

2021 BLOSSOM MUSIC FESTIVAL

AN AMERICAN CELEBRATION

Saturday, **July 3**, 2021, at 8 p.m.

Sunday, **July 4**, 2021, at 8 p.m.

Blossom Festival Week One
The Cleveland Orchestra
CONCERT PRESENTATION
Blossom Music Center
1145 West Steels Corners Road
Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio 44223

THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA

Brett Mitchell, *conductor*

Michelle Cann, *piano*

LEONARD BERNSTEIN (1918-1990)

Overture to *Candide*

MARY D. WATKINS (b. 1939)

Soul of Remembrance

from Five Movements in Color

FLORENCE PRICE (1887-1953)

Concerto in One Movement

(for piano and orchestra)

INTERMISSION

ADOLPHUS HAILSTORK (b. 1941)

An American Fanfare

AARON COPLAND (1900-1990)

Suite from *Appalachian Spring*

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

Overture: The Year 1812

JOHN PHILIP SOUSA (1854-1932)

The Stars and Stripes Forever

*This PDF is a print version
of our digital online Stageview
program book, available at this link:
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*A fireworks display by American Fireworks Company will take place
immediately following the concert, weather permitting.*

2021 Blossom Music Festival Presenting Sponsor: **The J.M. Smucker Company**

CONCERT OVERVIEW

THIS FOURTH OF JULY holiday, The Cleveland Orchestra kicks off the 2021 Blossom Music Festival with “An American Celebration,” after a year that has tested us personally and as a nation. As we renew relationships with loved ones and beloved traditions, this evening’s concert also asks us to consider what is American music? Who can write it? Does it have to be composed by an American? Can it celebrate, criticize, or hold us to our highest principles?

Tonight’s program, conducted by Brett Mitchell and featuring pianist Michelle Cann, brings together seven works, each one offering a unique and poignant perspective on our national identity, from the ideals expressed in our founding documents to the pioneering spirit that fueled progress to the invigorating influence of diverse cultures and backgrounds.

For many, the idea of an American calls up images of Leonard Bernstein, whose **Overture to *Candide*** opens tonight’s concert. The son of Jewish Ukranian immigrants, he introduced a generation of concertgoers to the immense pleasures of music and created the sound of urban anxiety in *West Side Story*. In *Candide*, which premiered in 1956 one year earlier than *West Side Story*, he looks back to 18th- and 19th-century European culture, mining the Age of Enlightenment ideals that inspired America’s founding fathers and adapting it into an operetta form.

Unlike Bernstein, Mary D. Watkins, a Washington D.C.-based composer, tackles an intimately American subject in “**Soul of Remembrance**,” the second section of her work *Five Movements in Color*. Using her shared experience as inspiration, Watkins traces African American history from crossing the Atlantic on slave ships to the continuing fight for equity. She explains: “I saw my own people in their long march to fully express themselves as fully human. It’s bittersweet and nostalgic, a song of sorrow and a song of hope.”

Florence Price’s **Concerto in One Movement** (1934) was premiered by the Chicago Symphony under music director Frederick Stock, featuring the composer as soloist. However, her name has only recently been included among the canon of American composers. Born in 1887 in Little Rock, Arkansas, to music teacher mother and a dentist father, she candidly wrote “I have two handicaps — those of sex and race.” She attended the New England Conservatory, one of the few schools that would accept African American students. Price’s work is a melting pot of European and African American traditions, linking the legacy of Liszt and Mendelssohn’s virtuosic works for piano with African American spirituals and West African dance forms.

The composer Adolphus Hailstork continues in this tradition with his **An American Fanfare** (1985), which acts as both as an homage as well as a corrective to Aaron Copland’s *Fanfare for the Common Man*. The Rochester-born composer created a piece that begins with a sober and regal horn melody that hints at Copland’s model and adds jazzy runs and slides. “The thing that I always criticized about Copland’s Fanfare,” Hailstork said, “is that it left out a large segment of the population, meaning my folks, so I wanted to write an American fanfare that has some blues licks in it that would represent the African American presence in this great country of ours.”

