

Looking forward to the summer season: a conversation with Cleveland Orchestra artistic administrator Ilya Gidalevich

by Mike Telin



Now that summer is officially upon us, it's time to locate the picnic basket, fill it with your favorite summer foods, and head to the Cuyahoga National Park with family and friends to enjoy a Cleveland Orchestra concert at Blossom Music Center. And, if anyone in your vehicle is under the age of 18, their seat on the lawn is free.

If you can't make it to Blossom, the Orchestra has scheduled three early Friday evening concerts in its Summers@Severance series. Special "happy hour" drink prices will be offered one hour prior to each concert on Severance Hall's front terrace. Attendees are encouraged to arrive early and enjoy the outdoor delights of University Circle.

"As usual the summer season is a mix of musical genres and artists," Cleveland Orchestra artistic administrator Ilya Gidalevich said during a recent telephone conversation. "Even within the classical performances we have an exciting combination of artists who will be making their Blossom debuts, as well as those who come back regularly. And on a number of occasions we'll be featuring our own musicians."



The festivities will commence on Saturday and Sunday, July 2 and 3 at 8:00 p.m. "This is a slightly different take on the traditional *1812 Overture* concert program," Gidalevich noted. "I don't think the Orchestra has ever performed Shostakovich's *Suite for Variety Orchestra* No. 1 in its entirety." The program under the direction of Johannes Debus will also include

Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* and Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*. Weather permitting, fireworks will follow each night's concert.

Conductor Loras John Schissel will return to the Blossom stage to lead the Blossom Festival Band in its annual *Salute to America* on Monday, July 4 at 8:00 pm. The evening will feature a mix of Sousa marches, Broadway favorites, an Armed Forces Salute, and the *1812 Overture* complete with fireworks.

TCO music director Franz Welser-Möst will lead the first of three Summers@Severance concerts on Friday, July 8 at 7:00 pm. The program will include Richard Strauss's *Death and Transfiguration* and Brahms's *A German Requiem* featuring the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus, soprano Lauren Snouffer, and bass-baritone Dashon Burton.



Franz Welser-Möst will make his sole appearance on the Blossom stage on Saturday, July 9 at 8:00 pm when he leads the Orchestra in a performance of the “Overture,” “Waltz,” and “Finale” from Thomas Adès’s opera *Powder Her Face*. Bartók’s *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*, and Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 3* (“Eroica”) are also included on the program. Weather permitting, fireworks will follow the concert.

British conductor Michael Francis will make his Cleveland Orchestra debut on Saturday, July 16 at 8:00 pm. “He’s had a prominent career in Europe for a number of years and has recently been named the music director of the Florida Orchestra,” Gidalevich pointed out. “The concert also marks the debut of Canadian-born pianist David Fung in Mozart’s *Piano Concerto No. 21*. The very English program also features Vaughan Williams’s *Symphony No. 2* (“A London Symphony”) and Elgar’s *Introduction and Allegro* for String Quartet and Orchestra, with our own principals as soloists.”

Gidalevich noted that the Cuyahoga Valley National Park has played an important role in the history of Blossom Music Center. “We wanted to make sure that we celebrate the National Park Centennial in a special way,” he said. On Sunday, July 17 at 7:00 pm, Bramwell Tovey will lead an American-influenced program that includes Ravel’s *Rapsodie espagnole*, Copland’s Suite from *Appalachian Spring*, and Gershwin’s *An American in Paris*. Spanish pianist Javier Perianes will make his TCO debut in Ravel’s jazz-inspired *Piano Concerto in G*.



The second Summer@Severance concert will play host to the Finals of the 2016 Thomas and Evon Cooper International Piano Competition on Friday, July 22 at 7:00 pm. Conductor Jahja Ling will lead The Cleveland Orchestra in concertos featuring piano stars of the future.

Ling will travel to Blossom on Saturday, July 23 at 8:00 pm to lead the Orchestra in Stravinsky’s *Four Norwegian Moods* and Sibelius’s *Symphony No. 1*. Audience favorite Jean-Yves Thibaudet will be the featured soloist in Grieg’s *Piano Concerto*.

