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MUSIC DIRECTOR LAUREATE ROBERT SPANO CONDUCTS TWO DELTA CLASSICAL CONCERTS WITH THE ATLANTA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Highlighting America @ 250 with works from Bernstein, Rachmaninoff and more

ATLANTA – Music Director Laureate Robert Spano returns to Symphony Hall for a two-week residency, showcasing the **America @ 250** series, with works from Bernstein, Rachmaninoff, and Christopher Theofanidis, featuring acclaimed soloists, pianists Sir Stephen Hough, Conrad Tao, violist Zhenwei Shi and mezzo-soprano Kelley O'Connor, April 30 through May 9.

APR 30/MAY 2– Pianist Sir Stephen Hough joins Spano's first Delta Classical Concert for Rachmaninoff's virtuosic Piano Concerto No. 3. With a career spanning four decades and over 70 recordings, Hough brings an "impeccable pianism and refined musical sense" (*Utah Arts Review*) to Rachmaninoff's most popular showpieces.

At the top of the concert, Spano conducts Christopher Theofanidis' contemplative *On the Bridge of the Eternal* (written in 2020), using text from St. Augustine's *The Confessions*. He welcomes frequent collaborator, mezzo-soprano Kelley O'Connor, for Bernstein's tumultuous Symphony No. 1, "Jeremiah."

MAY 7/9– For his second week of America @ 250 concerts, Maestro Spano invites ASO Principal Violist Zhenwei Shi to step into the spotlight for Berlioz's *Harold in Italy*. Shi personifies Harold on a quest for meaning while traversing through an Italian backdrop.

Spano trades one antsy exploration for another when he leads the orchestra in Bernstein's Second Symphony, *The Age of Anxiety*. Taking W.H. Auden's 138-page poem, Bernstein translates post-World War II weariness to a New York bar through four characters. Pianist Conrad Tao, celebrated for "assertive virtuosity, razor-sharp articulation," (*The Washington Post*) performs Bernstein's "autobiographical protagonist."

Robert Spano, who *The New York Times* raves, "has that great skill in a conductor of making every performance radiate joy," leads both concerts exploring themes of the America @ 250 series. Tickets for these concerts are now on sale at aso.org.

CALENDAR LISTING

America @ 250: Spano Conducts Rachmaninoff + Bernstein

Thursday, April 30, 2026, 8pm

Saturday, May 2, 2026, 8pm

Robert Spano, conductor

Stephen Hough, piano

Kelley O'Connor, soprano

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

CHRISTOPHER THEOFANIDIS: *On the Bridge of the Eternal*

BERNSTEIN: Symphony No. 1, "Jeremiah"

RACHMANINOFF: Piano Concerto No. 3

The incomparable Stephen Hough, one of the greatest players of our time, returns to the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra for Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3, a dazzler combining ferocious pianism with Hollywood lyricism. Music Director Laureate Robert Spano returns to conduct a pair of Bernstein symphonies over a two-week residency. This week's concert shines a spotlight on the ASO brass in Bernstein's tumultuous *Jeremiah* Symphony, based on the Biblical prophet. The Orchestra welcomes the Grammy® Award-winning mezzo-soprano Kelley O'Connor.

America @ 250: Spano Conducts Bernstein + Berlioz

Thursday, May 7, 2026, 8pm

Saturday, May 9, 2026, 8pm

Robert Spano, conductor

Zhenwei Shi, viola

Conrad Tao, piano

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

BERLIOZ: *Harold in Italy*

BERNSTEIN: Symphony No. 2, "The Age of Anxiety"

Two wartime poets expressed disillusionment; two composers spun their poems into evocative musical scores. Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Principal Violist Zhenwei Shi stands in for Childe Harold in Berlioz's picturesque *Harold in Italy*. Robert Spano presents the "fearless" piano virtuoso Conrad Tao in Bernstein's plaintive and sassy symphony "*The Age of Anxiety*," inspired by W.H. Auden's Pulitzer Prize-winning poem.

