



WASHINGTON
PERFORMING ARTS

2022/23 SEASON THE WORLD IN OUR CITY



CITY OF BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, principal guest conductor

Sheku Kanneh-Mason, cello

FRI, OCT 21, 8 p.m.

THE MUSIC CENTER AT STRATHMORE



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PERFORMING ARTS

2022/23 SEASON

THE WORLD IN OUR CITY

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Tito Muñoz and Eugene Rogers, music directors
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Washington Performing Arts's classical music performances this season are made possible in part through the generous support of Betsy and Robert Feinberg.

TICKETS AND INFORMATION:

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WASHINGTON PERFORMING ARTS WELCOME

“When do you think you’ll be able to bring orchestras back?”

Happily, we can say...tonight!

We are thrilled to bring you a performance that we have been planning for the better part of four years: the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, with Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla and Sheku Kanneh-Mason. It is amazing that this powerful combination of ensemble, conductor, and soloist have remained intact since our very first conversations—and our anticipation has only heightened with the recordings of their superb music-making together, and the distinction of their work even beyond this collaboration during the intervening time. The wonderful occasion of presenting this orchestra in its centenary year is matched by a lovely symmetry: Sir Edward Elgar was its first conductor; and tonight, his cello concerto marks the moment.

It has been three years since we presented a full orchestra series, and I know that each person who treasured the Washington Performing Arts legacy of visiting orchestras has felt that absence. As the reality of the global pandemic descended in March 2020, the visceral impact of risks to health, and indeed to our lives was compounded by the suspension of so many beloved traditions. Among them, experiencing live music of any sort, and especially orchestral music. The 2021-22 season was transitional: orchestras were back onstage around the world, but very few were able to travel to the United States given COVID-19 restrictions and waves of flare-ups.

As we planned this season—The World In Our City—we wanted to honor our very global community and truly focus on the contours of what unites, energizes, and inspires us. Indeed, we crave the fortification and inspiration of live music. In programming our orchestral series, we invited orchestras with exciting artistic leadership and guest artists to bring programs that reflected each one’s culture—past and present. You will hear monumental works of the orchestral canon, and new composers who have been inspired to add their own creative voices to a treasured legacy.

We treasure your role in this legacy as well—as members of our audience, as patrons whose support has made it possible for us to bring excellent orchestras each year. We hope that by the end of the season you will feel as though we have answered that very first question with gusto. Thank you for being with us tonight, and for this historic season.

Warmly,



Jenny Bilfield, President and CEO

Jenny Bilfield, President & CEO

Presents

**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, principal guest conductor

Sheku Kanneh-Mason, cello

FRI, OCT 21, 8 p.m. • THE MUSIC CENTER AT STRATHMORE

EDWARD ELGAR

Cello Concerto in E Minor, Opus 85

Adagio; Moderato

Lento; Allegro molto

Adagio

Allegro; Moderato; Allegro, ma non troppo

INTERMISSION

THOMAS ADÈS

***The Exterminating Angel* Symphony**

Entrances

March

Berceuse

Waltz

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

La Mer

De l'aube à midi sur la mer

Jeux de vagues

Dialogue du vent et de la mer

Washington Performing Arts's classical music performances this season are made possible in part through the generous support of Betsy and Robert Feinberg.

Her Excellency Dame Karen Elizabeth Pierce, Ambassador of the United Kingdom, and Her Excellency Ambassador Audra Plepytė, Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania, are the honorary patrons of this engagement.

This is one of twenty 2022/23 season performances included in Washington Performing Arts's The World in Our City initiative, which promotes cross-cultural understanding and cultural diplomacy via the presentation of international visiting artists, globally inspired local programming, and the award-winning Embassy Adoption Program, a partnership with D.C. Public Schools.

Special thanks to the following lead supporters of Washington Performing Arts's mission-driven work: Jacqueline Badger Mars and Mars, Incorporated; the National Capital Arts and Cultural Affairs Program and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts; D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities; and the Dallas Morse Coors Foundation for the Performing Arts.

PROGRAM NOTES

Cello Concerto in E Minor, Opus 85 SIR EDWARD ELGAR (1857-1934)

The period of World War I was extremely difficult for Elgar. The war was demoralizing, and Elgar—who turned 60 during its course—was further downcast by poor health and his own declining productivity. The war might seem the sort of occasion that should have roused his creative spirits, but Elgar had no appetite for “war” music. After three years of war, he wrote to a friend while on a conducting tour: “I am not well and the place is so noisy & I do not sleep. The guns are the quietest things here. I long for the country . . . Everything good & nice & clean & fresh & sweet is far away—never to return.” During the fall of 1917 he resolved to get away from London, and he rented a thatched two-story cottage outside Fittleworth, in the rolling countryside north of Chichester. Delighted by the quiet and the surrounding woods, he felt his creative powers return. From the waning months of the war came a sudden surge of creativity: he wrote three chamber pieces in 1918 and then set to work on a *Cello Concerto*, completing it in the summer of 1919. It would be his final significant work

