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ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-SIXTH SEASON

Thursday, September 24, 2026, at 7:30

Friday, September 25, 2026, at 1:30

Saturday, September 26, 2026, at 7:30

Klaus Mäkelä Conductor

SIBELIUS

Symphony No. 7 in C Major, Op. 105

Adagio—Vivacissimo—Adagio—Allegro moderato—Adagio

INTERMISSION

SHOSTAKOVICH

Symphony No. 4 in C Minor, Op. 43

Allegretto poco moderato—Presto

Moderato con moto

Largo—Allegro

These performances are made possible by the Juli Plant Grainger Fund for Artistic Excellence.

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JEAN SIBELIUS

Born December 8, 1865; Tavastehus, Finland

Died September 20, 1957; Järvenpää, Finland

Symphony No. 7 in C Major, Op. 105



In the early 1920s, Sibelius's career suddenly came to a close. Even though he would live another thirty-some years, he withdrew from the music scene where he once played a major role, preferring the seclusion of his villa in Järvenpää. His decision wasn't inexplicable—it was, in fact, even predictable as he ventured further and further from the cutting-

edge territory of Schoenberg and Stravinsky into his own dark and deeply personal world of sound. His final orchestral works, this Seventh Symphony and the single tone poem, *Tapiola*, that followed it, carried Sibelius to the end of the line; we can scarcely imagine what music would logically have followed scores of such finality and stubborn originality.



COMPOSED

sketched: 1914–15

composed: 1923–24

FIRST PERFORMANCE

March 24, 1924; Stockholm, Sweden. The composer conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

2 flutes with piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

22 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES

January 28, 1936, Orchestra Hall. Sir Hamilton Harty conducting

July 12, 1941, Ravinia Festival. Sir Thomas Beecham conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES

June 28, 1956, Ravinia Festival. Eugene Ormandy conducting

December 7, 8, and 9, 2023, Orchestra Hall. Mikko Franck conducting

THIS PAGE, FROM TOP: Jean Sibelius, photographed by Eric Sundström (1866–1933), 1915. Sibelius Museum Archives, Turku, Finland | Sibelius in his study at Ainola, photographed by Sundström, 1915. Sibelius Museum Collection, Åbo Akademi University Foundation | **OPPOSITE PAGE:** September 30, 1957: state funeral procession for Jean Sibelius in Senate Square, outside the Great Church (now Helsinki Cathedral). Photograph by Jussi Pohjakallio (1930–1990), Finnish Heritage Agency

“Let no one imagine that composing is easier for an old composer if he takes his art seriously,” Sibelius once said. “Greater sureness makes one scorn solutions that come too easily.” The Seventh Symphony is an astonishing testament to his impatience with convention and his sheer determination to find new ways of saying things that mattered. By 1914, when Sibelius began to sketch this symphony, along with the Fifth and Sixth, his standards were already exceptionally high. And so all three of those symphonies are unlike any others ever written, and the seventh and last of them to be finished is so unclassifiable by the traditional names and forms that, at the premiere, Sibelius called it a symphonic fantasy, only later admitting that it really belonged with the numbered symphonies. Actually, it’s the logical culmination of the series—the pure distillation of everything Sibelius knew about symphonic form and thought.

For all its individuality, the Seventh Symphony owes its conception to the traditional centuries-old search for symphonic unity. Like earlier, influential works by Schubert, Liszt, Strauss, and Schoenberg, it is a multimovement form cast in one continuous movement. Sibelius makes passing reference to the familiar contents of the standard symphony—we hear stretches of a slow movement, part of a scherzo. It’s as if the conventional symphony has been taken apart and can’t be reassembled. In its place, Sibelius writes music that continually renews itself, as it moves with great subtlety through various tempos (there are four big tempo changes and a number of lesser ones) and switches imperceptibly from each idea to the next, from one key to another.

