

PRESS RELEASE

December 14, 2022

Featuring Angélique Kidjo, Philip Glass' Symphony No. 12 Receives its NY Premiere at Carnegie Hall with Dennis Russell Davies & the Filharmonie Brno



Angélique Kidjo (photo: Patrick Fouque)



Dennis Russell Davies and Philip Glass (photo: Reinhard Winkler)

Described by the *Los Angeles Times* as a "stupendous symphony" that goes "where no symphony has gone before," Philip Glass' Symphony No. 12 comes to Carnegie Hall this February for its New York premiere performance. Featuring five-time Grammy Award-winning singer-songwriter Angélique Kidjo, it concludes Glass' trilogy of David Bowie-inspired symphonies. "Where Bowie is cool, Kidjo is hot, and every so often it's the other way around. She is an observer of him, illuminating on every level" (*LAT*, Jan. 2019).

Widely considered to be one of the most innovative and adventurous conductors/programmers in the classical music world, Dennis Russell Davies leads the famed Czech symphony orchestra Filharmonie Brno in a program that pairs Philip Glass' twelfth symphony with two works by quintessential Czech composers: *Thunderbolt P-47*, the charming scherzo by Martinů, and together with organ virtuoso Christian Schmitt, Janáček's *Taras Bulba*, in which "Russell Davies beautifully integrate[s] the agitated rhythms of battle, stark tragedy, a wild mazurka and a triumphant apotheosis with the sonic splendour of full orchestra, plus organ and chiming bells" (*Ilkley Gazette*, England, Oct. 2022).

Event Information

Date: Wednesday, February 8, 2023

Time: 8:00 PM

Location: Stern Auditorium/Perelman Stage at Carnegie Hall

Dennis Russell Davies, Chief Conductor & Artistic Director

Angélique Kidjo, vocalist

Christian Schmitt, organ

Program

BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ: *Thunderbolt-P47*LEOŠ JANÁČEK: *Taras Bulba*

PHILIP GLASS: Symphony No. 12 *New York Premiere

Tickets

<https://www.carnegiehall.org/Calendar/2023/02/08/Filharmonie-Brno-0800PM>
TICKETS
START AT
\$35

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The US Tour of Filharmonie Brno is sponsored by Brno City Municipality, South Moravian Region, Ministry of Culture Czech Republic, and EU Funds.



south moravia



Dennis Russel Davies, Chief Conductor & Artistic Director

Dennis Russell Davies' activities as opera and orchestral conductor, and as pianist and chamber musician, are characterized by an extensive repertory stretching from Baroque to the latest music of our time. Widely considered to be one of the most innovative and adventurous conductors/programmers in the classical music world, Davies has successfully challenged and inspired audiences on both sides of the Atlantic as well as in Japan.



He is noted for exciting, well-structured concerts and for his close working relationships with such varied composers as Luciano Berio, William Bolcom, John Cage, Philip Glass, Heinz Winbeck, Aaron Copland, Lou Harrison, Laurie Anderson, Arvo Pärt, Hans Werner Henze, Kurt Schwertsik, Thomas Larcher, Balduin Sulzer, and Manfred Trojahn.

After first appointments as Music Director of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and Chief Conductor of the American Composers Orchestra, which he led for 25 years, Davies moved to Europe as General Music Director of the Staatsoper Stuttgart, then Opera Bonn and the Beethoven Orchestra Bonn. He subsequently led the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, and the Sinfonieorchester Basel.

In 2013, during his long and successful tenure in Linz as Chief Conductor of the Landestheater Linz and Bruckner Orchester Linz, Davies inaugurated the new Linzer Musiktheater conducting the World Premiere of Philip Glass/Peter Handke's *Spuren der Verirrten* and Strauss' *Rosenkavalier*.

