Season 2019-2020

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Cristian Măcelaru Conductor
Leonidas Kavakos Violin

Shostakovich Violin Concerto No. 1 in A minor, Op. 77
I. Nocturne: Moderato
II. Scherzo: Allegro
III. Passacaglia: Andante—
IV. Burlesque: Allegro con brio

Intermission

Marsalis Blues Symphony
I. Born in Hope
II. Swimming in Sorrow
III. Reconstruction Rag
IV. Southwestern Showdown
V. Big City Breaks
VI. Danzon y Mambo, Choro y Samba
VII. Dialog in Democracy

First Philadelphia Orchestra performances

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Yannick Nézet-Séguin is now in his eighth season as the eighth music director of The Philadelphia Orchestra. His connection to the ensemble’s musicians has been praised by both concertgoers and critics, and he is embraced by the musicians of the Orchestra, audiences, and the community.

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Photo: Jessica Griffin
Conductor

Cristian Măcelaru has established himself as one of the fast-rising stars of the conducting world. He is chief conductor of the WDR Symphony in Cologne and music director and conductor of the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, the world’s leading festival dedicated to contemporary symphonic repertoire. He was recently named music director of the Orchestre National de France (beginning with the 2021–22 season) and the inaugural artistic director and principal conductor of the Interlochen Center for the Arts’ World Youth Symphony (effective immediately). He has performed regularly on the podium of the world’s great orchestras, including the Chicago, St. Louis, National, Bavarian Radio, City of Birmingham, and Danish National symphonies; the New York, Rotterdam, and Los Angeles philharmonics; the Cleveland, Royal Concertgebouw, and Scottish Chamber orchestras; and the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin.

Mr. Măcelaru recently completed his tenure with The Philadelphia Orchestra as conductor-in-residence, a title he held for three seasons until August 2017. Prior to that he was the Orchestra’s associate conductor for two seasons and assistant conductor for one season. He made his Philadelphia Orchestra subscription debut in April 2013 and continues a close relationship with the ensemble, leading annual subscription programs and other special concerts. In addition to these current performances, highlights of his 2019–20 season include the gala opening at the WDR Symphony with Mahler’s Fourth Symphony and Dvořák’s Te Deum, his BBC Proms debut conducting the BBC Symphony, and collaborations with the Barcelona, Swedish Radio, San Francisco, and Seattle symphonies; the Orchestre National de Lyon; the Orchestre de Paris; the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra; and the Dresden Philharmonic.

Mr. Măcelaru was born in Timișoara, Romania, and comes from a musical family. An accomplished violinist from an early age, he was the youngest concertmaster in the history of the Miami Symphony and made his Carnegie Hall debut with that orchestra at the age of 19. He also played in the first violin section of the Houston Symphony for two seasons. In 2012 he received the Solti Emerging Conductor Award, followed in 2014 by the Solti Conducting Award. He resides in Bonn with his wife, Cheryl, and children, Beni and Maria.
Violinist Leonidas Kavakos is known for his virtuosity, superb musicianship, and the integrity of his playing. By age 21 he had won three major competitions: the Sibelius (1985), Paganini (1988), and Naumburg (1988). This success led to his recording the original version of the Sibelius Violin Concerto, the first recording of this work in history, which won the Gramophone Concerto of the Year Award in 1991. Mr. Kavakos was Gramophone’s Artist of the Year in 2014, and he is the 2017 winner of the Léonie Sonning Music Prize, Denmark's most prestigious musical honor.

Mr. Kavakos has been a regular guest of The Philadelphia Orchestra since making his debut in 1999 at the Mann Center and has appeared with the ensemble on a European tour. In addition to these current performances, highlights of his 2019–20 season include the Sony release of his recording of the Beethoven Concerto as soloist/conductor with the Bavarian Radio Symphony and a US tour with pianist Emanuel Ax and cellist Yo-Yo Ma performing Beethoven trios, concluding with three concerts at Carnegie Hall. In North America Mr. Kavakos performs with the Chicago, Houston, and Montreal symphonies, as well as with the Munich Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in Boston. In Europe he performs with the Vienna Philharmonic, the London Symphony, the Royal Concertgebouw and Mariinsky orchestras, and the Orchestre de Paris, among others. He performs in Asia with the Singapore Symphony and the Hong Kong, Seoul, and Taiwan philharmonics, and he gives recitals in Shanghai and Xinghai. He has also built a strong profile as a conductor and this season leads the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, the Czech Philharmonic, and the RAI National Symphony in Turin.

