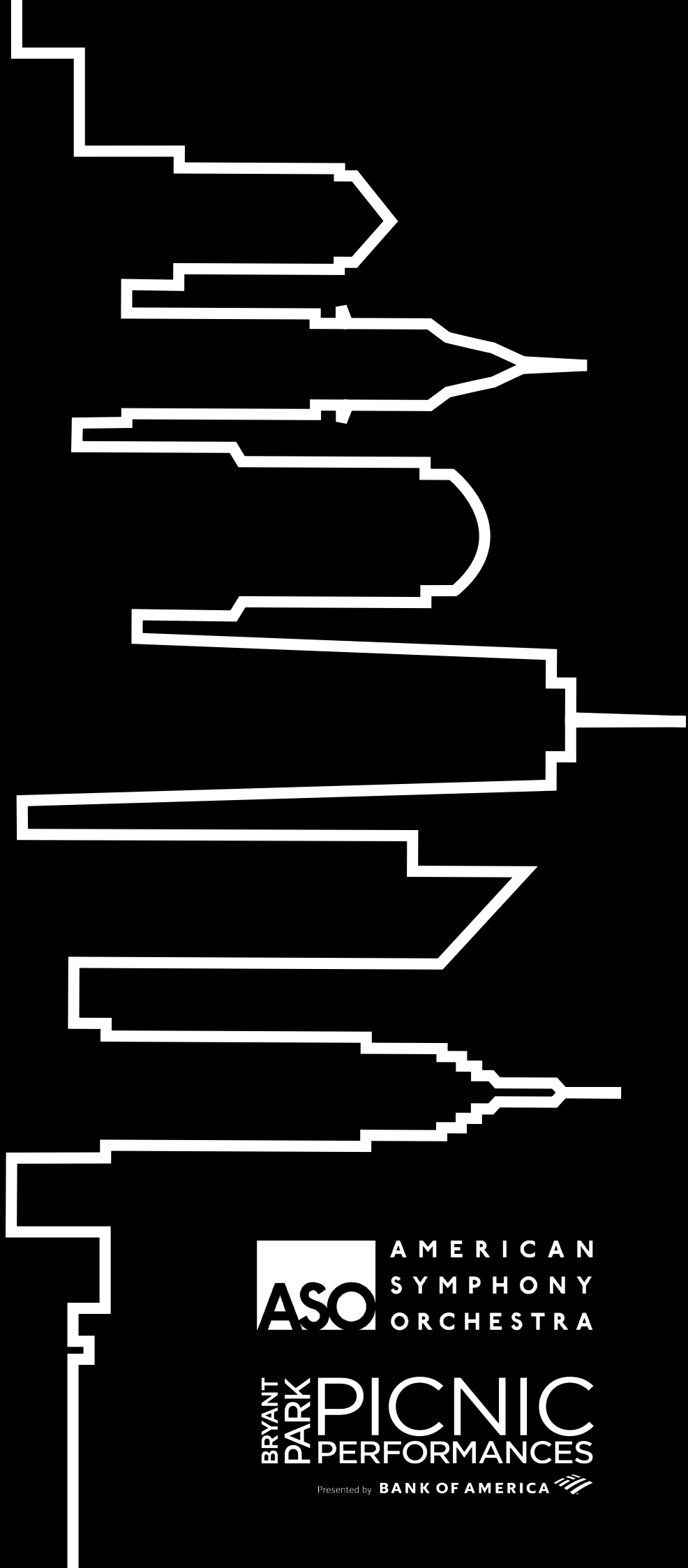


AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

BRYANT PARK

# CELEBRATING NEW YORK

SEPTEMBER 17, 2022  
7:00 PM



**ASO** AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
**BRYANT PARK** **PICNIC** PERFORMANCES  
Presented by **BANK OF AMERICA**



Friends,

Welcome back!

2022 marks 30 years since Bryant Park reopened into the public space we know today: a Midtown oasis filled with moveable chairs, colorful gardens, and exciting activity. Those who remember Bryant Park of the 1980s will understand my joy and astonishment to see what the park has become.

Over the past three decades, free public programming has been essential to the Park's success. From Ping Pong to Movie Nights to the rink and holiday market of Winter Village, our team works tirelessly to keep the Park active and engaging. As Jane Jacobs and William Holly Whyte, Jr. understood half a century ago, visitors' "eyes on the street" make Bryant Park a safer and more welcoming space.

Picnic Performances has grown into one of the Park's marquee programs, bringing world-class music, theater, and dance to tens of thousands of people on this lawn every summer. And, last summer, we expanded the audience to reach nearly a quarter of a million livestream viewers – some watching from other parts of the tri-state area, and others as far as Europe and Australia. This season deepens and expands our partnership with a wide range of New York's extraordinary cultural institutions — from Carnegie Hall to Ballet Hispanico to Classical Theatre of Harlem — and it is an honor to share our stage with them.

Finally, we extend our sincere gratitude to our neighbors and partners at Bank of America, whose support is critical to the Park and who make Picnic Performances possible.

Whether you're on the lawn or watching remotely, we hope you enjoy the show!

Sincerely,

*Dan Biederman*

Executive Director, Bryant Park Corporation



# BRYANT PARK PICNIC PERFORMANCES

Presented by **BANK OF AMERICA**

Welcome to Bryant Park – whether in-person or virtually!

Bryant Park is a jewel in the crown of midtown Manhattan and for Bank of America, it is also the centerpiece of our midtown campus. In buildings surrounding Bryant Park, over 10,000 Bank of America teammates collaborate to help make financial lives better, serving customers and the communities where we live and work. Since we moved to the neighborhood more than 10 years ago, we have developed a strong partnership with the Park, supporting activities throughout the year.