The *Cello Concerto* is a work of great beauty and great contradiction. Some of these contradictions rise from the sharp differences of style within the music: Elgar scores the concerto for a large orchestra, but then uses it with restraint—much of this music has a chamber-like delicacy. These contrasts point to sharp differences of mood within the music, which can move from a touching intimacy

one moment to extroverted concerto style the next. We almost sense two completely different composers behind the concerto. One is the public Elgar—strong, confident, declarative—while the other is the private Elgar, torn by age, doubt, and the awful comprehension that all the certainties he had known had been obliterated.

We seem to hear the old confident Elgar in the cello’s sturdy opening recitative, marked *nobilmente*, yet at the main body of the movement things change completely. Without any accompaniment, violas lay out the movement’s haunting main theme, which rocks along wistfully on its 9/8 meter. This somber idea sets the mood for the entire opening movement; throughout, Elgar reminds the soloist to play *dolcissimo* and *espressivo*.

The first movement is joined to the second by a brief pizzicato reminiscence of the opening recitative, and the solo cello tentatively outlines what will become the main theme of the second movement, a scherzo marked *Allegro molto*. Once this movement takes wing, it really flies—it is a sort of perpetual-motion movement, and while tuneful interludes intrude momentarily, the cello’s breathless rush always returns.

The *Adagio* returns to the mood of the opening movement. There is a dreamy, almost disembodied quality to this music, and Donald Francis Tovey caught its mood perfectly when he described the *Adagio* as “a fairy tale.” The finale has an extended introduction before plunging into the main part of the movement, marked *Allegro, ma non troppo*.

This is launched with some of the old Elgarian swagger, and the music at first seems full of enough confidence to knit up the troubled edges of what has gone before. But this is only a first impression. Beneath the jaunty surface of this music, another mood—dark and uneasy—begins to intrude and finds its clearest expression in the extended *Poco più lento* section near the end of the music. Gone is the swagger, gone is the confident energy, and we sense that in place of the music Elgar *wanted* to write he is giving us the music he *had* to write. This music seems to speak directly from the heart, and even the vigorous concluding flourish does little to dispel the somber mood that has touched so much of this concerto.

The Exterminating Angel Symphony
THOMAS ADÈS (born 1971)

Thomas Adès' opera *The Exterminating Angel*, based on Luis Buñuel's film *El ángel exterminador*, was premiered at the Salzburg Festival in 2016. Four years later, the composer drew a four-movement symphony from his music for the opera. Adès' publisher, Faber Music, has provided a program note for this music:

Composed in 2020, this Symphony is an orchestral rendering of music from Adès' third opera *The Exterminating Angel*. Based on Luis Buñuel's classic surrealist movie from 1962, in which a collection of society characters find themselves inexplicably trapped together at a post-opera party, it premiered at the 2016 Salzburg Festival, and has since traveled to the

Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, New York's Metropolitan Opera, and the Royal Danish Opera, Copenhagen.

In the *Symphony's* opening movement, *Entrances*, the guests arrive for dinner; in an early sign that they are leaving "reality" behind, they arrive twice. Then comes the ferocious and obsessive *March* that bridges the opera's first two acts, the music for their first night under the spell of the Exterminating Angel. The third movement is a *Berceuse* which draws on some of the work's most exquisite and memorable music: one of the yearning, melancholy duets between the doomed lovers Beatriz and Eduardo: "Fold your body into mine / Hide yourself within its hand."

Adès describes composing *Waltzes*—the Symphony's final and most extensive movement—as like 'joining together the bits of a broken porcelain object'. Unlike the other movements, which draw on fairly complete passages from the opera, here the waltz fragments that surface throughout the score are brought together to create something wholly original. 'What interests me about the waltz is the seductiveness of this music' remarked Adès in an interview before the opera's premiere. 'I often feel that the waltzes by Johann Strauss are saying "why don't you stay a little longer? Don't worry about what's going on outside". So in the context of this opera the waltz becomes very dangerous, potentially fatal.

La Mer

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

In the summer of 1903, Debussy took a cottage in the French wine country, where he set to work on a new orchestral piece inspired by his feelings about the sea. To André Messager he wrote, "I expect you will say that the hills of Burgundy aren't washed by the sea and that what I'm doing is like painting a landscape in a studio, but my memories are endless and are in my opinion worth more than the real thing which tends to pull down one's ideas too much."