Mr. Kavakos has an exclusive recording contract with Sony Classical. His previous releases include the Mendelssohn Concerto and the Mozart concertos playing and conducting with the Camerata Salzburg. In 2017 he joined Mr. Ma and Mr. Ax for a recording of the Brahms piano trios. Upcoming projects include the complete Bach solo sonatas and partitas. Mr. Kavakos plays the “Willemotte” Stradivarius violin of 1734.
Framing the Program

Parallel Events

1948
Shostakovich
Violin Concerto No. 1

Music
Messiaen
Turangalîla
Symphony

Literature
Auden
Age of Anxiety

Art
Moore
Family Group

History
Gandhi
assassinated

During the rollercoaster ride that characterized Dmitri Shostakovich’s career he could never be entirely sure when he would be in good favor with the Soviet authorities. He was most forcefully denounced in 1936 and 1948. At the time of the latter rebuke, he was composing his First Violin Concerto and felt it best to keep the work hidden until times were calmer—he had to wait seven years, until after Joseph Stalin’s death.

As trumpeter, composer, bandleader, educator, impresario, and tireless advocate, Wynton Marsalis has emerged as the preeminent figure in jazz today. He continually searches for ways to challenge himself and to reach new audiences. Following in the illustrious tradition of Gershwin, Ellington, Bernstein, and others, Marsalis has found imaginative paths to connect jazz and classical idioms, as in his *Blues Symphony*. Marsalis combines his gifts as composer, historian, and educator in this seven-movement work that explores jazz’s evolution.

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The career of Dmitri Shostakovich, perhaps the greatest artistic figure that the Soviet Union produced, proved to be a roller-coaster ride of triumph and condemnation. He had just turned 11 in 1917 when the October Revolution ended the three-century reign of the Romanovs and Russia headed into the brave new world of Communism. The prodigious young musician received an impressive education at the conservatory in his native St. Petersburg (at the time renamed Petrograd and later Leningrad) and, like many Russians, initially seemed optimistic concerning a bright Communist future.

The 1920s were a period of exciting Modernist experimentation in Russian art and Shostakovich emerged as one of the leading lights. His dazzling First Symphony, premiered when he was just 19, brought early international fame. Before 30 he had composed acclaimed symphonies, concertos, keyboard and chamber music, as well as scores for dance, film, and theater. His first opera, The Nose, pointed toward a promising career in that genre as well.

In and Out of Official Favor All this came crashing down in 1936 with his second opera, Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District. Although also initially a huge success, Shostakovich’s fortunes turned after Joseph Stalin walked out before the end of a new production in Moscow. Shostakovich gradually came back into official good graces, especially with his imposing Fifth Symphony, but the precarious ride would continue.

Shostakovich composed his concertos for specific soloists. The two for piano were either for his own use (he was a formidable pianist) or for his son, Maxim; the two violin concertos for David Oistrakh (1908–74), and the two cello concertos for Mstislav Rostropovich (1927–2007). Shostakovich first heard Oistrakh perform in 1935 and a friendship developed. During the 1946–47 season the violinist gave a concert series in Moscow devoted to the “Development of the Violin Concerto,” which may have provided the impetus for Shostakovich to begin writing his first concerto in July, the same summer as he recorded his Piano Trio No. 2 with Oistrakh.
Then in early 1948 came the Soviet authorities’ next denunciation of Shostakovich, this time in attacks also targeting Sergei Prokofiev and other prominent composers, all charged with the nebulous sin of “formalism.” Shostakovich was writing the Violin Concerto No. 1 in A minor, but pressed on.

**Pieces for the Drawer** One consequence of his going in and out of official favor—which could literally be life threatening, not merely career ending—was that Shostakovich composed pieces “for the drawer,” that is, knowing it would be unwise to present them in public and forcing him to wait many years for a more propitious time. Some major works after the 1948 smackdown, such as *From Jewish Folk Poetry*, the First Violin Concerto, and Fourth and Fifth string quartets, were released only after Stalin’s death in 1953. Shostakovich was largely reduced to writing film scores and such patriotic fare as the oratorio *Song of the Forests*, which celebrates the reforestation of the country after the ravages of war and drought.

The Violin Concerto No. 1 may not have been quite as provocative as some of the other “drawer” pieces, and it is not entirely clear whether the caution in withholding it was the composer’s or Oistrakh’s. When he wrote the Concerto Shostakovich assigned the opus number 77 and publicly acknowledged its existence, although it took seven years to be published, as Op. 99, and for Oistrakh to give the rapturously received world premiere with the Leningrad Philharmonic in October 1955. Two months later, on his first tour to America, he presented the premiere in this country at Carnegie Hall with the New York Philharmonic. Shostakovich later asked that the work revert to its original opus number, which reflected the actual chronology among his compositions.

