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Orchestra of St. Luke's Renews Bernard Labadie's Contract as Principal Conductor Through OSL's 50th Anniversary Season in 2024-25



Bernard Labadie (photo: Winnie Au)

[Orchestra of St. Luke's \(OSL\)](#) has renewed **Bernard Labadie's** contract as **Principal Conductor** for three additional seasons, positioning him to become the ensemble's **longest-tenured conductor to date**. Originally appointed for four seasons from fall 2018, Labadie will

now continue in the role through **2024-25**, when he looks forward to helping OSL's milestone **50th anniversary** celebrations. This extension recognizes the tremendous impact the conductor has made, both on the orchestra and its Manhattan home. "**A Canadian maestro known for his detailed, nuanced accounts of the Baroque and Classical repertoire**" (*New York Times*), Labadie is New York City's preeminent specialist in 18th- and early 19th-century performance practice. As such, he represents one of the city's foremost artistic leaders, conducting OSL in **eight programs at four New York halls** this season alone, more than any of his predecessors. Six of these programs are at **Carnegie Hall**, where Labadie has doubled OSL's annual presence and where he appears more frequently than almost any other conductor this season, while also remaining in high demand as a guest of leading orchestras worldwide. Beloved by the ensemble's musicians, guest artists, and audiences, Labadie's is one of the most warmly welcomed appointments in OSL's near five-decade history.

Concurrent with Labadie's renewal announcement, OSL emerges from the pandemic with robust financial strength. Having raised more than \$24 million in a comprehensive campaign, the organization's balance sheet is the strongest in its history, allowing for innovation and growth as the ensemble heads towards its 50th anniversary.

James Roe, OSL's President and Executive Director, says:

"It is with great anticipation that we announce the extension of Bernard Labadie's contract as Orchestra of St. Luke's Principal Conductor through our 50th anniversary season in 2024-25. Bernard is New York City's only internationally recognized conductor specializing in 18th- and early 19th-century repertoire. Our performances with him bring this music to life for today's audiences and his characteristically charming commentary opens new avenues for connecting with the legacy of human genius. From his debuts at Caramoor and Carnegie Hall to the founding of our Bach Festival to the joyful return to in-person performances following the pandemic, Bernard and our musicians have created vibrant, dynamic and unforgettable musical experiences for New York City."

Clive Gillinson, Executive and Artistic Director of Carnegie Hall, comments:

"It has been wonderful to see the great musical partnership between Bernard Labadie and Orchestra of St. Luke's develop and grow. We are delighted to hear that they will continue their work together, sharing their exceptional music-making with our audiences at Carnegie Hall."

Labadie responds:

"Orchestra of St. Luke's is a superlative ensemble, bringing together some of today's most outstanding performing artists. I love the fact that it grew from the will of local young virtuosos who wanted to create something different. There's something extremely touching about this vitality, which comes from within. It is a real honor to lead the orchestra for three additional seasons, especially as they will include its landmark 50th anniversary celebrations. OSL and I have already developed a profound musical rapport, and I look forward to deepening our relationship further over the years to come, so having the chance to become the longest-serving conductor in its history means a lot to me. It's also always a pleasure to perform in New York, the

United States' musical capital, and a treat to have so many excuses to visit! Now that I lead OSL six times or more each season, I'm really getting to know the city and all it has to offer."

This enthusiasm is mutual. OSL Concertmaster **Krista Bennion Feeney** explains:

"Bernard has a vision. I feel he's brought a lot of clarity and polish to our performances. He uses his historical knowledge to widen the palette of expression, and he has a certain way of pacing things that structures each piece like a really good novel. It's tough to come in and be responsible for unifying several dozen highly opinionated musicians and he's done a remarkable job of it – I think the performances speak for themselves. I also find him to be incredibly personable. He's just a wonderful guy!"