Listeners can hear their favorite film scores on Sunday, July 24 at 7:00 pm in a blockbuster tribute to music from the movies performed by The Cleveland Orchestra. “Conductor Michael Krajewski put this program together especially for us,” Gidalevich said. “It’s really great and will include music from *Titanic*, James Bond movies, *Back to the Future*, *Star Wars*, and many others. Soprano Capathia Jenkins will be back and the Blossom Festival Chorus will also be featured.”

The 27th annual free community concert in downtown Cleveland will take place later than usual — on Friday, July 29 at 9:00 pm. Led by Loras John Schissel, the *Star-Spangled Spectacular* will celebrate the newly renovated Public Square. The program includes John Philip Sousa's *The Stars and Stripes Forever*, as well as orchestral selections from Rodgers and Hammerstein's *The Sound of Music*. Baritone Norman Garrett will join Schissel and TCO in "Joey, Joey, Joey" from *The Most Happy Fella* and "Ol' Man River" from *Showboat*. If the weather allows, the performance will be capped off with fireworks.



Violinist Pinchas Zukerman will make his first Blossom appearance since 1990 on Saturday, July 30. "This program is a highlight of the season," Gidalevich said. "It begins at 7:00 pm with TCO's associate conductor Brett Mitchell leading the Kent/Blossom Chamber Orchestra in Andrew Norman's *The Great Swiftness* and Beethoven's *Symphony No. 8*. At 8:00 pm Hans Graf, who's become a real Blossom staple, will conduct TCO in Hindemith's Overture to *Cupid and Psyche* and Mozart's *Violin Concerto No. 5* ("Turkish"), featuring Zukerman. After intermission, both orchestras will come together for a side-by-side performance of Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 6* ("Pathétique") conducted by Graf."

By popular demand, vocalist Michael Feinstein will return to the Blossom stage on Sunday, July 31 at 7:00 pm for an evening of Broadway hits and classic songs by Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, and other selections from the Great American Songbook. "On the heels of his very successful appearance last summer, we're happy to have Michael back. But this time it's for a show with TCO conducted by Jack Everly, another person who's no stranger to the Blossom stage," Gidalevich noted.



Blossom favorite Nicholas McGegan will be back on Sunday, August 7 at 7:00 pm to lead a program that includes Haydn's *Symphony No. 99* and Mendelssohn's *Symphony No. 3* ("Scottish"). TCO assistant principal oboe Jeffrey Rathbun will be the featured soloist in Arthur Benjamin's *Divertimento on Themes by Gluck*.

Another early music specialist — Bernard Labadie — will return to Severance Hall to lead the final Summers@Severance concert on Friday, August 12 at 7:00 pm. The program includes Mozart's Chaconne from *Idomeneo* and *Symphony No. 29*. Soprano Karina Gauvin and TCO principal trumpet Michael Sachs will be the soloists in J.S. Bach's Cantata No. 51, *Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen* and Handel's "Let the Bright Seraphim" from *Samson*.



Yo-Yo Ma will bring his Silk Road Ensemble back to Blossom on Saturday, August 13, at 8:00 pm. "This is always a very special concert," Gidalevich said. "It's a pleasure to see who Yo-Yo Ma will bring with him, but they're always very talented musicians from

different walks of life — like kamancheh player Kayhan Kalhor, pipa virtuoso Wu Man, and Galician bagpiper Christina Pato.”

Gidalevich pointed out that “The Music of Led Zeppelin: A Rock Symphony,” on Sunday, August 20 at 8:00 pm will continue the tradition of presenting crossover programs at Blossom. “This is a very popular show that’s traveled all over the country performing with most of the major orchestras, and we’re excited to bring them here,” he said. Conductor Brent Havens will make his Blossom debut leading the Blossom Festival Orchestra in arrangements of the iconic band’s music, assisted by vocalist Randy Jackson and a rock backup band.



The renowned, conductorless Orpheus Chamber Orchestra will make their Blossom debut on Saturday, August 27. The 8:00 pm concert will feature J.S. Bach’s Brandenburg Concertos Nos. 3, 5, 6, and 2.

TCO’s summer season will wrap up with a special 35th anniversary screening of Steven Spielberg’s classic film, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. The Cleveland Orchestra will perform John Williams’s musical score under the direction of Brett Mitchell on Saturday and Sunday, September 3 and 4 at 8:30 pm. And weather permitting, you can enjoy fireworks after the show.

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