The Seventh Symphony is a work of epic majesty, stripped of all dross. The material is stern and concentrated; we sense just how desperate Sibelius was to write not a single note too many. The opening, for example, is built from the simplest of materials—the notes of the C major scale. But the way it begins (on A, following a quiet tap on the timpani) and leads to an ominous A-flat minor chord is full of mystery and rich in implications. As the music unfolds,



it’s always unpredictable and, at the same time, utterly logical. Yet nothing about this symphony is haphazard; it’s governed by the certainty that each move is the right one, even though, at every turn, Sibelius shows little concern for the conventional ideas of keys and subjects.

A solo trombone melody, rising majestically from a great polyphonic web of sound near the beginning, carries great weight. It returns twice in the symphony, each time more insistent, and the last time leading to a massive, wrenching climax—like an ache in the very heart of the work. From there the music slowly unravels, although the final gesture—a long, seemingly endless crescendo, reaching urgently up to C major—is like the last, life-affirming words of a dying man. It brings an extraordinary sense of closure to this restless, ever-questing music.

This would seem to be the climax of his life’s work, yet Sibelius apparently began an eighth symphony sometime late in 1926 and worked on it until at least 1933 or 1934. Portions of the score were delivered to a copyist in 1933 but

COMMENTS

subsequently retrieved. The composer apparently destroyed the symphony in the 1940s. All that remains are three measures of sketches, labeled “Sinfonia 8 commincio,” that provide little sense of the symphony’s beginning, let alone its destination. Even though Sibelius had no new works to offer the public, his popularity continued to grow (in a 1935 poll,

he was the favorite composer of the New York Philharmonic Society’s broadcast audience). He remained a beloved—even revered—figure, and on his ninetieth birthday in 1955, he received 1,200 telegrams, tapes from Toscanini, and cigars from Churchill. He died in 1957, nearly thirty years after the publication of his last completed work. **C**

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

Born September 25, 1906; Saint Petersburg, Russia
Died August 9, 1975; Moscow, Russia

Symphony No. 4 in C Minor, Op. 43



All but one of Dmitri Shostakovich’s fifteen symphonies were performed nearly as soon as the ink was dry and the players’ parts copied. Symphony no. 4, on the other hand, had to wait a quarter of a century for its

first public performance. In that gap lies a complicated story of politics, art, and unanswered questions.

Shostakovich began his Fourth Symphony on September 13, 1935. He was just twenty-eight years old at the time, and he had already known both overnight success and controversy. He burst onto the Soviet music scene with his clever and engaging First Symphony at the age of nineteen. But with his opera *The Nose*—premiered in concert form in 1929 and staged in Leningrad the following year—Shostakovich was accused for the first time of favoring Western modernism, and the work was immediately taken out of circulation (it wasn’t staged in Russia again until 1974). His next opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, only further fanned the flames, although it played to full houses for two years—not only in Moscow and Leningrad but also in Buenos Aires, Cleveland, and New York—before Shostakovich found himself in trouble.

In January 1936—Shostakovich was on tour with the cellist Victor Kubatsky—the composer went to the train station in Archangel



to buy that morning's *Pravda*. "I'll never forget that day," Shostakovich later said, remembering the exact moment he first felt "the bitterness that has colored my life gray." In an article titled "Muddle Instead of Music"—unsigned but written on direct orders from Stalin—Shostakovich read the now-notorious attack that criticized difficult modern music in general and his own work in particular ("fidgety, screaming, and neurotic"), pointing to *Lady Macbeth* as the worst offender. Shostakovich immediately called his friend Isaak Glikman and asked him to subscribe to a newspaper clipping service so he could track further comments on his work. The next week, *Pravda* jumped on his ballet score for *The Limpid Stream*, which Stalin had seen at the Bolshoi. "From that moment on," the composer recalls, "I was stuck with the label 'enemy of the people,' and I don't need to explain what the label meant in those days."

Shostakovich's ultimate response is famous: his magnificent, enduring Fifth Symphony, which came to be known as "the creative reply of a Soviet artist to justified criticism." His answer, given to the commanding voice of a full symphony orchestra, came only in November 1937 with the triumphant Leningrad premiere of Symphony no. 5. In the meantime, Shostakovich privately questioned both his art and his fate—and continued to work on his Fourth Symphony.

