



GUERRERO CONDUCTS THE VIOLINS *of* HOPE



CLASSICAL SERIES

THURSDAY, MARCH 22, AT 7 PM | FRIDAY & SATURDAY, MARCH 23 & 24, AT 8 PM

NASHVILLE SYMPHONY

GIANCARLO GUERRERO, *conductor*

JUN IWASAKI, *violin*

JONATHAN BISS, *piano*

JOHN WILLIAMS

Three Pieces from *Schindler's List*

Theme from *Schindler's List*

Jewish Town

Remembrances

Jun Iwasaki, violin

ROBERT SCHUMANN

Concerto in A Minor for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 54

Allegro affettuoso

Intermezzo: Andantino grazioso

Allegro vivace

Jonathan Biss, piano

- INTERMISSION -

JONATHAN LESHNOFF

Symphony No. 4, "Heichalos"

Part 1: Fast: \square Binah

Part 2: Slow

World Premiere | Nashville Symphony Commission

SAMUEL BARBER

Adagio for Strings

This concert will last approximately two hours, including intermission.

This concert is being recorded live for a forthcoming release on Naxos. To ensure the highest-quality recording, please keep noise to a minimum.

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Jonathan Leshnoff's Symphony No. 4 is made possible in part by a Creation Project Grant from Metro Arts and an Art Works grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Nashville Symphony is grateful for support from Violins of Hope Nashville project donors.

TONIGHT'S CONCERT

AT A GLANCE

This concert is part of Violins of Hope Nashville, a citywide collaboration exploring music, art, social justice and free expression. Learn more at ViolinsofHopeNashville.org.



JOHN WILLIAMS

Three Pieces from *Schindler's List*

- Originally featured in Steven Spielberg's 1993 film, these three selections from the score are representative of key themes from the movie, which tells the story of Oskar Schindler, the German industrialist who saved more than 1,000 Jews during the Holocaust. Williams' music also captures what the composer calls "the more tender and nostalgic aspects of Jewish life."
- At Spielberg's suggestion, Israeli-born violinist Itzhak Perlman performed the solo on the score. Nashville Symphony concertmaster Jun Iwasaki will take on that role tonight.



ROBERT SCHUMANN

Concerto in A Minor for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 54

- Schumann's only piano concerto began in 1841 as a single-movement "Phantasie," which he wrote for his wife Clara, a celebrated concert pianist. Four years later, he decided to expand the work into a complete concerto, reworking the Phantasie for the first movement and adding two more movements.
- The innovative nature of the concerto lies in the seamless interactions between piano and orchestra. This was the composer's hope for the genre. Prior to completing the concerto, he wrote, "[W]e must await the genius who will show us in a newer and more brilliant way how orchestra and piano may be combined, how the soloist...may unfold the wealth of his instrument and his art, while the orchestra...may interweave its manifold facets into the scene."



JONATHAN LESHNOFF

Symphony No. 4 "Heichalos"

- Baltimore-based composer Leshnoff brings his deep interest in Jewish spirituality to time-tested classical forms. Commissioned by the Nashville Symphony, and to be recorded for release on Naxos, this symphony is inspired by an ancient Jewish text that "describes the way to attain a mystical encounter with the higher worlds," the composer explains.
- The work is divided into two parts, with the dark tone and thick orchestration of Part One conveying the frightening experience of confronting the divine. Characterized as "a love song between humanity and God," Part Two is much lighter and more transcendent in tone.
- Leshnoff wrote this work with the Violins of Hope — a collection of restored instruments that survived the Holocaust — specifically in mind. "I see the Violins of Hope as the physical embodiment of...Jewish survival," he explains. "And I see my symphony as a representation of the spiritual/ethical embodiment of this Jewish survival."



SAMUEL BARBER

Adagio for Strings

- An adaptation of the second movement from his String Quartet in B Minor, Barber's Adagio for Strings catapulted him to fame after Arturo Toscanini and the NBC Symphony Orchestra performed it live on the radio in 1938.
- The Adagio has come to serve as a go-to work for times of national mourning and reflection, having been performed upon the deaths of Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, Albert Einstein and Leonard Bernstein, among others. It has been used in numerous film and TV soundtracks, including Oliver Stone's *Platoon*.



