

**Summers@Severance to feature
three (no, four!) Friday concerts in 2015**



by Daniel Hathaway

Except for special events like Oberlin's Cooper Competitions, Severance Hall usually takes a summer break while The Cleveland Orchestra is off performing at Blossom Music Center. Last year, in response to burgeoning summer activity among other University Circle institutions, the Orchestra's administration planned three Friday evening performances on its home turf. As chief marketing officer Ross Binnie said in an [interview](#) for this publication last July, "The change is so dramatic and the area is really buzzing with life now on a year-round basis. So it seemed an oversight not to have our doors opened as well to anyone wants to come to hear our concerts indoors in a relaxed atmosphere in the summer."

This summer, Severance Hall will again resound with three concerts by The Cleveland Orchestra — on July 10, August 7, and August 21 at 7:00 pm — plus a bonus performance on August 28 at 8:00 pm by Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra.

Music director Franz Welser-Möst will lead the opening performance, which revisits two works the Orchestra played during that busy week in May when the League of American Orchestras was visiting Cleveland for its annual conference. On July 10, Olivier Messaien's *Hymne* and Richard Strauss's *Symphonia domestica* will share the program with Ludwig van Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 4*, with Igor Levit as the featured soloist.



Born in Russia in 1987, Igor Levit moved with his parents to Hannover at the age of eight and still makes that German city his home. His recording of the last five Beethoven sonatas passed *New Yorker* critic Alex Ross's "multi-tasking" test, a necessity for a writer who receives dozens of recordings every day: "...put a CD in the player, set about other work, and await some strong gesture or upwelling of emotion that forces full attention to be paid. All too often, the music stays in the background. There is a surplus of pianists who play with glistening skill and photograph well but who have nothing memorable to say."

In Levit's case, Ross was "transfixed." "Here was playing of technical brilliance, tonal allure, intellectual drive, and an elusive quality that the Germans indicate with the word *Innigkeit*, or inwardness."

Ross's impression was confirmed through a live performance when Levit made his New York debut at the Park Avenue Armory in March of 2014 (read Ross's article [here](#).) No doubt the pianist will delight the Severance Hall audience on Friday with his take on the most magical of Beethoven's five piano concertos.

Those who were sorely disappointed when Stanislaw Skrowaczewski cancelled his Blossom appearance last summer, due to illness, will be delighted to hear he's returning

on August 7 to conduct Dimitri Shostakovitch's *Symphony No. 5* at Severance Hall. The long-time music director of the Minneapolis Symphony (which changed its name to the Minnesota Orchestra during his 19-year tenure) knew Shostakovich personally, and conducted the Paris premiere of the fifth symphony in 1948.



No stranger to the Severance Hall podium, Skrowaczewski was invited by George Szell to make his American conducting debut here in 1958. In February of 2014, his 90th birthday inspired a special celebration concert by the Minnesota Orchestra.



Fans of early music — and of historical performance guru Nicholas McGegan — will be interested in the August 21 concert, which brings principal cello Mark Kosower into the spotlight for Joseph Haydn's *Cello Concerto in C*, along with the second suite from G.F. Handel's *Watermusic* and Franz Schubert's cheerful little *Symphony No. 5*. McGegan and

Kosower will reprise the cello concerto the following evening at Blossom among new companions: J.S. Bach's *Orchestral Suite No. 3*, J.C. Bach's *Sinfonia in g*, and Mozart's "*Paris*" *Symphony*, No. 31.



Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra will have the Severance Hall stage all to themselves for their August 28 "bonus" appearance. They'll be joined by conductor William Eddins and The Cleveland Orchestra the following evening at Blossom for a program entitled "Swing Symphony," an homage to jazz and pop styles of ragtime, mambo, bebop, and church music.

Patrons are invited to come early to enjoy special "happy hour" drink prices on the front terrace of Severance Hall (or inside, if the weather isn't cooperating) before each of the three Friday evening "Summers@Severance" concerts and the Jazz at Lincoln Center performance. Drinks and food will also be available on the terrace following the Cleveland Orchestra performances (but not after the jazz concert).

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