Since 2013, our sponsorship of Bank of America Winter Village at Bryant Park has allowed thousands of New Yorkers and tourists alike to skate, dine and shop contributing millions of dollars to the New York economy. Additionally, we demonstrated our support for our small business community throughout the pandemic by underwriting a booth for local minority-owned businesses to use RENT FREE.

With warmer weather as the Park blossoms, people are drawn to the green oasis to get a break from the urban bustle. And when nature is complemented by art, it can be a powerful combination!

We're glad you are here today to enjoy a Bryant Park Picnic Performance. Bank of America believes in the power of the arts to help economies thrive, to educate and enrich societies and to create greater cultural understanding. So we lend our support to more than 1,500 nonprofit cultural institutions and programs around the world annually, including this one.

We applaud Bryant Park for launching this diverse series and are proud to be the presenting sponsor of Picnic Performances, including the livestream, making it possible for all New Yorkers, visitors and individuals globally to experience the best of New York City's arts scene for FREE.

Enjoy today's performance and we hope to see you in Bryant Park or at Bank of America Winter Village once again later this year!

Sincerely,



José Tavarez  
NYC President, Bank of America

MAP 4770542

## THE POWER TO imagine, illuminate and inspire

As a major supporter of arts and culture nonprofit organizations, Bank of America believes in the power of the arts.

We are proud to sponsor the livestream of the 2022 season of Bryant Park Picnic Performances.

What would you like the power to do?®



Featured artist: Isaiah J. Thompson

Photo Credit: Ryan Muir

# BRYANT PARK

# AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

# 60

# CELEBRATING NEW YORK

The American Symphony Orchestra was founded 60 years ago in 1962 by Leopold Stokowski with the mission of providing music within the means of everyone. Music Director Leon Botstein expanded that mission when he joined the ASO in 1992, creating thematic concerts that explore music from the perspective of the visual arts, literature, religion, and history, and reviving rarely performed works that audiences would otherwise never have a chance to hear performed live.

offers chamber music performances throughout the New York City area.

As part of its commitment to expanding the standard orchestral repertoire, the ASO has released recordings on the Telarc, New World, Bridge, Koch, and Vanguard labels, and live performances are also available for digital streaming. In many cases, these are the only existing recordings of some of the forgotten works that have been restored through ASO performances.

The ASO's signature programming includes its Vanguard Series, which presents concerts of rare orchestral repertoire, and various other events dedicated to enriching and reflecting the diverse perspectives of American culture. During the summer months, the ASO is the orchestra-in-residence at Bard's SummerScape, performs at the Bard Music Festival, and

For more information, please visit [americansymphony.org](http://americansymphony.org).

# CELEBRATING NEW YORK

LEON BOTSTEIN, *CONDUCTOR*

## AARON COPLAND (1900-1990)

*Quiet City*, 1939-1940

SARRAH BUSHARA, *English Horn*

GARETH FLOWERS, *Trumpet*

## WILLIAM GRANT STILL (1895-1978)

*Darker America*, 1924

## LOUISE TALMA (1906-1996)

*Full Circle*, 1985

## JACOB DRUCKMAN (1928-1996)

*Nor Spell Nor Charm*, 1990

## JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

Suite from Orchestral Works

Arr. Gustav Mahler

- I. Overture
- II. Rondeau - Badinerie
- III. Air
- IV. Gavotte I – Gavotte II

This evening's concert will run approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes with no intermission.

Continuing a partnership forged in the wake of COVID-19, the American Symphony Orchestra presents this concert in partnership with the Bryant Park Corporation.

This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

The ASO's Vanguard Series is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.

AARON COPLAND

# QUIET CITY FULL CIRCLE DARKER

LOUISE TALMA

# AMERICA

WILLIAM GRANT STILL

# NOR SPELL NOR CHARM

JACOB DRUCKMAN

# SUITE FROM ORCHESTRAL WORKS

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

ARR. GUSTAV MAHLER

# FROM THE MUSIC DIRECTOR

CELEBRATING MUSIC IN NEW YORK By Leon Botstein

This concert celebrates the role New York City has played, and continues to play as a center of national musical culture in the 20th century. At the same time, tonight's concert marks the 60th anniversary of the American Symphony Orchestra.

The ASO was founded by Leopold Stokowski in the early sixties. Lincoln Center—the not altogether wise (in terms of the character of cities) dream of bringing the major performing arts venues of New York together in one place had become a reality. The old Metropolitan Opera House and Carnegie Hall were both slated for demolition. The New York Philharmonic had a new home, Philharmonic Hall, later Avery Fisher Hall and now Geffen Hall. However, in one of the first successful citizen-led protests in support of historic architectural preservation, Carnegie Hall was saved. Since it had been the home of the New York Philharmonic—the orchestra Gustav Mahler conducted there—after the decision had been made to keep Carnegie Hall going as a concert hall, it needed an orchestra of its own. Stokowski's idea was to create an orchestra purely out of the growing pool of young first-rate American instrumentalists. He sought to demonstrate America's post-war equality with Europe as a place where talent in the field of classical music could be nurtured.

Stokowski also wanted to make ticket prices for symphony orchestra concerts low enough to attract an audience that, in terms of social class and ethnicity, mirrored the egalitarian aspirations of a democratic culture and would be less privileged than the public that supported New York Philharmonic. The Philharmonic's founding and continued existence were linked closely to the moneyed aristocracy of the city.

