orchestra 2024–2025

Andris Nelsons
Ray and Maria Stata Music Director, endowed in perpetuity, and Head of Conducting at Tanglewood

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First Violins

Nathan Cole
Concertmaster
Charles Munch chair, endowed in perpetuity

Alexander Velinzon
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Helen Horner McIntyre chair, endowed in perpetuity

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Associate Concertmaster
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Kristin and Roger Servison chair

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Principal
Carl Schoenhof Family chair, endowed in perpetuity

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Charlotte and Irving W. Rabb chair, endowed in perpetuity

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Shirley and J. Richard Fennell chair, endowed in perpetuity

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Violas

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Lois and Harlan Anderson chair, endowed in perpetuity

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Cellos

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Mischa Nieland chair, endowed in perpetuity

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Sandra and David Bakalar chair

Adam Esbensen *
Richard C. and Ellen E. Paine chair, endowed in perpetuity

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Nancy and Richard Lubin chair

Jonah Ellsworth *♪

Christine Lee *

Roric Cunningham *

Max Oppeltz-Carroz ◆

Gayane Khachatryan ♪

Basses

Edwin Barker
Principal
Harold D. Hodgkinson chair, endowed in perpetuity

Lawrence Wolfe
Assistant Principal
Maria Nistazos Stata chair, endowed in perpetuity

Benjamin Levy
Leith Family chair, endowed in perpetuity

Dennis Roy

Todd Seeber *
Eleanor L. and Levin H. Campbell chair, endowed in perpetuity

Thomas Van Dyck *
E.D. Rushworth chair

Carl Anderson *♪

Joseph Hearne

Karsten Heins ♪

Flutes

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Walter Piston chair, endowed in perpetuity

Clint Foreman
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Associate Principal
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Cynthia Meyers
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Oboes

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Mark McEwen

Keisuke Wakao
Assistant Principal
Farla and Harvey Chet Krentzman chair, endowed in perpetuity

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Robert Sheena
Beranek chair, endowed in perpetuity

Clarinets

William R. Hudgins
Principal
Ann S.M. Banks chair, endowed in perpetuity

Christopher Elchico

Thomas Martin
Associate Principal &
E-flat clarinet
Stanton W. and Elisabeth K. Davis chair, endowed in perpetuity

Bass Clarinet

Andrew Sandwick

Bassoons

Richard Svoboda
Principal
Edward A. Taft chair, endowed in perpetuity

Suzanne Nelsen
John D. and Vera M. MacDonald chair

Josh Baker
Associate Principal
Diana Osgood Tottenham/ Hamilton Osgood chair, endowed in perpetuity

Contrabassoon

Samuel Watson
Helen Rand Thayer chair

Horns

Richard Sebring
Principal
Helen Sagoff Slosberg/ Edna S. Kalman chair, endowed in perpetuity

Michael Winter
Associate Principal
Margaret Andersen Congleton chair, endowed in perpetuity

Rachel Childers
John P. II and Nancy S. Eustis chair, endowed in perpetuity

(position vacant)
Elizabeth B. Storer chair, endowed in perpetuity

Jason Snider
Jean-Noël and Mona N. Tariot chair

Austin Ruff

Trumpets

Thomas Rolfs
Principal
Roger Louis Voisin chair, endowed in perpetuity

Benjamin Wright

Thomas Siders
Associate Principal
Kathryn H. and Edward M. Lupean chair

Michael Martin
Ford H. Cooper chair, endowed in perpetuity

Trombones

Toby Oft
Principal
J.P. and Mary B. Barger chair, endowed in perpetuity

Stephen Lange

Bass Trombone

James Markey
John Moors Cabot chair, endowed in perpetuity

Tuba

Mike Roylance
Principal
Margaret and William C. Rousseau chair, endowed in perpetuity

Timpani

Timothy Genis
Sylvia Shippen Wells chair, endowed in perpetuity

Percussion

J. William Hudgins
Peter and Anne Brooke chair, endowed in perpetuity

Daniel Bauch
Assistant Timpanist
Mr. and Mrs. Edward H. Linde chair

Matthew McKay
Peter Andrew Lurie chair, endowed in perpetuity

Toby Grace

Harp

Jessica Zhou
Principal
Nicholas and Thalia Zervas chair, endowed in perpetuity by Sophia and Bernard Gordon

Voice and Chorus

James Burton
BSO Choral Director
and Conductor of the
Tanglewood Festival Chorus

Librarians

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Lia and William Poorvu chair, endowed in perpetuity

Mark Fabulich

Russel Allyn

Assistant Conductors

Samy Rachid
Anna E. Finnerty chair, endowed in perpetuity

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Stage Manager

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* participating in a system of rotated seating

° on leave

◆ Susan W. and Stephen D. Paine Resident Fellow

♪ *BSO/GHO Musician Exchange participant: BSO cellist Jonah Ellsworth and bassist Carl Anderson perform with Gewandhausorchester Leipzig (GHO) for the spring BSO season while GHO cellist Gayane Khachatryan and bassist Karsten Heins play with the BSO.*

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Meet the Musicians


Robert Torres

From Jazz Roots to Basslines: Bassist Thomas Van Dyck's Story
Interview by Maya Shwayder

What draws someone to the bass, a cornerstone of the orchestra's sound? For Tom Van Dyck, it was the Philadelphia jazz scene that laid the foundation. Along the way, he's found time to race bikes—and develop some strong opinions about Boston's bike lanes.

What brought you to classical music and the bass specifically?
I came to classical music in a roundabout way, through playing electric bass with my brother and his band, then starting to play jazz in Philly, where I grew up. I began studying with a guy in the Philly Orchestra who had taught a lot of legendary jazz players. He was teaching me basic technique, which got me more interested. One thing led to another. My mom was really involved in Settlement Music School, a major community music school in Philly. She was really into church music and things like that, so it was an easy connection to make.

Since joining the BSO, you've been doing the Tanglewood relay runs in the summer.
Yeah, I've been pretty active. For a long time, I was a rock climber, then I got into running, and for the past 10 years, I've been really into cycling and bike racing.

Do you have opinions about the state of the bike lanes around Boston?
I do have strong opinions about that! I think the protected bike lane is good in theory but not so great in practice. It horrifies me to be between parked cars and the sidewalk because you could get doored. Parts of Mass Ave are really scary to me. My sense is that protected bike lanes are good in theory, but in practice, they cause mass confusion. We're trying to be European, and I get that, but the culture's not there yet.

Lightning round! What's your favorite place to grab food around Symphony Hall?
I'm a creature of habit. I always go to Eataly and then Blue Bottle.

How about out in the Berkshires?
We're into Bistro Box down in Great Barrington.

What's your coffee order?
I always just get a cappuccino.

What's your favorite pizza topping?
Onions and pepperoni. It's classic. Maybe banana peppers too.

Maya Shwayder is the BSO's Senior Contributing Editor and Copywriter.

Scan to read the full version.

Decoding Shostakovich

Dmitri Shostakovich

April 2-May 7
What does political resistance sound like? Learn the secret messages of resistance that Dmitri Shostakovich folded into his music and what kept the composer writing—and resisting—in a turbulent time. Yo-Yo Ma, Mitsuko Uchida, and Baiba Skride headline this month-long dive into the orchestral works, films, and chamber music of a profound composer who survived and eventually thrived despite unrelenting political pressure.

Orchestra concerts at Symphony Hall; all other events' locations noted below.

"Muddle Instead of Music": Shostakovich and Censorship
Wednesday, April 2, 6pm
BYSO Youth Center for Music, 235 Huntington Ave, Boston
Matthew Heck, lecturer
Christine Lee, cello
Gilbert Kalish, piano
Cello Sonata in D minor, Opus 40

Decoding Shostakovich, Literally
Wednesday, April 9, 6pm
BYSO Youth Center for Music
Matthew Heck, lecturer
Parker Quartet
String Quartet No. 8 in C minor, Opus 110

BSO Program 1
Thursday, April 10, 7:30pm
Andris Nelsons conducting
ALL-SHOSTAKOVICH program
Symphony No. 6
Symphony No. 11, *The Year 1905*

BSO Program 2
Friday, April 11, 8pm
Andris Nelsons conducting
Yo-Yo Ma, cello
ALL-SHOSTAKOVICH program
Cello Concerto No. 1
Symphony No. 11, *The Year 1905*

Music Diplomacy and U.S.-Soviet Cultural Exchanges
Tuesday, April 15, 6pm
ASEAN Auditorium at The Fletcher School, Tufts University, 160 Packard Ave, Medford
Arik Burakovsky, host
Panelists **Alan Henrikson, Carla Canales, Gabrielle Cornish**, and **Ivan Kurilla**
Victor Romanul, violin
Romance from *The Gadfly*, Opus 97a
Selections from Five Pieces (arr. for solo violin)

BSO Program 3
Thursday, April 17, 7:30pm
Friday, April 18, 1:30pm (Pre-concert talk by Marc Mandel, 12:15-12:45)
Saturday, April 19, 8pm
Andris Nelsons conducting
Mitsuko Uchida, piano
BEETHOVEN Piano Concerto No. 4
SHOSTAKOVICH Symphony No. 15

Shostakovich in Soviet Cinema
Wednesday, April 23, 6:30pm
Coolidge Corner Theatre, 290 Harvard Street, Brookline
Harlow Robinson, lecturer
Hamlet, film by Grigori Kozintsev; score by Dmitri Shostakovich

BSO Program 4
Saturday, April 26, 8pm
Sunday, April 27, 2pm (Special Pre-concert Talk, 12:30-1:15, by Robert Kirzinger with Aleksandra Vrebalov)
Andris Nelsons conducting
Tanglewood Festival Chorus, James Burton, conductor
Aleksandra VREBALOV *Love Canticles* for chorus and orchestra (world premiere; BSO commission)
STRAVINSKY *Symphony of Psalms*
SHOSTAKOVICH Symphony No. 6

Judaism in the Soviet Union
Wednesday, April 30, 6pm
Vilna Shul, 18 Phillips Street, Boston
Harlow Robinson, host
Josie Larsen, soprano
Mary Kray, mezzo-soprano
Yeghishe Manucharyan, tenor
Joseph Vasconi, piano
SHOSTAKOVICH *From Jewish Folk Poetry,* Opus 79

BSO Program 5
Friday, May 2, 1:30pm (Pre-concert Talk by Harlow Robinson, 12:15-12:45)
Saturday, May 3, 8pm
Andris Nelsons conducting
Baiba Skride, violin
ALL-SHOSTAKOVICH program
Violin Concerto No. 1
Symphony No. 8

Form and Function: The Legacy of Brutalism
Wednesday, May 7, 6pm
City Hall Lobby, 1 City Hall Square, Boston
Mark Pasnik, host
Jonathan Senik, piano
SHOSTAKOVICH 24 Preludes, Opus 34

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When the Shadow Fell: Shostakovich's Re-inventive Art

by Thomas May


Roger & Renate Rössing/Deutsche Fotothek

Living his entire adult life within the Soviet system, Dmitri Shostakovich frequently used his music to respond to, deflect, or criticize the regimes through which he lived. The most dangerous and pervasive period of tension in his life corresponded to the two-plus decades between Joseph Stalin's consolidation of power and the dictator's death in 1953. Writer Thomas May contemplates the effects on Shostakovich's music of the composer's constant state of vigilance during and after Stalin's lifetime.