—Corinne Fombelle & Thomas May



JOHN TOWNER WILLIAMS

Born on February 8, 1932, in New York City; currently resides in Los Angeles

Composed: 1993

First performance: This music was originally composed for the film *Schindler's List*, which was released on December 15, 1993.

First Nashville Symphony performance:

The Theme from *Schindler's List* was first performed March 8 & 9, 1996, with soloist Mary Kathryn Van Osdale, but these are the orchestra's first full performances of Three Pieces from *Schindler's List*.

Estimated length: 12 minutes

Three Pieces from *Schindler's List*

By the time this program went to press, John Williams had received his 51st nomination for the Academy Awards, for Best Original Score for *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, thus breaking his own record as the most-nominated living person in the history of the Oscars, 51 years after his first win (in 1967, for *Valley of the Dolls*).

Williams' music has accompanied some of the most popular films of the past several decades: the *Star Wars* blockbusters, *Jaws*, the *Indiana Jones* films, *E.T.*, the *Harry Potter* series and, unforgettably, *Schindler's List*, another testament to the composer's long-term partnership with Steven Spielberg. His vast catalogue of film scores is further supplemented by an even larger number of television scores.

Lasting more than three hours, the period

drama *Schindler's List* is based on Australian writer Thomas Keneally's 1982 novel *Schindler's Ark*, a fictional treatment of real-life events and figures during the Holocaust. The title figure, Oskar Schindler (1908-1974), was a German industrialist situated in Poland and in the former Czechoslovakia. A member of the Nazi Party, Schindler saved the lives of some 1,100 Jews who were employed as slave laborers at his factories. In 1963 the Israeli government named him Righteous Among the Nations, and he was buried in Jerusalem on Mount Zion.

Schindler's List ranks No. 8 on the American Film Institute's list of The 100 Greatest American Films of All Time. (Williams himself holds the No.1 spot in AFI's "100 Greatest Film Scores of All Time" for *Star Wars*.)

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Williams recalls that when he first saw a cut of *Schindler's List*, "I was so moved I could barely speak. I remember saying to [director Steven Spielberg], 'Steven, you need a better composer than I am to do this film.' And he said, 'I know, but they're all dead.'" One thing Spielberg did suggest to tap into the legacy of the classical tradition was to bring in the violinist Itzhak Perlman, who is given a prominent role in the soundtrack.

According to Williams, "the film's ennobling story...offered an opportunity to create not only dramatic music, but also themes that reflected the more tender and nostalgic aspects of Jewish

life during those turbulent years." He later extracted three pieces from the score for concert performance — Jewish Town [Krakow Ghetto — Winter '41], Remembrances and Theme from *Schindler's List* — "which embody the main thematic elements of the score."

In addition to solo violin, Williams' Three Pieces are scored for 3 flutes (2nd doubling alto, 3rd on alto and piccolo), oboe, English horn, 3 clarinets (3rd doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 3 horns, 3 trombones, timpani, percussion, celesta, harp and strings.



ROBERT SCHUMANN

Born on December 16, 1770, in Bonn, Germany; died on March 26, 1827, in Vienna

Composed: 1845 (using material originally composed in 1841)

First performance: December 4, 1845, in Dresden, with Clara Schumann as the soloist and Ferdinand Hiller conducting

First Nashville Symphony performance:

April 29, 1947, with music director William Strickland and soloist Jesús María Sanromá

Estimated length: 30 minutes

Concerto in A Minor for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 54

Robert Schumann was born only 16 months after Mendelssohn, and both shared a deep love of literature and the other arts, which in turn served as sources of inspiration for their music. In his biography of Schumann, Martin Geck points out that they were “the first musicians to receive a proper formal education, which no doubt helps to explain why they understood each other as well as they did during the time they both spent in Leipzig.” The two composers befriended each other, and Mendelssohn even became godfather to Schumann’s first child, Marie.

Yet it took Schumann longer to establish himself as a major musical figure. It wasn’t until the 1840s that he seriously turned his attention to orchestral music, having devoted most of the previous decade to works for solo piano. A major catalyst was the newfound sense of confidence that he experienced following his marriage to Clara Wieck, a celebrated concert pianist, in 1840. She encouraged her husband to expand his ambitions, and early in 1841 he sketched out his First Symphony within a matter of days.