As guest conductor in the USA, he has appeared with the orchestras of Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Boston, New York and Cleveland. In Europe he has worked regularly with the Concertgebouworkest and the Gewandhausorchester and has conducted the Berliner Philharmoniker, Filarmonica della Scala, the St. Petersburg Philharmonia, Orchestra of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, as well as the Hamburg and Munich Philharmonic Orchestras.

Recent opera engagements include a new production of Peter Eötvös' *Tri Sestry* in Frankfurt and multiple performances of *Salome* and *Wozzeck* at the Wiener Staatsoper.

He has conducted new productions at the Bayreuth and Salzburg Festivals, the Metropolitan Opera New York, the Hamburgische and Bayerische Staatsoper, the Opéra National de Paris, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Teatro Real in Madrid - a total of more than 140 new productions by many of the theater world's most important stage directors.

Dennis Russell Davies' rich discography includes complete recordings of the symphonies of Anton Bruckner and Philip Glass (Bruckner Orchester Linz), Joseph Haydn (Stuttgarter Kammerorchester) and Arthur Honegger (Sinfonieorchester Basel). With his wife and duo partner Maki Namekawa he has recorded extensively, including works by Mozart, Beethoven, Shostakovitch, Glass and Stravinsky's original four-hand versions of *Le Sacre de Printemps*, *Firebird*, and *Petrouchka*, which he also recorded with the Sinfonieorchester Basel.

Born in Toledo, Ohio in 1944, Davies studied piano and conducting at the Juilliard School in New York. From 1997-2012 he was professor for orchestral conducting at the University Mozarteum Salzburg; beginning in September 2020 he will be guest professor at the Janáček Academy of Music and performing Arts in Brno.

Since 2009, Dennis Russell Davies is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and has been awarded the German "Bundesverdienstkreuz", the Austrian "Ehrenkreuz für Wissenschaft und Kunst", as well as the title "Commandeur des Arts et Lettres" bestowed by the French Government.



Filharmonie Brno

The roots of the Filharmonie Brno go back to the 1870s, when the young Leoš Janáček endeavoured to establish a Czech symphony orchestra in Brno. The works of the famous twentieth-century composer constitute the core of the orchestra's repertory, and to this day the Filharmonie Brno considers itself to be the authentic performer of his oeuvre. Since its foundation, the orchestra has given well over 300 performances of works by Janáček globally, and has recorded Janáček's complete symphonic and cantata works.

The present orchestra was created in 1956 by merging the Brno-based Radio and Regional orchestras, and since then has been among the leading Czech orchestras in terms of both size and importance. On its tours abroad, it has performed about a thousand concerts throughout Europe, the United States of America, Latin America, and both the Middle and Far East. The Filharmonie Brno is a regular guest at festivals in the Czech Republic and abroad, frequently joining forces for these appearances with the Czech Philharmonic Choir Brno.

Throughout its history, the orchestra has had a number of Czech and international conductors, including Kurt Masur, Yehudi Menuhin, Karl Anserl, Sir Charles Mackerras, Bretislav Bakala, František Jílek, Petr Altrichter, Jirí Belohlávek, Jakub Hruša and Tomáš Netopil, and has thrived on musical partnerships with a number of exceptional soloists such as Yefim Bronfman, Rudolf Buchbinder, Elina Garanca, Sophia Jaffé, Wilhelm Kempff, Olga Kern, Gidon Kremer, John Lill, Johannes Moser, Julian Rachlin, Sviatoslav Richter, Fazil Say, and Eva Urbanova, to name only a few. Maestro Davies is in his third season as the orchestra's Chief Conductor and Artistic Director.

The orchestra regularly records for the Czech Radio, Czech Television and a number of music labels such as Supraphon, Sony Music, IMG Records, BMG, Classic FM, Universal, Channel 4, also receiving a growing number of commissions from global clientele through the agency Czech Orchestra Recordings.