On January 28, 1936, *Pravda* published what arguably ranks as the most notorious music review of the 20th century. "From the first moment, listeners are flabbergasted by the intentionally dissonant, confused stream of sounds.... It is hard to follow this 'music'; to remember it is impossible." Thus ran the verdict on Dmitri Shostakovich's hit opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. The official Soviet newspaper's critique, cast in the form of an anonymous editorial—plausibly dictated by Stalin himself—included the stern admonition: "It is a game of clever ingenuity that may end very badly."

Stalin's shadow fell fast over the Soviet Union's most celebrated composer. In one fell swoop, this denunciation of the 29-year-old Shostakovich redefined his public standing. (And to hammer home the situation, this was followed soon after by a lesser- known attack on his ballet score *The Limpid Stream*.) The already famous composer had first come to widespread notice a decade before with the success of his First Symphony, written as a graduation exercise from the conservatory of his native St. Petersburg and soon taken up by the likes of famed conductor Bruno Walter (who led it in Berlin in 1928).

Despite several mixed successes and outright failures—his first full opera, the Gogol-inspired, absurdist farce *The Nose* (1928), earned nasty reviews from the official proletarian critics—Shostakovich had been described by a *New York Times* correspondent who was allowed to interview him at his home in 1931 as "on the way to becoming a kind of composer-laureate to the Soviet state." He had risen to the level of a "model young Soviet composer," as biographer Laurel E. Fay describes it, adding that he was "candid about the influence" on him of major avant-garde figures from the West (for example, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Alban Berg). But now, suddenly, his aesthetic outlook was condemned by the all-purpose charge of "formalism"—essentially, art that challenged the comfort zone of the State-approved criteria for "socialist realism." Shostakovich was "in an untenable position," Fay observes. "The idealistic vision of a Soviet music informed by cosmopolitan sophistication was no longer viable."

Pravda's pan had an immediate effect, of course. *Lady Macbeth* had already been running for two years and was an international smash. It could be seen in multiple productions

in Leningrad and Moscow, each distinguished by playing up a different aspect of the opera's sordid tale of lust, murder, and betrayal (showing sympathy for the degraded heroine on the one hand, accenting its tone of vicious satire on the other). But the productions were swiftly closed and *Lady Macbeth* was silenced; Shostakovich, at the time the Soviet Union's most brilliant and innovative composer writing for the theater, never completed another new opera.

In fact, from that point on, Shostakovich would channel his creative drive principally into the symphonies and chamber music for which he remains best-known to the general public. Even seasoned concertgoers accustomed to experiencing this composer year after year in the symphonic and chamber repertory might be surprised by the extent of Shostakovich's preoccupation with writing for the stage and screen when he launched his career—the great majority of these works having fallen into oblivion, and some in a state requiring painstaking reconstruction.

"By contrast with his music of later years, his output through to the first half of the 1930s was dominated by drama of different kinds," notes the composer-musicologist Gerard McBurney. Just a few years ago saw the belated premiere of a half-hour fragment McBurney reconstructed from the composer's papers: the prelude to Shostakovich's third projected full-length opera, *Orango*, from around the time of *Lady Macbeth*. *Orango*'s story of a human-ape hybrid mixes sci-fi grotesquerie with savage political parody. "It reappears now as a ghost from a lost era," writes McBurney, "the work of a young composer of the utmost energy and brilliance, not yet cast down by history, ill-health, and politics, and in every new piece that he embarked on striving for brilliance, theatricality, and coruscating satire."

Shostakovich had collaborated widely with leading artistic figures in other disciplines—many of whom also fell precipitously from grace and became victims of Stalin's terror—and his omnivorous curiosity had led him to experiment boldly. He mustered a salmagundi of styles and forms in the 1920s and early 1930s with the carefree attitude that looks ahead to the spirit of free-for-all boundary-crossing seen with so many of today's emerging composers. Along with the three operas referred to above, Shostakovich had written three full ballets, a half-dozen scores of incidental music for staged productions (including for *Hamlet*), an unclassifiable music hall entertainment (*Hypothetically Murdered*), and film scores, beginning with the silent film *The New Babylon* (1929), about the Paris Commune of 1871. This was the composer's first of many collaborations with Grigori Kozintsev (1905-1973), who would become a highly influential theater and film director and a friend of Shostakovich. The latter would go on to compose for almost all of his films—including his versions of *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. "I could not direct my Shakespearean films without [his music]," Kozintsev later remarked. "In Shostakovich's music I hear a virulent hatred of cruelty, of the cult of power, of the persecution of truth."

There's no question that the impact of the *Pravda* attack—a major salvo in Stalin's program of social engineering of artists—reverberated across Shostakovich's career. It set the pattern to follow, for which the stakes were not mere success but survival: the composer had to learn to navigate the arbitrary whims of Soviet policy without committing artistic suicide. Therein lies the core of the Shostakovich controversy that continues to be heatedly debated decades after his death and after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The Pravda *article of January 28, 1936, denouncing Shostakovich's opera* Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk

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Об опере «Леди Макбет Мценского уезда»

«Правда», 28/I 1936.

Was Shostakovich a true believer in the Socialist experiment or a servile opportunist who cynically transformed his style to regain approval? Or did he encode a hidden dissident commentary that was partially recognized by those close to him and that is still coming to light? Is the presence of a signature dark irony throughout his music a form of protest that undermines such surface affirmations as the conclusions to the Fifth (1937) and Seventh (1941) symphonies—conclusions so exaggerated that only gullible ears could be persuaded by their yea-saying? "Victory" here, as elsewhere in Shostakovich's oeuvre, leaves unsettling questions no matter how decisively it is proclaimed.

As Wendy Lesser writes in *Music for Silenced Voices*, her biography through the lens of the composer's string quartets, Shostakovich "was often dubious and often divided." In the context of life in the Soviet Union, above all until Stalin's death in 1953, "people learned to speak in code, but the codes themselves were ambiguous and incomplete. Nothing that emerged from that world…can be taken at face value."

The standard narrative has been to view the *Pravda* attack as a kind of Iron Curtain in Shostakovich's career dividing the wildly experimental early years from the period in which he took on the solemn mantle of an artist of the people—the artist whose Symphony No. 7 (*Leningrad*), written when his native Leningrad was under siege by the Nazis, bolstered Shostakovich's position as a cherished hero. Yet as with everything related to this composer, things are never so straightforward. It wasn't long before the challenges to convention posed by the dark, even nihilistic Eighth Symphony sufficed to have the work singled out as Exhibit A when the composer was once again denounced in 1948—this time for the sins of "pessimism" and overcomplicated "individualism."

Shostakovich's later focus on the more "abstract" genres of the symphony and string quartet instead of the stage may have been partially motivated as a survival strategy, but in fact he never entirely abandoned the theater. Along with an operetta, a thorough

revision of *Lady Macbeth* (renamed *Katerina Izmailova*), and orchestrations of Mussorgsky's operas, Shostakovich frequently contemplated potential opera topics, from Tolstoy's *Resurrection* to Chekhov's short story *The Black Monk*. According to his friend and correspondent Isaak Glikman, the composer asked him to write a libretto to "any of Shakespeare's plays (except *Othello*)."

Nor did he abandon the practices of his subversive early years. McBurney points out that the habits Shostakovich adopted, during that period, of recycling material from one project for another, and of rapidly tailoring his scores to the specific needs of his collaborators, taught the composer valuable lessons about the flexibility of musical meaning. A notable result was "his cool-headed grasp of the way the same music could bear different meanings in different contexts"—a key to the pervasive use of quotations throughout his oeuvre.

Similarly, the varieties of humor—through irony, parody, juxtaposition, puns, and the like—that teem in his music for the stage continue to inform the symphonies and string quartets, imbuing them with drama albeit in purely musical terms. "People (and they include many serious musicians) who object to Shostakovich's ironic sardonic mode often act as if such attitudes are incompatible with deep feelings and tragic awareness, as if one couldn't be funny and serious at the same time," writes Lesser. She then suggests taking "a close look at Shakespeare…particularly *Hamlet*."

Indeed, *Hamlet* recurs like a leitmotif across the career of a composer who himself seemed to embody the paradoxical traits of Shakespeare's tragic hero, not least with his mingled melancholy and antic humor. One critic wrote of the "*Hamlet*-like musings" of the Fifth Symphony. Shostakovich actually produced his first musical response to the play in 1932, for a highly eccentric stage production at Moscow's Vakhtangov Theater directed by Nikolai Akimov (1901-1968). Known in part for his iconoclastic revisions of the classics, for which the maverick director Vsevolod Meyerhold (another of Shostakovich's collaborators) had set a notable precedent, Akimov staged a provocatively distorted *Hamlet* in which the prince is an obese manipulator who covets the throne and conjures a fake ghost, Ophelia does her mad scene as a lush, and Claudius, by contrast, comes off as fairly decent.

Ironically, Shostakovich had just published a manifesto detailing his frustration with the compromises of writing for stage and screen, declaring his intention to take a moratorium from such commissions for five years. However reluctant he may have been to fulfill the *Hamlet* commission, the vibrant, inventive score he wrote was the highlight of the show, which proved to be a legendary flop, distinctly out of joint with the times.

As Elizabeth Wilson documents, the orchestra's leader, violinist Yuri Elagin, recalled that the music "was exceptional in its originality and innovation. It was much closer to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* than anything else in Akimov's production" even though the score itself featured "moments of great eccentricity…that were in the style of the production." McBurney singles out Shostakovich's *Hamlet* as "probably his most brilliant and fully achieved instrumental music, funny and touching, sharp-edged and memorable." Shostakovich himself liked it enough to fashion a thirteen-movement concert suite.

A 1943 image of Joseph Stalin (1878-1953)

Grigori Kozintsev later enlisted Shostakovich for a stage production of *Hamlet* (1954) as well as for his extraordinary film version of 1964. So, too, with *King Lear*, for which the composer wrote both incidental music to a stage production and the score for Kozintsev's 1971 film. Earlier the pair had undertaken their first attempt together to grapple with *King Lear*. This was for a staging at the Bolshoi in Leningrad in 1941—a time when Shostakovich was in good graces with the authorities, having garnered the Stalin Prize earlier that year for his Piano Quintet. McBurney suggests that—in contrast to the sardonic stage music for the 1932 *Hamlet*—the work on *King Lear* "perhaps reflect[ed] Shostakovich's recent experience of reorchestrating Musorgsky's epic opera *Boris Godunov*."

Laurel Fay notes the significant challenge the great Shakespeare tragedies posed for Shostakovich, who once wrote: "From the poetry and dynamics of these tragedies music is born.... The author of *Hamlet* and *King Lear* absolutely does not tolerate banality." Fay adds that the composer found himself particularly intrigued by the character of the Fool, in whom he may well have seen a reflection. Shostakovich himself observed: "The Fool illuminates the gigantic figure of Lear.... The Fool's wit is prickly and sarcastic, his humor magnificently clever and black. The Fool is very complicated, paradoxical, and contradictory. Everything he does is unexpected, original, and always wise."

Thomas May writes about the arts, lectures about music and theater, and blogs at memeteria.com.