That last phrase is a key to this music. While each of its three movements has a descriptive heading, *La Mer* is not an attempt to describe the ocean in sound. Debussy was interested not in musical scene-painting but in writing music that makes us feel the way we feel in the presence of the ocean—what mattered for Debussy was not the thing itself but his *idea* of that thing. At the premiere in 1905 the critic Pierre Lalo, misunderstanding Debussy's intentions in this music, complained: "I neither hear, nor see, nor feel the sea." *La Mer* sets out not to make us see white-caps but to awaken in us our own sense of the sea's elemental power and beauty.

Debussy subtitled *La Mer* "Three Symphonic Sketches," and it consists of two moderately-paced movements surrounding a scherzo. *From Dawn til Noon on the Sea* begins with a quiet murmur, a quiet nevertheless full of elemental strength. Out of this darkness glints of color and motion emerge, and solo trumpet and English horn share a fragmentary tune that will return—both thematically and rhythmically—

here and in the final movement. As the morning brightens, the music becomes more animated, and a wealth of ideas follows. From these fragments, Debussy builds his first movement, and at its close a horn chorale builds to an unexpectedly powerful climax.

Play of the Waves opens with shimmering swirls of color, and this movement is brilliant, dancing and surging throughout—it has a nice sense of fun and play, as a scherzo should. One moment it can be sparkling and light, the next it will surge up darkly. It draws to a delicate close in which a few solo instruments seem to evaporate into the shining mist.

The mood changes sharply at the beginning of the final movement—Debussy specifies that he wants *Dialogue of the Wind and the Sea* to sound "animated and tumultuous." The ominous growl of lower strings prefaces a restatement of the trumpet tune from the very beginning, and soon the horn chorale returns as well. Debussy's transformation of his material is particularly impressive here. A gentle chorale for woodwinds sings wistfully at first, but the music builds to a huge explosion. Moments later that chorale tune returns in a touch of pure instrumental magic: against rippling harps and the violins' high harmonics, solo flute brings back this tune with the greatest delicacy, and the effect is extraordinary—suddenly we feel a sense of enormous space and calm. Yet within seconds this same shape roars out with all the power of the full orchestra. As the movement proceeds, Debussy recalls themes from earlier movements, and all are

whipped into the vortex as the music hurtles to the most violent ending he ever wrote.

Program notes by Eric Bromberger

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



**MIRGA
GRAŽINYTĖ-TYLA**
Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla was named Music Director of the City of Birmingham Symphony

Orchestra in February 2016, following in the footsteps of Sir Simon Rattle, Sakari Oramo, and Andris Nelsons. For the 2022/2023 season, she assumes the position of principal guest conductor for one season. Winner of the 2012 Salzburg Festival Young Conductors Award, she made her debut with the Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra at the Salzburger Festspiele. Recent highlights include Britten's *War Requiem* at the Salzburger Festspiele, a new production of Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* at the Bayerische Staatsoper München, numerous European tours with the CBSO, and performances with the London Symphony Orchestra, NDR Elbphilharmonie, Swedish Radio Orchestra, Filarmonica della Scala, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Gražinytė-Tyla has electrified audiences as a guest conductor all over the world. In Europe, she has collaborated with the Lithuanian National Symphony

Orchestra, the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, MDR Leipzig, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Orchestre National de France, Orchestre National de Lyon, the Danish National Symphony Orchestra and the Mozarteum Orchestra. With Gidon Kremer and the Kremerata Baltica, she has enjoyed a dynamic collaboration on numerous European tours. She has led operas in Munich, Heidelberg, Salzburg, at the Komische Oper Berlin, and in Bern, where she served as Kapellmeister. In North America, she has worked with the orchestras of Philadelphia, Seattle and San Diego and led the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra in her Carnegie Hall debut in May of 2018. With the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Gražinytė-Tyla was a Dudamel Fellow in the 2012-13 season, Assistant Conductor (2014-16), and Associate Conductor (2016-17). From 2015 until 2017, she was the Music Director of the Salzburg Landestheater. An exclusive Deutsche Grammophon Artist since 2018, her first album—a collaboration of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Kremerata Baltica and Gidon Kremer—was released in spring 2019. Widely acclaimed, the album was hailed as an essential

contribution to the rediscovery of Mieczysław Weinberg's oeuvre, winning the 2020 Opus Klassik and Grammophon awards. Her second recording, released by DG in November 2019, features works by Raminta Šerkšnytė, and was followed in July 2021 by her most recent CD, *The British Project* with works by Elgar, Britten, Walton, and Vaughan Williams.



SHEKU KANNEH-MASON

Sheku Kanneh-Mason is already in great demand from major orchestras and concert halls worldwide. He

became a household name in 2018 after performing at the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex at Windsor Castle, the performance watched by nearly two billion people globally. Sheku initially garnered renown as the winner of the 2016 BBC Young Musician competition, the first Black musician to take the title. A Decca Classics recording artist, Sheku's latest album, *Song*, showcases his lyrical playing, while his 2020 album *Elgar* reached No.8 in the main UK Official Album Chart, making Sheku the first ever cellist to reach the UK Top 10.