Since 2000 the Filharmonie Brno has been organizing the open-air summer festival at the Špilberk castle in Brno, and in 2012 has become the organizer of the renowned traditional festivals Moravian Autumn, Easter Festival of Sacred Music and Exposition of New Music. The orchestra sponsors the Internationally-lauded children's choir Kantiléna, has been involved since 2010 in the young musicians' festival Mozart's Children, and in 2014 founded the Filharmonie Brno Orchestra Academy.

Today Filharmonie Brno is not only a strong player in the field of symphonic music at home and abroad, but also the primary organizer of the musical season in the second largest Czech city, an active instigator of festivals and a creative leader in orchestral programming.

Angélique Kidjo, vocalist

Five-time Grammy Award winner Angélique Kidjo is one of the greatest artists in international music today, a creative force with sixteen albums to her name. Time Magazine has called her "Africa's premier diva", and named her one of the 100 most influential people in the world for 2021. The BBC has included her in its list of the continent's 50 most iconic figures, and in 2011 The Guardian listed her as one of their Top 100 Most Inspiring Women in the World. Forbes Magazine has ranked Angélique as the first woman in their list of the Most Powerful Celebrities in Africa. She is the recent recipient of the prestigious 2015 Crystal Award given by the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, the 2016 Amnesty International Ambassador of Conscience Award, the 2018 German Sustainability Award, and the 2023 Vilcek Prize in music.

As a performer, her striking voice, stage presence and fluency in multiple cultures and languages have won respect from her peers and expanded her following across national borders. Kidjo has cross-pollinated the West African traditions of her childhood in Benin with elements of American R&B, funk and jazz, as well as influences from Europe and Latin America.

After exploring the roads of Africa's diaspora, offering a refreshing and electrifying take on the Talking Heads album *Remain In Light*, and reflecting on an icon of the Americas - celebrated salsa singer Celia Cruz, on Kidjo's latest album, *Mother Nature*, the award-winning luminary joins forces with many of her musical progeny, including some of the most captivating young creators of West African music, Afrobeat, Afro-pop, dancehall, hip-hop, and alt-R&B. The result is a truly visionary body of work, rooted in a deep understanding of musical tradition yet endlessly forward-thinking and inventive. *Mother Nature* fulfills a promise Kidjo first made upon accepting the award for Best Global Music Album at the 2016 Grammys, then reiterated after winning the Best World Music Album prize in 2020 and proudly proclaiming: "The new generation of artists coming from Africa are going to take you by storm, and the time has come." In sharing this album with the world, Kidjo hopes that her songs might inspire the kind of togetherness that ultimately leads to transcendent change. "This album is a love letter to Mother Earth and all the values we hold dear: truth, trust, love, connection," says Kidjo. "For our own survival, we need to recognize the humanity that we all share and learn how to live together. There's just no other way."

The Grammy-Award winning *Celia* was recorded in New York and Paris, produced by David Donatien and mixed by Russell Elevado (D'Angelo, Kamasi Washington). Over the course of 10 beloved songs from Cruz's extensive catalog but with special focus on her work from the 1950s, Angélique's voice soars in lockstep with a grand presentation of rhythmic touchstones that delve deep into the history of music from Africa and its influence on the music of Cuba. Her interpretation of The Talking Heads' classic 1980 album, *Remain in Light*, was recorded with superstar producer Jeff Bhasker (Kanye West, Rolling Stones, Beyoncé), taking classic songs such as "Crosseyed and Painless," "Once in a Lifetime," and "Born Under Punches (The Heat Goes On)" and reinterpreting them with electrifying rhythms, African guitars, and layered backing vocals.

Kidjo's star-studded album *DJIN DJIN* won a Grammy Award for Best Contemporary World Album in 2008, and her album *OYO* was nominated for the same award in 2011. In January 2014 Angélique's first book, a memoir titled *Spirit Rising: MyLife, My Music* (Harper Collins) and her twelfth album, *EVE* (Savoy/429 Records), were released to critical acclaim. *EVE* later went on to win the Grammy Award for Best World Music Album in 2015, and her historic, orchestral album *Sings with the Orchestre Philharmonique Du Luxembourg* (Savoy/429 Records) won a Grammy for Best World Music Album in 2016.

