

Marcelo Lehninger

Conductor





**Marcelo Lehninger, conductor
2026-2027 Full Biography**

Brazilian-born Marcelo Lehninger has led the Grand Rapids Symphony as Music Director since 2016 and was recently appointed Artistic Director of the Bellingham Festival of Music in Washington. Previously, he served as Music Director of the New West Symphony in Los Angeles, for which the League of American Orchestras awarded him the Helen H. Thompson Award for Emerging Music Directors. For five years, Lehninger was Assistant and then Associate Conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, a tenure that included many concerts in Boston, Tanglewood and a highly praised debut at Carnegie Hall in 2011.

Lehninger brought the Grand Rapids Symphony to Carnegie Hall in 2018 for its first performance at the famed venue in thirteen years and released the album "Strauss & Villa-Lobos," to international acclaim. Firmly committed to education, he continues his annual Conducting Institute, which offers a one-month residency to promising young conductors as part of the Bellingham Festival of Music.

During the 2026-2027 season, Lehninger makes his debut with the New World Symphony and maintains his close association with the Brazilian Symphony Orchestra, leading multiple engagements in Rio de Janeiro. In 2025-2026, he returned to the Rochester Philharmonic and North Carolina Symphony, and made his debut with the Rhode Island Philharmonic. In 2024, he visited South Africa for the first time, conducting concerts with the Johannesburg and KwaZulu Natal Philharmonics.

Lehninger has led some of the world's top orchestras, including the Chicago, Boston, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, National, Houston, Detroit, Baltimore, Seattle, Milwaukee, Indianapolis, Colorado, New Jersey and Portland Symphonies, among many others. In Canada, he has appeared with the Toronto, Winnipeg, and Kitchener- Waterloo Symphonies, the Calgary and Hamilton Philharmonics, and Symphony Nova Scotia.

European highlights include engagements with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Orchestre National de France, Lucerne Symphony, Prague Philharmonia, Budapest's MAV Symphony, regular visits to the Slovenian Philharmonic, including on tour to Vienna's Konzerthaus, and a tour with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra assisting Mariss Jansons. He made his Australian debut with the Sydney and Melbourne Symphonies with his friend and mentor Nelson Freire as soloist. In Japan, he conducted the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony in Tokyo and the Kyushu Symphony Orchestra in Fukuoka.

Lehninger was Music Advisor of The Orchestra of the Americas for the 2007-2008 season. In the summer of 2008, he toured with the orchestra in South America, conducting concerts in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay. He has led all of the top orchestras in Brazil, and served as Associate Conductor of the Minas Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra, where he returns frequently as guest conductor. He also appears regularly at the Campos do Jordão Winter Festival in Brazil.

Chosen by Kurt Masur in 2008, Lehninger was awarded the First Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy Scholarship sponsored by the American Friends of the Mendelssohn Foundation. He was Maestro Masur's assistant with the Orchestre National de France (during their residency at the Musikverein in Vienna), Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig, and the New York Philharmonic. Before dedicating his career to conducting, Lehninger studied violin and piano. He holds a master's degree from the Conductors Institute at Bard College. A dual citizen of Brazil and Germany, Marcelo Lehninger is the son of Brazilian pianist Sônia Goulart and German violinist Erich Lehninger.

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JUNE 2026 - PLEASE DESTROY ALL PREVIOUSLY DATED MATERIALS

Marcelo Lehninger

Critical Acclaim



“He was terrific, conducting all three works with impressive technique, musical insight and youthful energy. The orchestra sounded great.”

New York Times

“Lehninger and his responsive players kept sophistication to the fore.”

Chicago Tribune

“The Tchaikovsky was outstanding — a performance comprising brilliant playing, a precise grasp of the score, and ferocious power, all held in perfect balance.”

Boston Globe

“Lehninger drew brilliantly primal playing from the NSO brass.”

Washington Post

“Lehninger proved an impressive sculptor of phrasing and dynamics”

Herald Tribune

“Lehninger is a masterful talent to watch.”

Chautauquan Daily

artSMart

November 4, 2024

KZNPO SPRING SEASON CONCERT #1: REVIEW

By Barbara Trofimeczyk

Thursday's symphony concert was a splendid opening to the orchestra's Spring Season, the first of three concerts in this series.

The three works on the programme were played in an unusual sequence ending with the concerto rather than the symphony. There could be a number of reasons for that, but it certainly worked well – two well-contrasted “classical” works and the “romantic” one to follow, the superb performance by soloist, Jeneba Kanneh-Mason, leaving one at the end of the concert with a warm response to Chopin's distinctive and unique pianism.

That's not to say that the classical works were not on a par! Conductor Marcelo Lehninger made sure of that!

The overture, although romantic in its theatrical and descriptive reference, is essentially classical in style and structure, which enables it to stand on its own as a popular concert item.

Haydn was affectionately known as the “Father of the Symphony” due to his lifelong association with the growth and development of the symphony. The London Symphony is the last in his symphonic oeuvre and was written at the height of his fame and popularity as a composer in London. Symphony No.104 abounds in all the rich compositional elements of his mature classical style, themes and motives with character, contrasts and development, consistent use of the brass, woodwinds and strings in varying textures, sound colour and dynamics, to mention but a few! Conductor Marcelo Lehninger captured these elements perfectly in a very satisfying performance of this symphony by the orchestra.

Highlight of the evening was Jeneba Kanneh-Mason's relaxed and beautiful rendering of the concerto. Expressive, and with a technically fluent display of Chopin's decorative somewhat improvisatory style, and with Marcelo Lehninger following precisely the soloist's personal nuances, conductor, soloist and orchestra were at “one” in this fine performance of Chopin's concerto.

The encore, a quietly expressive performance of Debussy's musical gem *Girl with the Flaxen Hair*, brought an ecstatic audience to their feet.