About Robert Spano

Robert Spano, conductor, pianist, composer, and teacher, is known worldwide for the intensity of his artistry and distinctive communicative abilities, creating a sense of inclusion and warmth among musicians and audiences that is unique among American orchestras. Music Director of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra (FWSO) since August 2022 Spano will continue there through July 2031, shaping the artistic direction of the orchestra and driving its continued growth. This season, Spano also steps into the role of Music Director of the Washington National Opera (WNO) for a three-year term. An avid mentor to rising artists, he is responsible for nurturing the careers of numerous celebrated composers, conductors,

and performers. As Music Director of the Aspen Music Festival and School since 2011, he oversees the programming of more than 300 events and educational programs for 630 students and young performers; he also directs the Aspen Conducting Academy, which offers participants unparalleled training and valuable podium experience. After twenty seasons as Music Director with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO), he now serves as its Music Director Laureate. He also becomes Principal Guest Conductor of the Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra & Music School this season, where he previously served as Principal Conductor.

In his fourth season as music director of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, Spano leads more than six symphonic programs, including a world premiere by Michael Gandolfi. Spano leads two productions at Washington National Opera in 2025-2026: the company's production of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and a new production of Robert Ward's Pulitzer Prize- and Tony Award®-winning opera *The Crucible*. Other highlights of the season include a return to the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra for two programs celebrating the 250th anniversary of America's independence and guest conducting appearances with the Louisville Orchestra, Nashville Symphony, San Diego Symphony, and Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. Spano's newest recording as a pianist and composer is a collaboration with mezzo-soprano Kelley O'Connor, "Songs of Orpheus," a series of song cycles by Edvard Grieg, Claude Debussy, George Crumb, and Spano himself, on Sono Luminus (August 22, 2025).

Robert Spano made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 2019, leading the US premiere of Nico Muhly's *Marnie*. Recent concert highlights include several world-premiere performances, including *The Sacrifice of Isaac* by Jonathan Leshnoff with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra; Steven Mackey's *Aluminum Flowers* and James Ra's *Te Deum* with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra; Jake Heggie's *Earth 2.0* with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra; a new production of *Fidelio* with the Washington National Opera; *Of Earth and Sky: Tales From the Motherland* by Brian Raphael Nabors with the FWSO and Rhode Island Philharmonic; and *Voy a Dormir* by Bryce Dessner at Carnegie Hall, with the Orchestra of St. Luke's and mezzo-soprano Kelley O'Connor.

With a discography of critically acclaimed recordings for Telarc, Deutsche Grammophon, and ASO Media, Robert Spano has garnered four Grammy™ Awards and eight nominations with the Atlanta Symphony. Spano is on faculty at Oberlin Conservatory and has received honorary doctorates from Bowling Green State University, the Curtis Institute of Music, Emory University, and Oberlin. Maestro Spano is a recipient of the Georgia Governor's Award for the Arts and Humanities and is one of two classical musicians inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame.

About Sir Stephen Hough

Named by *The Economist* as one of Twenty Living Polymaths, Sir Stephen Hough combines a distinguished career of a concert pianist with those of a composer and writer. In recognition of his contribution to cultural life, he became the first classical performer to be given a MacArthur Fellowship and was awarded a Knighthood for Services to Music in the Queen's Birthday Honours 2022.

In a career spanning over 40 years, Hough has played regularly with most of the world's leading orchestras, including televised and filmed appearances with the Berlin, London, China, Seoul and New York Philharmonic Orchestras, and the Concertgebouw, Budapest Festival and the NHK Symphony Orchestras. He has been a regular guest of recital series and festivals worldwide, including Carnegie Hall,

London's Royal Festival Hall, Salzburg, Verbier, La Roque-d'Anthéron, Aspen, Tanglewood, Aldeburgh and Edinburgh.