Angélique has gone on to perform this genre-bending work with several international orchestras and symphonies including the Bruckner Orchestra, The Royal Scottish National Orchestra, and the Philharmonie de Paris. Her collaboration with Philip Glass, *IFÉ: Three Yorùbá Songs*, made its US debut to a sold out concert with the San Francisco Symphony in June 2015. In 2019, Angélique helped Philip Glass premiere his latest work, *Symphony #12 "Lodger"*, a symphonic re-imagining of the David Bowie album of the same name, at a sold out performance at the Los Angeles Philharmonic. In addition to performing this new orchestral concert, Angélique continues to tour globally performing the high-energy concert she's become famous for with her four-piece band.

Angélique also travels the world advocating on behalf of children in her capacity as a UNICEF and OXFAM goodwill Ambassador. At the G7 Summit in 2019, President Macron of France named Kidjo as the spokesperson for the AFAWA initiative (Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa) to help close the financing gap for women entrepreneurs in Africa. She has also created her own charitable foundation, Batonga, dedicated to support the education of young girls in Africa.



Angélique Kidjo (photo: Patrick Fouque)

Christian Schmitt, organ

Since his debuts with the Berlin Philharmonic under Sir Simon Rattle and the at Salzburg Festival with Magdalena Kožená, Christian Schmitt has become one of the world's most sought-after organists. He is praised for his virtuosic and charismatic playing. In 2021/22 he is an "Artist in Focus" of the Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich as well as curator of the „International Organ Days" and he inaugurates the new organ under the direction of Paavo Järvi. He is also "Artist in Residence" at the Staatstheater Augsburg in 2021/22. Since 2014, he has served as Principal Organist of the Bamberger Symphoniker, where he also curates the organ series for the Bamberg Concert Hall.



Recent highlights include his debut at Walt Disney Concert Hall presented by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, performances with the Staatskapelle Berlin conducted by Daniel Barenboim, the Japanese premiere of Toshio Hosokawa's "Embrace - Light and Shadow" with the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra at Suntory Hall, and the release of his most recent recording of Hindemith's Chamber Music No. 7 with conductor Christoph Eschenbach.

Christian Schmitt has played the organs at the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Konzerthaus Berlin, Berlin Philharmonie, Wiener Musikverein, Gewandhaus Leipzig, and Maison Symphonique Montréal with conductors and soloists including Philippe Herreweghe, Jakub Hruša, Marek Janowski, Cornelius Meister, Manfred Honeck, Sibylla Rubens, Matthias Höfs, and Michael Volle. Christian Schmitt's discography currently includes around 40 recordings. For Deutsche Grammophon, Schmitt recorded two CDs for the project 'Bach 333 - Die neue Gesamtausgabe'. He has also recorded an album of works for voice and organ with soprano Magdalena Kožena, which was released by Deutsche Grammophon in 2014. In 2013, the organist was awarded an ECHO Klassik for his recording of Widor's organ symphonies, Opp. 42.3 and 69.

A passionate educator, Christian is a guest lecturer at universities worldwide. Since the winter semester of 2021, he has been teaching at Codarts University Rotterdam as Professor of Organ and successor to Ben van Oostens.

Christian Schmitt studied organ with Daniel Roth (Paris), Leo Krämer (Saarbrücken), and James David Christie (Boston). He is an expert consultant for organ renovations and new construction of organs in Berlin, Nuremberg, Zurich, Lucerne, and Brno. His latest project is a digitally sampled version of the organ of the Philharmonie Essen for concerts with and in orchestras. The digital version of the famous organ, created in cooperation with a Dutch acoustics company, is transportable and easily adaptable to hall sizes and needs. Christian Schmitt has been a member of numerous international music competition juries and is involved in the music education project Rhapsody in School.

For more information:

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