Stokowski also wished the ASO to promote a distinctive artistic mission. The ASO was charged with offering not only wider public access to the standard repertory, but a steady diet of new music by American composers and important but neglected works from the history of music.

Despite this promising and brilliant beginning, the ASO's career as an institution was shaky. The philanthropy was insufficient, Stokowski's departed for England too soon, and the orchestra made its debut just as the centrality of classical music was beginning to fade. It is a tribute to the musicians of the orchestra, who for many years took over the governance of the orchestra, and to many generations of patrons that the orchestra has now reached its 60th year. Consistent support from the municipal government has been crucial. Above all, there has been a loyal audience following in the city.

But the secret behind the orchestra's longevity is something unique about New York that rarely gets attention. No other city in the United States possesses such a rich and gifted pool of freelance musicians. They earn their living not by being employed by a single institution, such as the Metropolitan Opera or the New York Philharmonic, but by playing in several orchestras with shorter seasons, playing on Broadway, playing in churches and in chamber music ensembles. The life a freelance musician is taxing and unpredictable. But the artistic rewards are high. The music making is less routine than that experienced by musicians whose careers are tied to a single ensemble and institution. The New York freelancer gains unparalleled skills in how to master new repertoire, put on fine performances with minimal rehearsal, and acquit themselves in the widest possible genres,

from popular music, jazz and Broadway, to sacred music and contemporary music. For many freelance musicians in New York the ASO has been their anchor, and they have embraced with enthusiasm, ASO's commitment to new and unfamiliar music.

As has been already noted, the challenges experienced by the ASO since its founding run parallel to a gradual erosion in the public sphere, in America, of interest in classical music, both old and new. The weakening of the audience base led to a steady decline in the philanthropic support for classical music, not only in New York but throughout the entire country. The orchestra was founded in a decade when there was a glimmer of hope that public support by the government—federal, state, and city—would grow. But the politics of the country turned away from the support of culture and the arts. The idea of “big” government fell into disrepute, particularly following the presidency of Ronald Reagan. The ideal of paying of taxes as a privilege, and a fundamental obligation of citizenship in a democracy—so that vital goods and services, including education and access to culture could be shared by all—was shunned as a political platform. The rising cost of higher education throughout the country was passed onto consumers, and the support of museums, opera houses, orchestras, and concert halls was again relegated, as it had been, before the Depression, to the realm of private philanthropy.

Despite the shocking inequality of wealth and the emergence of a fabulously wealthy elite, we, as a nation have permitted to occur, less of philanthropy than we might have hoped has gone to the performing arts and education. The fine public school music programs, even in New York, were allowed to deteriorate. In particular. The traditions and the future of classical and concert music no longer became favored objects of support. Tastes in entertainment among the very rich shifted and classical music increasingly came to be regarded as not quintessentially American or democratic in character.

The one place in the US where classical

music has remained central to a local and regional identity of what constitutes the American character is New York City. As the dominant entry point of immigration since the late 19th century, it has always been the nation's most cosmopolitan city. It is in New York that jazz flourished, the great tradition of musical theater came into being, and urban popular music found its home from the days of Tin Pan Alley in the extensive network of publishing houses and recording studios that thrived in the city. No other city in the United States could ever match the variety and density of the concert and opera life that evolved in New York City.

It is this unique character of New York that this ASO concert seeks to celebrate tonight. The program opens with a work by one of New York City's native sons, Aaron Copland, arguably the best known American classical composer of the 20th century who created a contemporary American musical sound and rhetoric. It includes a work by one of the finest and most productive African American composers, William Grant Still, to whom the ASO dedicated an entire program at Lincoln Center in 2009. It features a work by a remarkable composer and teacher (at Hunter College), a pioneering advocate of women composers, Louise Talma. The concert offers a work by one of the most compelling and imaginative modernist composers of the last century, Jacob Druckman, who like Louise Talma, left an admirable legacy as a teacher of composition.

The concert concludes with an idiosyncratic arrangement of music by Johann Sebastian Bach, put together for the New York Philharmonic by its then music director, Gustav Mahler. Mahler was recruited in 1907 by the Metropolitan Opera to come to New York. He and Arturo Toscanini, who came to New York shortly after Mahler, were perhaps the most famous conductors in the world in their day. As fate would have it, Mahler's years in New York were dominated by his work as a symphonic concert hall conductor and not by his conducting in the opera house, which in Europe had catapulted him to stardom. Toscanini drove him from the pit to the concert stage in New York.

# FROM THE MUSIC DIRECTOR

The modern history of the New York Philharmonic as a great orchestra can be dated to Mahler's brief tenure, in the years between 1907 and 1911, when Mahler spent the greater part of the concert season in New York. Mahler sought to champion American composers, and like Stokowski after him, bring new repertoire to the audiences of the city. Among his innovations were "historical concerts." It was for one such endeavor that in 1910 Mahler made his own version of movements to two of Bach's orchestral suites.

# THE ARTISTS



**Leon Botstein, Conductor**  
Photo by Ric Kallaher

Leon Botstein has been music director and principal conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra since 1992. He is also music director of The Orchestra Now, an innovative training orchestra composed of top musicians from around the world. He is co-artistic director of Bard SummerScape and the Bard Music Festival, which take place at the Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College, where he has been president since 1975. He is also conductor laureate and principal guest conductor of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, where he served as music director from 2003–11. In 2018 he assumed artistic directorship of the Grafenegg Academy in Austria.

On behalf of the musicians, staff, and patrons of the ASO, I wish to express the hope that the 60th season of the orchestra will herald a new renaissance for orchestral music, new and old, in New York's musical life. The repertoire at the center of the city's musical heart has been and should remain music for the symphony orchestra, for the concert stage, for the opera, and for the dance. The ASO hopes to bring to audiences in the city treasures from the history of music, known and unknown, and music by living composers, young and old, particularly those who have chosen to make New York, this great city, their home.