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The Program in Brief

In this program, Andris Nelsons leads two works commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra some 93 years apart: Igor Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*, commissioned at Serge Koussevitzky's request for the BSO's 50th anniversary, and the Serbian American composer Aleksandra Vrebalov's *Love Canticles*, which receives its world premiere performances this weekend. We also continue our Decoding Shostakovich exploration with performances of the composer's 1939 Sixth Symphony, of which he wrote "Music of a contemplative and lyric nature predominates in this latest symphony. Here I wanted to express feelings of springtime, joy, and youth."

Although often expected during his lifetime to be the standard-bearer of Soviet music, Shostakovich revered the music of his older countryman Igor Stravinsky, who self-exiled from Russia following the 1917 Bolshevik revolution. Soon after its composition in 1930, Shostakovich made a transcription for two pianos and chorus of Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* that he prized, always keeping it nearby until he had an opportunity to present it to the older composer in 1962.

Aleksandra Vrebalov, a 1999 Fellow of the BSO's Tanglewood Music Center, won the prestigious Grawemeyer Award in 2024. For the BSO commission, she was asked to compose a psalm setting for chorus and orchestra employing the same unusual instrumentation as Stravinsky's piece, which lacks high strings (violins and violas) and includes two pianos. In this rich, optimistic work, Vrebalov sets a blend of the King James versions of Psalms 103 and 104, poems of praise attributed to King David. While the chorus has the central role, Vrebalov acknowledges the virtuosity of the BSO's members by providing brilliant solo passages throughout the piece.

Igor Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* stands as one of the greatest works in the BSO's long history of commissions and premieres. Although requested by Koussevitzky, the piece was premiered in Belgium a week before the BSO's American premiere in Symphony Hall. *Symphony of Psalms* is one of the clearest and greatest examples of Stravinsky's so-called neoclassical style. Setting psalms in Latin, *Symphony of Psalms* achieves expressive intensity through crystalline clarity and austerity.

Robert Kirzinger

Boston Symphony Orchestra

Andris Nelsons, Ray and Maria Stata Music Director and Head of Conducting at Tanglewood
144th Season, 2024–2025

Saturday April 26, 8pm
Sunday April 27, 2pm

Andris Nelsons conducting

Decoding Shostakovich, Orchestral Program 4

Aleksandra VREBALOV
(b.1970)
15'

Love Canticles for chorus and orchestra

Psalms 103 and 104, King James Bible (world premiere; commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Andris Nelsons, Music Director, through the generous support of Catherine and Paul Buttenwieser and the New Works Fund established by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.)

Tanglewood Festival Chorus, James Burton, conductor

Sung in English, with supertitles; text printed on page 35

Igor STRAVINSKY
(1882-1971)
22'

Symphony of Psalms

I. ♩ = 92 (Psalm 38, verses 13 and 14)
II. ♪ = 60 (Psalm 39, verses 2, 3, and 4)
III. ♩ = 48 – ♩ = 80 (Psalm 150)

Tanglewood Festival Chorus, James Burton, conductor

Sung in Latin with supertitles in English. Text and translation on page 43

Intermission

Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH
(1906-1975)
32’

Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Opus 54

Largo
Allegro
Presto

This week’s performances by the Tanglewood Festival Chorus are supported by the Alan J. and Suzanne W. Dworsky Fund for Voice and Chorus.

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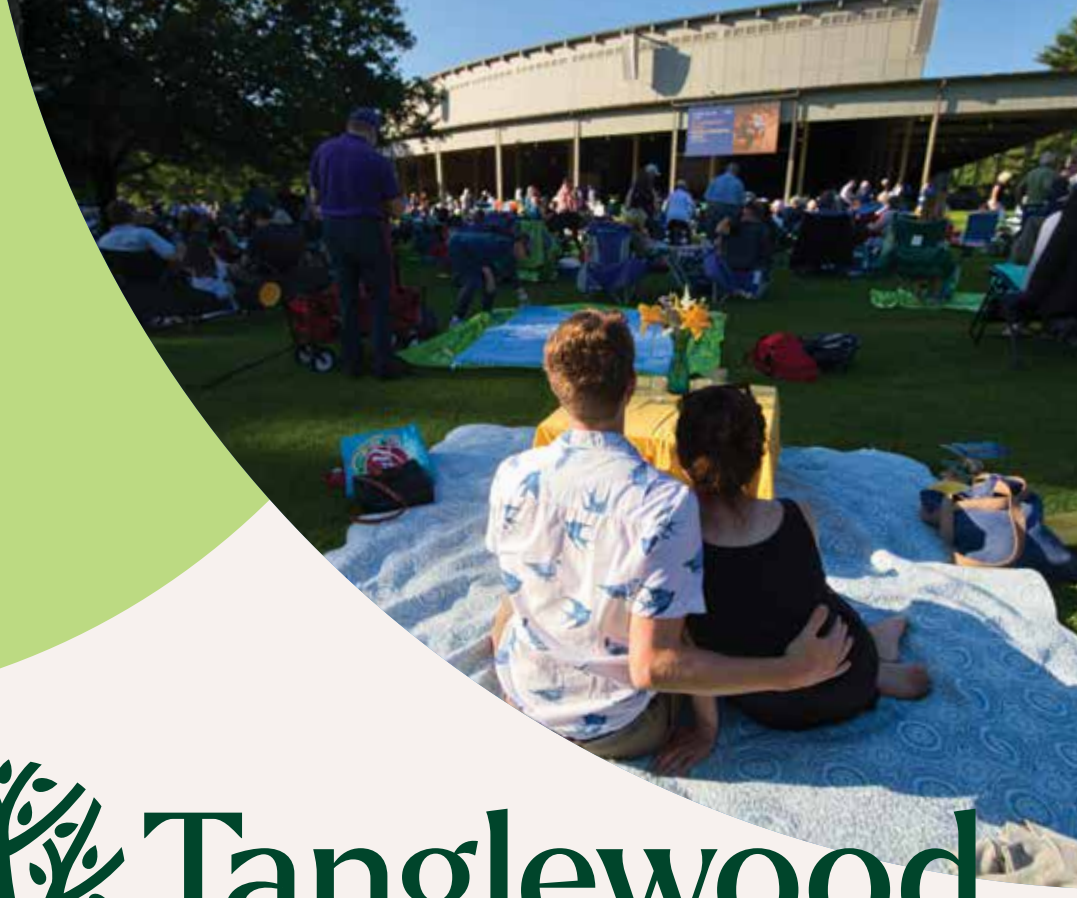
The Saturday concert will end about 9:40 and the Sunday concert about 3:40.
Intermission is 20 minutes.



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Aleksandra Vrebalov

Love Canticles

Aleksandra Vrebalov was born September 22, 1970, in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia, and lives there and in New York City, New York. Dividing her time between Serbia and the U.S. since the late 1990s, she became a U.S. citizen in 2014. *Love Canticles* was commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Andris Nelsons, Music Director, through the generous support of Catherine and Paul Buttenwieser and the New Works Fund established by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency. Vrebalov received the commission in late 2023, completed the choral score by January 2025, and finished the orchestration by the end of February. These are the world premiere performances.

The score of *Love Canticles* calls for mixed chorus (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) with an orchestra based on that of Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*, omitting the violin and viola sections and including two pianos. The ensemble consists of piccolo, 3 flutes, 2 oboes, 4 horns, high trumpet in D, 4 trumpets in C, trombone, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, percussion (vibraphone, suspended cymbal, bass drum), harp, 2 pianos, and strings (cellos and double basses only). The pianists in this performance are Vytas Baksys and Deborah DeWolf Emery.

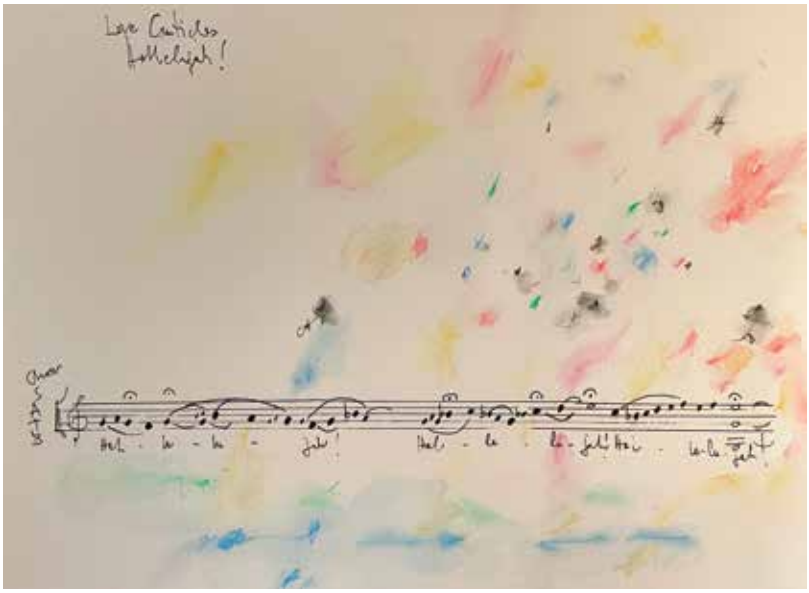
Growing up in Serbia in the former Yugoslavia, Aleksandra Vrebalov received the excellent early musical training that remains a strong foundation for her work as a composer and teacher. She came of age during the tumultuous era of political instability that followed the death of longtime Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito in 1980, which led to years of regional warfare and eventually the breakup of Yugoslavia into several different sovereign states. Vrebalov attended Novi Sad University and Belgrade University. Seeking broader horizons, she came to the U.S. for the first time in 1995 for further study at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where she worked with composer Elinor Armer and earned her master's degree in just a year. The experience of studying and living in San Francisco, historically a greenhouse of artistic experimentation, opened her eyes to a world of artistic freedom that was unknown to her in Serbia.

It was while she was in San Francisco that Vrebalov met the members of the well-known, new music-minded Kronos Quartet, beginning a powerfully collaborative relationship that has continued for the last 30 years. She composed her String Quartet No. 2 for the ensemble in 1997; it was this piece that introduced Vrebalov's music to the Boston Symphony community when it was performed as part of the 1999 Festival of Contemporary Music at Tanglewood. Vrebalov had returned to the U.S. that year as a Fellow of the BSO's Tanglewood Music Center, although for several weeks it was unclear whether she would be able to make the journey to the U.S. from Novi Sad. In March 1999, NATO had launched

a campaign of bombings in Serbia to force the country to abandon the so-called Kosovo War initiated by the government of Slobodan Milošević. The NATO bombings, which ended on June 10 of that year, resulted in more than 6,000 casualties, among them more than 1,000 dead, and in the destruction of important infrastructure in Serbia, including three of Novi Sad's major bridges over the Danube.

Vrebalov left that environment to come to the starkly contrasted setting of Tanglewood—idyllic, rural, remote, steeped in music and in its long legacy of dedication to the art form. At Tanglewood she encountered high-level musicians from different backgrounds; her Tanglewood Music Center cohort included composers from Switzerland, Germany, Israel, and the U.S. (but she was the only woman). Following Tanglewood she earned her doctorate at the University of Michigan, working with Evan Chambers and Michael Daugherty. For the past 25 years she has divided her time between New York City and Novi Sad. She returns as a visitor to Tanglewood nearly every summer, and in 2008 the Kronos Quartet performed her *"...hold me, neighbor, in this storm..."* at Seiji Ozawa Hall.

