

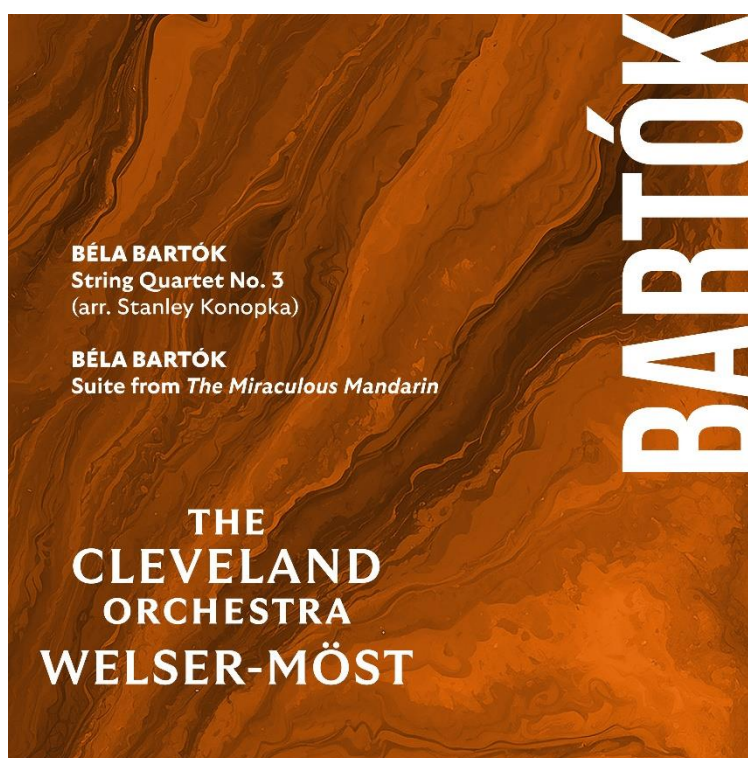
THE
CLEVELAND
ORCHESTRA
FRANZ WELSER-MÖST, MUSIC DIRECTOR

NEWS

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For release: May 22, 2024

The Cleveland Orchestra to release recording of Béla Bartók's String Quartet No. 3 and Suite from *The Miraculous Mandarin*, led by Music Director Franz Welser-Möst



CLEVELAND — On **June 7, 2024**, The Cleveland Orchestra will release a new audio recording of two works by Hungarian composer Béla Bartók: his **String Quartet No. 3** (arranged for string orchestra by Cleveland Orchestra Assistant Principal Viola [Stanley Konopka](#)) and his **Suite from *The Miraculous Mandarin***. Led by Music Director Franz Welser-Möst, the recording will be available worldwide for digital streaming and download in spatial audio on all major platforms. Album pre-orders and a sample track will be available on May 24.

These two challenging and ingenious works by Bartók were recorded live at the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Concert Hall at Severance Music Center, the home of The Cleveland Orchestra, in January 2024. In them, says Music Director Franz Welser-Möst, “Bartók creates a new musical path forward by masterly combining influences from folk tunes and elements of the avant-garde.”

The release was produced by five-time Grammy Award winner Elaine Martone and recorded, edited, and mixed by lead engineer Gintas Norvila. Jennifer Nulsen and Alan JS Han are the album's stereo mastering engineer and immersive mixing engineer, respectively.

This recording follows the April 2024 exclusive release of [Prokofiev: Symphony No. 6](#) on Apple Music Classical as part of a [new partnership](#) between The Cleveland Orchestra and Apple Music, and the 2023 releases of [Prokofiev: Symphony No. 5](#) (March), [Berg: Three Pieces from Lyric Suite – Strauss: Suite from Der Rosenkavalier](#) (June), [Schubert: Mass No. 6](#) (September), and [Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 4](#) (December). Visit The Cleveland Orchestra's [recordings website](#) for more information on all recent recordings.

Media Reviewing Access

Advance access to the recording for media reviewing is available upon request. Album cover art, digital booklet, high-resolution images, and further information can be found in the [press kit](#).

Product Information

The album will be released on **June 7**. A preview track (track 7) from **Suite from *The Miraculous Mandarin*** will be available for download and streaming as a single on **May 24**.

The Cleveland Orchestra

Franz Welser-Möst, *conductor*

Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

Track 1: String Quartet No. 3 (arr. Stanley Konopka for double string orchestra)

Track 2: Suite from *The Miraculous Mandarin*: I. Introduction

Track 3: Suite from *The Miraculous Mandarin*: II. First Decoy Game

Track 4: Suite from *The Miraculous Mandarin*: III. Second Decoy Game

Track 5: Suite from *The Miraculous Mandarin*: IV. Third Decoy Game

Track 6: Suite from *The Miraculous Mandarin*: V. The Girl Dances

Track 7: Suite from *The Miraculous Mandarin*: VI. The Chase

Audio Production

Elaine Martone, *Recording Producer*

Gintas Norvila, *Recording, Editing, and Mixing Engineer*

Jennifer Nulsen, *Stereo Mastering Engineer*

Alan JS Han, *Immersive Mixing Engineer*

About Stanley Konopka's Inspiration Behind His Arrangement of Bartók's String Quartet No. 3

Cleveland Orchestra Assistant Principal Viola Stanley Konopka became fascinated by Bartók as a seventh grader growing up in Chicago and staying up late listening to classical music on the radio.