There had been previous attempts at piano concertos — Schumann himself started out with aspirations to become a soloist, which he later had to abandon — but the popular association of the genre with lightweight, empty virtuoso display hampered his inspiration. Finally, in

1841, Schumann arrived at a sort of compromise: a “Phantasie” for piano and orchestra in one movement, in part to fulfill his promise to write a concerto for Clara. A fundamental feature of his approach, Clara wrote in the diary she shared with Robert, was how he managed to weave the piano and orchestra together “most skillfully.”

The Phantasie was intended as a freestanding work, but it also turned out to be the embryonic stage of the Piano Concerto in A minor. In 1845, Schumann returned to the Phantasie and reworked his original movement, adding two more to complete the familiar three-movement design. While this is the only concerto Schumann would produce for the keyboard, with it he created one of the landmarks of the early Romantic repertoire.

The composer managed to come to terms with his reservations about the genre by developing a unique concept of how the soloist and orchestra operate in relation to each other. His thinking “is entirely grounded in the piano, which incorporates the orchestra to the extent that it results in a single body of sound,” writes Geck. “The resultant work is not a concerto for a keyboard virtuoso but one in which the omnipresent sound of the piano merges with that of the orchestra to create a single entity — it was in this sense that the composer hoped to merge with his interpreter, Clara, who even helped him in writing out the score.”

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Following the orchestra’s opening exclamation point, the piano enters with a grand rhetorical gesture of descending chords, and then cedes to the oboe and bassoon for the lengthy central theme. This theme actually comprises multiple parts, each of which leads to varied transformations. Especially significant is its first part, a wistfully descending four-note phrase

that encodes an autobiographical dimension frequently found in Schumann’s compositions. The notes (C-B-A-A) outline the Italian spelling of Clara’s name, to which Schumann alludes in other works as well (Chiara, where H = B in the German system). In addition, this melodic idea recalls the beginning of the hero Florestan’s aria in Beethoven’s *Fidelio*, an opera whose loving couple

Robert and Clara regarded as their mirror image during their prolonged and difficult courtship.

In its earlier incarnation as the single-movement *Phantasie*, Schumann had organized his material into sections of contrasting tempo and mood so that the first movement contains a miniaturized version of a three-movement concerto. After a fanfare-like working out of one of Schumann's themes, the "slow" movement arrives in the guise of a gentle dialogue between piano and clarinet that one early critic compared to a "little lake...between dark rocks and trees." A richly imagined cadenza follows the reprise before a quickening of pace ends the first movement with a brisk, march-like variant on the theme.

Schumann conceived of the second and third movements as a single, interlinked entity. The language shared by piano and orchestra is lighter in character — even coquettish — in the outer sections of what Schumann calls an "Intermezzo,"

but it soars into rhapsody as strings and piano embrace in a swooning melody in the middle of the second movement.

A reminiscence of the Concerto's opening prepares the way for the finale, now in A major, which follows without pause. Again, Schumann gives us a complex theme reflecting several emotional shades, though a sense of exuberance dominates, thanks to its powerful rhythmic character. Touching at times on Beethoven in his "heroic" mode, the finale includes patches of suspenseful counterpoint and further recalls the first two movements before working its way to music of irresistible affirmation in which piano and orchestra have equal share.

In addition to the solo piano, the Concerto is scored for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns and trumpets, along with timpani and strings.



JONATHAN LESHNOFF

Born in New Brunswick, New Jersey, on September 8, 1973; currently resides in Baltimore

Composed: 2015-17

First performance: The Nashville Symphony is giving the world premiere with these performances.

Estimated length: 30 minutes

Symphony No. 4 "Heichalos"

World Premiere | Nashville Symphony Commission

On this program, Maestro Giancarlo Guerrero and the Nashville Symphony introduce a major new work by the Baltimore-based composer Jonathan Leshnoff. His stature as one of the leading American composers of orchestral music today is based on commissions not only from Nashville, but also from the Atlanta, Baltimore and Philadelphia orchestras; more than 60 orchestras around the world have programmed his music to date.

