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BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AND MUSIC DIRECTOR ANDRIS NELSONS RELEASE NEW CD OF RECENT BSO COMMISSIONS, AVAILABLE NOVEMBER 8

Issued by the Naxos label, the album features new works by American composers Timo Andres, Eric Nathan, Sean Shepherd, and George Tsontakis

Fresh from its two Grammy Award wins last February, the Boston Symphony Orchestra has added another CD to its extensive discography: recent Boston Symphony Orchestra commissions of works by American composers Timo Andres, Eric Nathan, Sean Shepherd, and George Tsontakis. BSO Music Director Andris Nelsons leads the Boston Symphony Orchestra in recordings made live at Symphony Hall from February 2016 through February 2018.
Since becoming music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) in 2014, Andris Nelsons has continued the BSO’s nearly 140-year tradition of commissioning and performing new works. American composers figured prominently in the early decades, and with the arrival of music director Serge Koussevitzky in 1924, a new generation, beginning with Aaron Copland, gained an unrivaled champion. Since then, the BSO has commissioned dozens of Americans, including Elliott Carter, Michael Gandolfi, John Harbison, Betsy Jolas, Bright Sheng, and Augusta Read Thomas, to name a few.

Timo Andres’ *Everything Happens So Much* and Eric Nathan’s *the space of a door* were both commissioned in conjunction with a miniature Johannes Brahms festival at Symphony Hall in November 2016. Recognized at an early age as a powerfully creative pianist, Timo Andres (b. 1985) was immersed in classical repertoire but also gained notice for compelling performances of his own compositions. He grew up in Connecticut and attended Yale University. He was a TMC Fellow in 2006, and he has worked with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Metropolis Ensemble, and New World Symphony, along with such musicians as Gabriel Kahane and Sarah Goldfeather, curating recital programs ranging from pop to high modernism.

A trumpet player and proficient pianist, Eric Nathan (b. 1983) attended the Boston University Tanglewood Institute and was also a Tanglewood Music Center Composition Fellow (2010); he holds degrees from Yale, Indiana, and Cornell universities. The BSO commissioned his *Why Old Places Matter* for the Boston Symphony Chamber Players, and he has worked with musicians of the New York Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, Boston Modern Orchestra Project, and many others. Nathan often finds inspiration in literature, visual art, and historic places. *the space of a door* (the title is from Samuel Beckett) was spurred by his first visit to the Providence Athenaeum, near Brown University where Nathan is on the faculty.

The Reno, Nevada-born Sean Shepherd (b. 1979) wrote *Express Abstractionism* in 2017 on a joint commission from the BSO and the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, celebrating the two orchestras’ innovative partnership. The BSO premiered the piece in February 2018. Shepherd studied at Indiana University and earned graduate degrees in composition at the Juilliard School and Cornell University, where he worked with Steven Stucky. He was a TMC Fellow in 2005. Shepherd’s music has been performed by the New York Philharmonic, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Cleveland Orchestra, and Reno Philharmonic, among others. *Express Abstractionism* was inspired by five artists: the American sculptor Alexander Calder (1898–1976); the German Gerhard Richter (b. 1932); the Russian-born Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) and the American Lee Krasner (1908–1984), both for the third movement; and the Dutch-born Piet Mondrian (1872–1944). Shepherd used their diverse artistic techniques as analogies to the layering, stretching, stacking, or tiling of musical ideas.

George Tsontakis’ *Sonnets* (Tone Poems for English Horn and Orchestra) was commissioned by the BSO to showcase its longtime English horn player Robert Sheena, and with the idea that the piece be tied to concerts marking the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death. Born into a Cretan Greek family in Astoria, Queens, New York City, Tsontakis (b. 1951) studied classical violin as a child and with composers Hugo Weisgall at New York’s Queens College, Roger Sessions at Juilliard, and Franco Donatoni. Tsontakis has served as composer-in-residence at Bard College and the Aspen Music Festival. An accomplished conductor, he has worked with ensembles throughout the U.S. Among other honors, he received the Grawemeyer Award for his Violin Concerto No. 2.

Issued by Naxos on **Friday, November 8** (download available at [https://naxos.lnk.to/BSOComm](https://naxos.lnk.to/BSOComm)), the album joins two other Boston Symphony Orchestra CDs released earlier this year. A Myrios Classics recording of the Busoni Piano Concerto, featuring pianist Kirill Gerstein, conductor Sakari Oramo, and the men of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus came out in March. In February, the Boston Symphony and
conductor Andris Nelsons continued their critically acclaimed *Under Stalin’s Shadow* series on Deutsche Grammophon with the release of Shostakovich Symphonies Nos. 6 & 7, together with the composer’s Suite from the Incidental Music to *King Lear* and the Festive Overture. The new double-disc set follows the 2018 release of a pairing of Shostakovich’s Fourth and Eleventh Symphonies, which won the Best Orchestral Performance and Best Engineered Album (Classical) categories at the 2019 Grammy Awards. This critically lauded project of recording the complete 15 symphonies by Dmitri Shostakovich was also honored with a 2017 Grammy Award for Best Orchestral Performance for Symphonies Nos. 5, 8, 9, and Suite from *Hamlet*, as well as a 2016 Grammy Award for Best Orchestral Performance for the Tenth Symphony and the Passacaglia from the opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*.

