ARTS + ENTERTAINMENT

FEBRUARY 23, 2023 YOUROBSERVER.COM



Maestro Kensho Watanabe will lead the Sarasota Orchestra in its guided tour of its "Masterworks: Copland and Stravinsky" performance.

Courtesy photo

THE MASTERS TOUR

Guided tours bring a contemporary context to a timeless art form.

EMILY LEINFUSSCONTRIBUTOR

hroughout time immemorial, both music and language have been used to tell stories.

When combined, as in Sarasota Orchestra's Guided Tours — the second and final of which is 7:30 p.m. on Feb. 24 at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall — it's possible that something altogether new may emerge.

That may be some of what Bramwell Tovey was aiming for, in addition to providing a forum to help make classical music more accessible to newcomers, when he initiated the hybrid lecture/concerts as part of Sarasota Orchestra's 2022-23 season. Tovey was music director from September 2021 to July

2022, when he died before he could lead the orchestra through the season.

For "A Guided Tour: Copland and Stravinsky," Maestro Kensho Watanabe will be conducting the full orchestra and hosting the evening along with participation from contemporary classical composer Jessica Hunt and guest soloist Stefan Jackiw.

Watanabe muses that guided tours could become part of Tovey's Sarasota legacy. The two maestros were close, and the program was developed collaboratively.

"He and I would get together maybe once a year to talk about the repertoire I might want to do," Watanabe says. Turns out they were thinking about the exact same thing — Aaron Copland's Symphony No. 3.

He explains that because Copland is considered the "Dean of American composers," his work provides a platform to springboard into the larger story of American classical

"We were late to the classical music world, and it's exciting to realize that what an Amer-

IF YOU GO

'GUIDED TOUR: COPLAND AND STRAVINSKY'

When: 7:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 24 Where: Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall Cost: \$26-\$69 Info: SarasotaOrchestra.org.

ican composer is, or what American music should sound like, is still being defined," says

All composers are influenced by those who came before and, in that light, Watanabe told Tovey he thought contemporary American composer Jessica Hunt's "Climb" would be a great opener. The two also agreed that, because the music of Igor Stravinsky had a huge impact on Copland, that his violin con-

SEE MASTERS TOUR, PAGE 2



Photo courtesy of Irina Belashov Maestro Kensho Watanabe worked with the late Sarasota Orchestra music director to form the guided tour for Masterworks: Copland and Stravinsky.

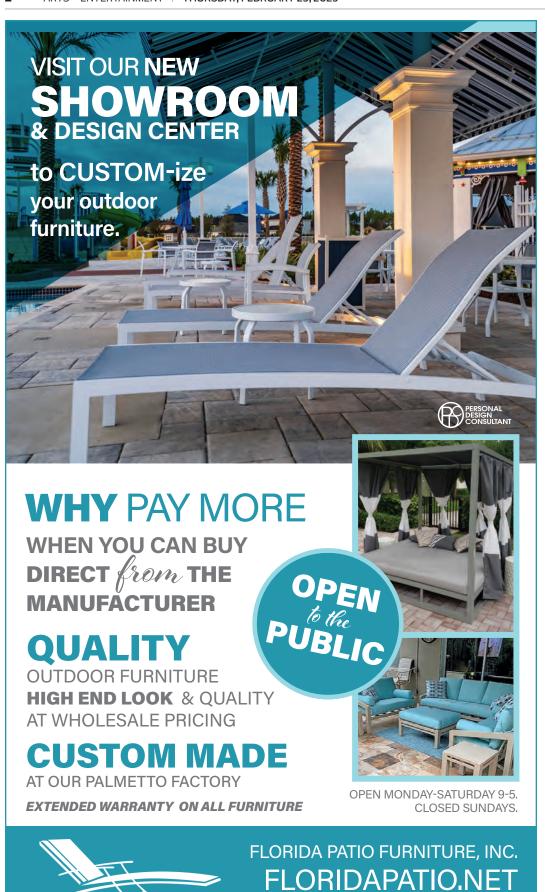


Photo courtesy of Her and Him Studios Contemporary American composer Jessica Hunt's"Climb" will open the Masterworks performance that runs Feb. 23-26.



Courtesy phot Violinist Stefan Jackiw will perform in the Sarasota Orchestra's Masterworks: Copland and Stravinskly.

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Photo courtesy of David Cooper

The idea of including guided tours came from Bramwell Tovey, the Sarasota Orchestra's late music director.

Masters tour

FROM PAGE 1

certo would round out the repertoire.

"Stravinsky was creating chaos in France with 'The Rite of Spring,' and other incredible works," Watanabe says. "Copland moved to Paris because he wanted to check out what that scene was like, and he ended up really discovering the classical music that was being created at the time. He brought that home and infused it with the tradition of American folk music, things he heard while he was growing up. In his third symphony, Copland fused all the influences that he had into this mammoth work."

All that history is part of the story, or tour, of the music, Watanabe explains. "It's my responsibility to weave a story or narrative so that both the musicians on the stage and the people in the audience can all go on the same journey."

He takes that responsibility seri-

ously — particularly when it comes to exposing new audiences to classical music.

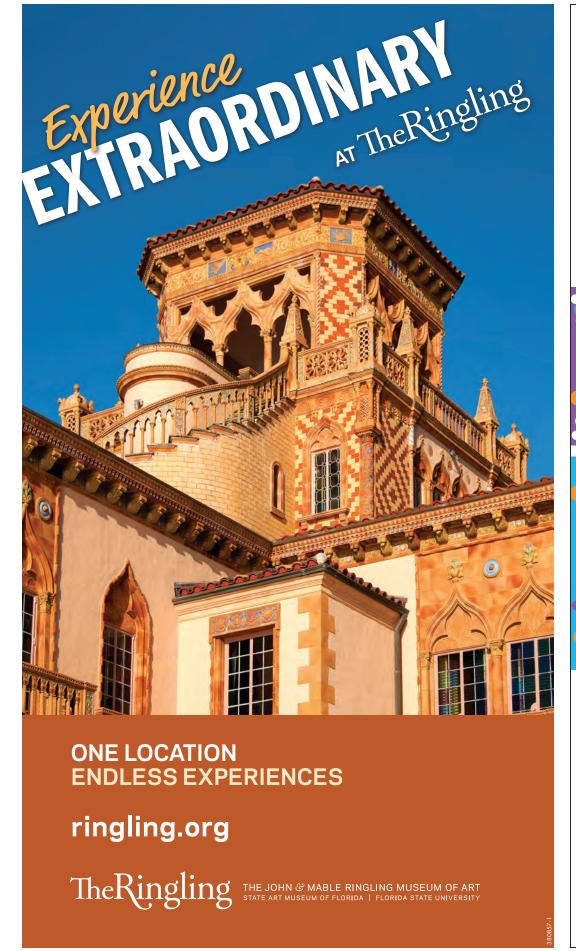
"I have encountered too many people who are either intimidated or perhaps feel inadequately prepared to come and listen to a piece of classical music," says Watanabe. "One of my missions in my artistic life is to convince them that this is not the case, and that there is something very special about encountering (the music) for the first time."

However, the evening is not just for the uninitiated. Already-dedicated concertgoers will enjoy what can be looked at as a live, supersized version of the kind of context and perspective usually gleaned from program notes, or when notes are presented from the podium.

"People read the program or do a Wikipedia search before a concert to get a sense of what they will experience," says Watanabe.

But guided tours are a novel setup,

even for the conductor. "I haven't done anything like this exactly," he says.



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