Sir Stephen Hough opens his 2025/26 season at the Elbphilharmonie, launching the Hamburg Staatsorchester's season under its new music director Omer Meir Wellber with Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3, for which he has composed a brand-new second movement. Over the following 12 months, he gives more than 60 concerts/recitals across three continents, appearing with leading orchestras in the US, Europe, and Asia. This season also marks the Asian premiere of his Piano Concerto *The World of Yesterday*—named after Stefan Zweig's memoir—with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, followed by its Korean premiere with Symphony S.O.N.G. His season also features a series of high-profile recital appearances, including Wigmore Hall in London and Klavierfestival Ruhr in Germany. His Piano Quintet (*Les Noces Rouges*), inspired by an episode in American novelist Willa Cather's *My Ántonia*, and commissioned by the Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society in 2024, will receive its European and UK premieres at the National Concert Hall in Dublin and Southbank Centre in London.

Hough's discography of over 70 recordings has garnered awards including the Diapason d'Or de l'Année, several GRAMMY nominations, and eight Gramophone Awards including Record of the Year and the Gold Disc. For Hyperion he has recorded the complete piano concertos of Beethoven, Brahms, Liszt, Mendelssohn, Rachmaninov, Saint-Saëns and Tchaikovsky as well as celebrated solo recordings of the Final Piano Pieces of Brahms, Chopin's complete nocturnes, waltzes, ballades and scherzi, as well as recitals of Schumann, Schubert, Franck, Debussy and Mompou. Recent releases include an album of Hough's own Piano Concerto in March 2025 with the Hallé Orchestra and Sir Mark Elder.

As a composer, Hough's *Fanfare Toccata* was commissioned for the 2022 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition and performed by all 30 competitors. His 2021 String Quartet No.1 *Les Six Rencontres* was written for and recorded by the Takács Quartet for Hyperion Records. Hough's body of songs, choral and instrumental works have been commissioned by Musée du Louvre, National Gallery of London, Westminster Abbey, Westminster Cathedral, the Wigmore Hall, the Genesis Foundation, Gilmore International Keyboard Festival, the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation, BBC Sounds, and the Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet. His music is published by Josef Weinberger Ltd.

As an author, Hough's memoir *Enough: Scenes from Childhood*, was published by Faber & Faber in Spring 2023. It follows his 2019 collection of essays *Rough Ideas: Reflections on Music and More* which received a Royal Philharmonic Society Award and was named one of the Financial Times' Books of the Year. His novel *The Final Retreat* was published in 2018 (Sylph Editions). He has also written for The New York Times, The Telegraph, The Times, The Guardian and the Spectator. Hough is an Honorary Bencher of the Middle Temple, an Honorary Member of the Royal Philharmonic Society, an Honorary Fellow of Cambridge University's Girton College, the International Chair of Piano Studies and a Companion of the Royal Northern College of Music and is on the faculty of The Juilliard School in New York.

About Kelley O'Connor

The Grammy® Award-winning mezzo-soprano Kelley O'Connor is one of the most compelling vocal artists of her generation. She is known for a commanding intensity on stage, a velvet vocal tone, and the ability to create sheer magic in her interpretations. O'Connor performs and inhabits a broad selection of repertoire, from Beethoven, Mahler and Brahms to Dessner, Corigliano and Adams; she is sought after by many of today's most accomplished composers. She performs with leading orchestras and conductors

around the world, with preeminent artists in recitals and chamber music, and with highly acclaimed opera companies in the U.S. and abroad.