So far, Vrebalov has written twenty pieces for Kronos, including 2023's *Gold Came from Space*; the hour-long *Sea Ranch Songs*; the Carnegie Hall-commissioned *"...hold me, neighbor, in this storm..."*; *Babylon, Our Own*, for Kronos and clarinetist David Krakauer, and *Beyond Zero: 1914-1918*, created in collaboration with the noted filmmaker Bill Morrison and later released on DVD. She wrote her most recent piece, *Cardinal Directions*, for Kronos and the Vietnamese đàn tranh player Vanessa Vo (Võ Vân Ánh), who gave the public premiere at the Kronos Festival in San Francisco this weekend, on April 25, 2025. *Cardinal Directions*



A sketch by Aleksandra Vrebalov from the writing of Love Canticles *(courtesy of the composer)*

was composed in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War; Vrebalov's own experience growing up in a war-torn region brings a broader human perspective to this prayer for peace.

Vrebalov has taught throughout much of her career and is currently a professor of composition at the University of Novi Sad's Academy of Arts, but she also composes full-time; she has nearly 100 works to her credit for a dizzying array of ensemble types, including ten orchestra works, music for dance, incidental music for the theater, works for solo instruments and chamber ensembles, and music for traditional and non-Western instruments including the Japanese koto and shakuhachi as well as pieces for Chinese instruments, composed following a residency in China. She has also created experimental pieces with graphic scores and sound installations. Visual art is part of her expressive means, either as standalone works or as a way of representing aspects of a musical work in progress (see image above). She has written three operas—most recently the one-act *The Knock*, produced for video by Glimmerglass Opera and for the stage by Cincinnati Opera. Her evening-length opera *Mileva*, based Vida Ognjenović's play about Albert Einstein's first wife, was commissioned by the Serbian National Theater for its 150th anniversary and was staged in Novi Sad and Belgrade in November 2011.

All of Vrebalov's works, even those for ostensibly conventional means, are deeply informed by the circumstances and people for whom they are written. In addition to the Kronos Quartet and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, commissions and awards have come from such organizations and ensembles as Carnegie Hall, Serbian National Theatre, English National Ballet, Festival Ballet Providence, Beijing's Forbidden City Orchestra, the Fromm Foundation, American Academy of Arts and Letters, and many others. She has worked with the Flying Carpet Children Festival on the Syrian-Turkish border to bring the power of music-making to young refugees of war. In 2024, she was honored with membership in the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, a major recognition of her status as one of her country's most important cultural thinkers. (In recent months, she has used her status to lend her support to the ongoing, widespread protests against governmental

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corruption in Serbia.) Also in 2024, she received one of the music world's most prestigious prizes, the Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition, for her *Missa Supratext*, written for the Kronos Quartet and the San Franciso Girls' Choir in 2018.

Missa Supratext is, as she puts it, "a mass beyond language and anthropocentrism...unrelated to any religion. The text is made up, with no meaning; it is rather a vehicle for voice, that is a vehicle of soul, to express emotion beyond verbal narratives." By employing vocal sounds without semantic basis, Vrebalov seeks to remove the restrictions that linguistic meaning imposes and thereby to open the piece to infinite nuances of interpretation.

This openness to possibility is a concept that Vrebalov has explored increasingly throughout her music. Her work, broadly stated, seeks to identify and resonate with a greater sense of universal or cosmic order, to reflect an idea of the interconnectedness of all things. Several of her works are explicit expressions of this holistic philosophy. Among these are her *Antennae*, composed for the Cleveland Museum of Arts and taking inspiration from the museum's spaces and the artifacts in its Byzantine gallery. In *Antennae* Vrebalov collaborated directly with monks of the Kovilj Monastery near Novi Sad, with whom she has cultivated friendships over many years. Founded in the 13th century, the order continues and teaches the ancient practice of Byzantine chant, which is considered a medium for access to another plane of experience.

The idea of a work of art as a receptor and amplifier of the cosmos is strongly present in *Love Canticles*, which is at the same time a very personal work for the composer. She was cognizant of composing for an orchestra she has heard countless times at Tanglewood and for a conductor, in Andris Nelsons, with a sense of the flexibility of musical time that's deeply in sympathy with her own. While the request from the Boston Symphony Orchestra was for a work setting Biblical psalms, it was her decision to set in the prevalent language of her second home, and to use the archaic but familiar King James texts, which remove them ever so slightly from the everyday. Vrebalov heeded the counsel of one of her friends from the monastery, now Jerotej, Bishop of Šabac, of the Serbian Orthodox Church, who suggested Psalms 103 and 104, hymns of praise attributed to King David, as a way of acknowledging the good fortune of her own life. The textually similar psalms are blended together in Vrebalov's setting.

The links between *Love Canticles* and Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* go beyond the BSO's stipulation that she create psalm settings and use Stravinsky's unusual orchestration. In comments to Andris Nelsons about her piece, Vrebalov quotes a passage from Stravinsky's *Poetics of Music*: "[T]he unity of the work has a resonance all its own. Its echo, caught by our soul, sounds nearer and nearer. Thus the consummated work spreads abroad and finally flows back to its source.... And that is how music comes to reveal itself as a form of communion with our fellow man and with the Supreme Being." Stravinsky was famously contradictory in speaking of his music; at times he emphasized the inherent objectivity of musical sound, an aspect he pursued especially in his "neoclassical" period, of which *Symphony of Psalms* is an exemplar. On the other hand, around the same time he wrote *Symphony of Psalms*, he also wrote hymns in Church Slavonic; in the 1940s he wrote a Latin Mass he considered suitable for liturgical use. Although he used archaic languages (as he had for explicitly objectifying purpose in the opera *Oedipus rex*), the origin of his sacred

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texts, taken with other comments including the above quotation, reveals Stravinsky as being intensely aware of the dimensionality of his music, which clearly echoes in Aleksandra Vrebalov's own philosophy.

Always ambivalent about genre and in particular that of the symphony, Stravinsky called *Symphony of Psalms* a "symphonization" of the choral settings. In a parallel way, *Love Canticles* can be thought of as a choral piece with orchestra rather than a work for orchestra with chorus. Vrebalov establishes this choral core by beginning with voices alone and ending with a sparsely accompanied, chantlike passage. But she also treats the voices as instruments, in wordless textures that connect them to the orchestral sound. These passages are aspects of freedom, variation, and dynamic possibility within what is otherwise a rigorous formal architecture.

The blend of freedom and creativity afforded to individual musicians on one level and rigor in the overall structure is characteristic of Vrebalov's work. In *Love Canticles*, that architecture is articulated at the highest level through centers of tonality. Beginning and ending on C, the piece traverses tonal centers of G, E, and B-flat. To open the piece, the bass voices establish a drone-like C that blossoms in the choir's first harmony: "Bless the Lord, oh my soul." As if picking up the vibrations of that idea, strings and pianos enter with a texture resembling overlapping lines of morse code, and the sound expands in waves with instruments joining in animatedly.

Vrebalov highlights the individual artistry and virtuosity of the BSO's members through solo passages, both short and long, for virtually every player, from bass trombone and tuba at the lowest end of the spectrum to piccolo at the top. In capturing the overall and local expression of the psalms, she occasionally employs madrigal-like word-painting, projecting the text into the music, as in the passage "He remembers that we are dust," where the texture become pointillistic and fragmented. In keeping with the nature of the psalms as both public and private in nature, she treats the chorus at times as a collective and at times as a group of individuals, some of whom occasionally stray exuberantly from the flock.

The final "Hallelujah," meaning "Praise the Lord," encapsulates in a single word the poeticized praise of the foregoing psalms. Musically, the phrase works as both coda and cadenza: Vrebalov carefully notated the rhythms to suggest the organic fluidity of the Byzantine chant that has been such a profound influence on her work. The phrase re-centers both the listener and the chorus after the work's wide-ranging journey, while the subtle atmosphere of the orchestra hints at the many further layers of experience that lie just outside our grasp.

Robert Kirzinger

Composer and writer Robert Kirzinger is the Boston Symphony Orchestra's Director of Program Publications.

Aleksandra VREBALOV *Love Canticles*

Praise for the Lord's Mercies from Psalms of David: 104 (103) and 103 (102)
New King James Version

Bless the Lord, O my soul!

Who makes His angels spirits,
His servants a flame of fire.

I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;
Bless the Lord, O my soul!
Praise the Lord!
And all that is within me, bless His holy name!

Who forgives all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases,
Who redeems your life from destruction,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,
Who satisfies your mouth with good things,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

The Lord is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.
For He remembers that we are dust.
As for man, his days are like grass;
As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.
For the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
And its place remembers it no more.

Bless the Lord, you His angels,
Bless the Lord!

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

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Igor Stravinsky

Symphony of Psalms

Igor Fedorovich Stravinsky was born on June 17, 1882, at Oranienbaum, Russia, on the Gulf of Finland, and died on April 6, 1971, in New York. *Symphony of Psalms* was one of the works commissioned to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Stravinsky composed it at Nice and Charavines, France, between January and August 15, 1930. The score bears the dedication (in French): "This symphony composed to the glory of GOD is dedicated to the Boston Symphony Orchestra on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary." Serge Koussevitzky was to have conducted the world premiere with the BSO in December 1930, with a European premiere following a few days later in Brussels under the direction of Ernest Ansermet, but Koussevitzky fell ill, and the Boston performance was postponed. As a result, the first performance was given by the chorus and orchestra of the Brussels Philharmonic Society under Ansermet on December 13, 1930, the BSO's American premiere performances under Koussevitzky following a week later on December 19 and 20, with the Cecilia Society Chorus, Arthur Fiedler, conductor.

The score of the *Symphony of Psalms* calls for four-part chorus (Stravinsky preferred, but did not insist on, children's voices for the soprano and alto parts) and an orchestra of 5 flutes (5th doubling piccolo), 4 oboes, English horn, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, one small trumpet in D, 4 trumpets in C, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, harp, 2 pianos, cellos, and double basses. The pianists at these performances are Vytas Baksys and Deborah DeWolf Emery.

The Boston Symphony Orchestra introduced new works before 1930, but it rarely—if ever—commissioned them. Even before the turn of the century the orchestra gave the world premieres of many American works, mostly by Boston composers, and, of course, American premieres of the newest compositions from Europe. Serge Koussevitzky's decision to commission a group of new pieces from the leading composers of the day to celebrate the orchestra's first half-century began a tradition that continues to the present. His invitation to celebrate the orchestra's anniversary produced such works as Hindemith's Konzertmusik for strings and brass, Roussel's Third Symphony, Copland's *Symphonic Ode*, Hanson's Second Symphony, and the work regarded by many as one of Stravinsky's greatest, the *Symphony of Psalms*.

