

Ross Binnie talks about The Cleveland Orchestra's fall season

by Mike Telin



As [The Cleveland Orchestra](#) gears up to launch its fall Severance Hall season, we caught up with Ross Binnie, the Orchestra's Chief Marketing Officer, and asked him to give his insights into the array of programs. He described them as “a blend of the curious and the familiar which will be wonderful for the audiences.”

The season kicks off on September 29 and 30 when Franz Welser-Möst leads performances of Ives's *Symphony No. 3* (“The Camp Meeting”) and Sibelius's *Symphony No. 2*.

And organist Paul Jacobs (below) will make his Cleveland Orchestra debut as soloist in Copland's *Symphony for Organ and Orchestra*. “Paul stunned us back in February of 2015 when he played solo works by Brahms,” Binnie said. “This is a very diverse program, and I love the idea of starting the season with an organ concerto. These are three very different pieces, but I think they will tie together very well.”



The Gala concert on Saturday, October 1 at 7:00 pm will feature pianist Emanuel Ax. “He is a favorite and has been with us many times. He’s a real star. It’s another interesting program and it’s going to be a wonderfully fun evening.” Franz Welser-Möst will lead a program that includes Beethoven’s *Piano Concerto No. 2*, John Harbison’s *Remembering Gatsby: Foxtrot for Orchestra*, and Copland’s Suite from *Billy the Kid*.



The music of Respighi takes center stage on October 6, 7, 8, and 9 when Franz Welser-Möst (above) conducts the composer’s *Roman Festivals*, *The Fountains of Rome*, and *The Pines of Rome*. “I’ve never heard or seen the ‘Rome trilogy,’ if you like, on one program and I’m very much looking forward to it.” The evening will also include Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 8*. “All Beethoven is terrific, but I think this symphony is particularly wonderful. I’m not certain what was going on in his life when he wrote it, but it must have been a good period because it’s such a joyful piece.”

Conductor Alain Altinoglu will make his Cleveland Orchestra debut and violinist Baiba Skride will make her Severance Hall debut on October 14, 15, and 16. The evenings will include Mussorgsky’s Prelude to *Khovanshchina*, Shostakovich’s *Violin Concerto No. 2*, Dutilleux’s *Métaboles*, and Ravel’s Suite No. 2 from *Daphnis and Chloé*. “Perhaps not everyone will know all of this music, but it is a program not to be missed. And whenever there’s a debut there’s always a little extra drama.”

Pianist Yuja Wang and conductor Jakub Hrůša (below) will return to Severance Hall for four concerts beginning on October 20. The Thursday-Saturday program will include Bartók’s *Piano Concerto No. 1*, Brahms’s *Symphony No. 4*, and the first Cleveland Orchestra performances of Martinů’s *Parables*. Friday’s matinee will feature the Martinů and Brahms, and the Fridays@7 will include the Bartók and Brahms. “Jakub

Hruša is a bit of a favorite here, the Brahms is a crowd pleaser, and Yuja Wang is just dynamic. I love hearing her with the Orchestra.”



An all-Prokofiev program will be presented on October 27, 28, and 29 under the direction of Stéphane Denève. The program will include the Suite from *The Love for Three Oranges*, the Suite from *Romeo and Juliet*, and the *Violin Concerto No. 1* featuring the Severance Hall debut of Canadian violinist James Ehnes. “He is in high demand these days. I think the 1st violin concerto is just a lovely piece, and in fact the entire program is very romantic.”

On Sunday, October 30 at 3:00 pm, Brett Mitchell will lead the Orchestra in the annual Holiday Spooktacular. The program, titled “Superman at the Symphony,” features music from John Williams’s score for the movie *Superman* and Michael Daugherty’s *Metropolis Symphony*, accompanied by classic images of the Man of Steel. “This is one of our big traditions of the year. The Orchestra takes the dressing-up part very seriously, and all the kids and families come in costume. It’s always fun.”



The Cleveland Orchestra Chorus will make their season debut at concerts on November 17, 19, and 20 when conductor Matthew Halls leads performances of Haydn's *Te Deum for the Empress Maria Therese*, Schubert's *Symphony No. 4* ("Tragic"), and Duruflé's *Requiem* featuring mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke (above). "Sasha is a Grammy Award-winner and has one terrific voice. On paper the program may look a little sad but it will be quite nice. The Duruflé is a fantastic piece of music, and the Schubert is not all that 'tragic.' This program is a hidden gem just waiting to happen. I'm really looking forward to it."



The Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra will present their season opener on November 18 at 8:00 pm. Brett Mitchell (above) will lead performances of Bruckner's *Symphony No. 4* and the world premiere of Roger Briggs' *Fountain of Youth*, which was commissioned by the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra. "This is an ambitious start to their season, but it's terrific for Brett and the orchestra to have a world premiere and the Bruckner to begin the year."



Pianist Daniil Trifonov (above) and conductor Jaap van Zweden will make return visits to Severance Hall on November 25, 26, and 27. The weekend's program will include Britten's *Sinfonia da Requiem*, Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 23*, and Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*. "There's a lot to talk about this intriguing program, between Daniil Trifonov, Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*, and Jaap van Zweden's new appointment in New York — and it's also Thanksgiving weekend."

The Orchestra's 2016 holiday offerings begin with *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker™* (below) with Pennsylvania Ballet, Angel Corella artistic director. Brett Mitchell will lead The Cleveland Orchestra in performances at the State Theater, Playhouse Square from November 30 through December 4. "Who doesn't love the Nutcracker?" Binnie said. "There are seven performances including a Friday matinee. This is our first time presenting it with the Pennsylvania Ballet, which will be exciting all around."



It's movie time on December 8 and 9 when Brett Mitchell leads The Cleveland Orchestra and Youth Chorus in Dimitri Tiomkin's score to Frank Capra's *It's A Wonderful Life*. "I think it's absolutely amazing how precise and how wrapped up in the story the orchestra has to be. You realize just how great this music is when you hear it performed live: I never think I've heard the soundtracks to movies properly until I hear them performed by this Orchestra. Between this movie and the music, it's going to be stunning."

The fall season concludes when The Cleveland Orchestra and Choruses, under the direction of Robert Porco, begin their annual Christmas concerts on December 10. Performances run through December 18. "The enthusiasm for these concerts is amazing," Binnie said. "There are plenty of fan favorites as well as some very intriguing programming that I just love. They feel so right."



After the holidays, The Cleveland Orchestra returns to Severance Hall the first weekend of the new year. On January 5 and 7, former assistant conductor James Gaffigan (above) returns to the podium to lead performances of Bernard Hermann's Suite from *Psycho* and Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*. The concerts will also mark the return of pianist Kirill Gerstein, who will be featured in Schoenberg's *Piano Concerto* and the original jazz band version of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. The Hermann, Gershwin, and Bartók will be repeated on January 6, both at 11:00 am and as part of the Fridays@7:00 series.

Franz Welser-Möst returns to the Severance Hall podium on January 12 and 14. Pianist Yefim Bronfman will play the first Cleveland Orchestra performances of Jörg Widmann's *Trauermarsch for piano and orchestra*. The program will also include Bruckner's *Symphony No. 7*.

"This is blockbuster stuff right after the break. Two really interesting programs to start the winter season."

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