We may never know for certain what Shostakovich was thinking during the difficult early months of 1936 after the *Pravda* attack. Apparently, he proceeded with writing his Fourth Symphony almost as if nothing had happened—as a way perhaps of keeping his creative spirit alive, although inevitably the symphony's ending was colored by the upheaval the composer felt. "The authorities tried everything they knew to get me to repent and expiate my sins," Shostakovich told Glikman much later. "But I refused. I was young then and had my physical strength. Instead of repenting, I composed my Fourth Symphony."

He finished the score on May 20, 1936. The next week, the renowned conductor Otto Klemperer, already a champion of Shostakovich's music, came to the composer's apartment to listen to him play through his newest symphony; Klemperer was so impressed that he quickly made arrangements to give the South American premiere.

COMPOSED

1935–36

FIRST PERFORMANCE

December 30, 1961, Moscow Philharmonic. Kirill Kondrashin conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

4 flutes and 2 piccolos, 4 oboes (fourth doubling english horn), 4 clarinets, E-flat clarinet and bass clarinet, 3 bassoons and contrabassoon, 8 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, 2 tubas, timpani, percussion (castanets, triangle, woodblock, tam-tam, cymbals, xylophone, glockenspiel), celesta, 2 harps, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

60 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES

March 11, 12, and 14, 1976, Orchestra Hall. Bernard Haitink conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES

May 8, 9, 10, 11, and 13, 2008, Orchestra Hall; May 16, 2008, Carnegie Hall. Bernard Haitink conducting

September 13, 2008, Kultur- & Kongresszentrum, Lucerne, Switzerland. Bernard Haitink conducting

CSO RECORDINGS

1977. André Previn conducting. Angel

2008. Bernard Haitink conducting. CSO Resound

OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP: Dmitri Shostakovich, ca. 1941 | *Kolhoznitza* (*Collective Farm Woman*), 1930s. Oil on canvas by Vasilii Kostyanitsyn (1881–1940). Vladimir-Suzdal Museum-Reserve, Vladimir, Russia. A stylized depiction of agricultural labor and collective identity, the painting evokes imagery that became increasingly prominent in Soviet cultural life during the period in which Shostakovich composed his Fourth Symphony.

(He also asked Shostakovich to reduce the number of flutes and piccolos to bring it within the reach of more orchestras; the composer declined.) Shostakovich spent the rest of the year soul-searching; little music was written. In the meantime, the premiere of the Fourth Symphony was scheduled for December in Leningrad. Once rehearsals began, rumors began to circulate that it was a score of “diabolical complexity”—that Shostakovich had defied the authorities. By some accounts, rehearsals were disorganized and tense; the playing was often a shambles. One day, an official from the Composers’ Union showed up at rehearsal, accompanied by a dignitary from the Communist Party. Shostakovich was summoned to the concert hall manager’s office. Shostakovich later remembered how that day changed the fate of his new symphony: “I didn’t like the situation,” he said. “Fear was all around. So I withdrew it.” Shostakovich made no official comment when the symphony was removed from the program, just days before the concert. Instead, he waited until he had fully recovered his voice, and then, on April 18, 1937, he began to draft a carefully considered public statement, the Fifth Symphony that took him only three months to write.

The next twenty years passed as if the Fourth Symphony had never been composed. The manuscript, hidden in a suitcase, disappeared during World War II. When the surviving orchestral parts were uncovered in Leningrad, it was possible at least to reconstruct the score. But it still went unperformed. One day in 1958, Shostakovich wrote to a friend from a Moscow hospital, his hand already crippled by the disease that would eventually kill him:

My stay here is coming to an end, and I’ll soon be home. My hand is better, but I won’t be playing the piano in a while. In my spare time, of which I’ve got a lot just now, I think about the Fourth Symphony. I’d so like to hear it. I don’t have much hope of that, but I indulge myself by imagining the music in my inner ear.

