PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
MANFRED HONECK, MUSIC DIRECTOR

For immediate release: Friday, June 19, 2026

# Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra 2025/2026 Season Culminates with America250 Festival

**Two-week festival celebrates American music, Pittsburgh partnerships, and the United States' 250th Anniversary**

**June 12 & 14: Academy Award-winning actor F. Murray Abraham joins the PSO to narrate Copland's *Lincoln Portrait***

**June 19-21: Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre collaborates on Copland's Appalachian Spring, paired with world premiere of Michael Daugherty's *Dancing in the Streets***

**July 2-5: PSO Celebrates America250 with free concerts and a new recording**

PITTSBURGH – The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (PSO) concludes its 2025/2026 BNY Classics season with an America250 Festival, a two-week celebration of American music in honor of America's 250th led by Music Director Manfred Honeck at Heinz Hall. Presented across the final two subscription weekends of the season, the festival brings together landmark American works, a PSO-commissioned world premiere, major guest artists, and two Pittsburgh partnerships: the Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh and a mainstage collaboration together with Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre.

The festival is the culminating expression of the PSO's 2025/2026 season theme, which has explored the evolving role of American orchestral music in the nation's 250th year. Across the season, the PSO's classical programming has featured 21 works by American composers, including music by Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, Samuel Barber, George Gershwin, Julia Wolfe, Jessie Montgomery, Caroline Shaw, Carlos Simon, and many others.

"Throughout this season, we've explored American music not as a single sound, but as a living and evolving conversation shaped by an incredible variety of voices, communities, and traditions," said Melia Tourangeau, President & CEO of the PSO. "Our America250 Festival brings that journey to a powerful culmination by celebrating American composers past and present, while honoring the special creative ties that make Pittsburgh such a distinctive cultural home."

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## June 12 & 14: Lincoln Portrait

The concerts on June 12 & 14 feature Academy Award-winning actor F. Murray Abraham as narrator in Aaron Copland's *Lincoln Portrait*, a work that frames the words of Abraham Lincoln

as Copland saw them. Abraham returns to the PSO following several previous collaborations, including his narration of Manfred Honeck's concept Mozart's Death in Words and Music, recently released as an album, and appearances with the orchestra at Carnegie Hall in 2014 and Heinz Hall in 2023.

The program opens with Joan Tower's *Tambor*, a work commissioned and premiered by the PSO in 1988 under Mariss Jansons. The concert also features the PSO premiere of John Adams' The Wound-Dresser, a moving setting of Walt Whitman's Civil War poem about tending to injured soldiers, brought to life by German baritone Matthias Goerne. The PSO is joined by the Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh and boy soprano Hudson Schmitt for Leonard Bernstein's lively *Chichester Psalms.*

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**June 19-21: Appalachian Spring**

The season finale centers on the PSO's largescale collaboration with Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, who steps center stage for Aaron Copland's beloved Appalachian Spring. PBT will perform Mark Godden's Angels in the Architecture choreography in front of the orchestra, bringing dance and live orchestral music together in PSO's ending to the BNY Classics season.

Appalachian Spring carries several resonances for Pittsburgh: the ballet was originally created for Martha Graham, who was born in Pittsburgh and became one of the defining figures of modern dance. Pittsburgh itself is also situated in Appalachia, lending a regional connection to a work that has become one of the most recognizable expressions of American musical identity.

The program opens with the world premiere of Michael Daugherty's *Dancing in the Streets*, a PSO commission written in celebration of America's 250th anniversary and the 100th anniversary of the Martha Graham Dance Company. The three-movement work continues the program's dance themes through musical tributes to four American cultural figures: Pittsburgh-born Gene Kelly, Martha Graham, and Woody and Marjorie Guthrie.

Violinist Augustin Hadelich, widely recognized among the foremost violinists performing today, joins the PSO for another nod to America with Samuel Barber's Violin Concerto. Jessie Montgomery's colorful *Strum* for string orchestra adds a contemporary counterpoint to this bouquet of American sounds and voices.

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**July 3-5: Parks Concerts and a Recording Release**

July 2-5: Free Concerts and a Recording Release
The Pittsburgh Symphony is also marking America's 250th with free concerts across July 2, 3, 4 and 5, with programs celebrating American music, civic pride and PSO talent. On July 2, Associate Conductor Jacob Joyce leads the Symphony's annual Americana Concert at Soldiers &

Sailors Memorial Hall & Museum, preceded by a flag-raising ceremony with the National Flag Foundation's Sojourn250.

