

The Cleveland Orchestra returns to Blossom Music Center

by Mike Telin



While many of us understood the seriousness of COVID-19 back in March of 2020, it did take time to grasp the extent to which the pandemic would alter our lives. “We cancelled the later part of the Severance season, but it wasn’t until we cancelled Blossom that I thought to myself, ‘this is very serious,’ Ross Binnie, the Orchestra’s Chief Brand Officer recalled during a recent conversation. “It was a

huge signal and a huge blow.”

After a year’s hiatus, the sounds of The Cleveland Orchestra will once again fill the grounds of Blossom Music Center and no one could be more excited than Binnie. “I was down there to do a television spot, and looking out on the lawn, the space is so beautiful. To be honest, it was very emotional, thinking that a small bit of people’s lives every summer is on its way back. And the more interviews I do the more excited I become.”

The [season](#) kicks off on Saturday, July 3 and Sunday, July 4 at 8:00 pm with An American Celebration. Brett Mitchell, will lead performances of Leonard Bernstein’s “Overture” to *Candide*, Mary D. Watkins’ *Soul of Remembrance*, Florence Price’s *Concerto in One Movement*, with Michelle Cann as soloist, Adolphus Hailstork’s *An American Fanfare*, Aaron Copland’s “Suite” from *Appalachian Spring*, Tchaikovsky’s *1812 Overture*, and Sousa’s *Stars and Stripes Forever*. A full season list is below.

“The great thing about Blossom is that we get to hear so many young musicians, and Michelle Cann is a classic example of that,” Binnie said. “We also have a range of

conductors. Karina Canellakis, who has just been named Chief Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, is a young up and coming American conductor. And Herbert Blomstedt is going to be 94 when he conducts his concert in August.”



There are many aspects of the Blossom experience that will remain in place this summer. A full orchestra onstage, the concerts will be full-length and include an intermission with open concessions. The parking lot will be open four hours before concerts so people can picnic on the grounds, and the gate will open two and a half hours before the concerts. And, people aged 18 are still free on the lawn. “That is such an important part of our business model that we had to continue to do that.”

Still, there will be some noticeable changes. “Essentially we’re selling about half of the pavilion, every other seat, and we’ll be about half capacity on the lawn.” The audience is being asked to stay in the location of their ticket purchase, and not to move between the lawn and the pavilion. Attendees who are fully vaccinated don’t need to wear a mask, but unvaccinated patrons are asked to continue to do so.

“I think this is as close to normal” as we can expect,” Binnie said. “Typically half of our yearly audience comes through Blossom, and so many young people hear the Orchestra for the first time, which hopefully becomes a lifetime journey for them.”

Wrapping up the conversation, I asked how the past year has changed the Orchestra’s daily operations. “For me, the whole institution has become more flexible and nimble,” Binnie said. “We’ve learned a lot and we’ve got to make sure that it all comes together in

a beautiful way. But, the generosity and love that this community had for the Orchestra carried us through — I can't emphasize that enough.



An American Celebration — Saturday, July 3 and Sunday July 4 at 8:00 pm.

Brett Mitchell, conductor, Michelle Cann, piano. Leonard Bernstein's "Overture" to *Candide*, Mary D. Watkins' *Soul of Remembrance*, Florence Price's *Concerto in One Movement*, Adolphus Hailstork's *An American Fanfare*, Aaron Copland's "Suite" from *Appalachian Spring*, Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* and Sousa's *Stars and Stripes*.



Mozart in the Meadows — Sunday, July 11 at 7:00 pm.

Dame Jane Glover, conductor, Benjamin Grosvenor, piano. Mozart's *Divertimento for Strings in D*, K. 136, *Piano Concerto No. 20*, K. 466 and *Symphony No. 40*.

The Great American Songbook — Sunday, July 18 at 7:00 pm.

Lucas Waldin conducts songs by George Gershwin, Duke Ellington, and Oscar Hammerstein. Broadway star and audience favorite, vocalist Capathia Jenkins returns for an evening of classics like “Summertime,” “Fascinating Rhythm,” “Satin Doll,” and “All the Things You Are.”

From the New World — Sunday, July 25 at 7:00 pm.

Rafael Payare, conductor, Stefan Jackiw, violin. Prokofiev’s *Violin Concerto No. 2* and Dvořák’s *Symphony No. 9* (“From the New World”).



Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony — Sunday, August 1 at 7:00 pm

Herbert Blomstedt, conductor, Garrick Ohlsson, piano. Beethoven’s *Piano Concerto No. 4* and *Symphony No. 7*.

Classical Mystery Tour. A tribute to The Beatles — Sunday, August 8 at 7:00 pm.

Martin Herman, conductor, with Classical Mystery Tour. A tribute to The Beatles featuring the greatest hits from their early music to the solo years in original orchestrations, including “Penny Lane,” “Yesterday,” “A Day in the Life,” and more.

Tchaikovsky’s Fourth — Sunday, August 15 at 7:00 pm.

Karina Canellakis, conductor, Behzod Abduraimov, piano, Michael Sachs, trumpet. Dvořák’s *The Wood Dove*, Shostakovich’s *Piano Concerto No. 1* and Tchaikovsky’s *Symphony No. 4*.



Romantic Brahms — Sunday, August 22 at 7:00 pm.

Jahja Ling, conductor, Sayaka Shoji, violin. Brahms' *Violin Concerto* and **Symphony No. 3.**

Enigma Variations — Saturday, August 28 at 7:00 pm.

Elim Chan, conductor, Jonathan Biss, piano. Beethoven's *Coriolan: Concert Overture*, Caroline Shaw's *Watermark* and Elgar's *Enigma Variations*.

Salute to John Williams — Saturday, September 4 and Sunday, September 5 at 7:00 pm.

Richard Kaufman, conductor. Hollywood Under The Stars. Movie scores including works by John Williams from films like Superman, Harry Potter, Star Wars, E.T., and others.

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