

Marsalis headlines CSO's next season

One of three musical giants with the orchestra

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The Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra will continue its unprecedented artistic leadership arrangement in its 2012-13 season, in which a trio of musical giants will oversee its programs. Former Tonight Show bandleader Branford Marsalis and Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Jennifer Higdon will join conductor Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos as creative directors, each leading their own series.

And making her overdue Cincinnati debut, opera diva Renée Fleming will perform a gala opening concert to launch the season on Sept. 18.

Next season will be the orchestra's last in Music Hall before the 138-year-old building undergoes a 16-month revitalization. In addition, the orchestra continues its search for a new music director. The 117th season will bring back music director laureate Paavo Järvi, who conducts in January for the first time since his tenure ended with a sold-out concert last May 2013.

Concertgoers can expect a starry lineup of guest artists, including renowned violinists Joshua Bell, Gil Shaham and Sarah Chang; pianists André Watts, Yefim Bronfman and Garrick Ohlsson and the virtuoso Scottish percussionist Evelyn Glennie. Profoundly deaf since age 12, she "hears" music with her whole body.

Legendary violinist Pinchas Zukerman will perform double duty, conducting and performing music by Beethoven, Schoenberg and Mendelssohn, when he returns in February 2013. Among the premieres, the season has Higdon's "All Things Majestic," a multimedia performance accompanied by historic images of Music Hall and Cincinnati in celebration of the city's 225th anniversary. Other premieres are a newly commissioned work by Chinese-American composer Zhou Tian, and the Pulitzer Prize-winning composer George Walker's Sinfonia No. 4, Strands, a CSO co-commission.

Frühbeck, who currently presides over this season's Masterworks Series, will return for an encore next season. Spanish maestro Frühbeck, who was Musical America's 2011 Conductor of the Year, will open the Masterworks Series on Sept. 28-29 with Falla's Music from "El amor brujo" and "Nights in the Gardens of Spain," featuring the debut of Mexican-American pianist

Jorge Federico Osorio. The evening will include Respighi's ever-popular "Fountains of Rome" and "Pines of Rome."

Frühbeck will also conduct Mahler's Symphony No. 3 with mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe, the Cincinnati Boychoir and the Women of the May Festival Chorus (Oct. 4 and 6).

Several maestros – and a maestra – who have made an impression have been invited back next season.

In the Masterworks Series, French conductor Louis Langrée will return for a pair of weekends in November. The first will include Saint-Saens' Piano Concerto No. 2, featuring rising talent Cédric Tiberghien, and Franck's Symphony in D Minor. A second program will pair Schoenberg's "A Survivor from Warsaw" with Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, "Choral."

Italian maestro Roberto Abbado will return in April to lead Strauss' "Alpine" Symphony and Mozart's glorious Piano Concerto No. 24 with pianist Lars Vogt (April 12-13 2013).

Marsalis, saxophonist, bandleader and member of the famed New Orleans family of jazz, will direct the five-concert Ascent Series. He will also appear as alto saxophone soloist in the "Tallahatchie Concerto" by Jacob Ter Veldhuis, a high-intensity piece to be conducted by frequent Marsalis collaborator Andrey Boreyko (Nov. 30-Dec. 1).

Opening the Ascent Series on Sept. 11, Bell, one of America's greatest violinists, will return with Bruch's Concerto No. 1 and Ravel's "Tzigane." Bell's fellow American, conductor William Eddins, will lead the concert's three performances.

Also on the Ascent Series, Argentine pianist Ingrid Fliter performs the Ravel Piano Concerto in January 2013, Mark Wigglesworth leads Shostakovich's Symphony No. 10 in February and Oregon Symphony music director Carlos Kalmar returns to conduct Nielsen's Symphony No. 4, "The Inextinguishable" in April 2013.

Higdon, who will lead the Boundless Series, is one of the most prolific American composers living today. She'll kick off her series Nov. 2-3 with her own Percussion Concerto performed by Glennie. In January 2013, the violinist Shaham will return with the Brahms Violin Concerto in a program that includes Sibelius' Symphony No. 1, conducted by Yan Pascal Tortelier.

The Boundless Series also will bring back Spanish conductor Juanjo Mena, who dazzled Cincinnati audiences earlier this month. Violinist Leila Josefowicz will play the Adès Violin Concerto and Schubert's Symphony No. 9, "The Great" (March 1-2 2013).

Also March 2013, the distinguished pianist Watts, who performed to a sold-out crowd in Music Hall last January, will perform Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5, "Emperor." Mei-Ann Chen, who made an impressive debut when she stepped in for an ailing Frühbeck on short notice this season, will conduct the program.

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra music director Robert Spano will lead the season finale in May 2013. Besides the multimedia commemoration of the city of Cincinnati's 225th anniversary, the program will feature Ohlsson performing Samuel Barber's Piano Concerto as well as Copland's Symphony No. 3.

Fleming, one of the most celebrated sopranos of our time, is familiar to many for her television appearances, such as PBS' "Live from Lincoln Center," and her big screen appearances, seen in movie theaters in the Metropolitan Opera's Live in HD series. For her single-night gala appearance, she will perform operatic favorites, symphonic songs and arrangements of popular American music.