

Magic Circle Mime to visit Cleveland Orchestra one last time

by Jarrett Hoffman



“Mimes go silent” doesn’t sound like news exactly, but that’s the case with Magic Circle Mime this year.

The company is built around collaborating with orchestras, so their shows actually contain plenty of sound, if not speech. And by the end of 2022, they’ll call it quits, having completed 43 years of touring.

“We’ve had a great run, and we’re superbly happy that we get to do

this kind of ‘goodbye tour,’ particularly in places like Cleveland,” Douglas MacIntyre said during a recent interview. MacIntyre co-founded Magic Circle with Maggie Petersen, and that creative partnership remains the foundation of the company.

On Sunday, March 13 at 3:00 pm at Mandel Hall, the mime duo will join conductor Vinay Parameswaran and The Cleveland Orchestra in “The Listener,” a family program that introduces audiences ages 6+ to the workings of an orchestra and the art of listening. Humor, drama, and dance are all part of the show, as are musical selections by Britten, Bernstein, Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky, Bizet, Mozart, and John Williams, representing genres such as orchestra, opera, ballet, and film. Tickets are available [here](#).

The central character is an audience member played by MacIntyre who makes up for his lack of knowledge with enthusiasm — perhaps a bit too much so. “I’m trying to figure out how I can be part of this,” he said. In his eagerness, he climbs onstage to snap photos,

tries his hand at conducting, and faces off with a trumpeter to try to take their spot in the orchestra.

The trumpet section will have already drawn straws to determine “who has to come out and deal with me,” MacIntyre said.

The mime has experience with brass, having played horn through his early years of college before catching the theater bug. He said he’ll offer up “a vicious but horrible bugle version of reveille,” noting he has “just enough chops that I can get through before it all collapses.”

The musical response is up to his opponent. “It’s been fun over the years to hear what they come up with,” MacIntyre said. “And the audience gets it — they see what it really takes to be in an orchestra.”

Written for the Spokane Symphony, “The Listener” was not only the first program that Magic Circle created, but also the program for their first visit with The Cleveland Orchestra in 1997. That means that Sunday’s performance marks the 25th anniversary of that collaboration.



The company has even deeper ties with the Chicago Symphony: their recent performance with that ensemble capped off a relationship of 32 years. “You get to know people in the orchestra and in the administration, so it was kind of a bittersweet thing, and I imagine we will have bittersweet moments in Cleveland, too,” MacIntyre said. “But at this point, we’re just looking forward to being there and working with the orchestra again.”

Magic Circle has jetted all over the world to collaborate with different ensembles, but some of MacIntyre’s fondest memories with the company come from being on tour with a single orchestra. He recalled the time that he and Petersen spent on the road with the Spokane Symphony in the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia.

“We were on the bus with the orchestra, and that was an amazing learning experience for us.” The musicians impressed him with their inventiveness, coming up with their own ideas, “which we promptly incorporated into our show,” MacIntyre said, laughing.

“That’s been kind of an ongoing thing for us — the great ideas that musicians come up with, and that we snatch!”

As for Magic Circle’s final bow, he pointed to that figure of 43 years, describing the physicality of this line of work and the demanding nature of touring. “The amount of time it takes to bounce back, so that you’re ready to do the next show or hop on the next plane, is something you have to take into account.”

The future of mime plus orchestra is uncertain. “I don’t know of anyone else who is doing this sort of thing, which is too bad,” he said. “But at a certain point you just have to say to yourself, it’s an ephemeral art, and we’ve had a nice run at it. We’ve also told various orchestras that if they ever want to restore one of our shows, we would certainly make that possible.”

The end of things can bring with it a sense of reflection, but also perhaps a desire to just enjoy the moment. That was the mood at the end of our call, when MacIntyre said that he and Petersen will be coming to Cleveland a day early. Why?

“We just want to goof off with people for a day before we go into rehearsal.”

The Cleveland Orchestra offers free activities beginning an hour before Family Concerts, including the hands-on Instrument Discovery zone.

Beginning tomorrow, March 10, proof of vaccination will no longer be mandatory at Severance Music Center, though masks are required. Read the full, updated safety policy [here](#).

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