But three years later, in December 1961, Shostakovich heard his Fourth Symphony for the first time, in Moscow under the baton of Kirill Kondrashin—twenty-five years after it had been pulled out of rehearsal. Shostakovich had unveiled eight new symphonies in the meantime. (Mahler’s symphonies, which had long attracted Shostakovich and cast a spell over his Fourth Symphony in particular, were only now beginning to find their public.) As soon as Kondrashin saw a score of the symphony in a sloppy reduction for two pianos that scarcely hinted at the force of the full score, he knew that this was an important and indispensable work. Glikman sat next to the composer at the premiere. “As the music launched into the earth-shattering introduction, I was sure I could hear his heart beating faster,” Glikman recalled. “His agitation lasted right to the magnificent ending. Afterward, back in his apartment, he said, ‘I think in many ways the Fourth is better than the symphonies that came after.’” His longtime friend Flora Litvinova was stunned by the symphony’s dynamism, drive, and staggering contrasts—qualities that she had missed in the composer’s later works. “One involuntarily thinks what a different path he would have taken, how different his life would have been, if it were not for the ‘historic’ Decree which warped the living spirit in him.”

Shostakovich’s Fourth remains his most lavishly scored symphony. At the time of its composition, it also marked an extreme expansion of the form—its first movement alone is longer than the entire Second Symphony and nearly as long as either the First or Third symphonies. Nearly every page of this score reveals the influence of Mahler—whose vast and complex symphonies had recently begun to fascinate him—in details of scoring and even snatches of melody (listen, for example, to the mournful, marching bassoon melody that launches the third movement).

The Fourth Symphony has two big outer movements surrounding a shorter scherzo. The long opening movement is ambitiously scaled and richly contrasted. It is a remarkable exercise in long-range planning—scaling the

heights (Shostakovich sets the full orchestra loose only moments in), then descending into the quiet valleys. For every page that calls on the six clarinets and eight horns that Shostakovich requests, there are others with but a few threads of music—a violin solo over simple chords or, just before the movement's end, two bassoons dancing over a rapid drum-beat. But the proportions are heavily weighted toward the extravagant outburst, and there is a predominance of dissonance unusual for Shostakovich, even in his more dramatic moods. (One particularly powerful chord near the end—marked *ffff*, building to *fffff*—contains all twelve notes of the chromatic scale.) The form, too, is oddly balanced: Shostakovich has written a sonata form movement that is nearly all development, with little exposition and even less recapitulation.

The scherzo moves more steadily, without the extremes in dynamics or texture of the opening movement; it also is a third as long. The music builds with little interruption toward a magnificent climax then slowly unravels over the quiet clicking of castanets, like the distant tread of horses' hooves. Shostakovich recycled one of the scherzo themes as the main melody in the first movement of his Fifth Symphony—apparently assuming at the time that the Fourth Symphony would never be played and his self-borrowing would go undetected.

The finale begins with a slow C minor march (recalling Mahler's Fifth Symphony), turning into faster, more complex, and ultimately unsettling music, encompassing both anger and comedy. The shadow of Mahler looms not only at the start of the movement but also intermittently in the quirky sequence of passages that follow, including an odd dance tune with its gentle yet unmistakable touch of burlesque and the final broad apotheosis. There also is much that foreshadows Shostakovich's next work, his Fifth Symphony, both in melodic ideas and details of scoring. But, unlike the rousing and triumphant big finish of the Fifth, the Fourth turns dark and ends quietly. For measure after measure, Shostakovich repeats a throbbing low C as shifting chords and lone lines—from the horn, the flute, and the strings—rise against the numbness of the sound. At last, a muted trumpet and the celesta mull over a few still unanswered questions—the doubts and fears of a man about to make the most important public statement of his career. **C**

*Phillip Huscher has been the program annotator for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra since 1987. His history of the Orchestra, *Passing the Baton: The Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Music Directors Who Shaped Its Greatness*, will be published on September 28 by The University of Chicago Press.*

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Klaus Mäkelä Zell Music Director Designate



Finnish conductor Klaus Mäkelä has been music director of the Orchestre de Paris since September 2021, and he served as chief conductor of the Oslo Philharmonic from 2020 to 2026. He assumes the title of chief conductor of the

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Amsterdam in September 2027 and, in the same season, begins his tenure as Zell Music Director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Mäkelä's final season as music director of the Orchestre de Paris marks the culmination of a seven-year artistic partnership, with programs centered on large-scale choral and symphonic repertoire, including Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet* and Mahler's symphonies nos. 3 and 8. This season also includes the world premiere of a new work by Thomas Larcher; Beethoven's *Triple Concerto* with Martha Argerich, Renaud Capuçon, and Gautier Capuçon; and a gala concert at Philharmonie de Paris featuring Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, a work that has become a defining thread of his collaboration with the orchestra.

