

**THE
CLEVELAND
ORCHESTRA**
FRANZ WELSER-MOST, MUSIC DIRECTOR

NEWS

For release: Monday, July 31, 2023

The Cleveland Orchestra announces a special performance with Renée Fleming, the Emerson String Quartet, Simone Dinnerstein, and Merle Dandridge in *Music from Beethoven to Provir*



Renée Fleming



Simone Dinnerstein



Emerson String Quartet



Merle Dandridge

CLEVELAND – The Cleveland Orchestra announced celebrated soprano Renée Fleming will return to Severance Music Center on October 15, 2023, joined by pianist Simone Dinnerstein, the Emerson String Quartet, and actress Merle Dandridge (*The Last of Us*).

The “strikingly original” Simone Dinnerstein opens the program with the mesmerizing Etude No. 6 by Philip Glass. Then, a not-to-be missed performance of Beethoven’s String Quartet No. 14 by the Emerson String Quartet, which will disband in 2023 after more than four decades of concerts as one of the world’s premiere chamber music ensembles.

At the heart of the program is *Penelope*, a new concert work created for Renée Fleming by two legends: composer André Previn and librettist Tom Stoppard. *Penelope* takes the audience into the mind of the mythic heroine from Homer’s *Odyssey* who waited years on end for her husband’s return. Portrayed jointly by Fleming and Merle Dandridge, sung and spoken text is brilliantly interwoven amidst a rich musical setting provided by Dinnerstein and the Emerson String Quartet.

Tickets go on sale to Cleveland Orchestra donors and subscribers on July 31 at 10 a.m. Ticket sales for the general public start August 3 at 10 a.m. Buy your tickets by going to clevelandorchestra.com, calling Ticket Services at 216-231-1111, or visiting the box office at Severance Music Center, open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Additional photos available for [download here](#).

About Renée Fleming

One of the most beloved and celebrated singers of our time, soprano Renée Fleming captivates audiences with her sumptuous voice, consummate artistry, and compelling stage presence. At a White House ceremony in 2013, President Obama awarded her the National Medal of Arts, America’s highest honor for an individual artist. In May 2023, Renée was named a Goodwill Ambassador for Arts and Health for the World Health Organization, and in June it was announced that she will be awarded the prestigious Kennedy Center Honor.

Winner of the 2023 Grammy Award (her fifth) for Best Classical Vocal Solo and honored with the World Economic Forum’s 2023 Crystal Award at Davos, Renée is the only classical artist ever to sing “The Star-Spangled Banner” at the Super Bowl (2014). As a musical statesman, Renée has sung at numerous prestigious occasions, from the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize ceremony to performances in Beijing during the 2008 Olympic Games. In 2014, she sang in the televised concert at the Brandenburg Gate to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. In 2012, in an historic first, she sang on the balcony of Buckingham Palace in the Diamond Jubilee Concert for HM Queen Elizabeth II.

A ground-breaking distinction came in 2008 when Renée became the first woman in the 125-year history of the Metropolitan Opera to solo headline an opening-night gala. In January 2009, Renée was featured in the televised *We Are One: The Inaugural Celebration* at the Lincoln Memorial for President Obama. She has also performed for the United States Supreme Court and, in 2009, celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Czech Republic’s “Velvet Revolution” at the invitation of Václav Havel.

About Merle Dandridge

Merle Dandridge most recently starred as Desiree Armfeldt in the critically acclaimed production of *A Little Night Music* at the Pasadena Playhouse. Most recently on screen, Merle reprised her role of Marlene, leader of the Fireflies in HBO’s adaptation of *The Last of Us*, based on Naughty Dog’s video game of the same name. recently received 24 Emmy nominations, including Outstanding Drama Series. Merle can also currently be seen as Chief Ross in ABC’s *Station 19*, and as Zarina Killebrew in Apple TV+’s *Truth Be Told*. Merle starred as Grace Greenleaf in Oprah Winfrey’s hit series *Greenleaf* which ran for five seasons. Other television shows includes HBO’s *The Flight Attendant*, FX’s *Sons of Anarchy*, CW’s *Starcrossed*, and NBC’s *The Night Shift*.