Leshnoff takes the traditional forms seriously. He believes the symphony, concerto and string quartet have endured "because they are time-tested forms that have shown they work. But I believe in pouring fresh wine into these flasks. I'm not comfortable doing the same thing over, but try to shed new light so there's something fresh: in harmony and expression and also in the architectural form."

This is especially apparent in the composer's

unfolding relationship with the symphony — the great legacy of the Classical and Romantic eras — which underwent an identity crisis in the later 20th century. "I have always admired the symphony for its heritage as an enduring, substantial musical statement," he says.

In this case, the "fresh wine" comes from Leshnoff's signature fascination with Jewish spirituality, an inexhaustible source of inspiration for the composer. "I've become known for putting spiritual concepts to music and finding ways to express them in this art," he remarks. His *Guitar Concerto*, for example, which Nashville performs next month (for future release on a Naxos recording alongside Leshnoff's *Symphony No. 4*) incorporates concepts of humility from Jewish thought into its presentation of the solo-ensemble dynamic.

Leshnoff discovered that he would be able to include the *Violins of Hope* as part of

his soundscape for Symphony No. 4, which is dedicated to Giancarlo Guerrero. This extraordinary collection of violins, one viola and one cello were played by Jewish musicians during the Holocaust. They have been restored by Israeli luthiers Amnon and Avshi Weinstein and are now arriving in Nashville as a part of a citywide initiative led by the Nashville Symphony and the Jewish Federation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee. Visit ViolinsofHopeNashville.org or turn to p. 30 to learn more about this historic project, which involves the participation of more

than 25 local organizations.

“The root of Judaism is the teaching and philosophy of monotheism and Jewish ethics,” explains the composer. “This is what has kept the Jewish people together through all the millennia of persecutions. I see the Violins of Hope as the physical embodiment of this Jewish survival. And I see my symphony as a representation of the spiritual/ethical embodiment of this Jewish survival, combined with this physical embodiment. I’m attracted to the mystical aspect of these very deep spiritual themes.”

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The Symphony No. 4’s subtitle, “Heichalos,” provides the key to this spiritual dimension, which in turn shapes the formal design of the 20-minute composition.

Heichalos literally refers to “rooms” and is one of the oldest written mystical works. Leshnoff was specifically inspired by the *Heichalot Rabbati* (also known as *Heichalos Rabbasai* in Ashkenazi Hebrew, which Leshnoff chooses to use for his own title). According to the composer, this is an “ancient Jewish mystical text written approximately 2,000 years ago. It is one of a few texts that explicitly describes the way to attain a mystical encounter with the higher worlds. Through the means outlined in the text, the initiate meditates himself into ‘rooms,’ where he advances, room by room, to a communion with the Divine. The Rabbis who were qualified to teach and attempt this type of meditation have long ago ceased to walk the face of this Earth.”

Leshnoff describes Symphony No. 4 as “a musical depiction of the initiate’s travels through these rooms.” The music proceeds in two parts of roughly equal lengths, each about 10 minutes. These should not be thought of as “movements” in the usual sense, he points out, because the two parts contrast so powerfully and have such distinctive characters, though on a motivic level they are connected by the arresting theme stated majestically at the outset (a sequence of fortissimo

chords spread across the orchestra).

Part One refers to the opening and a later chapter of the *Heichalos* text: “When one enters the [first] room, he knows everything that will happen in the terrestrial world...when he is on a higher level, he sees each person’s secret deeds...when he is on yet a higher level, he is separated from mankind; anyone who tries to harm him is rebuked by a Heavenly tribunal...and when he approaches the seventh room, the angelic Chayos glare at him each with their 512 eyes, each stare like a flash of lightning.” The overall character of the music here, says Leshnoff, is of a darker hue than anything he had hitherto written, though there is a foretaste in his Second Symphony. Taking up images that were disturbing and frightening in a spiritual way, the composer deploys thick orchestration, using a very dark brush. “This does not have the lightness and nuanced touch of my other works. I’m purposefully using mysterious and foreboding orchestration,” he adds.

