



THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA

Biography, January 2012

Renowned for its distinctive sound, desired for its keen ability to capture the hearts and imaginations of audiences, and admired for an unrivaled legacy of “firsts” in music-making, The Philadelphia Orchestra remains one of the preeminent orchestras in the world. While wholly committed to the exploration of classical music and repertoire, the Orchestra also continues to develop compelling programs that resonate with contemporary audiences. The Philadelphia Orchestra is focused on the future while inspired by a rich tradition of achievement and seeks to not simply sustain the highest level of artistic quality, but to challenge—and exceed—that level by creating a powerful musical experience for audiences around the world.

Artistic Leadership

Demonstrating a deep and abiding commitment to the highest levels of artistic excellence, The Philadelphia Orchestra has cultivated an extraordinary history of artistic leaders in its 112 seasons, including music directors Fritz Scheel, Carl Pohlig, Leopold Stokowski, Eugene Ormandy, Riccardo Muti, Wolfgang Sawallisch, and Christoph Eschenbach, and the Orchestra’s current chief conductor, Charles Dutoit. Under such extraordinary guidance, The Philadelphia Orchestra has served as an unwavering standard of excellence in the world of classical music—and it continues to do so today.

Yannick Nézet-Séguin joins this small yet illustrious group in the 2012-13 season, serving as the eighth music director of The Philadelphia Orchestra. An integral member of the Orchestra’s leadership team since 2010 when he assumed the title of music director designate, Nézet-Séguin also serves as music director of the Rotterdam Philharmonic, principal guest conductor of the London Philharmonic, and artistic director and principal conductor of Montreal’s Orchestre Métropolitain. He brings a wealth of talent and vision that extends beyond symphonic music and into the vivid world of opera and choral music. Nézet-Séguin possesses a distinctive gift for reaching audiences, and arrives well-prepared to share his unmatched versatility and depth with Philadelphia and the world.

Philadelphia is Home

Philadelphia is home and the Orchestra continues to discover new and inventive ways to nurture its relationship with its loyal patrons who support the main season (September-May) in Verizon Hall at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts. The Kimmel Center, for which the Orchestra serves as the founding resident company, has been the ensemble’s performance hall since 2001. The Philadelphia Orchestra Association continues to own the Academy of Music—a National Historic Landmark and the oldest operating opera house in the nation—as it has since 1957. Each year, the Orchestra returns to the “Grand Old Lady of Locust Street”—where it performed for 101 seasons before moving to the Kimmel Center—for the highly anticipated Academy Anniversary Concert and Ball.

Beyond its robust concert offerings at the Kimmel Center, the Orchestra also performs for Philadelphia audiences during the summer months at the Mann Center for the Performing Arts, as well as in venues across the region, including Penn's Landing, Longwood Gardens, and the Philadelphia Navy Yard. Many of these performances are part of the ensemble's free Neighborhood Concert Series as well as its educational and community partnership programs—all of which aim to create greater access and engagement with classical music as an art form.

Commitment to Education

The Philadelphia Orchestra also has an important tradition of presenting educational programs for local audiences—a tradition dating back to 1921 when Leopold Stokowski initiated concerts exclusively for children. Today the Orchestra reaches Philadelphia-area families, teachers, students, and children through a multitude of education and community partnership programs. From Sound All Around (designed for children ages 3-5) to Family Concerts (aimed at children ages 6-12 and their families) to eZseatU (a membership program for full-time college students), The Philadelphia Orchestra seeks to introduce orchestral music to a new generation of listeners through these special programs. Further, the Orchestra aims to engage adult audiences more deeply in its performances through learning programs, including free PreConcert Conversations, which occur before every subscription concert, and Lectures/Luncheons with guest speakers.

In an effort to more directly connect with the youth of Philadelphia, the Orchestra has implemented the Billy Joel School Concert Program, which improves access to the Orchestra's School Concerts for underserved city schoolchildren and serves approximately 90 elementary and middle schools chosen from within the School District of Philadelphia. The Orchestra's School Partnership Program also offers students incomparable exposure and access to The Philadelphia Orchestra and its musicians inside the classrooms of five selected schools in the Philadelphia region. The program's teaching artists work side by side with classroom teachers using curriculum and materials created by the Orchestra's education department. Finally, The Philadelphia Orchestra collaborates with schools interested in having Orchestra musicians work with their students through the Musicians in the Schools program. These school visits take the form of assembly programs, performances or demonstrations, clinics, and master classes or sectionals, and generally involve a solo musician.

A Cultural Ambassador Abroad

Through concerts, tours, residencies, presentations, and recordings, The Philadelphia Orchestra touches the lives of countless music lovers around the globe. Outside of Philadelphia, the Orchestra enjoys a three-week residency at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center in New York—a venue that was built for the Orchestra—as well as a strong partnership with the Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival.

The Philadelphia Orchestra also has a long history of touring, having first performed outside of Philadelphia in the earliest days of its founding. The Philadelphia Orchestra was the first American orchestra to perform in the People's Republic of China in 1973 and, in 2012, The Philadelphia Orchestra will reconnect with its historical roots in China and more deeply embrace its role as a cultural ambassador. The Orchestra will launch a new partnership with the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) in Beijing, with a pilot that will unite the Orchestra with talented young Chinese musicians and composers to further develop their orchestral skills. It will also serve to bring orchestral music, through performance and master classes, not only to China's major cities but also further into the provinces.

An Orchestra that Understands the Power of Innovation in its Art Form

The Philadelphia Orchestra has long pushed the boundaries of convention in the classical music realm. Signature to such a reputation are world and/or American premieres of such important works as Mahler's Symphony No. 8 ("Symphony of a Thousand"), Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*, and Rachmaninoff's Symphonic Dances. As part of its commitment to bringing classical music to audiences where they are listening, the Orchestra was the first to create an online store for purchasing music. To further expand such distribution, the Orchestra formed a new distribution with Independent Online Distribution Alliance (IODA), making its live recordings available on popular digital music services such as iTunes and Amazon, among others.

For more information on The Philadelphia Orchestra, please visit www.philorch.org.