In the video game space, she is known for Naughty Dog's *The Last of Us* and *The Last of Us Part II* as Marlene, the leader of Fireflies, Evelyn and the Nun in *Uncharted 4: A Thief's End*, Legion Commander and Winter Wyvern in *Dota 2*, Alyx Vance in *Half-Life 2*, and Katherine Collins in *Everybody's Gone to the Rapture* for which she won the 2016 BAFTA for "Best Performer."

Born in Japan, raised in Nebraska, and schooled in Chicago at Roosevelt University, Dandridge began her acting career with leading roles on Broadway in *Spamalot* (Lady of the Lake), *Rent* (Joanne), *Aida* (Aida), *Tarzan* (Kala) and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. More recently, Merle took on the role of Pharaoh in The Manhattan Concert Productions' presentation of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* at Lincoln Center. She is also the first woman to play the role of Papa Ge in the Tony Award-winning Broadway revival of Ahrens and Flaherty's *Once on This Island*, which received a Grammy Award nomination for Best Musical Theater Album. She has toured the U.S. and Europe six times and has been featured in several regional theatre productions (including multiple stints at The Geffen and Pasadena Playhouse). She has also performed at the Hollywood Bowl, Boston Pops, and Royal Albert Hall.

Merle serves on the Board of Directors of The Geffen Playhouse and Harvest Home, which provides housing and holistic support to homeless pregnant women.

About Simone Dinnerstein

Simone Dinnerstein is an American pianist. She lives in Brooklyn, New York with her husband and dog, less than a mile from the hospital in which she was born.

Simone has a distinctive musical voice. *The Washington Post* has called her "an artist of strikingly original ideas and irrefutable integrity." She first came to wider public attention in 2007 through her recording of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, reflecting an aesthetic that was both deeply rooted in the score and profoundly idiosyncratic. She is, wrote *The New York Times*, "a unique voice in the forest of Bach interpretation."

Since that recording, she has had a busy performing career. She has played with orchestras ranging from the New York Philharmonic and the Montreal Symphony Orchestra to the London Symphony Orchestra and the Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale Rai. She has performed in venues from Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center to the Berlin Philharmonie, the Vienna Konzerthaus, the Seoul Arts Center, and the Sydney Opera House. She has made thirteen albums, all of which topped the Billboard classical charts, with repertoire ranging from Couperin to Glass.

This season, Simone takes on a number of new artistic challenges. She gives the world premiere of *The Eye Is the First Circle* at Montclair State University, the first multi-media production she has conceived, created, and directed, which uses as source materials her father Simon Dinnerstein's painting *The Fulbright Triptych* and Charles Ives's Piano Sonata No. 2 ("Concord"). In addition, she premieres Richard Danielpour's *An American Mosaic*, a tribute to those affected by the pandemic, in a performance on multiple pianos placed throughout Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery. She also joins Renée Fleming, the Emerson String Quartet, and Uma Thurman for performances of André Previn and Tom Stoppard's *Penelope* at both Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

About Emerson String Quartet

The Emerson String Quartet will have its final season of concerts in 2022–23, disbanding after more than four decades as one of the world's premier chamber music ensembles. "With musicians like this," wrote

a reviewer for *The Times* (London), “there must be some hope for humanity.” The Quartet has made more than 30 acclaimed recordings and has been honored with nine GRAMMYS® (including two for Best Classical Album), three Gramophone Awards, the Avery Fisher Prize, and Musical America’s “Ensemble of the Year” award. As part of their larger mission to keep the string quartet form alive and relevant, they have commissioned and premiered works from some of today’s most esteemed composers, and have partnered in performance with leading soloists such as Renée Fleming, Barbara Hannigan, Evgeny Kissin, Emanuel Ax, Mstislav Rostropovich, and Yefim Bronfman, James Galway, Edgar Meyer, Menahem Pressler, Leon Fleisher, André Previn, and Isaac Stern, to name a few.