Shostakovich's works for the drawer sometimes had an underground existence of sorts, similar to dissident “samizdat” literature, in that they were performed privately in piano reductions, giving him the satisfaction of hearing pieces played in some form. And, of course, it is standard practice for composers to test out pieces while they are being written to get feedback. This was particularly helpful for the Violin Concerto because although Shostakovich had played the instrument for a while in his youth, he benefited from suggestions by Oistrakh and others.

**A Closer Look** The four-movement Concerto begins with a somber and mysterious *Nocturne: Moderato*. The following wild *Scherzo: Allegro* offers a stark,
Shostakovich composed his First Violin Concerto from 1947 to 1948.

Yehudi Menuhin was the soloist and Eugene Ormandy the conductor in the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of Shostakovich’s First Violin Concerto, in October 1961. The Concerto’s dedicatee, David Oistrakh, performed it here in January 1968, and since then such artists as Viktoria Mullova, Kyoko Takezawa, Vadim Repin, Baiba Skride, and Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg have played the piece. Most recently on subscription Lisa Batiashvili performed the work in May 2015 with Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

The Concerto is scored for solo violin, three flutes (III doubling piccolo), three oboes (III doubling English horn), three clarinets (III doubling bass clarinet), three bassoons (III doubling contrabassoon), four horns, tuba, timpani, percussion (tam-tam, tambourine, xylophone), two harps, celesta, and strings.

Performance time is approximately 35 minutes.

Virtuosic contrast. There are two features in this movement that Shostakovich used in various pieces around this time. First, he encoded his name musically: D[mitri] SCH[ostakovich] as it is spelled using the German notational system that corresponds to the pitches D, E-flat, C, B natural. (Other composers have done similar things since as far back as the Middle Ages, Bach most notably.) This prominent motif later appears in his 10th and 15th symphonies and in the “autobiographical” String Quartet No. 8. Second, in the middle of the movement there is what seems to be reference to a Jewish musical idiom, something that Shostakovich, although not himself Jewish, increasingly called upon in passages of his music in solidarity with the targets of anti-Semitic oppression.

The lyrical third movement unfolds as a Passacaglia: Andante, that is a set of variations first presented in the bass. There is an extended cadenza at the end of the movement that leads without pause into the concluding Burlesque: Allegro con brio, one of Shostakovich’s essays in the satirically grotesque.

—Christopher H. Gibbs
Wynton Marsalis's life and work are as impressive as they are difficult to categorize: He has earned multiple Grammy awards for his classical trumpet performances, a Pulitzer Prize for his 1997 oratorio Blood on the Fields, and has sold over seven million copies of his various jazz albums. In addition to being a virtuosic musician and prolific composer, he is also an energetic leader in arts advocacy, administration, and education. Since co-founding the program that would eventually become Jazz at Lincoln Center in 1987, he has served as a powerful voice shaping public perceptions of both the history and significance of jazz.

**Understanding the Past to Change the Present**

A year after assuming his leadership role at Lincoln Center, Marsalis wrote an article for the *New York Times* titled “What Jazz Is—and Isn’t” in which he describes the political stakes of his work, namely to provide an alternative to a worldview that sees jazz “merely as a product of noble savages—music produced by untutored, unbuttoned semiliterates for whom jazz history does not exist.” This “noble savage” concept is a vestige of an Enlightenment-era paradigm that views non-European cultures as uncorrupted by the tainting influences of civilization and reason. Throughout much of the 20th century, white Euro-American critics frequently interpreted African-American music—especially the blues and jazz—within this paradigm, understanding the prominence of improvisation in these genres to be an expression of the “natural” musicality of the “black race” rather than the product of rigorous study and practice.

Jazz at Lincoln Center has served as Marsalis’s institutional response to such thinking, and its success is rooted in the way it shapes understandings of the past in order to change the politics of the present. Without a history that clearly defines jazz and its lineage, Marsalis worries that the artistry and virtuosity of contemporary jazz performers may continue to be undervalued or misunderstood. His programming therefore seeks to create and solidify a jazz canon, giving Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong positions akin to those of Bach and Beethoven within the classical canon. In doing so, Marsalis has helped to turn jazz history into one of the many fields
upon which contemporary racial politics are worked out—and not without controversy. Programming that argues for the centrality of certain artists or movements necessarily argues for the peripherality of others, and some of Marsalis's critics have taken issue with how he has done so. Nevertheless, his influence has inspired generations of jazz musicians to see themselves as working within an established and respected musical tradition.

Marsalis's political aims influence not only his programming at Lincoln Center but also his compositional style. His pieces frequently draw on his encyclopedic familiarity with traditional jazz techniques, as his *Blues Symphony* clearly demonstrates.