Mr. Botstein is also active as a guest conductor and can be heard on numerous recordings with the London Symphony (including a Grammy-nominated recording of Popov's First Symphony), the London Philharmonic, NDR-Hamburg, and the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. Many of his live performances with the American Symphony Orchestra are available online. His recording with the ASO of Paul Hindemith's The Long Christmas Dinner was named one of the top recordings of 2015 by several publications, and his recent recording of Gershwin piano music with the Royal Philharmonic was hailed by The Guardian and called "something special... in a crowded field" by Musicweb International.

Mr. Botstein is the author of numerous articles and books, including The Compleat Brahms (Norton), Jefferson's Children (Doubleday), Judentum und Modernität (Böhlau), and Von Beethoven zu Berg (Zsolnay). He is also the editor of The Musical Quarterly. For his contributions to music he has received the award of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and Harvard University's prestigious Centennial Award, as well as the Cross of Honor, First Class from the government of Austria. Other recent awards include the Bruckner Society's Julio Kilenyi Medal of Honor for his interpretations of that composer's music; and the Leonard Bernstein Award for the Elevation of Music in Society. In 2011 he was inducted into the American Philosophical Society.

# THE ARTISTS



**Sarrah Bushara, English Horn**  
Photo by Sunset Blue Productions

Praised by the Huffington Post for her "lithe and penetrating line," Sarrah Bushara is a recent alumna of the Curtis Institute of Music, having studied oboe performance with Richard Woodhams and composition with David Serkin Ludwig. A native of Eden Prairie, Minnesota, Bushara began her studies with Julie Madura and John Snow, and has soloed with local groups including the Wayzata Symphony Orchestra, the Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies, and the Northeast Orchestra. As a composer, Bushara began her studies with Dr. Sarah Miller at the MacPhail Center for Music and studied with Dr. Edie Hill as part of the Schubert Club Composer Mentorship program. This past spring, Bushara performed with the Gateways Festival Orchestra as part of the first all-black orchestra to perform at Carnegie Hall, collaborating with composer and pianist Jon Batiste. Bushara has also performed with the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. She currently resides in Cambridge, MA where she studies philosophy at Harvard University, with interests in aesthetics and critical theory. Bushara is a John Harvard scholar and one of two recipients of the 2022 Wendell Prize.



**Gareth Flowers, Trumpet**  
Photo by Debra Li

Trumpeter Gareth Flowers has been living and performing in the New York City area for over 20 years. He has performed regularly with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra as an Associate Musician since 2014. He was a company member of the Lincoln Center Theater revival of South Pacific and the Broadway Theater's adaptation of Cinderella. As an orchestral musician, he has performed with the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Seoul Philharmonic, Orchestra of St. Luke's, and the American Symphony Orchestra. As a chamber musician he has been a member of the International Contemporary Ensemble since 2004, playing a diverse and extensive array of chamber, electro-acoustic, improvisatory, and multimedia works.

Gareth has recorded with and for many living composers. Some notable recordings include John Adams' Son of Chamber Symphony, Matthias Pintscher's Sonic Eclipse, David Byrne and St. Vincent's Love This Giant, and the Metropolitan Opera's Grammy award-winning recording of Akhnaten by Philip Glass. His own electro-acoustic compositions and improvisations can be found on most streaming services.

Gareth holds a bachelor's degree and a masters degree from the Juilliard School. He is originally from Arlington, Virginia.

# NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

By Nicholas Stevens, Musicologist

COPLAND

## AARON COPLAND

### *Quiet City*

Born November 14, 1900, in Brooklyn, New York

Died December 2, 1990, in North Tarrytown, New York

Composed 1939-1941

Orchestra version premiered on January 28, 1941 in New YORK,

Conducted by Daniel Saidenberg

Performance Time: Approximately 10 minutes

“My career in the theatre has been a flop,” wrote Aaron Copland to his friend and fellow composer-critic Virgil Thomson in 1939. Copland meant live spoken theatre rather than the stage and screen in general, but in hindsight, the finality of the remark seems comically premature. (In the same letter, he questioned the comeback potential of Orson Welles, then already at work on *Citizen Kane*.) Over the ensuing decades, Copland would become the best-known and -loved of American ballet composers through his work with modern-dance icon Martha Graham, penning music that both suited and transcended her stages. His film scores would help Hollywood delight moviegoers, providing a fresh alternative to the swashbuckling throwback style then prevalent. Spring had sprung around him that early May as he wrote from his apartment in an upper west side hotel. He had no idea how riotously his theatrical career would bloom soon, even if his ties to New York’s Group Theatre company never led to the live-drama successes he

craved.

Many a writer has noted the apparent ironies of Aaron Copland, American Icon: a lifelong New Yorker who conjured lush and dusty rural landscapes in plush auditoriums; a target of McCarthyism whose art reliably unites listeners of all stripes each July; a symphonist, trained in neoclassicism, who lived long enough to hear jazz, rock, and hip hop when each was new. Yet surely, as stereotypes and categories of yore fall away, twenty-first century listeners will cease to find such combinations surprising. The man, like his city and all of us, contained multitudes. His music, just as expansive, ranges from spiky to velvety, from grandly sweeping to finely etched. Take, for example, *Quiet City*, which appears on this program in its second version, a glowing expanse that resembles the original only in flashes.