Born in Brooklyn to Jewish immigrants from Lithuania, Aaron Copland was an unlikely candidate to compose the quintessential sound of the American frontier. But with works like *Billy the Kid* (1938), *Rodeo* (1942) and tonight's piece ***Appalachian Spring*** (1943-44), he created an indelible impression on the music of the U.S. The choreographer Martha Graham approached Copland to write a score for her new ballet about newlyweds forging a life together in bucolic western Pennsylvania. Copland's utopic vision, and particularly the final variations on the Shaker hymn "Simple Gifts," was an instant classic that continues to epitomize a pioneering spirit.

The penultimate work on tonight's program isn't written by an American, but nothing evokes memories of barbeques and fireworks like Tchaikovsky's **1812 Overture** (1880). Though written by a Russian about Napoleon's brutal victory in the Battle of Borodino, its cannon blasts have resonated in our patriotic traditions since legendary Boston Pops leader Arthur Fiedler made it a holiday staple in the 1970s. Like pizza and fireworks, which were adopted from abroad, it too has been woven into our national fabric.

The program ends fittingly with John Philip Sousa's celebration of his homeland, **The Stars and Stripes Forever** (1897). Sousa, who was also the son of immigrants, wrote this iconic piece during his travels back to the United States from Europe. He had just been notified of the death of his close collaborator and manager of the Sousa Band and was suffering a bout of homesickness, "and that flag of ours became glorified ... and to my imagination it seemed to be the biggest, grandest, flag in the world, and I could not get back under it quick enough," he said. As we gather to celebrate the birth of this nation, Sousa's idealistic vision of unity under one flag is as profound and relevant as ever.

—Amanda Angel



Digital Program Book

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CONDUCTOR: BRETT MITCHELL

AMERICAN CONDUCTOR Brett Mitchell is known for his engaging and thoughtfully curated programs at home and abroad. His 2020-21 season featured debuts with the North Carolina and Fort Worth symphonies, as well as guest engagements with the Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, National, Oregon, San Antonio, San Francisco, and Vancouver symphonies; the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl; the Minnesota Orchestra; the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra; the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra; the Grant Park Festival Orchestra; and a two-week tour with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

From 2017 to 2021, Mr. Mitchell served as music director of the Colorado Symphony in Denver after a year as music director designate (2016-17). During his five-season tenure, he deepened the orchestra's engagement with its audience and expanded its commitment to contemporary American repertoire — with a particular focus on the music of Mason Bates, Missy Mazzoli, and Kevin Puts — through world premieres, recording projects, and commissions. In addition, Mr. Mitchell spearheaded collaborations with such local partners as Colorado Ballet, Denver Young Artists Orchestra, and El Sistema Colorado.

From 2013 to 2017, Mr. Mitchell served on the conducting staff of The Cleveland Orchestra, first as assistant conductor and from 2015 on as associate conductor. In these roles, he led the Orchestra in several dozen concerts each season at Severance Hall, Blossom Music Center, and on tour. Prior to this, Mr. Mitchell was assistant conductor at the Houston Symphony (2007-11), the Orchestre National de France (2006-09), and the Castleton Festival (2009-10). In 2015, Mr. Mitchell completed a five-year appointment as music director of the Saginaw Bay Symphony Orchestra.

Mr. Mitchell has served as music director of nearly a dozen opera productions, principally in his former post as music director of the Moores Opera Center in Houston (2010-13). Mr. Mitchell led a production of *The Nutcracker* with the Pennsylvania Ballet in collaboration with The Cleveland Orchestra during the 2016-17 season.

Passionate about mentoring young musicians, he was music director of the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra from 2013 to 2017, leading the ensemble's second international tour and first to Asia with a four-city tour of China in June 2015. Mr. Mitchell has worked with young musicians at the Cleveland Institute of Music, the National Repertory Orchestra, Texas Music Festival, Sarasota Music Festival, and Interlochen Center for the Arts; and has served on the faculties of the schools of music at Northern Illinois University (2005-07), University of Houston (2012-13), and University of Denver (2019).

Born in Seattle in 1979, Mr. Mitchell holds degrees in conducting from University of Texas at Austin and composition from Western Washington University.

SOLOIST: MICHELLE CANN

PIANIST MICHELLE CANN made her orchestral debut at age fourteen and has since performed as a soloist with numerous ensembles including the Philadelphia Orchestra, Florida Orchestra, North Carolina Symphony, and New Jersey Symphony Orchestra.