In the 2025–2026 season, Kelley O'Connor returns to the Aspen Music festival for the world premiere of Christopher Theofanidis's *Siddhartha, She*, under the baton of Robert Spano. She opens the Grand Rapids Symphony season with Beethoven 9 and performs the work again with the San Francisco Symphony; joins the New World, and Fort Worth Symphonies for Peter Lieberson's *Neruda Songs*; appears with the Colorado and Winston-Salem Symphonies for Handel's *Messiah*; sings Mahler 2 with the Indianapolis Symphony; returns to the Atlanta Symphony for Bernstein's "Jeremiah" Symphony; and appears with the Nashville Symphony in two programs: Verdi's *Requiem* and Bernstein's "Jeremiah."

Recently, O'Connor has premiered an extended version of Thomas Adès's *America (A Prophecy)* in her debut with the Gewandhausorchester under Andris Nelsons; performed Mahler's Second Symphony with the Kansas City Symphony Orchestra and his Third Symphony with the San Francisco Symphony; John Adams's *El Niño* with the Houston Symphony; and a gala performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the New York Philharmonic to celebrate the opening of the newly renovated David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center.

Sought after by many of the most heralded composers of the modern day, Kelley O'Connor has recently premiered works by John Corigliano, Kareem Roustom, Joby Talbot, and Bryce Dessner. John Adams wrote the title role of *The Gospel According to the Other Mary* for O'Connor and she has performed the work, both in concert and in the Peter Sellars fully staged production, under the batons of John Adams, Gustavo Dudamel, Grant Gershon, Gianandrea Noseda, Sir Simon Rattle, and David Robertson. She continues to be the eminent living interpreter of Peter Lieberson's *Neruda Songs*, having performed this moving set of songs with orchestras around the world. She also created the role of Federico García Lorca in Osvaldo Golijov's *Ainadamar*, for which she has received unanimous critical acclaim.

Operatic highlights include her Seattle Opera debut as Anna in a concert version of Berlioz's *Les Troyens*, the title role of Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* presented by Boston Lyric Opera in a new production by Broadway theater director Sarna Lapine, *Carmen* with Los Angeles Opera, Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, *Madama Butterfly* in a new production by Lillian Groag at the Boston Lyric Opera and at the Cincinnati Opera, Berlioz's *Béatrice et Bénédicte* at Opera Boston, *Falstaff* with the Santa Fe Opera, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Canadian Opera Company.

For her debut with the Atlanta Symphony in *Ainadamar*, Kelley O'Connor joined Robert Spano for performances and a Grammy® Award-winning Deutsche Grammophon recording. Her recording catalogue also includes Mahler's Third Symphony with Jaap van Zweden and the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Lieberson's *Neruda Songs* and Michael Kurth's *Everything Lasts Forever* with Robert Spano and the Atlanta Symphony, Adams' *The Gospel According to the Other Mary* with Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with Franz Welser-Möst and the Cleveland Orchestra. O'Connor's newest recording, a collaboration with pianist and composer Robert Spano, is "Songs of Orpheus," a series of song cycles by Edvard Grieg, Claude Debussy, George Crumb, and Spano himself, on Sono Luminus.

About Zhenwei Shi

Zhenwei Shi was appointed principal violist of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra in 2019 at the age of twenty-three.

He received first prize in the 2010 International String Players Competition in Hong Kong and third prize in the 2014 Johansen International Young String Players Competition in the U.S.A. He was also awarded the Special Jury Prize from the 2016 XII Lionel Tertis Viola International Competition and the Regent's Award from the Duchess of Gloucester of British Royalty and Royal Academy of Music.

As a Drake Calleja Trust and ABRSM scholar in the U.K. since 2016, Mr. Shi has performed as a solo violist and chamber musician at prestigious venues such as Buckingham Palace, Wigmore Hall, Royal Festival Hall, Shanghai Concert Hall, and on the BBC's In Tune broadcast.

Since 2018, he has been a frequent guest player with the San Francisco Symphony and Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Shi has performed with the Georgian Chamber Players since 2019. He was invited to be an artist-faculty member at the Aspen Music Festival and School in 2020.