This season, Sheku appears as Artist in Residence with the Philharmonia Orchestra, performing three concerti in addition to chamber music and giving educational workshops. He also performs with orchestras such as the London Mozart Players, Orchestre de chambre de Paris, Royal Northern Sinfonia, Camerata

Salzburg, Hallé Orchestra, and Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

In the Americas, Sheku features as soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Toronto Symphony, Boston Symphony, and São Paulo Symphony. He also performs his first solo cello recital program in venues such as Wigmore Hall, London; National Concert Hall, Dublin; Palau de la Música Catalana, Barcelona and Musée du Louvre, Paris. Since his debut in 2017, Sheku has performed every summer at the BBC Proms, including a breathtaking 2020 recital performance with his sister, Isata, within an empty auditorium due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He appeared as guest soloist at the 2022 *Last Night of the Proms* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. A graduate of London's Royal Academy of Music, Sheku was appointed in May 2022 as the Academy's first Menuhin Visiting Professor of Performance Mentoring. He is an ambassador for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, Future Talent, and Music Masters. Sheku was appointed a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the 2020 New Year's Honours List. He plays a Matteo Goffriller cello from 1700, which is on indefinite loan to him.

ABOUT CITY OF BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) is the flagship of musical life in Birmingham and the West Midlands, and one of the world's great orchestras. Based in Symphony Hall, Birmingham, in a normal year the CBSO typically presents over 150 concerts each year in Birmingham, the UK and around the world, playing music that ranges from classics to contemporary, film scores and even symphonic disco. With a far-reaching community program, and a family of choruses and ensembles, the CBSO is involved in every aspect of music-making in the Midlands. But at its center is a team of 90 superb professional musicians, and an over a 100-year tradition of making the world's greatest music in the heart of Birmingham. That local tradition started with the orchestra's very first symphonic concert in 1920 – conducted by Sir Edward Elgar. Ever since then, through war, recessions, social change and civic renewal, the CBSO has been proud to be Birmingham's orchestra. Under principal conductors including Adrian Boult, George Weldon, Andrzej Panufnik, and Louis Frémaux, the CBSO won an artistic reputation that spread far beyond the Midlands. But it was when it discovered the young British conductor Simon Rattle, in 1980, that the CBSO became internationally famous and showed how the arts can help give a new sense of direction to a whole city. Rattle's successors, Sakari Oramo and Andris Nelsons,

helped cement that global reputation and continued to build on the CBSO's tradition of flying the flag for Birmingham. Under the dynamic leadership of Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, the CBSO continued what it does best—playing great music for the people of Birmingham, the Midlands, and beyond. In September of 2021, the Orchestra announced Japanese conductor Kazuki Yamada as its incoming Chief Conductor and Artistic Advisor, effective April 1, 2023. Yamada has been the Orchestra's Principal Guest Conductor since October 2018.

The CBSO is grateful to Mr. John Osborn, CBE, a former member of the CBSO Board for his exceptional generosity in making the tour possible. Additional support is provided by the Dunard Fund.

The CBSO is extremely grateful to all its supporters, both individuals, and trust, and foundations who contribute to our Sound of the Future Campaign. Your support enables us to offer world-class, life-enhancing artistic experiences, enrich more lives in schools and communities, nurture young talent and welcome the next generation of concertgoers.

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra's 2022 U.S. tour has been made possible in collaboration with Arabella Arts. Sheku Kanneh-Mason appears by arrangement with Enticott Music Management.

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ABOUT WASHINGTON PERFORMING ARTS

One of the most established and honored performing arts institutions in America, Washington Performing Arts has engaged for more than half a century with artists, audiences, students, and civic life. The city is truly our stage: for decades, in venues ranging from concert halls and clubs to public parks, we have presented a tremendous range of artists and art forms, from the most distinguished symphony orchestras to both renowned and emerging artists in classical music, gospel music, jazz, international genres, and more. Washington Performing Arts also has an ever-expanding artistic and educational presence on the internet, addressing the programming challenges of this time of pandemic while envisioning ongoing opportunities for online connection and community in a post-COVID world.

Washington Performing Arts deeply values its partnerships with local organizations and other arts

institutions. Through events online and in a myriad of performance venues and neighborhoods, Washington Performing Arts engages international visiting artists in community programs and introduces local artists to wider audiences. We place a premium on establishing artists as a continuing presence in the lives of both young people and adults through residencies and education programs.

For its achievements, Washington Performing Arts has been recognized with a National Medal of Arts and with three Mayor's Arts Awards from the D.C. Government. We have now embarked upon our second half-century, ever inspired by the motto of our founder, Patrick Hayes: "Everybody in, nobody out."

For more information, please visit washingtonperformingarts.org.

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