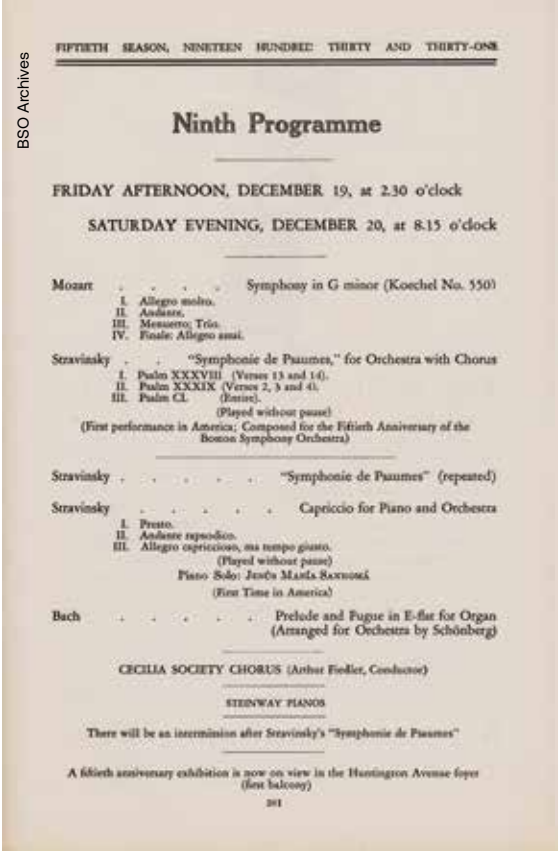
Koussevitzky gave Stravinsky carte blanche in determining the form and character of his work. The composer was not interested in a traditional 19th-century symphony; he wanted rather to create a unique form that did not rely on custom but would nonetheless be a unified whole. He had had a "psalm symphony" in mind for some time and decided to develop this notion for the commission. His publisher, meanwhile, had expressed the hope that the new work would be something "popular."

As Stravinsky recalled:

> I took the word, not in the publisher's meaning of "adapting to the understanding of the people," but in the sense of "something universally admired," and I even chose Psalm 150 in part for its popularity, though another and equally compelling reason was my eagerness to counter the many composers who had abused these magisterial verses as pegs for their own lyrico-sentimental "feelings." The psalms are poems of exaltation, but also of anger and judgment, and even of curses. Although I regarded Psalm 150 as a song to be danced, as David danced before the Ark, I knew that I would have to treat it in an imperative way.

The passages that Stravinsky selected are the closing verses of Psalm 38, the opening verses of Psalm 39, and the whole of Psalm 150 in the Latin text of the Vulgate. (To avoid confusion, it is worth noting that, owing to different textual traditions, the Vulgate numbers almost all of the psalms differently from the King James Version and all later translations used in the Protestant and Jewish traditions; in those translations, the texts of the first two movements come from Psalms 39 and 40, respectively. Psalm 150 has the same numbering in both systems.)

Stravinsky began by composing the fast sections of the last movement. Indeed, the repeated eighth-note figure heard on the words "Laudate Dominum" was the very first musical idea that suggested itself. This, followed by a breathtaking rapid triplet passage, is strikingly reminiscent of Jocasta's words "Oracula, oracula" in the composer's *Oedipus rex*; the reminiscence of the earlier score suggests that in some ways the *Symphony of Psalms* fulfills the Christian implications of that humanistic opera based on a classical Greek drama.



FIFTIETH SEASON, NINETEEN HUNDRED THIRTY AND THIRTY-ONE

Ninth Programme

FRIDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 19, at 2.30 o'clock

SATURDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 20, at 8.15 o'clock

Mozart . . . . . Symphony in G minor (Koechel No. 550)
I. Allegro molto.
II. Andante.
III. Menuetto: Trio.
IV. Finale: Allegro assai.

Stravinsky . . "Symphonie de Psaumes," for Orchestra with Chorus
I. Psalm XXXVIII (Verses 13 and 14).
II. Psalm XXXIX (Verses 2, 3 and 4).
III. Psalm CL (Entire).
(Played without pause)
(First performance in America; Composed for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra)

Stravinsky . . . . . "Symphonie de Psaumes" (repeated)

Stravinsky . . . . . Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra
I. Presto.
II. Andante rapsodico.
III. Allegro capriccioso, ma tempo giusto.
(Played without pause)
Piano Solo: JESÚS MARÍA SANROMÁ
(First Time in America)

Bach . . . . . Prelude and Fugue in E-flat for Organ
(Arranged for Orchestra by Schönberg)

CECILIA SOCIETY CHORUS (Arthur Fiedler, Conductor)

STEINWAY PIANOS

There will be an intermission after Stravinsky's "Symphonie de Psaumes"

A fiftieth anniversary exhibition is now on view in the Huntington Avenue foyer (first balcony)

201

BSO Archives

Program page for the first Boston Symphony Orchestra performances of Stravinsky's Symphony of Psalms*—the American premiere—on December 19 and 20, 1930, with Serge Koussevitzky conducting, but note that, contrary to the printed program, the new work was not repeated as originally planned*

After finishing that fast music, Stravinsky started at the beginning of the work. He took a motive from what he had already composed of the last movement—a pair of interlocked thirds—and derived from it the root musical idea of the whole score. The first movement, a cry of "Hear my prayer, O Lord," was composed "in a state of religious and musical ebullience." The opening chord is one of those Stravinskian sonorities that is so unusual and so striking that it is possible to recognize the work at once from that single sound. It is a simple E minor triad, but contrary to all of the normal prescriptions of musical scoring, the note that is most frequently sounded is G, the third degree of the scale, which appears in four octaves on many instruments. The orchestral introduction contains long-flowing lines (which prefigure the voice parts) and running sixteenth-note passages. When the chorus enters, the rhythmic background slows to a steady eighth-note pattern presenting explicitly the interlocked thirds that make up the root motive, over which the voices utter their plea, emphasizing the expressive semitone E-F; this has reminded many listeners of the Phrygian mode of plainchant, though Stravinsky disavowed any intention of recalling traditional church music. Nonetheless, the semitone rising and then falling again is an age-old emblem of lamentation and perfectly expresses the plea "Hear my prayer." Each of these elements functions as a self-contained block, often punctuated by a repetition of that opening chord, with its curious emphasis on G. Finally, as if in answer to this insistence, a climactic passage builds up with long choral phrases and increasing dynamic energy in the orchestral part to conclude on a massive G major triad, the extended musical goal of the movement and a climax of powerful effect.

That G major chord provides the harmonic link to the second movement as well, functioning as the dominant of C minor. Following the increasingly intense prayer of the opening, the second movement represents the believer waiting for the Lord's response. Stravinsky called the movement "an upside-down pyramid of fugues." There is one fugue for the instruments stated at the outset by flutes and oboes, another for the chorus. Both are

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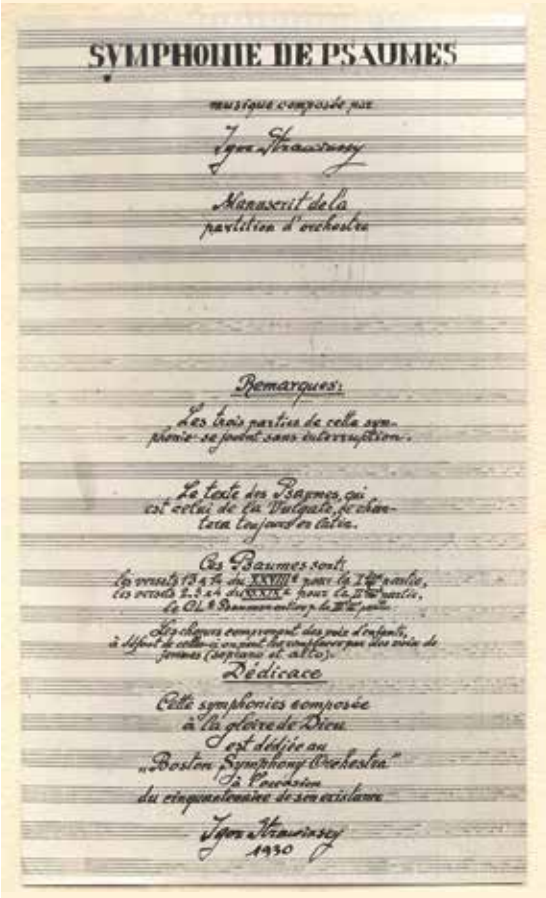
SYMPHONIE DE PSAUMES

musique composée par

Igor Stravinsky

Manuscrit de la
pavillon d'orchestre

Remarques:

Les trois parties de cette sym-
phonie se jouent sans interruption.

Le texte des Psaumes, qui
est celui de la Vulgate, se chan-
tera toujours en latin.

Ces Psaumes sont:
le versets 13 à 16 du XXXIX^e pour la 1^re partie,
les versets 2, 3 et 4 du XXXIX^e pour la 2^me partie,
le CL^e Psaume entier pour la 3^me partie.

Les chœurs comprendront des voix d'enfants,
à défaut de celles-ci on peut les remplacer par des voix de
femmes (soprano et alto).

Dédicace

Cette symphonie a composée
à la gloire de Dieu
est dédiée au
„Boston Symphony Orchestra"
à l'occasion
du cinquantenaire de son existence

Igor Stravinsky
1930

Title page of Stravinsky's Symphony of Psalms, *with its dedication "to the Boston Symphony Orchestra on the occasion of the cinquentennial of its existence"*

fully and elaborately developed with strettos and combined statements. The basic motive of the symphony here takes the form C–E-flat–B–D, with the third note at the higher octave, giving a new, yearning shape to the subject of the instrumental fugue. The choral fugue enters in E-flat minor with the lower instruments providing the accompaniment by way of their first crack at the instrumental fugue. A climactic choral passage in octaves ("He has put in my mouth a new song") is accompanied by strettos of the instrumental fugue in sharply dotted rhythms and leads to the movement's conclusion in E-flat.

After the plea for aid and the testimony that God has put a new song into the singer's mouth, the last movement presents this new song. Stravinsky noted that, although he had begun working on the *Symphony of Psalms* with the fast music of the last movement, he could not compose the slow introductory section before writing the second movement because that introduction—"Alleluia"—is the answer to the prayer. The rest of the slow introduction was originally composed to the Slavonic words "Gospodi pomiluy," cast as a prayer to the Russian image of the infant Christ with orb and sceptre. It is extraordinarily elevated, stately music, with the voices and instruments suggesting the somber joyfulness of church bells ringing for a slow procession. The fast section—with its rushing triplets in brass and piano—Stravinsky admitted was inspired by a vision of Elijah's fiery chariot climbing the heavens. At the end of all this energetic jubilation, the slower opening material comes back for a wonderfully intense quiet conclusion. The long phrases of the chorus carefully and repeatedly filling in the interval from E-flat down a minor third to C suggest that the conclusion will be in C minor. But as one last time the "new song"—"Alleluia"—is

breathed out by the chorus, the orchestra calmly brings matters to a bright close by inserting E-natural—which produces the major mode—over the closing tonic C, a conclusion of overwhelming serenity in a timeless mood.

Steven Ledbetter

Steven Ledbetter, a freelance writer and lecturer on music, was program annotator of the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 1979 to 1998.

The first American performances of Symphony of Psalms *were given by Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, with the chorus of the Cecilia Society, Arthur Fiedler, conductor, on December 19 and 20, 1930. Koussevitzky believed in the work, repeating it two months later, on February 20 and 21, 1931, and then in New York on March 5 and 7, 1931, following these with further performances in April of 1932, 1936, 1939, and 1942 (all with the Cecilia Society Chorus), and in March 1947 (in Boston and New York, with the Harvard Glee Club and Radcliffe Choral Society). Between 1947 and January 1972, BSO performances were given by Robert Shaw (with the Festival Chorus in 1947 at Tanglewood; and with the Chorus Pro Musica in Boston and New York in January 1959), Leonard Bernstein (with the Festival Chorus), Erich Leinsdorf (Chorus Pro Musica), and Michael Tilson Thomas (with the New England Conservatory Chorus in January 1972). Since then, all BSO performances of the* Symphony of Psalms *have featured the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, the conductors being Tilson Thomas (at Tanglewood in August 1973 and more recently there in July 2010), Colin Davis, Seiji Ozawa, Robert Shaw, Andrew Davis, Bernard Haitink (a 2001 Tanglewood performance followed by tour performances in London, Edinburgh, Lubeck, and Lucerne), James Levine, Shi-Yeon Sung, François-Xavier Roth (the most recent subscription performances, in April 2014), and Andris Nelsons (at Tanglewood in 2012 and more recently in 2024).*

Stravinsky with the conductor Ernest Ansermet, who led the world premiere of Symphony of Psalms

Igor STRAVINSKY *Symphony of Psalms*

I.

