

SERGEI PROKOFIEV
Symphony No. 4

**THE
CLEVELAND
ORCHESTRA
WELSER-MÖST**

PROKOFIEV

PROKOFIEV

SYMPHONY NO. 4

Composed 1929–30



Sergei Prokofiev, circa 1918

In 1947, 17 years after its premiere, Sergei Prokofiev made a revision of his Fourth Symphony (Op. 47) so radical that many commentators regard the revised version as a new work altogether. Its new opus number (Op. 112) supports that view.

But Prokofiev thought of both versions of this music as the natural outgrowth from his ballet *The Prodigal Son*, which he wrote in response to a commission from impresario Sergei Diaghilev and his Ballets Russes in 1928. The ballet was first performed in Paris with the composer conducting. At the same time, he was fashioning his Third Symphony out of the opera *The Fiery Angel*, frustrated by not being able to persuade any theater to stage it. He was also asked by Serge Koussevitzky

to compose something for the 50th anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, to be celebrated in 1930. His response was to offer a new symphony, which was already in his head, using *The Prodigal Son* along with music intended for, but not included in, the ballet.

It is said that Prokofiev declined the commission because the fee was too low, but he nonetheless allowed the Boston Symphony Orchestra to purchase the manuscript of the Fourth Symphony and premiere it. Much of it was in fact composed in the US during a lengthy tour that Prokofiev undertook in the early months of 1930. Its American reception in November of that year, after Prokofiev had returned to Europe, was only lukewarm, a response that was shared in Europe and the Soviet Union.

On the other hand, the Fifth Symphony, composed in 1944 after his return to the Soviet Union, was a success everywhere — and still is — which encouraged him to think again about the Fourth. Rather than simply revising the work, he rewrote it, expanding the size of the orchestra and adding nearly 15 minutes to its duration. Its connection to the original ballet was now remote, and it is in this form that the music has won its place as an important part of the composer's legacy.

The listener will be struck by the abundance of musical ideas in this work. Symphonic forms are present, but hidden. In the first movement, there is a startling contrast between the placid atmosphere which opens the work and the aggressive, noisy music that bursts in at regular intervals, strangely labeled “eroico” (heroic). It is as if two alien musics are at war, with no resolution.

As we know from Prokofiev's ballets, there is a sweet and sometimes childish side to his music, and this is to be heard here, especially in the middle two movements. Prokofiev was never afraid to write crystalline, exposed, expressive melodies, often high above the supporting accompaniment, or barely accompanied at all.

The finale recalls the Haydn-esque high spirits that inspired Prokofiev's First Symphony, the “Classical.” This is music reminding us that the rhythmic vitality possessed in full measure by Prokofiev is the essential mark of a great composer of ballet. ■

— Hugh Macdonald

SYMPHONY NO. 4 AT A GLANCE

Born

April 23, 1891, in Sontsivka, Ukraine

Died

March 5, 1953, in Moscow

World Premiere

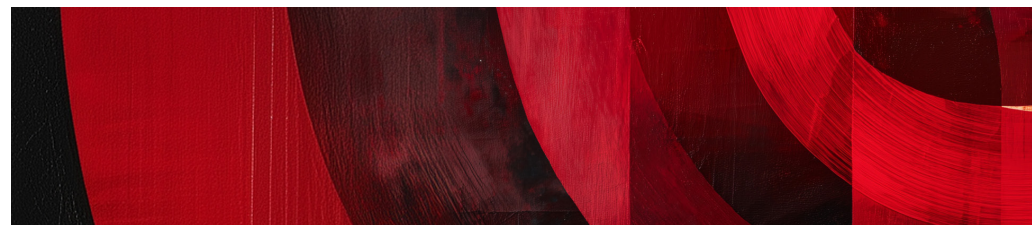
November 14, 1930, with Serge Koussevitzky leading the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The revised version premiered on March 11, 1950, with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Adrian Boult.

Cleveland Orchestra Premiere

May 4, 2023, led by Music Director Franz Welser-Möst

Orchestration

2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (triangle, woodblock, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, tambourine), piano, harp, and strings



The Recording



THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA
conducted by **FRANZ WELSER-MÖST**

SERGEI PROKOFIEV
Symphony No. 4 in C major, Op. 112

- Track 1 – I. Andante — Allegro eroico 14:31
- Track 2 – II. Andante tranquillo 9:10
- Track 3 – III. Moderato quasi allegretto 5:59
- Track 4 – IV. Allegro risoluto 10:20

*Recorded live in Mandel Concert Hall
at Severance Music Center
in Cleveland, Ohio,
on May 8 & 10, 2025*

*Recorded at 24bit 96kHz PCM
Stereo and Dolby Atmos mixes available*

About the Orchestra

Now firmly in its second century, The Cleveland Orchestra, under the leadership of Music Director Franz Welser-Möst since 2002, is one of the most sought-after performing ensembles in the world. Year after year, the ensemble exemplifies extraordinary artistic excellence, creative programming, and community engagement. *The New York Times* has called Cleveland “the best in America” for its virtuosity, elegance of sound, variety of color, and chamber-like musical cohesion.