OSL Principal Clarinetist **Jon Manasse** agrees:

"Bernard has brought us a sense of unity, a sense of focus, an incredibly high artistic standard and mutual respect. It's wonderful to get the feeling from someone so informed, talented and inspiring that there's a reciprocal respect on his end for all the members of the orchestra. It's just a positive and complete energy match."

As OSL Principal Flutist **Elizabeth Mann** puts it:

"Our relationship with Bernard is like a good marriage, and it's exciting to move forward into our next chapter together."

Click [here](#) to see Labadie and the musicians talk further about his relationship with OSL.

Labadie's history with OSL

Following in the footsteps of Sir Roger Norrington, Sir Charles Mackerras, Sir Donald Runnicles and Pablo Heras-Casado, Bernard Labadie is just **OSL's fifth artistic leader to date**. When the orchestra first formed a committee to select its next Principal Conductor in August 2016, the international search was broad in scope. Before long, however, its focus was Labadie alone. Already well-known to New York audiences at Carnegie Hall and beyond, both as the founding conductor of **Les Violons du Roy** and as guest conductor of the **New York Philharmonic** and **Metropolitan Opera Orchestra**, Labadie's interpretations made a deep impression on the committee's members. Krista Bennion Feeney remembers his account of Handel's *Messiah* with Le Violins du Roy as "**breathtaking**," while James Roe affirms: "**Their Hallelujah Chorus left both Krista and me breathless, like it was the first time we'd ever heard it.**"

Following the announcement of Labadie's appointment in May 2017, the conductor made his **OSL debut** with an all-Mozart program at Caramoor. Asked by the *New York Times* if this would feel like having a "first date after the marriage is arranged," the conductor responded with characteristic warmth and candor: "**No! No! It's our first public date. We've cuddled a lot in private.**" Indeed, Roe recalls that after that same concert, "**Musicians came up to hug me and thank me for bringing Bernard to OSL.**" Labadie went on to make his eagerly anticipated OSL Carnegie Hall debut in December 2017, before returning to the venue the following October to

launch his tenure with a program of Haydn and Mozart. Under the headline “**A New Conductor Inspires the Orchestra of St. Luke’s**,” the *New York Times* observed:

“Their playing had all the best qualities of period-instrument performance – responsive to the music’s emotional eddies without ever breaking the flow. Mr. Labadie is a specialist in music of the Baroque and Classical era. ... With Mr. Labadie at its helm, the ensemble looks set to develop a distinct profile on the New York scene.”

In that first season, Labadie led the orchestra in two additional programs on Carnegie’s mainstage, besides doubling its presence at the venue by founding the **OSL Bach Festival**. Selling out two of its three concerts, the festival’s first season was hailed as “**an impressive initiative**” (*New York Times*), and Labadie’s own chamber orchestral version of Bach’s “Goldberg” Variations was praised as “**revelatory**” (*New York Times*). The 2018-19 season also saw Labadie helm OSL’s season-closing concert at **Caramoor**, the orchestra’s long-time summer home, and deepen his involvement with New York’s music community. As well as coaching the **Youth Orchestra of St. Luke’s (YOSL)**, OSL’s after-school youth orchestra program, he conducted masterclasses at the **Juilliard School** and was recognized with an **honorary doctorate** from **Manhattan School of Music**.

Labadie’s next two seasons with the orchestra both faced interruptions from the pandemic. Nevertheless, OSL “**responded robustly and creatively to the constraints of streamed performance**” (*New York Times*), successfully taking the opportunity to “**grow its audience online – and make it more diverse in the process**” (*ABC News*). Having led the final concert of OSL’s 2019-20 Carnegie Hall series just days before New York first went into lockdown, Labadie helped orchestrate the orchestra’s deft pandemic response, nimbly taking the **2020 Bach Festival** online before planning and hosting the OSLive digital series “**Baroque 2020**.”