Exaudi orationem meam, Domine,
et deprecationem meam; auribus
percipe lacrymas meas.
Ne sileas, quoniam advena ego sum
apud te, et peregrinus sicut omnes
patres mei.
Remitte mihi, ut refrigerer priusquam
abeam et amplius non ero.

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and my
supplication: give ear to my tears.

Be not silent: for I am a stranger
with thee, and a sojourner as all my
fathers were.
O forgive me, that I may be refreshed,
before I go hence, and be no more.

Psalm 38: 13, 14

II.

Exspectans, exspectavi Dominum, et
intendit mihi.
Et exaudivit preces meas, et eduxit me
de lacu miseriae et de luto faecis.

Et statuit super petram pedes meos, et
direxit gressus meos.
Et immisit in os meum canticum
novum, carmen Deo nostro.
Videbunt multi, et timebunt, et
sperabunt in Domino.

With expectation I have waited for
the Lord, and he was attentive to me.
And he heard my prayers, and brought
me out of the pit of misery and the
mire of dregs.
And he set my feet upon a rock, and
directed my steps.
And he put a new canticle into my
mouth, a song to our God.
Many shall see, and shall fear: and they
shall hope in the Lord.

Psalm 39: 2, 3, 4

III.

Alleluia.
Laudate Dominum in sanctis ejus;
laudate eum in firmamento virtutis
ejus.
Laudate eum in virtutibus ejus;
laudate eum secundum multitudinem
magnitudinis ejus.
Laudate eum in sono tubae;
[laudate eum in psalterio et cithara.]*
Laudate eum in tympano et choro;
laudate eum in chordis et organo.
Laudate eum in cymbalis benesonantibus;
laudate eum in cymbalis jubilationis.
Omnis spiritus laudet Dominum!
Alleluia.

Alleluia.
Praise ye the Lord in his holy places;
praise ye him in the firmament of
his power.
Praise ye him for his mighty acts;
praise ye him according to the
multitude of his greatness.
Praise him with sound of trumpet:
[praise him with psaltery and harp.]
Praise him with timbrel and choir:
praise him with strings and organs.
Praise him on high sounding cymbals:
praise him on cymbals of joy:
let every spirit praise the Lord.
Alleluia.

Psalm 150

* Stravinsky omits the line in brackets.

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— **Sabrina Ellis**
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Dmitri Shostakovich

Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Opus 54

Dmitri Dmitrievich Shostakovich was born in St. Petersburg, Russia, on September 25, 1906, and died in Moscow on August 9, 1975. He composed his Symphony No. 6 during the spring, summer, and early autumn of 1939. Evgeny Mravinsky conducted the Leningrad Philharmonic in the premiere on November 5, 1939, in Leningrad.

The score of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 6 calls for piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, E-flat clarinet, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 3 trumpets, 4 horns, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (xylophone, triangle, cymbals, tam-tam, snare drum, tenor drum, bass drum), celesta, harp, and strings (first and second violins, violas, cellos, and double basses).

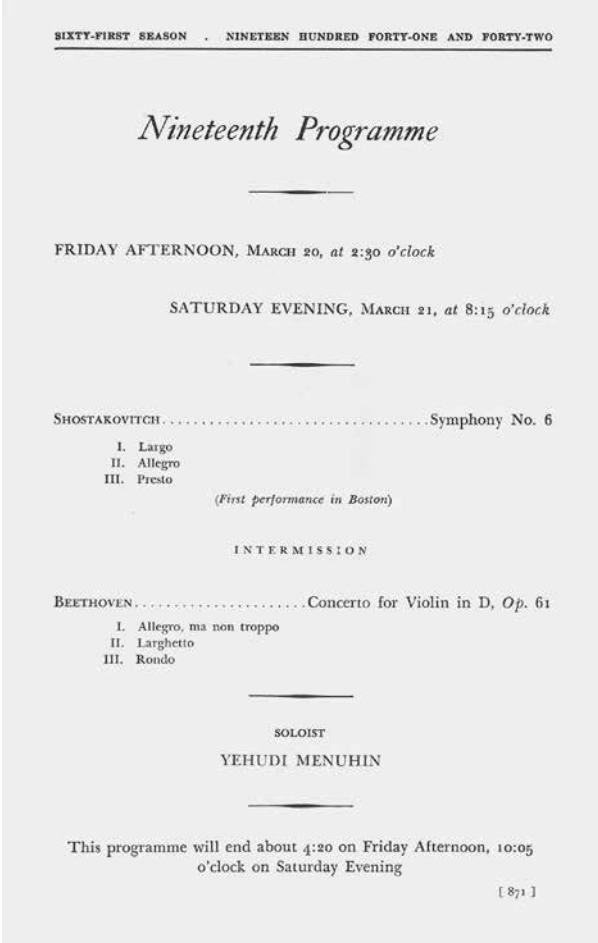
Sandwiched between two of Dmitri Shostakovich's most celebrated works, the meditative and whimsical Sixth Symphony has often been overlooked. Composed two years after the Fifth, which resurrected Shostakovich's ideological reputation after his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* had offended Stalin, and two years before the Seventh (the *Leningrad*, the massive wartime opus that became one of the 20th century's most popular symphonies), the non-programmatic Sixth has always been somewhat elusive and difficult to categorize.

Shostakovich wrote the Sixth between April and October 1939. At about thirty minutes long, the work is considerably shorter than both the Fifth (45 minutes) and the Seventh (well over an hour). But it is the Sixth Symphony's unusual structure that provoked the greatest confusion and—in the highly politicized environment of Soviet music—controversy: a long slow movement (Largo) followed by two much shorter fast ones (Allegro and Presto). "It is only natural to expect profound thoughts and meaningful artistic concepts from such a brilliantly gifted master, who is acclaimed by the widest possible public," complained the critic for *Soviet Music*, the official organ of the Soviet Composers Union, after the Moscow premiere, in an unfairly harsh assessment. "But there are none in the Sixth Symphony. The flashiness and refinement of the orchestration cannot conceal the absence of a unified symphonic conception."

The realities of the international political situation undoubtedly played a role in the cool official reception given to the Sixth Symphony. On August 27, 1939, the very day that Shostakovich finished the second of its three movements, Stalin and Hitler signed their infamous non-aggression pact. Under the terms of this agreement (called the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact after the Soviet and German foreign ministers who created it), Stalin agreed that he would not launch military action against the increasingly aggressive Nazi regime. In return, he received assurances that the Red Army could occupy the indepen-

dent Baltic states and Bessarabia (Ukraine/Moldova). Most important, the pact cleared the way for the Nazi invasion and occupation of Poland, which began on September 1, 1939. (Less than two years later, in June 1941, Hitler would break this pact and launch a massive invasion of the USSR.) At such a fraught moment, with Europe on the edge of war, the oddly disengaged, even ironic quality of the Sixth Symphony—especially in its last two movements—seemed inappropriate to some official critics. They were waiting for something more heroic, more like the concluding Allegro of the classically proportioned and pathos-laden Symphony No. 5.

They noted an apparent lack of connection between the three movements, and accused the composer of having produced a suite, not a symphony. But as Shostakovich had already shown in his Second Symphony, and would show again numerous times in the future—notably in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth symphonies—his definition of a symphony (the number of movements, their respective length, and sequence) could be very broad and innovative, stretching the traditional idea of the genre to its very limits.



SIXTY-FIRST SEASON . NINETEEN HUNDRED FORTY-ONE AND FORTY-TWO

Nineteenth Programme

FRIDAY AFTERNOON, MARCH 20, *at* 2:30 *o'clock*

SATURDAY EVENING, MARCH 21, *at* 8:15 *o'clock*

SHOSTAKOVITCH.....Symphony No. 6

I. Largo
II. Allegro
III. Presto

(First performance in Boston)

INTERMISSION

BEETHOVEN.....Concerto for Violin in D, *Op.* 61

I. Allegro, ma non troppo
II. Larghetto
III. Rondo

SOLOIST

YEHUDI MENUHIN

This programme will end about 4:20 on Friday Afternoon, 10:05 o'clock on Saturday Evening

[871]

Program page for the first Boston Symphony performances of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 6 on March 20 and 21, 1942, with Serge Koussevitzky conducting (BSO Archives)

While working on the new symphony, Shostakovich made clear that it would represent a departure from his previous work. "The music of the Sixth Symphony," he told a correspondent from *Leningrad Pravda* in late August, "will be distinct in mood and emotional tone from the Fifth Symphony, characterized by moments of tragic feeling and intensity. Music of a contemplative and lyric nature predominates in this latest symphony. Here I wanted to express feelings of springtime, joy, and youth."

The more contemplative, cheerful, and less conflicted mood of the Sixth Symphony emerged from what was an unusually calm and contented period in the composer's life. After early turmoil, his marriage to Nina Varzar was happy and had made him the proud new father of a son and daughter. Having at last overcome the disaster over his opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, which was castigated at the highest levels of the Communist Party for inaccessibility and obscenity, Shostakovich, now 33, seemed to be entering a more hopeful phase in his turbulent career. The triumph of his Fifth Symphony in late 1937 had restored him to official favor and given him breathing room. Soon after its premiere, he completed another film score (his fourteenth) for *The Man with a Gun*, a pedestrian and frankly propagandistic biopic about Vladimir Lenin. Then he began the first of what would be a distinguished cycle of fifteen string quartets. The unusually simple and transparent lyricism of the String Quartet No. 1, his "Springtime Quartet," stands in stark contrast to the dark, complex musical style of most of the quartets that would follow. Shostakovich appeared to be enjoying life. A passionate soccer fan, he took a trip to Moscow to see a match between the leading Leningrad and Moscow teams.

But behind the scenes of Stalin's self-aggrandizing parade of prosperity and "normality" lurked pervasive terror and paranoia. Some of Shostakovich's closest friends, associates, and collaborators were being arrested as "enemies of the people" in ongoing purges of the artistic community. These included the brilliant avant-garde stage director Vsevolod Meyerhold, apprehended in June 1939 while the composer was writing the Sixth Symphony. Seven months later, after terrible torture, Meyerhold, one of the great theatrical

A 1961 photo of Shostakovich with the conductor Evgeny Mravinsky

minds of the 20th century, was executed. Given their close personal and creative relationship, one can imagine that Meyerhold's arrest and disappearance must have shocked and unsettled the hypersensitive Shostakovich.