### Andris Nelsons

The 2019–20 season, Andris Nelsons’ sixth as the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s Ray and Maria Stata Music Director, marks his fifth-year anniversary in that position. Named Musical America’s 2018 Artist of the Year, Mr. Nelsons leads 15 of the BSO’s 26 weeks of concerts this season, ranging from repertoire favorites by Beethoven, Dvořák, Gershwin, Grieg, Mozart, Mahler, Rachmaninoff, Ravel, and Tchaikovsky to world and American premieres of BSO-commissioned works from Eric Nathan, Betsy Jolas, Arturs Maskats, and HK Gruber. The season also brings the continuation of his complete Shostakovich symphony cycle with the orchestra, and collaborations with an impressive array of guest artists, including a concert performance of *Tristan und Isolde*, Act III—one of three BSO programs he will also conduct at Carnegie Hall—with Jonas Kaufmann and Emily Magee in the title roles. In addition, February 2020 brings a major tour to Asia in which Maestro Nelsons and the BSO give their first concerts together in Seoul, Taipei, Hong Kong, and Shanghai.

In February 2018, Andris Nelsons became Gewandhauskapellmeister of the Gewandhausorchester (GHO) Leipzig, in which capacity he also brings the BSO and GHO together for a unique multi-dimensional alliance including a BSO/GHO Musician Exchange program and an exchange component within each orchestra’s acclaimed academy for advanced music studies. A major highlight of the BSO/GHO Alliance is a focus on complementary programming, through which the BSO celebrates “Leipzig Week in Boston” and the GHO celebrates “Boston Week in Leipzig,” thereby highlighting each other’s musical traditions through uniquely programmed concerts, chamber music performances, archival exhibits, and lecture series. For this season’s “Leipzig Week in Boston,” under Maestro Nelsons’ leadership in November, the entire Gewandhausorchester Leipzig comes to Symphony Hall for joint concerts with the BSO as well as two concerts of its own.

In summer 2015, following his first season as music director, Andris Nelsons’ contract with the BSO was extended through the 2021–22 season. In November 2017, he and the orchestra toured Japan together for the first time. They have so far made three European tours together: immediately following the 2018 Tanglewood season, when they played concerts in London, Hamburg, Berlin, Leipzig, Vienna, Lucerne, Paris, and Amsterdam; in May 2016, a tour that took them to eight cities in Germany, Austria, and Luxembourg; and, after the 2015 Tanglewood season, a tour that took them to major European capitals and the Lucerne, Salzburg, and Grafenegg festivals.

The 15th music director in the history of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Andris Nelsons made his BSO debut at Carnegie Hall in March 2011, his Tanglewood debut in July 2012, and his BSO subscription series debut in January 2013. His recordings with the BSO, all made live in concert at Symphony Hall, include the complete Brahms symphonies on BSO Classics; Grammy-winning recordings on Deutsche Grammophon of Shostakovich’s symphonies 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, and 11 (*The Year 1905*) as part of a complete Shostakovich symphony cycle for that label; and a recent two-disc set pairing Shostakovich’s symphonies...
6 and 7 (Leningrad). Under an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon, Andris Nelsons is also recording the complete Bruckner symphonies with the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig and the complete Beethoven symphonies with the Vienna Philharmonic.

During the 2019–20 season, Andris Nelsons continues his ongoing collaborations with the Vienna Philharmonic. Throughout his career, he has also established regular collaborations with the Berlin Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, and Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam, and has been a regular guest at the Bayreuth Festival and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

Born in Riga in 1978 into a family of musicians, Andris Nelsons began his career as a trumpeter in the Latvian National Opera Orchestra before studying conducting. He was music director of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra from 2008 to 2015, principal conductor of the Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie in Herford, Germany, from 2006 to 2009, and music director of Latvian National Opera from 2003 to 2007.

Robert Sheena

Robert Sheena has been the English Horn player of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Boston Pops Orchestra since 1994, occupying the Beranek chair in the BSO’s woodwind section. He has performed as soloist with both the BSO and the Pops on many occasions. Sheena was formerly a member of the San Antonio Symphony and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, as well as a Chicago-based freelancer. He teaches oboe and English Horn at Boston University, Boston University Tanglewood Institute, Boston Conservatory at Berklee, Longy School of Music of Bard College, and the Tanglewood Music Center, of which he is an alumnus.

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BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Andris Nelsons, Music Director
Robert Sheena, English horn

BOSTON SYMPHONY COMMISSIONS
NAXOS American Classics 8559874

Eric Nathan (b. 1983) the space of a door (2016)
George Tsontakis (b. 1951) Sonnets, Tone poems for English horn and orchestra (2016)
    Robert Sheena, English horn
Timo Andres (b. 1985) Everything Happens So Much (2016)
Sean Shepherd (b. 1979) Express Abstractionism (2017)

Total timing: 61:19
Special thanks to Malachi Bosch Giuliano Cherubini Purcell for his support of this recording.

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