Marking just his second full, uninterrupted season with the orchestra, 2021-22 has seen Labadie and OSL return to live performance in full force. They kicked off the season with fall concerts at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and Carnegie Hall, where their program’s centerpiece was the world premiere of *Imaginary Violin Concerto*, an original Bach compilation created “**with respect and plucky daring**” (*New York Times*) by the Principal Conductor himself, and where their “**exceptionally fine and committed music-making**” impressed the *New York Times* as evoking an “**act of renewal**.”

This spring & summer: *St. Matthew Passion* & more at Carnegie Hall; Beethoven at Caramoor

Bach’s music also forms the focus of OSL and Labadie’s two remaining appearances in this season’s “**Carnegie Hall Presents**” series. As the high point of the season, they return to the Perelman Stage for a historically informed account of the composer’s monumental ***St. Matthew Passion***, featuring German tenor **Julian Prégardien** as the Evangelist, of which he is one of the world’s leading exponents, and three stellar North American choirs: Boston’s **Handel & Haydn Society**, the conductor’s own **La Chapelle de Québec** and the boys of New York’s **Saint Thomas Choir (April 7)**. For their final appearance in the series, Labadie leads OSL in a program pairing Bach’s music with that of his champion **Mendelssohn**, for which they will be joined by Grammy-

winning violinist and frequent OSL collaborator **Augustin Hadelich** and Grammy-nominated countertenor **Reginald Mobley**, making his **Carnegie Hall and OSL debuts (May 5)**.

Bach's timeless music and enduring legacy are also the subject of OSL's **2022 Bach Festival**, which is anchored by three programs led by Labadie at Carnegie's **Zankel Hall**. Showcasing cellist **Steven Isserlis**, the series opens with a program of symphonies and cello concertos by **Haydn** and **C.P.E. Bach**, two of the composers most directly influenced by the latter's father (**June 2**). Next follows an evening of music by **J.S. Bach** and his contemporaries, featuring the **U.S. premiere** of Labadie's original arrangement of Pachelbel's E-minor Chaconne, and guest appearances by soprano **Amanda Forsythe**, violinist **Stefan Jackiw** and oboist **Philippe Tondre (June 7)**. The series culminates with Labadie's leadership of Bach's *A Musical Offering*, contextualized with the conductor's characteristically informative and illuminating commentary. Dating from the composer's final decade, the work is complex and highly chromatic, exhaustively exploring the contrapuntal possibilities of a single theme (**June 22**).

To complete the season, Labadie and OSL return to **Caramoor** for the festival's **Summer Season Finale**. After giving a pre-concert talk, the conductor looks forward to leading an **all-Beethoven program** that pairs the "Emperor" Concerto, featuring Labadie's compatriot **Marc-André Hamelin** – a pianist "known for a technical finesse that borders on the supernatural" (*Seattle Times*) – with the composer's Second Symphony (**Aug 7**).

Labadie's international engagements next season

OSL's upcoming 2022-23 Carnegie Hall season will be announced in the coming weeks. Meanwhile, as a regular presence on some of the world's most prestigious podiums, Labadie already looks forward to a full schedule of guest conducting engagements next season. In the U.S., he returns to the **Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra** and **Handel & Haydn Society**, and in his native Canada he leads the **Montreal Symphony** and **National Arts Centre Orchestra**, where he will serve as **2022-23 Creative Partner**. Further afield, he returns to Europe's **Berlin Radio Symphony, Orchestre National de Lyon, Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg** and **The English Concert & Chorus**, which he leads at next year's **Edinburgh Festival**.

Other major orchestras where Labadie is a favored guest include North America's New York and Los Angeles Philharmonics, the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Detroit, Houston, St. Louis and Toronto Symphonies, as well as such leading international ensembles as the Academy of Ancient Music, Bavarian Radio Symphony, BBC Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and Zurich Chamber Orchestra.