Copland’s remark about flopping in the theatre contained a caveat – the failures had not been his own – and pertained to the recent cancellation of *The Quiet City*, a play set in

COPLAND

a city of dreamers, strivers, and those who shuttle between the two: New York. Playwright Irwin Shaw would later command respect, like the composer and director he worked with on this early effort: Copland and Elia Kazan, respectively. Yet *The Quiet City*, which foregrounded the sort of family drama and class resentment that would later animate Shaw’s successes, ran for just two nights. A manuscript score of Copland’s original theatrical music surfaced in 2011, full of stolid cycles for piano and wistful meandering for clarinet and saxophone. Piercing Shaw’s cityscape, however, were the trumpet melodies that electrify Copland’s subsequent orchestral piece, which debuted in 1941 under the play’s title.

New York sounds heavenly, or at least haven-like, in Copland’s work for trumpet, English horn, and strings. This testifies to his versatility and love of the town; in the original version, the place sounds more purgatorial. Shaw’s play cast its spotlight on a protagonist who abandons his identity and integrity to become a success by society’s definition. The sound of the trumpet reminds him of the more authentic life he could have led, for his brother, who

pursues a humbler yet happier course, plays the instrument. Copland could have transcribed the piano part for strings and the woodwind parts for English horn, then copied over the trumpet solos and called it a day. Instead, he brightened the mood, tightened the structure, and rendered everything more dynamic and fluid. The changes suit concert music, in which the drama must arise from the music rather than vice versa.

Copland sheared *Quiet City* of its narrative roots and regrew it as “absolute music,” free of any specific plot or characters. However, in instrumentation alone, it suggests drama. As the trumpet’s sparks of inspiration, the English horn’s reflections, and the strings’ assertions and atmospheres alternate and overlap, consider how these entities echo the events of life and fiction. What sorts of figures might the soloists represent? Do the strings feel more like an actor or a backdrop? And in a city as influential on its residents and the world as New York, does such a distinction between setting and character matter? Thanks in part to Copland and company’s “flop,” the choices belong to listeners.

# NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

WILLIAM GRANT STILL

*Darker America*

Born May 11, 1895, in Woodville, Mississippi

Died December 3, 1978, in Los Angeles, California

Composed 1924

Premiered November 22, 1926, conducted by Eugene Goossens

Performance time: Approximately 13 minutes

STILL

Viewed from a distance, the course of William Grant Still's early years looks downright modern: determined to make his first great passion into his career, he trod many paths but made his way toward New York. From childhood homes in the South to points incrementally north and east, he pursued an unshakeable ambition to become a professional composer through multiple higher-education institutions and temporary jobs. The best-paying opportunities often lay along parallel routes. Still reached adulthood just in time for Mamie Smith's single "Crazy Blues" to make recorded African American music not just commercially viable, but the defining sound of the decade to come. He worked in blues bands, record labels, and musical-theatre pits through these days of striving, also participating in the bloom of scholarly and literary activity that we now call the Harlem Renaissance. However, he remained undeterred in seeking a place among the nation's great classical musicians. By the time he wrote the work *Darker America* in 1924, he had more

fuel for this inner flame than ever before.

On closer inspection, Still's journey included more hurdles than anyone should ever have to clear. He arrived in Harlem after serving in World War I, a young and gifted Black man in a segregated nation convulsed by worsening racist massacres. He sought opportunities in a mostly live form of music as a pandemic swept the world, closing venues. Despite all this, plus having to work hard outside classical music to fund his education, he added new allies to his expanding circle: established concert-hall composers. In quick succession, he took lessons with George Whitefield Chadwick, an eminence two generations his elder, and Edgard Varèse, a rising French émigré busy escalating his musical experimentalism with each new piece. Still emerged as a composer in the mid-1920s, formed by contradictions that he would resolve musically.

In her indispensable history *The Music of Black Americans*, the late musicologist Eileen Southern describes the sort of concertgoing opportunity

STILL

that makes one wish for a time machine: on the same weekend in 1926, the world premieres of composer James Weldon Johnson's *The Creation* and Still's *Darker America* took place in New York. Still had, by this point, become a regular at concerts held by Varèse's International Composers' Guild. Johnson's work appeared under the auspices of the rival League of Composers, whose bright young things included Aaron Copland, Still's junior by five years. Prejudice and frustration had divided a once-unified scene. Despite playing for opposed teams, Copland and Still shared the experience of struggling to find personal voices amidst a glut of options. "Modernism" could involve heavy borrowing from jazz, or none; melody, or the modular clots of aanti-expressive sound that Varèse championed. At the time, reasonable listeners could disagree as to whether *Darker America* represented Still's first success at distilling an individual style from this murky brew of influences. Today's listeners cannot; its immediate predecessor, a more radical work for voice and ensemble called *Levee Land* (1924), remains unpublished and unrecorded.

Nearly twenty years would pass before Duke Ellington, almost

Still's contemporary, would perform a suite titled *Black, Brown and Beige* to a more-than-sold-out Carnegie Hall. Yet amid the Harlem Renaissance's attempt to retrieve and retell Black History, Still became one of the first composers to attempt a symphonic essay on the subject. He outlined the intended music-to-history correspondences in marvelous detail. "At the beginning," he writes, "the theme of the American Negro is announced by the strings in unison. Following a short development of this, the English horn announces the sorrow theme which is followed immediately by the theme of hope, given to muted brass accompanied by strings and woodwind. The sorrow theme returns treated differently, indicative of more intense sorrow as contrasted to passive sorrow indicated at the initial appearance of the theme. Again hope appears and the people seem about to rise above their troubles. But sorrow triumphs. Then the prayer is heard (given to oboe); the prayer of numbed rather than anguished souls. Strongly contrasted moods follow, leading up to the triumph of the people near the end, at which point the three principal themes are combined." Young though he was, Still had already become expert at reconciliation.

# NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

TALMA

## LOUISE TALMA

### *Full Circle*

Born October 31, 1906, in Arcachon, France

Died August 13, 1996, in Saratoga Springs, New York

Composed 1985

Premiered on October 7, 1986 in New York, conducted by

Robert Black

Performance Time: Approximately 13 minutes

In April 1925, *The New York Times* announced the debut of an exceptional young pianist named Louise Talma. In an interview, the Columbia University student explained how courses and extracurriculars alike served her pianism: fencing and swimming to strengthen the muscles, debate classes to steel the mind. The venue of that first recital still stands mere steps from Bryant Park, at 50 East 41st Street (inscription: “Chemists’ Club”). Trips overseas and upstate aside, she remained a New Yorker – complete with the characteristic grit and tenacity – for the rest of her life. To hear Talma’s music in Manhattan is to encounter it in its natural habitat; to move through Bryant Park is to follow in her footsteps. *Full Circle*, the composition on this program, seems to conjure her presence, a palpable yet phantasmic brilliance.

A contemporary of Copland, Talma studied with the same composition teacher in Paris at the same institute, later becoming its first faculty

member from the U.S. Talma achieved similar “firsts” on a routine basis, an American woman composing modern music in an era warming to gender equality, modernism, and non-European composers all at once, if in fits and starts. Talma had little patience for self-promotion and even less for compromising her vision, which made the sort of household-name status that Copland achieved – after a willed effort to reach the masses through stylistic shifts and film scoring – out of the question. Instead, Talma earned her keep as a professor, despite a long-held belief that only musical fundamentals, not the creative act of composition, could be taught. As her biographer Kendra Preston Leonard reports, Talma would rather have had time to compose. Many of her auspicious “firsts” involved fellowships, grants, and residencies that afforded her just that. As sports and classes had served her piano-playing, now the keyboard, like most elements of her adult life, served composing.

In the classical music world, artist bios can sometimes resemble mere lists of

TALMA

prestigious institutions. One could easily render Talma’s life this way given her fate as an oft-recognized, if reluctant, creature of the academy. However, the stigmatizing label “academic composer” fits her poorly. Works such as *Full Circle* sublimate her knowledge of musical technique and tradition into sensuous successions of ideas that wear their interconnectedness lightly, referencing the feel of familiar classics without devolving into games of name-that-tune. A reviewer who attended this piece’s premiere in 1986 noted that its opening strains return in reverse at the end, the sort of clever move that many twentieth-century composers cherished – but added that this music, contrary to stereotypes of modernist composition, “made quick sense to the naked ear.”

If this performance seems haunted by Talma’s spirit due to the location alone, wait until the pianist comes in, answering a fragment of gloomy melody with an upward-surging flourish. Over the course of *Full Circle*, clouds gather and the pace slows several times, but the piano part often returns to restore infectious energy. The nineteen-year-old Talma of 1925 summarized all her pursuits

as extensions of her piano practice. Sixty years later, in *Full Circle*, her instrument still seems in charge, to the point that it is tempting to imagine her at the keyboard. She nods to the music of such elders as Igor Stravinsky, only recently deceased by then, without wallowing in pastness or flaunting quotations. Her own mortality had occurred to her by this time: consider the biographical significance of the title, and the fact that *Full Circle* represents a fluid transition between the end of her orchestral composition career and a late-in-life immersion in chamber music.

Talma avoided earning a PhD, seeing it as a distraction from composing, yet she ended up with a terminal degree regardless: an honorary doctorate conferred by Bard College in 1984, just before she composed *Full Circle*. At the commencement ceremony, the college President offered a customary exhortation to excellence, praising those who continue to create and aspire despite life’s imposition of dull practicalities. “The real challenge is to keep that inner flame alive,” remarked Leon Botstein at the climax of his address, perhaps drawing a smile from the composer behind him on the podium.

# NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

JACOB DRUCKMAN

*Nor Spell Nor Charm*

Born June 26, 1928, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Died May 24, 1996, in New Haven, Connecticut

Composed in 1989-90

Premiered on March 2, 1990 in Los Angeles, conducted by the composer

Performance Time: Approximately 15 minutes

Months after Aaron Copland's death in 1990, the fund for contemporary American music that still bears his name sought a President who would tend the flame (in Copland's honor) while pushing the art form forward (in his spirit). Jacob Druckman must have seemed the obvious, if not the only, choice. A student of Copland who went on to study and teach at seemingly every top-tier music school in the New York metropolitan area, Druckman hardly remained confined to the Ivory Tower or its prevailing tendencies. A decade after winning a Pulitzer Prize for his first orchestral work, he took up a residency with the New York Philharmonic, planning festivals that upended listener expectations of what newly composed music could sound like – in a good way. Druckman helped usher in a “New Romanticism” in which sounds, and sometimes subject matter, reminiscent of the 19th century emerged recharged in the final decades of the 20th.

Two riddles: how did Shakespeare

meet the synthesizer, and how did a never-sung song become an enchanted forest made of sound? The answer to both is Druckman's *Nor Spell Nor Charm*, in which digital technology facilitates both personal and literary tributes. In the comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595 or '96), William Shakespeare conjured a world of humans, fairies, and magically transformed beings who become entangled in one another's affairs only to resolve things, customarily, with weddings and reconciliations between reunited couples. First, however, come the ever-so-Shakespearean hijinks, including moments of dramatic irony. At the start of Act II, Scene 2, the fairy-queen Titania asks her attendants for a lullaby. The loyal creatures sing:

You spotted snakes with double tongue,  
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;  
Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong,  
Come not near our fairy queen.  
Philomel, with melody  
Sing in our sweet lullaby;  
Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla,  
lullaby:  
Never harm,  
Nor spell nor charm,  
Come our lovely lady nigh;  
So, good night, with lullaby.