About Conrad Tao

Conrad Tao is a pianist and composer celebrated for his boundary-defying artistry as well as his powerful performances of traditional repertoire. Described by *New York Magazine* as "the kind of musician who is shaping the future of classical music," and praised by *The New York Times* for his "probing intellect and open-hearted vision," Tao appears regularly as a soloist with leading orchestras and at major venues across the world.

In the 2025–26 season, Tao returns to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra as both soloist and recitalist, performing Bartók's Piano Concerto No. 3 with Karina Canellakis and later presenting a recital program featuring Gershwin song arrangements alongside works by Schoenberg, Strayhorn, Schumann, and others. Recital highlights include debuts at Berlin's Philharmonie and Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie, as well as returns to Klavierfestival Ruhr, and to the Celebrity Series of Boston, and the Seattle Symphony with *Poetry and Fairy Tales*, a program blending works by David Fulmer, Rebecca Saunders, Todd Moellenberg, Brahms, and Ravel.

Tao reunites with Robert Spano for performances of John Adams' *Century Rolls* (San Diego Symphony) and Bernstein's *The Age of Anxiety* (Atlanta Symphony). He also joins Matthias Pintscher and the Konzerthausorchester Berlin for Pintscher's *NUR*, and travels to Tokyo to perform Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 17 with the NHK Symphony and Jaap van Zweden. He makes his harpsichord debut at Princeton University in Patricia Kopatchinskaja's *Dies Irae*.

Recent highlights include his return to Carnegie Hall with Debussy's *12 Études* and his original composition *Keyed In*, as well as appearances with the San Francisco Symphony and Nicholas Collon, Philadelphia Orchestra and Marin Alsop, Boston Symphony and Dima Slobodeniouk, New York Philharmonic and Jaap van Zweden, and Cleveland Orchestra and Jahja Ling. In 2024, he also toured Europe with the Kansas City Symphony and Matthias Pintscher to mark the 100th anniversary of

Rhapsody in Blue, with sold-out performances at the Elbphilharmonie, Berlin Philharmonie, and Concertgebouw.

Tao continues performing his own works, including *Flung Out*, an homage to Gershwin, which he played recently at the Aspen Festival, and *The Hand*, a companion to Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1, which was commissioned and performed by the Kansas City Symphony. His orchestral work *Everything Must Go* premiered with the New York Philharmonic and later in Europe with the Antwerp Symphony. He also tours *Counterpoint*, his collaboration with dancer Caleb Teicher, and performs regularly with the Junction Trio alongside Stefan Jackiw and Jay Campbell. Additional recent collaborators include vocalist Charmaine Lee, artist Avram Finkelstein, choreographer Miguel Gutierrez, and brass quartet The Westerlies.

Tao's acclaimed recordings include *Voyages*, *Pictures*, and *American Rage* (all on Warner), as well as *the loser* by David Lang, and *Bricolage* with The Westerlies.

He is a recipient of the Avery Fisher Career Grant, the Gilmore Young Artist Award, and a New York Dance and Performance "Bessie" Award for his collaboration with Caleb Teicher on *More Forever*.

About the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

Under the leadership of Music Director Nathalie Stutzmann, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO) offers live performances, media initiatives, and learning programs that unite, educate and enrich our community through the engaging and transformative power of orchestral music experiences. The ASO engages the diverse international community of our city, bringing people together in harmony—including our youngest citizens, with extensive opportunities for youth and families to experience the power of live orchestra music.

The Orchestra's range and depth are featured in more than 150 concerts each year, including the flagship Delta Classical Series, Movies in Concert, Family Concerts, Coca-Cola Holiday series, and many community and education concerts. In addition, the ASO presents many vibrant, wide-ranging events and artists through its Delta Atlanta Symphony Hall Live presentations. The ASO also performs regularly with the ASO Chorus, originally founded by Robert Shaw, and currently under the direction of Norman Mackenzie. The Chorus is featured on nine of the ASO's 27 GRAMMY® Award-winning recordings.

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