**A Closer Look** Premiered in 2009 with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Marsalis's seven-movement *Blues Symphony* is as much a musical composition as it is a historical essay. The composer's program note describes the piece as giving “a symphonic identity to the form and feeling of the blues,” explaining that it builds upon the legacy of composers “who were determined to add the innovations of jazz to the vocabulary of the symphonic orchestra.” Each of the work's movements is an exploration of a particular moment in jazz's historical evolution, with the 12-bar blues progression forming a framework underlying each movement and giving coherence to the Symphony as a whole.

The first movement is an “evocation of the American Revolution and the birth of the possibility of the blues,” opening with a piccolo-drum duet that is eventually reshaped in the movement's conclusion with a ragtime stomp rhythm. The second movement evokes the seaborne Middle Passage between Africa and the United States, featuring a central section with “the trombone preaching the gospel [and] a choir of French horns as elder deacons in recognition of the centrality of church music to the blues and jazz.”

The third movement consists of both parlor genres such as ragtime as well as music that represents the stereotyped “African mystique” that proved so fascinating for turn-of-the-century white audiences. The fourth movement is a meditation on the diverse styles and trajectories of gospel music, featuring an extended exploration of the shuffle, which Marsalis describes as “our most flexible and enduring American rhythm.” During the fifth movement, percussion-heavy bebop is suffused with evocations of a New York City soundscape, complete with
traffic sounds at rush hour. The sixth movement broadens the geographical scope of the Symphony and explores various Latin jazz styles such as the mambo, samba, and bossa nova. Marsalis describes the final movement as “a dialogue between the low and high voices that ends up in a […] screaming match.” The climax represents the resolution of the argument and presages the reprise of the Symphony’s opening theme.

—Sean Colonna

The Blues Symphony was composed in 2009.

These are the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the piece.

The score calls for three flutes (I and III doubling piccolo), three oboes (III doubling English horn), three clarinets (I doubling E-flat clarinet, III doubling bass clarinet), three bassoons (III doubling contrabassoon), four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (agogo bells, anvil, bass drums [small, concert, jazz], bongo bell, brake drum, chimes, Chinese cymbals, congas, cowbell, field drum, glockenspiel, gong, güiro, hand cymbals, hi-hat, marimba, New Orleans bass drum cymbal, pandero, piccolo snare drum, police whistle, ride cymbal, sand block, sizzle cymbal, slapstick, snare drum, splash cymbal, suspended cymbals [small, medium, large], tambourine, tam-tam, temple blocks, timbales, tom-toms, triangle, washboard, woodblocks, xylophone), and strings.

Performance time is approximately 1 hour.
Musical Terms

GENERAL TERMS
Burleske: A humorous piece involving parody and grotesque exaggeration
Cadence: The conclusion to a phrase, movement, or piece based on a recognizable melodic formula, harmonic progression, or dissonance resolution
Cadenza: A passage or section in a style of brilliant improvisation, usually inserted near the end of a movement or composition
Chord: The simultaneous sounding of three or more tones
Counterpoint: The combination of simultaneously sounding musical lines
Dissonance: A combination of two or more tones requiring resolution
Ground bass: A continually repeated bass phrase of four or eight measures
Harmonic: Pertaining to chords and to the theory and practice of harmony
Harmony: The combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes to produce chords and chord progressions
Legato: Smooth, even, without any break between notes
Meter: The symmetrical grouping of musical rhythms

Modernism: A consequence of the fundamental conviction among successive generations of composers since 1900 that the means of musical expression in the 20th century must be adequate to the unique and radical character of the age
Nocturne: A piece of a dreamily romantic or sentimental character, without fixed form
Op.: Abbreviation for opus, a term used to indicate the chronological position of a composition within a composer’s output. Opus numbers are not always reliable because they are often applied in the order of publication rather than composition.
Oratorio: Large-scale dramatic composition originating in the 16th century with text usually based on religious subjects. Oratorios are performed by choruses and solo voices with an instrumental accompaniment, and are similar to operas but without costumes, scenery, and actions.
Ostinato: A steady bass accompaniment, repeated over and over
Passacaglia: In 19th- and 20th-century music, a set of ground-bass or ostinato variations, usually of a serious character

Ragtime: A style of popular music, chiefly American, with a main identifying trait of ragged or syncopated rhythm
Scherzo: Literally “a joke.” An instrumental piece of a light, piquant, humorous character.
Shuffle: A specific 8th note rhythmic feel based on triplet subdivisions of the beat rather than on dividing each beat perfectly in half
Syncopation: A shift of rhythmic emphasis off the beat
Timbre: Tone color or tone quality

THE SPEED OF MUSIC (Tempo)
Allegro: Bright, fast
Andante: Walking speed
Con brio: Vigorously, with fire
Moderato: A moderate tempo, neither fast nor slow
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