In her indispensable book on Shostakovich's symphonies, Russian musicologist Marina Sabinina has pointed out that of all of the composer's symphonies, the Sixth is closest in technique and spirit to Tchaikovsky. Particularly in the first movement, melody is the most important compositional element, a rare event in Shostakovich's music, usually propelled by and unified around a rhythmic "motor" impulse. Both harmonically and structurally, the Largo is unusually spare and plain; it progresses around the repetition (in only slightly altered form) of two lyrical, even requiem-like themes. The strong sense of musical conflict found in so many of the composer's symphonies is almost entirely missing here. "Teetering on long tremolando pedal-points," Ian MacDonald has written colorfully in his book *The New Shostakovich*, the first movement "hardly moves, employing only pallid colours and restricting its discourse to a brooding game of patience with its germinal cells."

In dramatic contrast, the two succeeding movements overflow with ironic joie de vivre, recalling the romping high spirits of the composer's early ballet scores, especially *The Golden Age*. Against the background of the austere opening, the waltz-like theme of the Allegro and the joking Rossini-esque buffoonery of the Presto (where neoclassical elements spar with images borrowed from Soviet popular music in sonata-rondo form) create an atmosphere of musical and emotional eclecticism. This careening between the sublime and the ridiculous would become increasingly characteristic of the mature Shostakovich.

Despite mixed reviews, the Sixth Symphony was never banned from the Soviet concert hall, and Mravinsky continued to perform it with the Leningrad Philharmonic, the most esteemed orchestra in the USSR. The Sixth was also a great favorite of BSO conductor Serge Koussevitzky, a consistent champion of the composer, and also of Leopold Stokowski, who conducted it with the Philadelphia Orchestra several times in 1940 and said,

> With each new symphony Shostakovich reveals himself as a master who continues to grow, constantly developing his creative fantasy and his musical self-awareness. In the Sixth Symphony, he has reached new heights—especially in the first movement. It con-

tains harmonic sequences and melodic turns of remarkable expressiveness and highly original sonority. Upon first hearing, they can sound strange and even incomprehensible, and their meaning seems hidden from us. But later, upon a third or a fourth hearing, the symphony's unusual expressive profundity becomes clear.

Harlow Robinson

Harlow Robinson is an author, lecturer, and Matthews Distinguished University Professor of History, Emeritus, at Northeastern University. His books include Sergei Prokofiev: A Biography *and* Russians in Hollywood, Hollywood's Russians. *His essays and reviews have appeared in the* Boston Globe, New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Cineaste, *and* Opera News, *and he has written program notes for the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, and Metropolitan Opera.*

The first American performance of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 6 was on November 29, 1940, with Leopold Stokowski conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra.

The first Boston Symphony Orchestra performances of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 6 were given by Serge Koussevitzky on March 20 and 21, 1942, with further Symphony Hall performances the following week on March 27 and 28, followed by performances in Washington, New Brunswick, New York, Providence, Boston again, and Cambridge. By the end of 1944 Koussevitzky had led the work 24 times, including a benefit in Washington, DC, for Russian War Relief, as well as performances in Springfield, Philadelphia, New Haven, and Toledo, and a broadcast performance in November 1944 from Hunter College. Also in November 1944, Richard Burgin conducted two performances here when Koussevitzky was indisposed. Since then, the BSO has played the work under Kurt Masur (subscription concerts in January 1983), Yuri Temirkanov (the only Tanglewood performance, on July 2, 1988), André Previn, and Andris Nelsons (in April 2017, the most recent subscription performances prior to this month's).

From the early 1960s, a photo of Shostakovich (seated second from right) with Russian musicologist Marina Sabinina (who is referenced in the program note) along with other musicologists and members of the Russian army

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James Burton


Robert Torres

James Burton is the Boston Symphony Orchestra Choral Director and Conductor of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, holding the Alan J. and Suzanne W. Dworsky Chair, endowed in perpetuity. Since his appointment in 2017, Burton has conducted performances at Symphony Hall and Tanglewood with the BSO and the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, and he has been a frequent guest conductor with the Boston Pops. Born in London, he has conducted many of the UK's leading ensembles including the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, the Hallé, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and the BBC Singers. In the 2023–24 season, he made debuts with the Ulster Orchestra, the Aalborg Symphony in Denmark, and the Handel and Haydn Society. Burton has conducted at English National Opera, English Touring Opera, and Garsington Opera, and earlier in his career he served as assistant conductor at the Metropolitan Opera and Opéra national de Paris. Burton's previous appointments include Choral Director at the Hallé Orchestra, where he won the *Gramophone* Choral Award in 2009, Music Director of the Schola Cantorum of Oxford (2002–2017), and honored guest director of the National Youth Choir of Japan in 2017. Throughout his career he has been a passionate advocate for young musicians, and from 2020 to 2024 he was Director of Orchestral Activities at Boston University's School of Music, leading the orchestral program and teaching conducting. He founded a scholarship for young conductors at Oxford, has given masterclasses at the Royal Academy of Music, the Tanglewood Music Center, and Birmingham University, and has been a regular faculty member for the Prague Summer Nights Festival. He founded the Boston Symphony Children's Choir in 2018. Burton's composition portfolio includes works performed by the Boston Pops and choirs including The Sixteen, the Choir of New College Oxford and the BBC Singers. The King's Singers featured a work of his on their 2021 Christmas album, and his carol "Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day" was premiered by the Choir of St John's College Cambridge and recently received its first American recording by the Choir of Trinity Copley Square. His piece *The Lost Words*, commissioned by the BSO, was performed at Tanglewood and the BBC Proms in 2019 and was featured by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra last season. Born in London, Burton was head chorister of the Choir of Westminster Abbey, studied at St John's College at Cambridge University, and holds a master's degree in orchestral conducting from the Peabody Conservatory, where he studied with Frederik Prausnitz and Gustav Meier.


Hillary Scott

Tanglewood Festival Chorus

James Burton, BSO Choral Director and Conductor of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus

Originally formed under the joint sponsorship of Boston University and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the all-volunteer Tanglewood Festival Chorus was established in 1970 by its founding conductor, the late John Oliver. In 2017, James Burton was named the new Conductor of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, also being appointed to the newly created position of BSO Choral Director. First established for performances at the BSO's summer home, the Tanglewood Festival Chorus plays a major role in the BSO's subscription season as well as in BSO concerts at Carnegie Hall. Considered one of the world's leading symphonic choruses, the Tanglewood Festival Chorus is made up of volunteer singers who share their time and talents, performing year-round with the Boston Symphony and Boston Pops. The TFC also records frequently with the BSO and the Boston Pops. Its most recent BSO recordings were Shostakovich's symphonies 2, 3, and 13 conducted by BSO Music Director Andris Nelsons, released in October 2023. The chorus has also recorded with conductors Seiji Ozawa, Bernard Haitink, James Levine, Leonard Bernstein, Colin Davis, Keith Lockhart, and John Williams. It can also be heard on several movie soundtracks, including *Saving Private Ryan*. The chorus has sung with the Boston Pops for Boston Red Sox and Celtics games and sang the National Anthem prior to an American League Championship Series game at Fenway Park in October 2021. In the 2023-24 season they performed a special postlude concert at Symphony Hall in November, in Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* in January at both Symphony Hall and Carnegie Hall, and in the American premiere of Elena Langer's *The Dong with a Luminous Nose* with the BSO and Principal Cellist Blaise Déjardin, as well as music of Scriabin and Berlioz with the BSO. This past summer's performances included works of Scriabin, Sibelius, and Stravinsky in July and music of Brahms, Bruckner, Ravel, and Beethoven the final weekend of the season, as well as the annual Prelude Concert on August 23. In 2024-25, the chorus appears in BSO performances including Mahler's Symphony No. 8, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, Korngold's *Die tote Stadt*, Mozart's Requiem, Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*, and a world premiere by Aleksandra Vrebalov.

Tanglewood Festival Chorus

James Burton, BSO Choral Director and Conductor of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus

In the following list, * denotes membership of 40 years or more, # denotes membership of 35-39 years, and + denotes membership of 25-34 years.

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Explore

For a complete BSO performance history of any piece on the program, readers are encouraged to visit the BSO Archives' online database, "HENRY," named for BSO founder Henry Lee Higginson, at archives.bso.org.

Aleksandra Vrebalov

Information

Aleksandra Vrebalov's website, aleksandravrebalov.com, is the best source for information and news about the composer, and includes a works list, interviews, writings, sketches, and more.

Robert Kirzinger's essay on the composer's opera *Mileva* appeared in *New Sound International Journal of Music* (newsound.org).

Recordings

A discography of Vrebalov's music can be found on her website. Recordings include the DVD of *Beyond Zero: 1914-1918*, a collaboration with the filmmaker Bill Morrison and the Kronos Quartet; the Kronos Quartet's recordings of her *Pannonia Boundless*, "*...hold me, neighbor, in this storm...*", *The Sea Ranch Songs*, and with the San Francisco Girls' Chorus, *Bubbles*. Many performances of Vrebalov's music can be found on YouTube, including *Missa Supratext*, for which she won the 2024 Grawemeyer Award.

Igor Stravinsky

Books

Jonathan Cross, *Igor Stravinsky* (Reaktion Books "Critical Lives")
Jonathan Cross, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Stravinsky* (Cambridge University Press)
Graham Griffiths, ed., *Stravinsky in Context* (Cambridge University Press)
Tamara Levitz, ed., *Stravinsky and his World* (Princeton University Press)
Michael Oliver, *Igor Stravinsky* (Phaidon "20th-Century Composers")
Igor Stravinsky, *Chronicle of My Life* [aka *An Autobiography*] (various publishers)
Igor Stravinsky/Robert Craft (series of autobiographies through interviews) (University of California Press)
Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works through "Mavra"* (2 vol.; University of California Press)
Stephen Walsh, *Stravinsky—A Creative Spring: Russia and France, 1882-1934* and *Stravinsky—The Second Exile: France and America, 1934-1971* (University of California Press)
Eric Walter White, *Stravinsky: The Composer and his Works* (University of California)

Recordings

Stravinsky recorded the *Symphony of Psalms* with the CBC Vancouver Symphony Orchestra and Toronto Festival Singers in 1963. A 1987 Boston Symphony Orchestra broadcast with the Tanglewood Festival Chorus and Seiji Ozawa conducting is included in the BSO's 12-disc set *Symphony Hall Centennial Celebration: From the Broadcast Archives, 1943-2000*. Andris Nelsons recorded *Symphony of Psalms* with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Chorus.

Other recordings of the Symphony of Psalms (alphabetical by conductor): Berlin Philharmonic/Berlin Radio Chorus/Pierre Boulez; London Symphony Orchestra/Monteverdi Choir/Sir John Eliot Gardiner; Royal Flemish Philharmonic/Ghent Collegium Vocale/Philippe Herreweghe; Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and Chorus/Mariss Jansons; Berlin Philharmonic/Berlin Radio Chorus/Sir Simon Rattle; Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Chorus/Robert Shaw; London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus/Michael Tilson Thomas

Dmitri Shostakovich

Books

Laurel E. Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (Oxford University Press)
Dmitri Rabinovich, *Dmitri Shostakovich*, translated by George Hanna (Foreign Languages Publishing House)
Solomon Volkov, *Shostakovich and Stalin* (Random House)
Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (Princeton University Press)
Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich, as compiled by Solomon Volkov, continues to generate discussion regarding its veracity (Limelight). This was the basis of Tony Palmer's 1988 film starring Ben Kingsley as Shostakovich.
Shostakovich Reconsidered, ed. Allan B. Ho and Dmitry Feofanov (Toccata Press)
Shostakovich and His World, ed. Laurel E. Fay (Princeton University Press)
Laurel Fay wrote the Shostakovich article in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.
Julian Barnes's *The Noise of Time* is a historical novel based on Shostakovich's life.
The publisher DSCH is undertaking the publication of Shostakovich's complete works; its website, shostakovich.ru, includes a work list, timeline of the composer's life, and other information.

