



Jonathon Heyward Renews Contract as Renée and Robert Belfer Music Director of the Festival Orchestra of Lincoln Center Through 2029

Announcing Three Commissions Premiering in 2025 and 2026

NEW YORK, NY (January 13, 2025) – Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) today announced **an extension for Renée and Robert Belfer Music Director Jonathon Heyward’s contract** with the Festival Orchestra of Lincoln Center through the 2029 season.

In recognition of Heyward's commitment to furthering the Orchestra's impact across Lincoln Center's campus and the city of New York, Artistic Director is being added to his title, making him **Music Director & Artistic Director of the Festival Orchestra of Lincoln Center**, effective immediately.

Heyward’s leadership over the next several years will continue to expand on the Orchestra’s legacy of accessible and engaging concerts that uphold the traditions of classical music while paving the way for its future.

“I feel such a profound connection to the musicians of this Orchestra and am thrilled to be continuing this chapter,” said **Jonathon Heyward, Renée and Robert Belfer Music Director & Artistic Director of the Festival Orchestra of Lincoln Center**. “My inaugural summer in 2024 was truly special—filled with extraordinary music-making and incredible moments that can only happen in a city like New York. I look forward to many more summers forging new ties across campus and the city at large. Together, we will continue to grow and explore time-tested repertoire alongside new discoveries, deepening the unique sense of community that exists inside the concert hall. This is just the beginning.”

Building on a banner inaugural season in 2024 that included two commissions from New York-based composers Huang Ruo and Hannah Kendall, Heyward will lead commissions by three dynamic composers whose works will premiere across the next two summers as part of *Summer for the City*.

The culminating performance of the 2025 Orchestra season sees the premiere of **a commission by James Lee III**, the current Composer-in-Residence with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, where Heyward also serves as Music Director. Two commissions are featured in the 2026 season: **a Double Concerto by Billy Childs for Anthony McGill** (Principal Clarinet at the New York Philharmonic) **and Demarre McGill** (Principal Flute at the Seattle Symphony), and **a Cello Concerto by Jessie Montgomery for Abel Selaocoe**.

The 2025 season spans past and present with pieces by **Beethoven, Mozart, Clara Schumann**, and more performed alongside contemporary works by **Michael Abels, Osvaldo Golijov, and Anna Clyne**, among others. This summer also sees Heyward's continued **exploration of Robert Schumann's four symphonies through the lens of mental health, presented in collaboration with Jameel Arts & Health Lab, established with the World Health Organization (WHO)**. He leads the Festival Orchestra in Schumann's Fourth Symphony in 2025 and Schumann's First Symphony in 2026. Additional highlights of the 2025 season include the continued collaborations with the **New York Philharmonic** through their **Very Young Composers Program (VYC)** and the **New York City Public Schools' Summer Arts Institute (SAI)**, emphasizing Heyward's commitment to education and community outreach, as well as the return of the popular **"Symphony of Choice" concert**—giving audiences the opportunity to vote on the evening's program, choosing from a menu of repertoire from the summer season ahead.

A special focus of the Festival Orchestra of Lincoln Center is providing new entry points to the unparalleled classical music and artistry happening across campus year-round. In collaboration with the **Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program**, the Festival Orchestra will embark on an in-depth exploration of the "Da Ponte" operas—*The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan tutte*—three operas by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart based on libretti by poet Lorenzo da Ponte, across the three summer seasons 2027-2029.

"Lincoln Center was founded on the belief that the arts are for all, and Jonathon's leadership of this Orchestra reflects this promise," said **Mariko Silver, President and CEO of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts**. "From dynamic repertoire spanning composers old and new to inspiring audiences of all ages, we look forward to many more summers with Jonathon at the helm of this great Orchestra."

“We are incredibly grateful to be continuing this exciting journey with Jonathon and the Festival Orchestra,” said **Shanta Thake, Ehrenkranz Chief Artistic Officer of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts**. “His passion and commitment to making classical music accessible to audiences of all kinds is felt the moment you walk into the concert hall, and we are thrilled to be expanding his role and impact.”

Thake continued: “Jonathon’s vision for the Orchestra goes well beyond the stage. As we continue to integrate artists more deeply into the fabric of everything we do, we are proud to elevate and support this important work alongside the other artistic visionaries across campus.”

“My Orchestra colleagues and I are thrilled to be continuing this chapter with Jonathon Heyward,” said **Ann Kim, Cellist, Festival Orchestra of Lincoln Center & Orchestra Committee Chair**. “We feel a deep sense of excitement for the future and are grateful for Jonathon’s commitment, fresh interpretations, and wonderful spirit of collaboration. Together we will continue to build on this Orchestra’s legacy—bringing iconic works in conversation with new and rediscovered pieces, and making classical music more accessible.”