A champion of the music of Florence Price, Ms. Cann performed the New York City premiere of the composer's Concerto in One Movement with The Dream Unfinished Orchestra in July 2016 and the Philadelphia premiere with the Philadelphia Orchestra in February 2021, which the *Philadelphia Inquirer* called "exquisite." She has also performed Price's works for solo piano and chamber ensemble for the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Chamber Music Society of Detroit, and the New World Symphony, among other presenters.

Ms. Cann regularly appears in solo and chamber recitals across the U.S., China, and South Korea, including performances at the National Centre for the Performing Arts (Beijing), Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (Washington D.C.), Walt Disney Concert Hall (Los Angeles), and the Barbican (London).

Ms. Cann has appeared as cohost and collaborative pianist with NPR's *From the Top*. Her summer festival appearances have included the Taos Chamber Music Festival, Yellow Barn, Perlman Music Program, Music Academy of the West, Geneva Music Festival, and Pianofest in the Hamptons, where she serves as artist-in-residence.

An award winner at top international competitions, she served as the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra's MAC Music Innovator in 2019 in recognition of her role as an African-American classical musician who embodies artistry, innovation, and a commitment to education and community engagement.

Ms. Cann studied at the Cleveland Institute of Music and the Curtis Institute of Music, where she holds the inaugural Eleanor Sokoloff Chair in Piano Studies.

Piano by Steinway & Sons.

THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA

ONE OF THE FEW major American orchestras founded by a woman, The Cleveland Orchestra's inaugural concert took place in December 1918, at a time of renewed optimism and progressive community ideas. By the middle of the century, with its own concert hall, the decades of growth and sustained effort had turned the ensemble into one of the most-admired around the world. Under the leadership of Franz Welser-Möst since 2002, The Cleveland Orchestra has extended its artistry and musical abilities and remains one of the most sought-after performing ensembles in the world — year after year setting standards of extraordinary artistic excellence, creative programming, and community engagement. In recent years, the *New York Times* has called it “the best in America” for its virtuosity, elegance of sound, variety of color, and chamber-like musical cohesion, “virtually flawless,” and “one of the finest ensembles in the country (if not the world).”

The partnership with Franz Welser-Möst, begun in 2002 and entering its 19th year with the 2020-21 season, has earned The Cleveland Orchestra unprecedented residencies in the U.S. and around the world, including one at the Musikverein in Vienna, the first of its kind by an American orchestra. It also performs regularly at important European summer festivals. The Orchestra's 100th season in 2017-18 featured two international tours, concluding with the presentation on three continents of Welser-Möst's *Prometheus Project* featuring Beethoven Symphonies and overtures; these Beethoven concerts were presented in May and June 2018, at home in Cleveland, in Vienna's Musikverein, and in Tokyo's Suntory Hall.

The Cleveland Orchestra has a long and distinguished recording and broadcast history. A series of DVDs (available through Clasart Classics) and CD recordings under the direction of Mr. Welser-Möst continues to add to an extensive and widely praised catalog of audio recordings made during the tenures of the ensemble's earlier music directors. In addition, Cleveland Orchestra concerts are heard in syndication each season on radio stations throughout North America and Europe.

From 2020 forward, a number of new digital media initiatives are being launched to share and extend the ensemble's artistry globally. These include debut releases on the Orchestra's own recording label, an ongoing series of podcasts titled “On A Personal Note,” a new digital streaming platform named Adella (after the Orchestra's founder Adella Prentiss Hughes), and a series of premium concert broadcasts created from the 2020-21 season titled *In Focus*.

For more information, visit: www.clevelandorchestra.com.

The Cleveland Orchestra is grateful to these organizations for their ongoing generous support of The Cleveland Orchestra:

National Endowment for the Arts, the State of Ohio and Ohio Arts Council, and to the residents of Cuyahoga County through Cuyahoga Arts and Culture.

The Cleveland Orchestra is proud of its long-term partnership with Kent State University, made possible in part through generous funding from the State of Ohio.

The Cleveland Orchestra is proud to have its home, Severance Hall, located on the campus of Case Western Reserve University, with whom it has a long history of collaboration and partnership.