In stark contrast to the darkness and speed of Part One, Leshnoff characterizes Part Two as “a love song between humanity and God,” its language therefore much warmer. “There’s a lot more nuance and detail, which you can hear in just the string writing, with the added sonorities of harp, bass clarinet and vibraphones. The audience should feel as if suddenly they have been pushed from one extreme to the other.” For Part

“The root of Judaism is the teaching and philosophy of monotheism and Jewish ethics,” Leshnoff explains. “This is what has kept the Jewish people together through all the millennia of persecutions.”

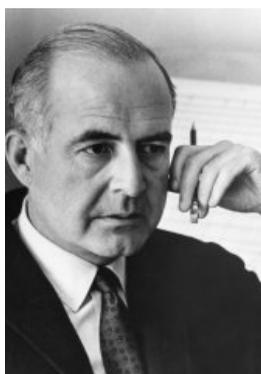
Two, Leshnoff's score appends brief quotes from Chapter 28 of the *Heichalos* text, which glorifies various qualities of "the One who lives forever" ("might and faithfulness," "understanding and blessing" and the like).

It is here that the Violins of Hope come into the foreground: in the first five minutes, the strings alone play extended, slow, quasi-Mahlerian lines, and following a massive climax for full orchestra and organ later in the movement, they again take center stage at the end (with discrete accompaniment from vibraphone, piano and harp). Into the score the composer has written brief, thought-inducing questions — "who do you love?" and "where are they now?" — at the beginning and end, respectively, of Part Two.

Leshnoff explains that he has been exploring

how to make "the transitions from music to enter into spiritual realms." Thus, the start of Part Two is a measure of notated rest with these questions held as long as the conductor is inclined. "I want the musicians to meditate on that phrase and to start thinking about who they love. Then, at the end, what has happened to them — are they dead or alive, part of your life?"

Symphony No. 4 is scored for 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (3rd doubling English horn), 3 clarinets (3rd doubling bass clarinet) 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets (1st doubling piccolo trumpet, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, 2 percussion players, harp, piano, strings and optional organ.



SAMUEL BARBER

Born on March 9, 1910, in West Chester, Pennsylvania; died on January 23, 1981, in New York City

Composed: 1936

First performance: November 5, 1938, with Arturo Toscanini conducting the strings of the NBC Symphony Orchestra in a live radio broadcast

First Nashville Symphony performance: October 28, 1947, with music director William Strickland

Estimated length: 8 minutes

Adagio for Strings

Samuel Barber's *Symphony in One Movement* (1936) was the first piece by an American to be played at the prestigious Salzburg Festival in Austria in 1937. It so impressed the world-famous conductor Arturo Toscanini that he requested music from the young American for his fledgling radio orchestra, the NBC Symphony — a new endeavor founded for Toscanini, a vehement anti-Fascist who left Mussolini's Italy out of protest and who also refused to perform in Hitler's Third Reich.

Barber responded by sending a version for string orchestra, in five parts, of the slow movement from his Op. 11 String Quartet,

adapted for string orchestra. The Adagio's premiere over the radio waves in November 1938 catapulted the composer to international fame. The Adagio for Strings has come to serve as a go-to work in the canon of American music for times of national mourning and reflection. Its sensibility is both secular and non-denominational and yet conveys a sense of spiritual gravitas with unadorned authenticity. (Later, the composer made an a cappella arrangement set to the Latin prayer "Agnus Dei.") The Adagio has also been used to great effect on *Platoon* and many other movie soundtracks.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

In its original context, the Adagio occurs as the middle of three movements, yet it is perfectly suited to performance as a stand-alone piece. In fact, Barber was never satisfied with his conclusion to the String Quartet, whose emotional weight he

realized was centered in the middle. According to Barber scholars, one hidden inspiration for the original was the pagan nature poetry of the great classical Latin poet Virgil.

Rather than a simple "Adagio," Barber's actual

tempo indication is *molto adagio espressivo cantando*, i.e., “very slowly and with an expressive singing quality.” The music gradually builds in intensity and textural density as it ascends through the strings’ registers. The entire piece develops from the stepwise melodic motif stated at the opening. Using simple and familiar elements, Barber follows a well-calculated but emotionally compelling architectural design to build toward a wrenching climax before the piece breaks off into a numbed, throbbing silence. A gentle

reprise then recasts the opening in a new guise of stoic resignation to achieve a powerful effect of emotional catharsis.