The audience, having just watched the fairy-king Oberon conspire against his wife, know already that this song will do nothing to shield Titania from harm and charm. She will recover from the love potion that makes her pine for a donkey-headed bystander, but the menace-tinged humor of the scene arises from attendees' foreknowledge that the protective incantation will not work. Druckman would eventually find a tragic aspect to this instance of comedy. What happens when all the spells and charms in the book fail to save someone, and we know it in advance?

The mezzo-soprano Jan DeGaetani, hailed as “the finest song recitalist that the United States has ever produced” and the “Queen of the Avant-garde” in a *New York Times* obituary, had worked with Druckman many times, singing such substantial vocal works as *Dark Upon the Harp*, his cycle of psalm settings. Druckman traces the ideas behind *Nor Spell Nor Charm* back to a song he wrote for DeGaetani as she lay dying of cancer. She never had a chance to sing it, so he expanded its music into the instrumental piece on this

program in grief. In drawing inspiration from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and writing this song without words (so to speak), Druckman echoes the German composer Felix Mendelssohn, who set this very fairy song in his own music to accompany Shakespeare's play. New Romanticism, meet the old Romanticism.

Unlike any composer of the 1800s, Druckman, who once wrote that orchestral color was “intrinsic and structural” to his compositional practices, had access to the Yamaha DX7, the first commercially successful digital synthesizer. By the time Druckman programmed custom sounds into the instrument for *Nor Spell Nor Charm*, its bank of preset tones had defined much of 1980s pop music, dominating songs by Phil Collins, Tina Turner, and many others. Druckman uses the digital device for splashes of color that surprise and delight. Another layer of irony: listeners may know that these sounds come from an electronic instrument, but as it chimes, warbles, and pings between the acoustic instruments' Puckish scampering, perhaps one wants, just for a moment, to believe in magic.

# NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

MAHLER / BACH

## GUSTAV MAHLER

*Suite from the Orchestral Works of Johann Sebastian Bach*  
Born July 7, 1860, in Kalischt, Bohemia (present-day Kaliště, Czech Republic)  
Died May 18, 1911, Vienna, Austria

Arranged 1909, composed by Bach in the 1720s-1730s  
Premiered November 10, 1909, conducted by the composer  
Performance time: Approximately 20 minutes

In 1909, the Steinway Company sent a piano full of metal tacks to Grand Central on a sled. As music historian Mary H. Wagner explains, this made perfect sense in context: the tacks made the modern baby grand sound more like a harpsichord, the instrument from whose family tree the piano had long since branched. Piano-moving remained a makeshift operation in an era when auspicious groups such as the New York Philharmonic toured via train. And the still-new conductor of that orchestra, Gustav Mahler, needed that piano with the (approximate) sound of a harpsichord to make the history of Germanic orchestral music come alive in New York and well beyond. (On this program, we hear an actual harpsichord.)

Many accounts of Mahler's life treat his years as principal conductor of the Metropolitan Opera and New York Philharmonic as a blip, a passing final pursuit before his passing. However, he first conducted in the Met's original house, an industrial-looking building on Broadway, in 1907, before some of his best-loved

compositions came to exist. He came back each year for the rest of his life. As Leon Botstein has written, New York proved exceedingly welcoming: it had the third-largest population of German-speakers in the world after Berlin and Vienna, and many of its classical musicians and patrons were first- or second-generation immigrants from central Europe. Some found New York more welcoming than their homelands. Mahler stepped away from Vienna amid mounting anti-Semitism that rendered critics, elected officials, and audiences hostile. As with Felix Mendelssohn, then viewed with suspicion due to his ancestors' faith, slurs suggesting infidelity to German culture should, in a healthier political climate, have been laughable. Few composers had as much evangelizing zeal for their forebears – Bach and Beethoven above all – as had first Mendelssohn and, decades later, Mahler.

Throughout this program, keyboard instruments have played integral roles in orchestral music – a rare situation in core repertoire, but an assumed default before the 1790s and a distinct trend of the 20th

MAHLER / BACH

century. Copland wrote himself into the original, piano-heavy music for *Quiet City*; Talma and Still included it in *Full Circle* and *Darker America*; and Druckman's DX7 pulls the orchestral keyboard into the digital age in *Nor Spell Nor Charm*. Mahler had written for the celesta (picture a small upright piano playing Tchaikovsky's "Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy") in symphonic music before 1909, but the modified Steinway that he had dragged along (semi-literally) on his Philharmonic tour represented not innovation in orchestral color so much as an attempt at greater fidelity to the past.

In a touring program that ranged across nearly two centuries, Mahler stood and conducted as usual for most of an evening. Building on recent experiments with the hacked Steinway at the Met, however, Mahler plunged into the orchestral suites of Johann Sebastian Bach hands-first, leading a self-assembled and -arranged patchwork of movements from the keyboard. Today, hundreds of ensembles perform pre-1800 music on meticulously reconstructed early instruments, led by musicians in their midst, as was standard in Bach's lifetime. Mahler's insistence on including both that prepared piano and an

organ in his Bach Suite seemed remarkably idiosyncratic to critics at the time. Now, it feels prophetic.