Season highlights with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra include Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*, Mahler's Symphony no. 7, Schumann's Symphony no. 1, Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*, Lotta Wennäkoski's *Flounce*, and the world premiere of a new work for orchestra by Magnus Lindberg. In December, Mäkelä conducts the Amsterdam Christmas Matinee

for the fifth time and leads the orchestra on tours to France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Spain before returning to the Baden-Baden Easter Festival for the second installment of the orchestra's annual residency, where they present three programs.

With the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Mäkelä opens the season with a three-week residency, including performances of Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, Mahler's Symphony no. 9, and Walton's *Belsazzar's Feast* with baritone Thomas Hampson as soloist. In January 2027 he leads the Orchestra on its first international tour under his direction, with concerts in eight cities across Europe. The season also includes an all-Finnish program pairing Sibelius's Symphony no. 1 with works by Lindberg in May and concludes with Beethoven's Symphony no. 9 and Boulez's rarely performed *Le soleil des eaux* in June.

Mäkelä is an exclusive Decca Classics artist whose discography includes works by Stravinsky, Debussy, Berlioz, and Ravel with the Orchestre de Paris, as well as symphonies by Sibelius and Shostakovich with the Oslo Philharmonic. His most recent recording, Mahler's Symphony no. 8, was captured live with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra at the Mahler Festival 2025.

In the 2026–27 season, Klaus Mäkelä appears as guest conductor with the Vienna Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, Orchestra del Teatro alla Scala in Milan, London Symphony Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, and the Munich Philharmonic. As a cellist, he partners with members of the Orchestre de Paris, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and Chicago Symphony Orchestra for chamber music performances.

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Chicago Tribune, on Mäkelä's debut performances at the Ravinia Festival





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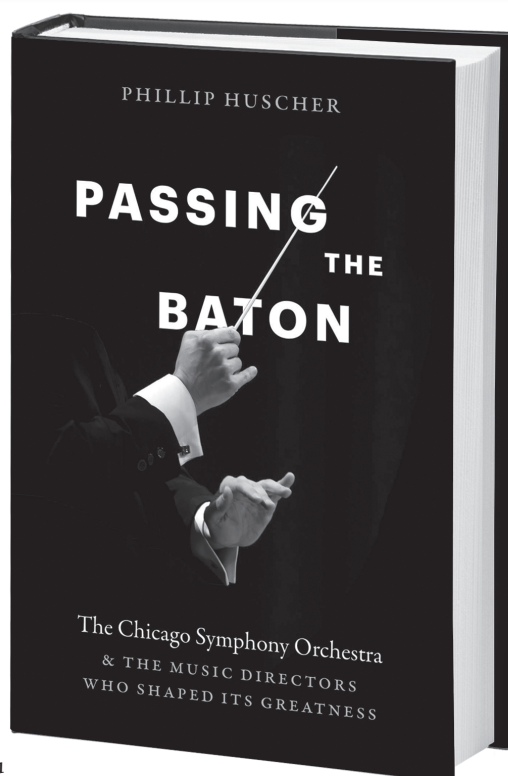
PASSING THE BATON

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra
and the Music Directors Who
Shaped Its Greatness

PHILLIP HUSCHER

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CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Now in its 136th season, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra is a global artistic leader, hailed as one of the most esteemed ensembles in classical music.

The ensemble's history began in 1889, when Theodore Thomas, the leading conductor in America and a recognized music pioneer, was invited by Chicago businessman Charles Norman Fay to establish a symphony orchestra. Thomas's aim to build a permanent orchestra of the highest quality was realized at the first concerts in October 1891 in the Auditorium Theatre. Thomas served as music director until his death in January 1905, just three weeks after the dedication of Orchestra Hall, the Orchestra's permanent home designed by Daniel Burnham.