The Adagio is scored for string orchestra alone.

— Thomas May, the Nashville Symphony’s program annotator, is a writer and translator who covers classical and contemporary music. He blogs at memeteria.com.

ABOUT THE SOLOISTS



JONATHAN BISS
PIANO

Jonathan Biss is a world-renowned pianist who shares his deep musical curiosity with classical music lovers in the concert hall and beyond. Over the course of two decades,

he has forged relationships with the New York Philharmonic; the Philadelphia, Cleveland and Philharmonia orchestras; the Boston, Chicago and Swedish Radio symphony orchestras; and the Leipzig Gewandhaus, Budapest Festival and Royal Concertgebouw orchestras, among many others. In addition to performing a full schedule of concerts, he has spent 11 summers at the Marlboro Music Festival and has written extensively about his relationships with the composers with whom he shares a stage. A faculty member at his alma mater, the Curtis Institute of Music, Biss led the first massive open online course (MOOC) offered by a classical music conservatory, *Exploring Beethoven’s Piano Sonatas*, which has reached more than 150,000 people in 185 countries.

This season Biss continues his latest Beethoven project, *Beethoven/5*, for which the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra is co-commissioning five composers to write new piano concertos, each inspired by one of Beethoven’s. Last fall with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, he premiered Salvatore Sciarrino’s “Il Sogno di Stradella,” paired with Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4.

Biss has embarked on a nine-year, nine-disc recording cycle of Beethoven’s complete piano sonatas, and in early 2018 he released the seventh volume. His bestselling eBook, *Beethoven’s Shadow*, describing the process of recording the sonatas,

was the first Kindle Single written by a classical musician. The recording cycle will be complete in 2020, at the same time as his final online lectures on the sonatas.

Throughout his career, Biss has been an advocate for new music. Prior to the *Beethoven/5* project, he commissioned *Lunaire Variations* by David Ludwig, *Interlude II* by Leon Kirchner, *Wonderer* by Lewis Spratlan and *Three Pieces for Piano* and a concerto by Bernard Rands, the latter of which he premiered with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He has also premiered a piano quintet by William Bolcom.

Biss represents the third generation in a family of professional musicians that includes his grandmother Raya Garbousova, one of the first well-known female cellists (for whom Samuel Barber composed his Cello Concerto), and his parents, violinist Miriam Fried and violist/violinist Paul Biss. He began his piano studies at age 6, and his first musical collaborations were with his mother and father. He studied at Indiana University with Evelyne Brancart and at the Curtis Institute of Music with Leon Fleisher.



JUN IWASAKI
VIOLIN

Jun Iwasaki was appointed concertmaster of the Nashville Symphony by music director Giancarlo Guerrero at the beginning of the 2011/12 season. A graduate of

the Cleveland Institute of Music’s prestigious Concertmaster Academy, he has been hailed for his combination of dazzling technique and lyrical musicianship. In a review of Iwasaki’s performance

at the Mimir Chamber Music Festival, the *Fort Worth Star Telegram* called him “the magician of the evening. He could reach into his violin and pull out bouquets of sound, then reach behind your ear and touch your soul.”

Prior joining the Nashville Symphony, Iwasaki served as concertmaster of the Oregon Symphony from 2007-11, and he performed with that ensemble at the first annual Spring For Music Festival in 2011. Throughout his career, he has appeared with numerous other orchestras, including the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, Columbia Symphony Orchestra, Blossom Festival Orchestra, Rome (Georgia) Philharmonic, New

Bedford Symphony, Canton Symphony, Richardson Symphony, Cleveland Pops Orchestra, Plano Symphony Orchestra and the Cleveland Institute of Music Orchestra. In addition, he has served as guest concertmaster of the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra in 2015, Santa Barbara Symphony in 2010 and National Arts Center Orchestra in Ottawa in 2006. He served in the same position with the Canton (Ohio) Symphony Orchestra from 2005-07.

In addition to teaching at Vanderbilt University’s Blair School of Music, Iwasaki is the artistic director of Portland Summer Ensembles in Portland, Oregon, a workshop for young musicians focusing on chamber music.