The Symphony continues with free summer parks concerts on July 3 at South Park Amphitheatre with Allegheny County, July 4 at the Dollar Bank Stage at Arts Landing as part of the City of Pittsburgh's Independence Day celebration with the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, and July 5 at Hartwood Acres Park as part of Allegheny County's America's 250th Anniversary Celebration.

Fittingly, the PSO will also release a new American-themed recording on July 3, the day before Independence Day. Released on Reference Recordings, the album pairs Music Director Manfred Honeck and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra in Dvořák's Symphony No. 9, "From the New World," with the first commercial recording of Carlos Simon's Four Black American Dances, bringing together two perspectives on American music: Dvořák's experience of America and Simon's vibrant contemporary voice.

## Concert Information

Tickets for the America250 Festival are available at pittsburghsymphony.org, by calling the Heinz Hall Box Office at 412-392-4900, or by visiting the Box Office at 600 Penn Avenue.

**Lincoln Portrait**
Friday, June 12, 2026 at 7:30PM
Sunday, June 14, 2026 at 2:30PM
Heinz Hall

Manfred Honeck, conductor
F. Murray Abraham, narrator
Matthias Goerne, baritone
Hudson Schmitt, boy soprano
Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh

JOAN TOWER: *Tambor*
JOHN ADAMS: *The Wound-Dresser*
BACH: "Ich Habe Genug" from Cantata No. 82
LEONARD BERNSTEIN: *Chichester Psalms*
AARON COPLAND: *Lincoln Portrait*

**Appalachian Spring**
Friday, June 19, 2026 at 7:30PM
Saturday, June 20, 2026 at 7:30PM
Sunday, June 21, 2026 at 2:30PM
Heinz Hall

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Manfred Honeck, conductor
Augustin Hadelich, violin
Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre

MICHAEL DAUGHERTY: *Dancing in the Streets* (PSO Commission & World Premiere)
BARBER: Violin Concerto
JESSIE MONTGOMERY: *Strum* (PSO Subscription Premiere)
COPLAND: *Appalachian Spring*

## Americana Concert

Thursday, July 2, 2026 at 7PM
Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall & Museum

Flag-raising ceremony at 6PM with National Flag Foundation's Sojourn250

Jacob Joyce, conductor
Katy Williams, vocalist
Ilkhom Mukhiddinov, violin
Ethan Murphy, narrator

Star-Spangled Banner
GOULD: American Salute
COPLAND: *John Henry*
JOHN WILLIAMS: Music from *The Patriot*
PONCE: Estrellita
PRICE: Music from Symphony No. 1
MANCINI: *Strings on Fire*
JOHN WILLIAMS: "Hymn to the Fallen" from *Saving Private Ryan*
America the Beautiful
Armed Forces Salute
COPLAND: Music from *Lincoln Portrait*
SOUSA: *Stars and Stripes Forever*

## Free Summer Parks Concerts

Friday, July 3, 2026 at 8:15PM (South Park Amphitheatre)
Saturday, July 4, 2026 at 6PM (Dollar Bank Stage at Arts Landing)
Sunday, July 5, 2026 at 8:15PM (Hartwood Acres, America's 250th Anniversary Celebration)

Jacob Joyce, conductor
Ilkhom Mukhiddinov, violin
Ethan Murphy, narrator

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GLINKA: Overture to *Ruslan and Mudmila*
JOHN WILLIAMS: Music from *The Patriot*
COPLAND: *John Henry*
PRICE: Music from Symphony No. 1
PONCE: *Estrellita*
SARASATE: *Zigeunerweisen*
MANCINI: *Strings on Fire*
DVORAK: Music from Symphony No. 9, "From the New World"
Armed Forces Salute
COPLAND: Music from *Lincoln Portrait*
SOUSA: *Stars and Stripes Forever*

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**With Gratitude**

- BNY Classics concerts are made possible by title sponsorship support from BNY. The 2025/2026 season marks BNY's 25th consecutive year as title sponsor of the series.
- The America250 Festival is made possible in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.
- The Dvorak/Simon recording is made possible by generous support from Cheryl and Jim Redmond.
- The Americana Concert is supported in part by Dollar Bank, Free Concert Sponsor.
- The Americana Concert and Free Summer Parks Concerts are supported in part by Trebuchet Consulting LLC.
- The PSO is grateful for overall support from local and state government entities including the Allegheny Regional Asset District, The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Community and Economic Development, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
- Radio station WQED-FM 89.3/WQEJ-FM 89.7 is the official voice of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

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