“One night I heard something unlike anything I had ever heard before: the pizzicato movement of Béla Bartók's Fourth String Quartet. The harmonic language was like nothing I'd ever encountered, the interaction of the lines was so interesting and complex, and the fourth movement was as wild as any of the heavy metal my friends were listening to at that time,” Konopka said. “The next morning, I ran

straight to our local library—I arrived before the doors were unlocked—I had to verify that music like this really existed. I found the 1940 Julliard Strong Quartet mono recording of Bartók’s Third and Fourth string quartets and quickly began to wear out the vinyl. It was like an alien language, but somehow, I intuitively knew what everything meant in detail.”

He first had the idea to arrange the string quartet for orchestra around 2000 and revisited the concept roughly 20 years later with the support of Music Director Franz Welsch-Möst.

“From the beginning of the Third String Quartet, you perceive these blatant, definitive interruptions. An idea will be proposed, and then it will be countered. I originally thought that this back-and-forth depicted the internal dialogue of a single person with multiple different personalities. And my first attempt at an arrangement reflected this impression,” Konopka added. “However, the more I studied the piece, the more I realized that there were two consistent and distinct voices that emerged: one is often calmer and more levelheaded; the other is much more reactionary and hostile; and together they make up two passionate and complex characters.”

“With this realization, I turned to Bartók’s Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta for inspiration. In this piece, Bartók divides the string section in two and places them antiphonally on stage. I made a bold choice to follow this model as a means of capturing these two characters. At the same time, I tried to be as faithful to the original score as I could. Compositionally, it showcases Bartók’s genius and his ability to take a tiny, little musical idea and run it through every permutation: forwards, backwards, inverted, and recapitulated.”

About the Suite from *The Miraculous Mandarin* (by Peter Laki)

The one-act play *The Miraculous Mandarin* by Menyhert (Melchior) Lengyel struck a deep nerve in Béla Bartók, who decided to set it to music as soon as he had read it in the literary magazine Nyugat (The Occident). Lengyel was a successful Hungarian playwright who later worked in Hollywood (writing screenplays for Greta Garbo, among others). *The Miraculous Mandarin* abounded in gruesome details that instigated adverse consequences for the performance history of Bartók’s pantomime ballet. Its premiere in the predominantly Catholic city of Cologne sparked a major scandal, leading the city’s mayor to ban the work. However, this should not prevent us from recognizing the intense drama that arises from the fatal conflict between trivial everyday experience and something that transcends it.

The action of the pantomime is summarized in the score as follows:

In a shabby room in the slums, three tramps, bent on robbery, force a girl to lure prospective victims from the street. A down-at-heel cavalier and a timid youth, who succumb to her attractions, are found to have thin wallets and are thrown out. The third “guest” is the eerie Mandarin. His impassivity frightens the girl, who tries to thaw him by dancing — but when he feverishly embraces her, she runs from him in terror. After a wild chase he catches her, at which point the three tramps leap from their hiding place, rob him of everything he has, and try to smother him under a pile of cushions. But he gets to his feet, his eyes fixed passionately on the girl. They run him through with a sword; he is shaken, but his desire is stronger than his wounds, and he hurls himself on her. They hang him up, but it is impossible for him to die. Only when they cut him down, and the girl takes him into her arms, do his wounds begin to bleed and he dies.

The scenario is intentionally unappealing, typical of the expressionist dramas created during the Weimar era, a wild interwar period of artistic experimentation. In his harmonies, in his treatment of rhythm and

orchestration, Bartók was at his most experimental here, coming closer than ever, as László Somfai states in *The New Grove Dictionary*, “to the aspirations of the Second Viennese School,” whose intentions were to create a new kind of music vocabulary.

Bartók’s music depicts the successive stages of the action with great vividness. After a frenetic introduction, which portrays the hustle and bustle of a large city, the curtain rises. The three tramps appear and order the girl to stand by the window and lure men from the street. The girl will play her “decoy game” three times, with her seductive motions rendered by a clarinet solo in rubato (free) rhythm. Each time, the clarinet solo gets more involved and more agitated.

The first visitor, an old cavalier, enters. His awkward gestures are expressed in humorous trombone glissandos. He tries to woo the girl (mock-romantic English horn and cello solos), but the tramps seize the old man and throw him out, in a short *Vivace* section dominated by the repeated-note figures of the trumpets.

The second “decoy game” lures a shy young man to the door. He is represented by a dreamy oboe solo; the dance begins with the entrance of the harp, with a theme played by bassoon and violin. Does the girl forget her role for a minute and become attracted to the youth? At any rate, the tramps set her straight and throw out the young man as before.