In its final season, the Quartet will give farewell performances across North America and Europe, including San Francisco’s Herbst Theater, Chicago’s Orchestra Hall, Toronto’s Royal Conservatory of Music, Vienna’s Musikverein, Prague’s Rudolfinum, London’s Southbank Centre for the completion of its acclaimed cycle of Shostakovich quartets, and more, before coming home to New York City for its final series there with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, in a trio of programs entitled “Emerson Dimensions” where the Quartet will perform some of its most storied repertoire. They will give several performances of André Previn’s *Penelope* with Renée Fleming and Uma Thurman, including at the Los Angeles Opera, and they will appear at Carnegie Hall with Evgeny Kissin to perform the Dvořák Quintet as part of a benefit concert for the Andrei Sakharov Foundation. The final performance as the Emerson String Quartet will take place in October 2023 in New York City and will be filmed for a planned documentary by filmmaker Tristan Cook.

The Quartet’s extensive discography includes the complete string quartets of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Bartók, Webern, and Shostakovich, as well as multi-CD sets of the major works of Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, and Dvořák. In its final season, the Quartet will record Schoenberg’s Second Quartet with Barbara Hannigan for release in 2023, with the sessions video documented by Mathieu Amalric for a short film. Deutsche Grammophon will also reissue its box set of the *Emerson Complete Recordings* on the label, with two new additions. In October 2020, the group released a recording of Schumann’s three string quartets for the Pentatone label. In the preceding year, the Quartet joined forces with GRAMMY®-winning pianist Evgeny Kissin to release a collaborative album for Deutsche Grammophon, recorded live at a sold-out Carnegie Hall concert in 2018.

Formed in 1976 and based in New York City, the Emerson String Quartet was one of the first quartets whose violinists alternate in the first violin position. The Quartet, which takes its name from the American poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, balances busy performing careers with a commitment to teaching, and serves as Quartet-in-Residence at Stony Brook University. In 2013, cellist Paul Watkins—a distinguished soloist, award-winning conductor, and devoted chamber musician—joined the original members of the Quartet to form today’s group.

In the spring of 2016, the State University of New York awarded full-time Stony Brook faculty members Philip Setzer and Lawrence Dutton the status of Distinguished Professor and conferred the title of Honorary Distinguished Professor on part-time faculty members Eugene Drucker and Paul Watkins. The Quartet’s members also hold honorary doctorates from Middlebury College, the College of Wooster, Bard College, and the University of Hartford. In January of 2015, the Quartet received the Richard J. Bogomolny National Service Award, Chamber Music America’s highest honor, in recognition of its significant and lasting contribution to the chamber music field.

Calendar listing:

Renée Fleming & Friends
Music from Beethoven from Previn
Sunday, October 15 at 7 p.m.

Renée Fleming, *soprano*
Merle Dandridge, *narrator*
Emerson String Quartet
Simone Dinnerstein, *piano*

The Cleveland Orchestra presents soprano Renée Fleming, the Emerson String Quartet, pianist Simone Dinnerstein, and special guest actress Merle Dandridge in a one-night only performance of music from Beethoven to Previn.

At the heart of the program is *Penelope*, a new concert work created for Renée Fleming by two legends: composer André Previn and librettist Tom Stoppard. *Penelope* takes the audience into the mind of the mythic heroine from Homer's *Odyssey* who waited years on end for her husband's return. Portrayed jointly by Fleming and Merle Dandridge (*The Last of Us*), sung and spoken text is brilliantly interwoven amidst a rich musical setting provided by Simone Dinnerstein and the Emerson String Quartet.

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