Recordings

Andris Nelsons and the Boston Symphony Orchestra's recordings of the complete Shostakovich symphonies, along with the concertos (two each) for violin, cello, and piano, the opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, and a few other pieces, were released as a 19-disc box set last month. Symphony No. 6 was originally released in February 2019 along with Symphony No. 7.

Among many other recordings of the complete Shostakovich symphonies are those by former BSO Conductor Emeritus Bernard Haitink with the Concertgebouw and London Philharmonic orchestras, Valery Gergiev with the Mariinsky Orchestra or the Kirov Theatre Orchestra, Mariss Jansons with various orchestras (also including the piano and cello concertos), Kiril Kondrashin with the Moscow Philharmonic, Vasily Petrenko with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Mstislav Rostropovich with various orchestras, Gennady Rozhdestvensky with the USSR Ministry of Culture Symphony Orchestra, and the composer's son Maxim Shostakovich with the Prague Philharmonic.


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BSO News

New BSO Recordings on Deutsche Grammophon

On March 28, 2025, Deutsche Grammophon issued a box set of Andris Nelsons and the BSO's Shostakovich recordings made over the past decade, including the complete symphonies, the concertos for piano, violin, and cello, and his opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. Soloists include cellist Yo-Yo Ma, soprano Kristine Opolais, bass-baritone Matthias Goerne, pianist Yuja Wang, and violinist Baiba Skride. The Tanglewood Festival Chorus is also featured in several works. The series, which had its first release in 2015, has earned three Grammy Awards for Best Orchestral Performance and one for Best Engineered Album.

Deutsche Grammophon and the Boston Symphony Orchestra recently announced the release of pianist Seong-Jin Cho's performances of the two Maurice Ravel piano concertos with the BSO and Andris Nelsons, recorded live at Symphony Hall. This release and Seong-Jin Cho's recordings of Ravel's complete solo piano music coincide with the 150th anniversary of the composer's birth, which the BSO and Seong-Jin Cho will also celebrate at Tanglewood this coming summer in a series of concerts.

In December 2024, to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the BSO's world premiere of Olivier Messiaen's extraordinary *Turangalîla-symphonie*, Deutsche Grammophon released digitally Andris Nelsons and the BSO's performance of the work featuring soloists Yuja Wang, piano, and Cécile Lartigau, ondes Martenot, recorded live at Symphony Hall. A physical album will be released later in 2025.

BSO Broadcasts on CRB

BSO concerts are heard on the radio at 99.5 CRB and online at classicalwcrb.org. Saturday-night concerts are broadcast live at 8pm with host Brian McCreath, and encore broadcasts are aired on Monday nights at 8pm. In addition, interviews with and features on guest conductors, soloists, and BSO musicians are available online at classicalwcrb.org/bso. Broadcasts through the end of the BSO 2024-25 season, all led by Music Director Andris Nelsons, include last week's program of Dmitri Shostakovich's Symphony No. 15 and Ludwig van Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4 with soloist Mitsuko Uchida (encore April 28); this week's program of Shostakovich Symphony No. 6 and two works featuring the Tanglewood Festival Chorus: the world premiere of the BSO-commissioned *Love Canticles* by recent Grawemeyer Award winner Aleksandra Vrebalov, and Igor Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* (April 26 and May 6); and the next week, Shostakovich's Violin Concerto No. 1 with soloist Baiba Skride and the Symphony No. 8 (May 3 and 12).

Pre-concert Talks at Symphony Hall

Friday Pre-concert Talks take place from 12:15 to 12:45pm in Symphony Hall before all of the BSO's Friday afternoon subscription concerts throughout the season. Given by BSO Director of Program Publications Robert Kirzinger and occasional guest speakers, these informative half-hour talks use recorded examples to add context and insight to the music being performed. Northeastern University Professor Emeritus and author Harlow Robinson gives the talk on May 2. Prior to the Sunday, April 27, BSO concert, there is a special pre-concert conversation, 12:30-1:15, between Robert Kirzinger and composer Aleksandra Vrebalov, whose BSO-commissioned *Love Canticles* receives its world premiere performances this weekend.

Irving W. and Charlotte F. Rabb Symphony Hall Tours

Go behind the scenes with a tour of Symphony Hall! Experienced members of the Boston Symphony Association of Volunteers unfold the history of the Boston Symphony Orchestra—its musicians, conductors, and supporters—as well as offer information about the historic building. Tours last about one hour to 90 minutes, depending on the group, and include the hall's public spaces as well as select behind-the-scenes areas when possible.

On the day of the tour, your tour guide will meet you inside the Box Office Lobby at Symphony Hall on Massachusetts Avenue. Doors to the Box Office Lobby will open 10-15 minutes prior to the tour start time, and will close at the tour start time.

Reservations are not required, but recommended for planning purposes. To find out more and to sign up for a free Public Walk-up Tour at https://www.bso.org/visit/symphony-hall-tours or scan the QR code.

The Conductors Circle

The Conductors Circle, created in January 2025, salutes the generosity of donors who have made leadership commitments to support the full breadth of the Boston Symphony Orchestra's mission and values. Their exemplary investments in musical excellence, innovation, and service to our community resonate in every aspect of the BSO's work.

The Conductors Circle encompasses all donors who have made combined contributions of $25,000 or more in fiscal year 2024 or fiscal year 2025 to the Boston Annual Fund, Pops Annual Fund, Tanglewood Annual Fund or special operating projects.

For further information on the Conductors Circle, please contact the Development Office at 617-638-9276.

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If you would like information about how to include the BSO, Boston Pops, or Tanglewood in your plans, or if you find that your name is not included with other Walter Piston Society members and should be, please contact Karen Bippus, Director of Planned Giving, at kbippus@bso.org or 617-638-9270.

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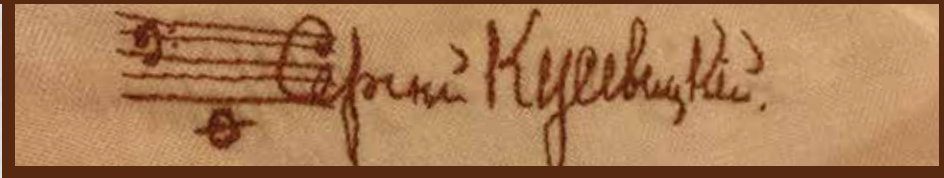
Located on the orchestra and first balcony levels of Symphony Hall, this season's archival exhibits continue the BSO's 2024 celebration of the 150th anniversary of Serge Koussevitzky's birth and the 100th anniversary of his appointment as the BSO's ninth Music Director. Exhibits and artwork in the Cabot-Cahners Room on the first balcony look at his commissioning legacy, his first season with the BSO, and selected recordings and written works.

The Archives also celebrates the Beethoven and Shostakovich festivals occurring this season with cases documenting festivals and relationships with these two composers. Also on display are cases focused on the legacy of BSO founder Henry Lee Higginson, a 19th-century musical power couple (Mr. and Mrs. Henschel), the last 100 years of BSO concertmasters, the history of dance at Symphony Hall, and the raked flooring and sculptures that make Symphony Hall unique architecturally.



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- **Children**: For BSO concerts, to minimize disruptions we request that children under the age of five do not attend. Families with younger children are encouraged to attend our BSO Family Concerts and family-friendly Boston Pops performances.
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Please silence all cell phones and electronic devices, and please keep them stored and unused throughout the performance so your fellow concertgoers may enjoy the concert without distraction. While photos and videos before the concert and during intermission are welcome (and encouraged!), photos, videos, and recording during the performance are prohibited. Thank you!

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More of the BSO

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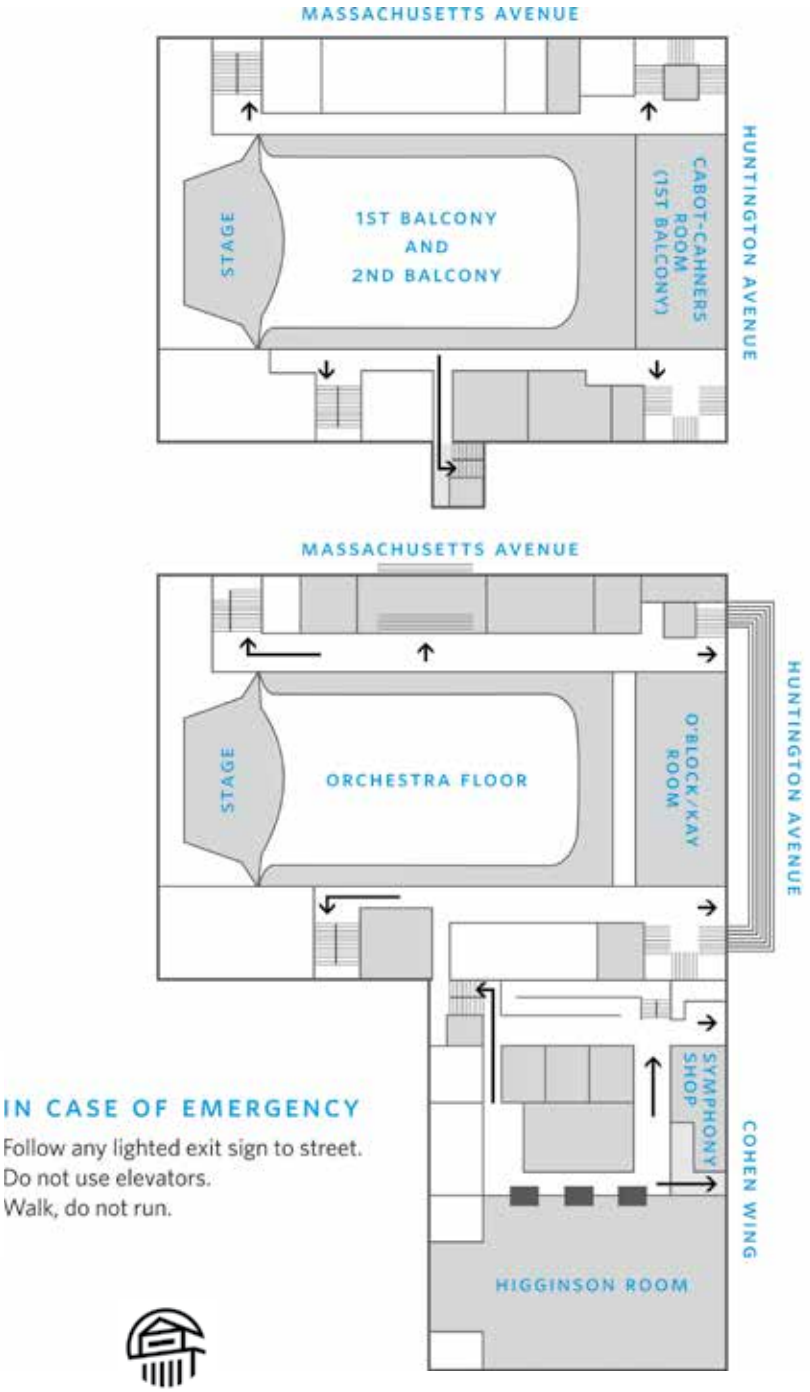

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