Frederick Stock, recruited by Thomas to the viola section in 1895, became assistant conductor in 1899 and succeeded the Orchestra's founder. His tenure lasted thirty-seven years, from 1905 to 1942. Stock founded the Civic Orchestra of Chicago—the first training orchestra in the U.S. affiliated with a major orchestra—in 1919, established youth auditions, organized the first subscription concerts especially for children, and began a series of popular concerts.

Three conductors headed the Orchestra during the following decade: Désiré Defauw was music director from 1943 to 1947, Artur Rodziński in 1947–48, and Rafael Kubelík from 1950 to 1953. The next ten years belonged to Fritz Reiner, whose recordings with the CSO are still considered hallmarks. Reiner invited Margaret Hillis to form the Chicago Symphony Chorus in 1957. For five seasons, from 1963 to 1968, Jean Martinon held the position of music director.

Sir Georg Solti, the Orchestra's eighth music director, served from 1969 until 1991. His arrival launched one of the most successful musical partnerships of our time. The CSO made its first overseas tour to Europe in 1971 under his direction and released numerous award-winning recordings. Beginning in 1991, Solti held the title of music director laureate and returned to conduct the Orchestra each season until his death in September 1997.

Daniel Barenboim became ninth music director in 1991, a position he held until 2006. His tenure was distinguished by the opening of Symphony Center in 1997, appearances with the Orchestra in the dual role of pianist and conductor, and twenty-one international tours. Appointed by Barenboim in 1994 as the Chorus's second director, Duain Wolfe served until his retirement in 2022.

In 2010, Riccardo Muti became the Orchestra's tenth music director. During his tenure, the Orchestra deepened its engagement with the Chicago community, collaborated with visionary musicians and composers, and realized many notable performances of operas in concert. In September 2023, Muti became music director emeritus for life.

In April 2024, conductor Klaus Mäkelä was announced as the Orchestra's eleventh music director and will begin an initial five-year tenure as Zell Music Director in September 2027. In July 2025, Donald Palumbo became the third director of the Chicago Symphony Chorus.

Carlo Maria Giulini was named the Orchestra's first principal guest conductor in 1969, serving until 1972; Claudio Abbado held the position from 1982 to 1985. Pierre Boulez was appointed as principal guest conductor in 1995 and was named Helen Regenstein Conductor Emeritus in 2006, a position he held until his death in January 2016. From 2006 to 2010, Bernard Haitink was the Orchestra's first principal conductor. Pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet is the CSO's artist-in-residence for the 2026–27 season.

The Orchestra first performed at Ravinia Park in 1905, later helped to inaugurate the Ravinia Festival in 1936, and has been in residence nearly every summer since. Listeners enjoy the weekly CSO Radio Broadcast series as well as releases from the ensemble's extensive commercial discography. Recordings by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus have earned sixty-five Grammy awards from the Recording Academy.

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Assistant Principal

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*Chair sponsored by an
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Vadim Karpinos

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* Assistant concertmasters are listed by seniority. ‡ On sabbatical § On leave

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The Louise H. Benton Wagner and Erika and Dietrich M. Gross Principal Flute chairs are currently unoccupied.

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra string sections utilize revolving seating. Players behind the first desk (first two desks in the violins) change seats systematically every two weeks and are listed alphabetically. Section percussionists also are listed alphabetically.

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- **Electronic devices:** Before the concert begins, mobile phones and other electronic devices must be turned off or set to silent mode. The use of photography, audio, and video equipment is not permitted during the music.

Please note: Beginning in the 2026/27 Season, Box Level seating is now assigned.

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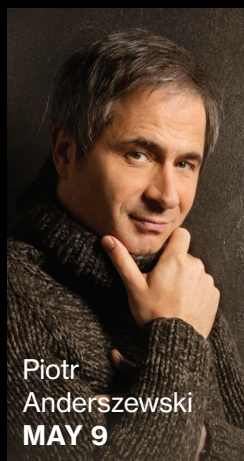
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