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Tanglewood Serves Up A Tasty Picnic Of 7 Musical Offerings To End The Season

August 19, 2016 By [Keith Powers](#) 

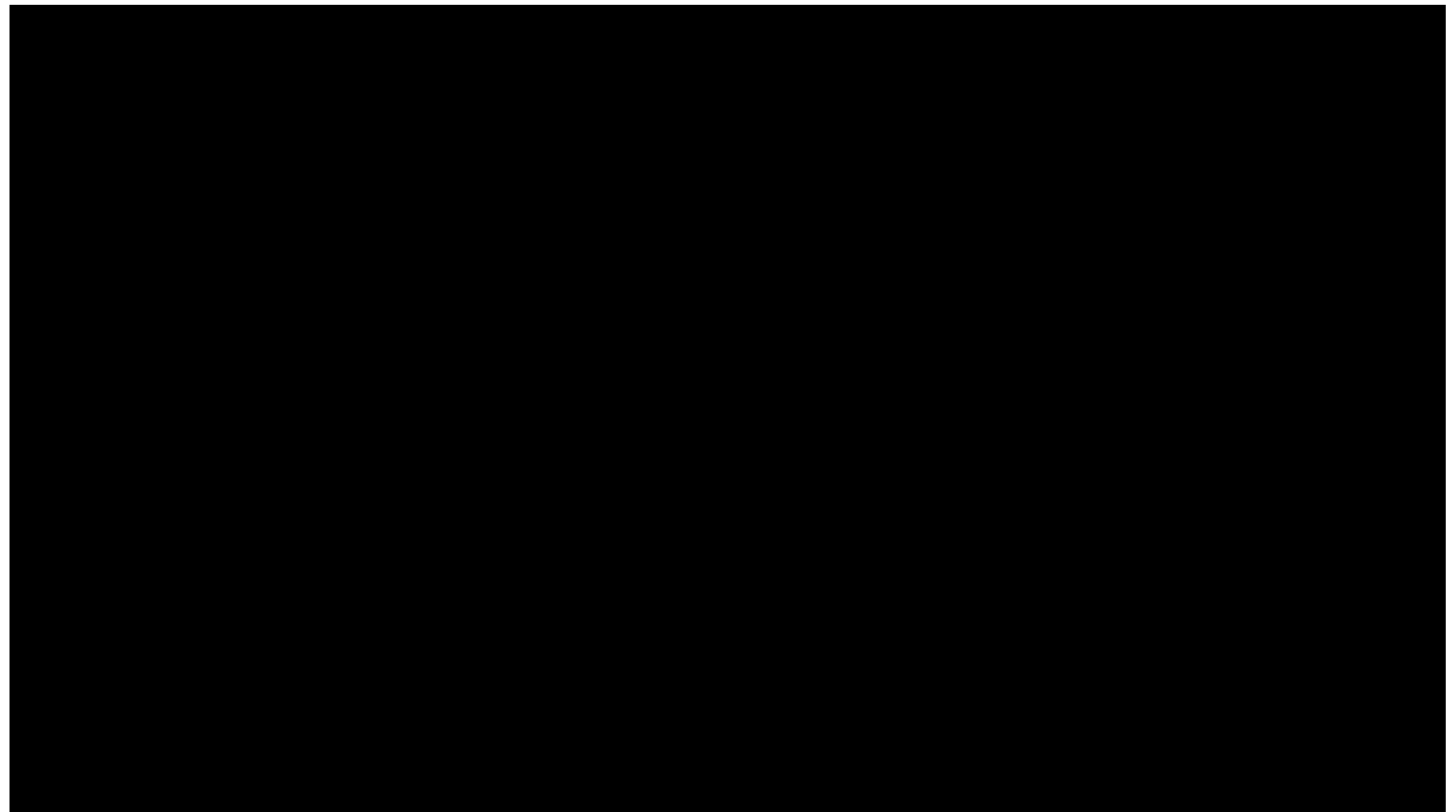


The end of summer doesn't have to be depressing. Go to Tanglewood. There's enough happening there in the last two weeks of the season to carry those good

summertime vibes deep into leaf-peeping season.