Founded by Adella Prentiss Hughes, the Orchestra performed its inaugural concert in December 1918. By the middle of the century, decades of growth and sustained support had turned it into one of the most admired globally.

The past decade has seen an increasing number of young people attending concerts, bringing fresh attention to The Cleveland Orchestra’s legendary sound and committed programming. More recently, the Orchestra launched several bold digital projects, including the streaming platform Adella.live, the podcast *On a Personal Note*, and

its own recording label, a new chapter in the Orchestra’s long and distinguished recording and broadcast history. Together, they have captured the Orchestra’s unique artistry and the musical achievements of the Welser-Möst and Cleveland Orchestra partnership.

The 2025/26 season marks Franz Welser-Möst’s 24th year as Music Director, a period in which The Cleveland Orchestra has earned

unprecedented acclaim around the world, including a series of residencies at the Musikverein in Vienna, the first of its kind by an American orchestra, and a number of acclaimed opera presentations.

Since 1918, seven music directors — Nikolai Sokoloff, Artur Rodziński, Erich Leinsdorf, George Szell, Lorin Maazel, Christoph von Dohnányi, and Franz Welser-Möst — have guided and shaped the ensemble’s growth and

sound. Through concerts at home and on tour, broadcasts, and a catalog of acclaimed recordings, The Cleveland Orchestra is heard today by a growing group of fans around the world.

For more information, please visit clevelandorchestra.com. ■



Photo Aireonna McCall-Dube

The Cleveland Orchestra

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Franz Welser-Möst

Now in his 24th season, Franz Welser-Möst continues to shape an unmistakable sound culture as Music Director of The Cleveland Orchestra. Under his leadership, the Orchestra has earned repeated international acclaim for its musical excellence, reaffirmed its strong commitment to new music, and brought opera back to the stage of Severance Music Center. In recent years, the Orchestra also launched its own streaming platform, Adella.live, and a recording label. Today, it boasts one of the youngest audiences in the United States.

In addition to residencies in the US and Europe, Welser-Möst and the Orchestra perform regularly at the world's leading international festivals. Welser-Möst will remain Music Director until 2027, making him the longest-serving music director of The Cleveland Orchestra.

Welser-Möst enjoys a particularly close and productive artistic partnership with the Vienna Philharmonic. He regularly conducts the orchestra in subscription concerts at the Vienna Musikverein, at the Salzburg Festival, and on tour in Europe, Japan, China, and the US, and has appeared three times on the podium for their celebrated New Year's

Concert (2011, 2013, and 2023). At the Salzburg Festival, Welser-Möst has set new standards in interpretation as an opera conductor, with a special focus on the operas of Richard Strauss.

Among Welser-Möst's many honors and awards, he was named an Honorary Member of the Vienna Philharmonic in 2024, one of the orchestra's highest distinctions. ■



Franz Welser-Möst conducts The Cleveland Orchestra in Mandel Concert Hall at Severance Music Center.

Photo Roger Mastroianni

Severance Music Center

Home of The Cleveland Orchestra



Photo Roger Mastroianni

Severance Music Center, home of The Cleveland Orchestra since 1931, is one of Cleveland's most treasured landmarks and among the world's most admired concert halls. Located in University Circle, Severance was designed by the Cleveland firm Walker & Weeks and funded largely through a \$1 million gift from John and Elisabeth Severance. The hall's creation was the result of years of advocacy by Orchestra founder Adella Prentiss Hughes and the Musical Arts Association.

Today, Severance houses the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Concert Hall, named in 2021 following a \$50 million grant from the Mandel Foundation, as well as Reinberger Chamber Hall, an intimate space ideal for smaller ensembles, recitals, and lectures. The building is used year-round for concerts, rehearsals, and education programs, and is also available to community organizations for performances and private gatherings. A \$36 million renovation

completed in 2000 restored the hall's original Art Deco details, improved patron amenities, modernized backstage areas, and preserved its legendary acoustics.

Recognized by the Cleveland Landmarks Commission and the National Register of Historic Places, Severance Music Center is a symbol of Cleveland's philanthropic spirit and commitment to the arts. ■

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