The third “decoy game” leads to the appearance of the Mandarin in a menacing theme for trombones and tuba, set against woodwind tremolos and glissandos for violins and piano. The music hesitates before the girl begins her dance. Out of short melodic fragments played by solo woodwinds, a waltz theme gradually emerges. As the Mandarin begins his frenzied chase after the girl, a wild fugato starts in the orchestra, to the thudding accompaniment of the low winds and percussion. At the climactic point of the chase, the Mandarin catches the girl. The suite version, prepared by Bartók in 1927, ends at this point.

The suite is in fact nothing but the first two-thirds of the original score, with a few concluding measures added for concert use. The rest of the action, including the threefold murder and final catharsis, was cut off to provide a rousing concert ending.

About The Cleveland Orchestra

Now firmly in its second century, The Cleveland Orchestra, under the leadership of 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. In recent years, *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, “virtually flawless,” and “one of the finest ensembles in the country (if not the world).”

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 the ensemble into one of the most admired around the world.

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 in 2020, the Orchestra launched several bold digital projects, including a streaming broadcast series and its

own recording label. New initiatives for audience growth and community service have been launched in recent years, including new technological infrastructure and capabilities at its home, Severance Music Center, to capture the Orchestra's unique artistry and the musical achievements of the Welser-Möst and Cleveland Orchestra partnership.

The 2023–24 season marks Franz Welser-Möst's 22nd 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.

Its acclaimed opera presentations, including Puccini's *La Fanciulla del West* (2023), Verdi's *Otello* (2022), Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* (2019), Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* (May 2017), Bartók's *The Miraculous Mandarin* and *Bluebeard's Castle* (2016), and Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* (2014 and 2017), have showcased the ensemble's unique artistry and collaborative work ethic.

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. [Find out more.](#)

About Franz Welser-Möst

Franz Welser-Möst is among today's most distinguished conductors. The 2023–24 season marks his 22nd year as Music Director of The Cleveland Orchestra. With the future of their acclaimed partnership extended to 2027, he will be the longest-serving musical leader in the ensemble's history. The New York Times has declared Cleveland under Welser-Möst's direction to be "America's most brilliant orchestra," praising its virtuosity, elegance of sound, variety of color, and chamber-like musical cohesion.

With Welser-Möst, The Cleveland Orchestra has been acclaimed for its inventive programming, its ongoing support for new musical works, and for its innovative work in presenting semi-staged and staged operas. An imaginative approach to juxtaposing newer and older works has opened new dialogue and fresh insights for musicians and audiences alike. The Orchestra has also been hugely successful in fostering a new and, notably, a young audience. To date, the Orchestra and Welser-Möst have been showcased around the world in 20 international tours together. In 2020, despite shutdowns caused by the global pandemic, the ensemble launched its own recording label—and new streaming broadcast performances with the In Focus series—to continue and extend sharing their artistry globally.

In addition to his commitment to Cleveland, Mr. Welser-Möst enjoys a particularly close and productive relationship with the Vienna Philharmonic as a guest conductor. He conducted its celebrated New Year's Concert three times, and regularly leads the orchestra in subscription concerts in Vienna, as well as on tours in Japan, China, Australia, and the United States. He is a regular guest at the Salzburg Festival, where his work leading a series of opera performances has been widely admired. These have included *Rusalka*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Fidelio*, *Die Liebe der Danae*, Aribert Reimann's *Lear*, Strauss's *Salome* and *Elektra*, and Puccini's *Il Trittico*. At the 2023 Festival, he leads a production of Verdi's *Macbeth*.

Franz Welser-Möst's recordings and videos have won major international awards and honors. With The Cleveland Orchestra, his recordings include a number of DVDs on the Clasart Classic label, featuring live

performances of five Bruckner symphonies and a multi-DVD set of major works by Brahms. A number of his Salzburg opera productions, including *Der Rosenkavalier*, have been released internationally on DVD by Unitel. In 2019, Mr. Welser-Möst was awarded the Gold Medal in the Arts by the Kennedy Center International Committee on the Arts in recognition of his long-lasting impact on the international arts community. Other honors include The Cleveland Orchestra's Distinguished Service Award (given during the ensemble's 100th season celebrations for his focus on community and education), two Cleveland Arts Prize citations, the Vienna Philharmonic's "Ring of Honor" for his personal and artistic relationship with the ensemble, recognition from the Western Law Center for Disability Rights, honorary membership in the Vienna Singverein, appointment as an Academician of the European Academy of Yuste, and the Kilenyi Medal from the Bruckner Society of America.

Franz Welser-Möst's book *From Silence: Finding Calm in a Dissonant World* was published in Austria in July 2020, under the title *Als ich die Stille fand*, and rapidly rose to number one on the [German-language] bestseller lists, where it remained through much of 2021. The English version of *From Silence* was released worldwide in Summer 2021. Read more about [Franz Welser-Möst](#).

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