As Botstein notes, the grand piano as we know it today, an almost car-sized beast with a metal frame and overlapping courses of strings, emerged largely from the work of a New Yorker who had arrived from Germany, Henry Steinway. People of all origins and backgrounds have brought musical ideas to this area, and music has emerged from the encounter transformed. The musician Karl Kroeger once noted that the only person in North America who would have had reason to know of J.S. Bach's existence by 1750 was an organist who happened to play some tavern concerts in New York before settling in Charleston. (Almost everyone who has attended weddings has heard music by that organist's father, a friend of the Bach family named Johann Pachelbel.) By the time Mahler realized how much artistic freedom the city had gratefully given him, times had changed and esteem for Bach had soared, but that boundless possibility had been in place since the arrival of the Lenape. As a singer murmurs to close one of Mahler's last works, "Ewig... ewig:" eternal, eternal.

Leon Botstein, *Conductor*

Violin I

Cyrus Beroukhim,  
*Concertmaster*  
Yukie Handa  
Katherine Livolsi-Landau  
Yana Goichman  
John Connelly  
Ashley Horne

Violin II

Richard Rood,  
*Principal*  
Wende Namkung  
James Tsao  
Patricia Davis  
Pauline Kim Harris  
Dorothy Strahl

Viola

William Frampton,  
*Principal*  
Sally Shumway  
Shelley Holland-Moritz  
Jason Mellow

Cello

Alberto Parrini  
*Principal*  
Roberta Cooper  
Eliana Mendoza  
Diane Barere

Bass

Stephen Sas,  
*Principal*  
Louis Bruno

Flute

Laura Conwesser,  
*Principal*  
Keith Bonner  
Fanya Wyrick-Flax

Oboe

Alexandra Knoll,  
*Principal*  
Julia DeRosa  
Melanie Feld,  
*English Horn*

Clarinet

Benjamin Baron,  
*Principal*  
Alec Manasse

Bassoon

Marc Goldberg,  
*Principal*  
Patricia Wang

Horn

David Peel,  
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Lawrence DiBello

Trumpet

Gareth Flowers,  
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John Dent  
Matthew Gasiorowski

Trombone

Richard Clark,  
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Timpani

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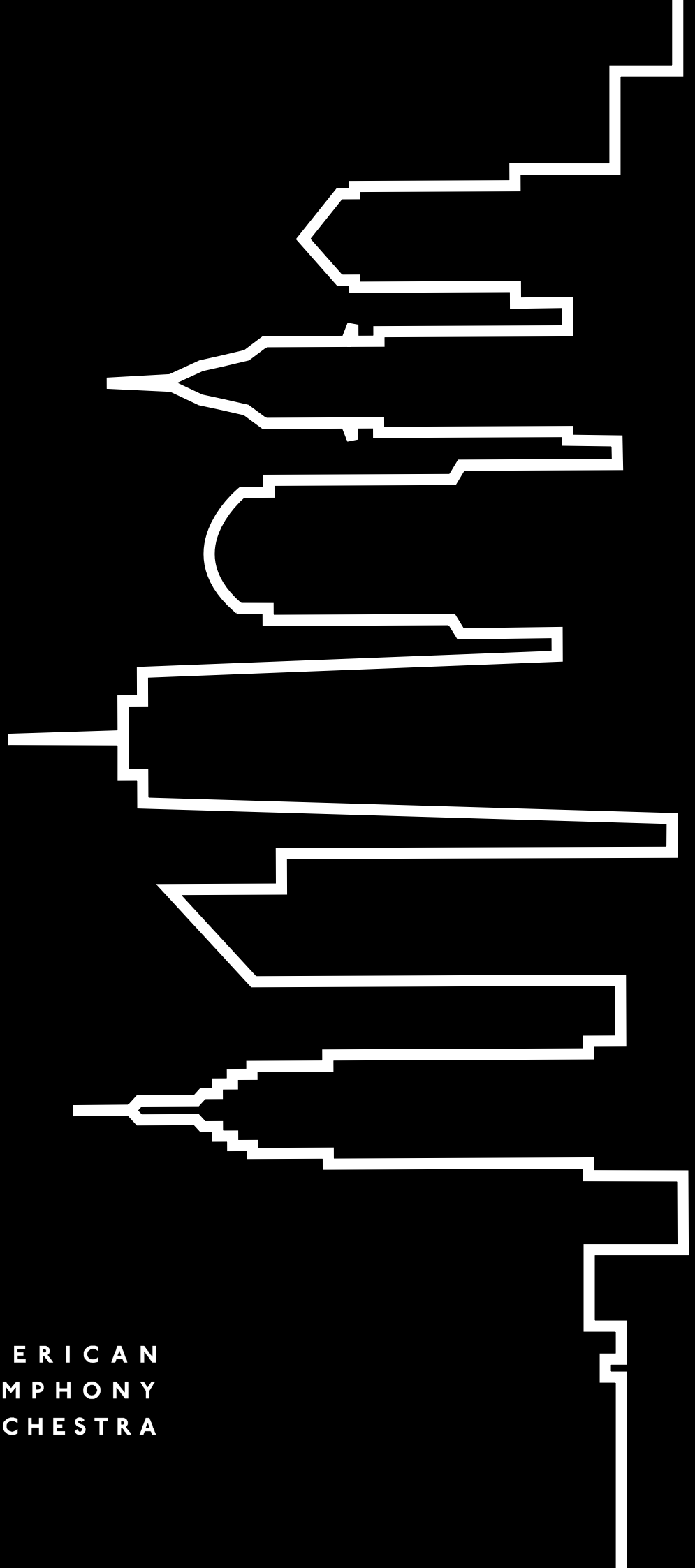
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