Core to the Festival Orchestra of Lincoln Center’s mission is expanding audiences for classical music with dynamic repertoire, educational initiatives, and affordable ticketing options. In recent years, the Orchestra has made significant strides in providing greater access and expanding its audiences—drawing younger and more diverse concertgoers, more families with children, and more residents from NYC’s outer boroughs. Recent data has also shown a sharp increase in repeat attendance: during the 2024 season, the number of audience members booking four or more Orchestra concerts more than doubled when compared with 2019. All Festival Orchestra performances will remain Choose-What-You-Pay, starting at \$5.

The concluding concert from Jonathon Heyward’s inaugural season as Music Director of the Festival Orchestra of Lincoln Center is **now available to stream on [allarts.org](https://www.allarts.org)**, featuring works by Bach, Schumann, and a world premiere by Hannah Kendall. It will **air on the ALL ARTS broadcast channel on February 26, at 8pm**.

More details about the 2025 season of the Festival Orchestra of Lincoln Center and the fourth annual *Summer for the City* will be announced in the coming months.

Click [here](#) for imagery. More information available [here](#).

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About Jonathon Heyward

Jonathon Heyward is forging a career as one of the most exciting conductors on the international scene. He currently serves as Music Director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, having made his debut with the BSO in March 2022 in three performances that included their first-ever performance of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 15. In summer 2024, Jonathon became Renée and Robert Belfer Music Director of the Festival Orchestra of Lincoln Center. This appointment followed a highly acclaimed Lincoln Center debut with the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra in summer 2022, as part of their *Summer for the City* festival.

Most recently, Jonathon completed his four-year tenure as Chief Conductor of the Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie. In summer 2021, he took part in an intense, two-week residency with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain which led to a highly acclaimed BBC Proms debut. According to *The Guardian*, Jonathon delivered “a fast and fearless performance of Beethoven's Eroica Symphony, in which loud chords exploded, repeating like fireworks in the hall's dome, and the quietest passages barely registered. It was exuberant, exhilarating stuff.”

Jonathon's recent and future guest conducting highlights in the United Kingdom include debuts and re-invitations with the London Philharmonic, London Symphony, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra Ireland, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Royal Academy of Music, and Scottish Chamber Orchestra. In continental Europe this season, Jonathon makes distinguished debuts with NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester and Danish National Symphony. Successful European highlights of recent seasons, included collaborations with the Castilla y León Symphony, Galicia Symphony, Brussels Philharmonic, Orchestre National Bordeaux Aquitaine, and MDR-Leipzig Symphony.

In high demand in the USA, and in addition to his Music Director positions, Jonathon conducts prominent orchestras such as the New York Philharmonic, the Atlanta, Detroit, Houston, Seattle, Dallas, and St Louis symphonies, and the Minnesota Orchestra. In 2021, Jonathon made his Wolf Trap debut conducting the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington DC, and in 2023 he made his debut with the Chicago Symphony at the Ravinia Festival.

Equally at home on the opera stage, Jonathon made his Royal Opera House debut with Hannah Kendall's *Knife of Dawn*, having also conducted a Kurt Weill's *Lost in the Stars* with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, as well as the world premiere of Giorgio

Battistelli's new opera, *Wake*, in a production by Graham Vick for the Birmingham Opera Company.

Born in Charleston, South Carolina, Jonathon began his musical training as a cellist at the age of ten and started conducting while still at school. He studied conducting at the Boston Conservatory of Music, where he became assistant conductor of the prestigious institution's opera department and of the Boston Opera Collaborative, and he received postgraduate lessons from Sian Edwards at London's Royal Academy of Music. Before leaving the Academy, he was appointed assistant conductor of the Hallé Orchestra, where he was mentored by Sir Mark Elder, and became Music Director of the Hallé Youth Orchestra. In 2023, he was named a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music; an honour reserved for Academy alumni.

Jonathon's commitment to education and community outreach work deepened during his three years with the Hallé and flourished during his post as Chief Conductor of the Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie. He is equally committed to including new music within his imaginative concert programs.

About the Festival Orchestra of Lincoln Center

The Festival Orchestra of Lincoln Center is a chamber orchestra that comes together each summer to celebrate and share the beauty of classical music. The ensemble, formerly the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra, is comprised of world class musicians who perform year-round as soloists, chamber musicians, and in other ensembles across Lincoln Center's campus and around the globe.

About Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) is a cultural and civic cornerstone of New York City. The primary advocate for the entire Lincoln Center campus, our strategic priorities include: fostering collaboration and deepening impact across the Lincoln Center resident organizations; championing inclusion and increasing the accessibility and reach of Lincoln Center's work; and nurturing innovation on stage and off to help ensure the arts are at the center of civic life for all. LCPA presents hundreds of programs each year, offered primarily for free and choose-what-you-pay, including many specially designed for young audiences, families, and those with disabilities.

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