The presence of Boston Symphony Orchestra music director Andris Nelsons would be reason enough to smile. He was already on the docket to conduct a major concert presentation of Verdi's "Aida" with his wife, soprano Kristine Opolais, in the title role (Acts I and II, Aug. 20). And to bring back one of the excellent Shakespeare celebration concerts that he conducted in February at Symphony Hall the next afternoon (Aug. 21).

But then Nelsons was pressed into further duty, when Christoph von Dohnányi could not conduct the traditional season closer, Beethoven's Ninth (Aug. 28). So he'll take on Beethoven's mammoth choral symphony, and as you can see from this BBC Proms performance with his old ensemble, the City of Birmingham Orchestra, he knows his way around the Ode to Joy.



The week between these performances gets filled with the transcendent, the unheard-of and the downright bizarre. With aging glory and newly minted

genius thrown in for good measure.

The Friday evening before the Nelsons family “Aida” (Aug. 19), Tanglewood welcomes pianist Menahem Pressler to the Shed. Pressler, at 92, no longer commands the keyboard as he has for the past half century. That is nothing to apologize for. But his concerts are riveting events filled with admirers — a legacy of now-great pianists in their own right, who show up to pay tribute and enjoy the moment.

He plays Mozart’s concerto no. 23, with Charles Dutoit on the podium. His performance of the same concerto with the Berlin Philharmonic on New Year’s Eve 2014, captured here with Simon Rattle on the podium, was simulcast world-wide to an audience of millions. It’s the perfectly delicate, musicianly piece for Pressler to play at this phase of his voluminous career.



If you’re not interested in nostalgia, try innovation. The vocal ensemble Roomful of Teeth, the Grammy-winning, throat-singing and thoroughly captivating a

cappella octet, caps off its annual residency at Mass MoCA with a performance the same evening, a program that ranges from Toby Twining to death metal.



Pianist Jeremy Denk innovates as well, but in his own cerebral way. The elegant pianist has been preparing a sort of “History of Musical Style” program for a year or so; now it’s ready to go, and he takes the Ozawa Hall stage on Aug. 24 to play music from Binchois to Bach to the Beatles, and back again — 25 pieces in all. Denk has called this program the “musical analogy to time-lapse photography.”

If Gilles Binchois gets too medieval for you, move on to the Baroque the following evening (Aug. 25). Conductor Nicholas McGegan and his Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra present Alessandro Scarlatti’s “La gloria di primavera,” a serenata (a kind of an opera written for a ceremonial occasion), one you can be certain that nobody in the audience will have ever heard.

OK, there’s a recording, and somebody may have heard that. Here McGegan talks about making it, and the some of the wonders of recording Scarlatti père.



He's not Renaissance, but in many ways John Williams is music's Renaissance man. Williams has found a way to entertain high- and low-brow audiences throughout his career. Both audiences get their due during this week: on Friday evening (Aug. 26), Keith Lockhart and the Pops play the live score of Williams's "Raiders of the Lost Arc" in the Shed along with the film — a feat of timing that is fun to watch simply for Lockhart's precision acrobatics.


On Saturday evening, cellist Yo-Yo Ma investigates Williams' more serious side, performing several of his works — including his gorgeous concerto "Heartwood" — with conductor Michael Stern and the BSO. Ma also plays Williams' solo piece "Rosewood and Pickin'," along with Haydn's cello concerto in C, seen here in a vintage video with Williams himself on the podium.



And then finally the classical season at Tanglewood comes to a close. Nelsons, generous in every way — in his personality, his gestures and his innocent enthusiasms — takes us out of the summer and into the sublime with Beethoven’s Ninth. Bass Günther Groissböck highlights Nelsons’ vocalists, and Copland’s “Quiet City” — with BSO principals Thomas Rolfs (trumpet) and Robert Sheena (English horn) as soloists—fills out the program.

Here’s a look at Nelsons’ BSO debut — already a bit of nostalgia — as a further inducement to venture out to Tanglewood to close out the summer.



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