About Orchestra of St. Luke's

Orchestra of St. Luke's (OSL) grew from a group of virtuoso musicians performing chamber music concerts at Greenwich Village's Church of St. Luke in the Fields in 1974. Regular seasons see OSL perform in diverse musical genres at New York's major concert venues, drawing on an expanded roster for large-scale works, and collaborating with artists ranging from Joshua Bell

and Renée Fleming to Bono and Metallica. The orchestra has commissioned more than 50 new works and has given more than 175 world, U.S., and New York City premieres, as well as participating in 118 recordings, four of which have been recognized with Grammy Awards. Internationally celebrated for his expertise in 18th-century music, **Bernard Labadie** was appointed as OSL's Principal Conductor in 2018, continuing the orchestra's long tradition of working with proponents of historical performance practice. Built and operated by OSL, the **DiMenna Center for Classical Music** opened in 2011. New York City's only rehearsal, recording, education and performance space expressly dedicated to classical music, it serves more than 500 ensembles and 30,000 musicians each year.

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Bernard Labadie & OSL at Carnegie Hall: spring engagements

April 7

New York, NY

Carnegie Hall (Stern Auditorium)

Carnegie Hall Presents: Orchestra of St. Luke's

"Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*"

Bernard Labadie, Principal Conductor

BACH: *St. Matthew Passion*

(With Julian Prégardien, tenor (Evangelist); Philippe Sly, bass-baritone (Jesus); Carolyn Sampson, soprano; countertenor Hugh Cutting; Andrew Staples, tenor; Matthew Brook, bass-baritone; La Chapelle de Québec, choir; Handel + Haydn Society Chorus, choir; Boys of the Saint Thomas Choir, children's choir)

May 5

New York, NY

Carnegie Hall (Stern Auditorium)

Carnegie Hall Presents: Orchestra of St. Luke's

"Mendelssohn's *"Italian" Symphony*"

Bernard Labadie, Principal Conductor

BACH: "Ich habe genug," BWV 82 (with Reginald Mobley, countertenor)

MENDELSSOHN: Violin Concerto in E Minor (with Augustin Hadelich, violin)

MENDELSSOHN: Symphony No. 4, "Italian"

June 2

New York, NY

Carnegie Hall (Zankel Hall)

OSL Presents: OSL Bach Festival 2022

“Steven Isserlis plays Haydn and Bach”

Presented in association with Carnegie Hall

Bernard Labadie, Principal Conductor

HAYDN: Symphony No. 26, “Lamentatione”

C.P.E. BACH: Cello Concerto in A (with Steven Isserlis, cello)

C.P.E. BACH: Symphony in E-flat

HAYDN: Cello Concerto in C (with Steven Isserlis, cello)

June 7

New York, NY

Carnegie Hall (Zankel Hall)

OSL Presents: OSL Bach Festival 2022

“Virtuoso Concertos”

Presented in association with Carnegie Hall

Bernard Labadie, Principal Conductor

PACHELBEL (arr. LABADIE): Chaconne in E minor (U.S. premiere)

HANDEL: Concerto grosso in D minor Op. 6, No. 10, HWV 328

BACH: Concerto for oboe d’amore in A, BWV 1055R (with Philippe Tondre, oboe)

BACH: Concerto for oboe and violin in C minor, BWV 1060R (with Philippe Tondre, oboe; Stefan Jackiw, violin)

HANDEL: *Silte venti*, HWV 242 (with Amanda Forsythe, soprano)

June 22

New York, NY

Carnegie Hall (Zankel Hall)

OSL Presents: OSL Bach Festival 2022

“A Narrated Musical Offering”

Presented in association with Carnegie Hall

Bernard Labadie, Principal Conductor and narrator

BACH: *A Musical Offering*

Bernard Labadie & OSL at Caramoor: summer engagement

Aug 7 at 4pm

Katonah, NY

Caramoor (Venetian Theater)

“Summer Season Finale”

Bernard Labadie, Principal Conductor and pre-concert speaker

BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 2 in D

BEETHOVEN: Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat, “Emperor” (with Marc-André Hamelin, piano)

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