

2015 KURT MASUR CONDUCTING SEMINAR

PARTICIPANTS

Yoon Sang Timothy Cho

Benjamin Grow

Norman Huynh

Jooan Mun

Melissa Panlasigui

Lukáš Pohůnek

Kyle Ritenauer

Vlad Vizireanu

CONDUCTING MASTER CLASSES

MONDAY, JANUARY 12 | 6 PM

TUESDAY, JANUARY 13 | 7 PM

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14 | 6 PM

THURSDAY, JANUARY 15 | 7 PM

BORDEN AUDITORIUM

DRESS REHEARSAL

FRIDAY, JANUARY 16 | 10 AM

BORDEN AUDITORIUM

FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 2015 | 7:30 PM

JOHN C. BORDEN AUDITORIUM

MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC SYMPHONY

FINAL CONCERT OF THE 2015 KURT MASUR CONDUCTING SEMINAR

Kurt Masur and **Selected Seminar Participants**, Conductors

PROGRAM

ANTON BRUCKNER
(1824–1896)

Symphony No. 7 in E Major, WAB 107

Allegro moderato

Jooan Mun

Adagio

Kyle Ritenauer

Scherzo: Sehr schnell

Lukáš Pohůnek

Finale: Bewegt, doch nicht schnell

Norman Huynh

PROGRAM NOTES

Symphony No. 7 in E Major

Anton Bruckner

Reconciling Bruckner's personal traits with the monumental sound of his symphonies requires a bit of imagination. Somehow his lack of self-confidence, religious piety, and unorthodox route toward symphonic composition erupted into a remarkable musical legacy. Though he studied music as a youth and held various organ posts, he worked mainly as a schoolteacher. At age thirty-one, however, he sought counterpoint training with the rigorous Simon Sechter, who forbade him from writing any music outside of exercises for a six-year period. After additional orchestration studies, Bruckner finally—as a man of forty—began his career as a symphonic composer.

Profoundly influenced by hearing the premiere of *Tristan und Isolde* and meeting Wagner in 1865, Bruckner inadvertently got caught up in the raging Wagner–Brahms controversy in Vienna. Though his music was little like Wagner's in its structure or aesthetic approach, he was constantly attacked as a “Wagnerite” by the pro-Brahms critic Eduard Hanslick and had difficulty getting his works performed. It was only toward the end of his life that Bruckner gained recognition. Even Hanslick had to admit after a performance of the Seventh Symphony that it was rare for a composer to be called out four or five times after each movement.

Even more than the Third Symphony, which Bruckner dedicated to Wagner, the Seventh might be called his “Wagner” Symphony. Having begun the work in September 1881, Bruckner had completed the first movement and the Scherzo by January 1883, when he learned of Wagner's grave illness. On January 22 he wrote, “One day I came home and felt very sad. The thought had crossed my mind that the Master [Wagner] would die, and the C-sharp minor theme of the Adagio came to me.” Wagner died on February 13, and Bruckner completed the movement as an elegy. Here for the first time he employed Wagner tubas (brass instruments devised by Wagner for his *Ring* cycle to bridge a perceived gap between horns and trombones), also using them in the Finale, which pays further tribute to “the Master.”

With the full score completed on April 21, 1883, efforts began to secure a premiere performance. Several of Bruckner's former pupils tried to arouse interest with two-piano performances in Vienna, but it wasn't until

December 30, 1884, that the orchestral premiere took place—in Leipzig under the baton of Arthur Nikisch. Despite the audience's enthusiasm, critical response was mixed, but a wildly successful second performance in Munich in March 1885 launched Bruckner on the road to worldwide recognition. The Seventh remains Bruckner's most popular symphony, rivaled only by his Fourth.

A radiant serenity pervades the expansive first movement. Like most of Bruckner's sonata forms, it deals with the unfolding, development, and recapitulation of three main themes. The first is a luminous, arching melody for the cellos, joined by violas and clarinet. Bruckner marks the gentle second theme (oboes and clarinets over quietly pulsing brass) with a little melodic ornament or *turn*. A portentous buildup brings on the hushed third theme, its short phrases marching calmly downward until they provoke an outburst of brass fanfares. The ominous climax of the unhurried development prepares the wonderfully unobtrusive return of the opening. A similar peak sets up the ravishing beginning of the coda, which goes out in a characteristic blaze of glory.

Bruckner's lament for Wagner contrasts the solemn opening theme (Wagner tubas and violas) with a lighter theme that foreshadows some of Mahler's nostalgic, innocent-seeming passages. Into his somber opening idea, Bruckner inserts a quotation from his own concurrently composed *Te Deum* that symbolizes triumph over death. Rich variations of the two main themes form alternating sections, culminating in one of the greatest climaxes in the symphonic literature. At its apex, the composer's pupils-turned-editors, Joseph and Franz Schalk, added a now notorious cymbal crash (along with triangle and timpani), which Nikisch persuaded Bruckner to accept. Despite a penciled objection written above the pasted-in addition to the original score, most conductors include the percussive reinforcement.

The energetic Scherzo gives off both a cheerful and restless impression as it leads to a tempestuous conclusion in each of three sections. The two intervening, more delicately scored trio sections provide more relaxed, lyrical contrast.

The grand finale pays further homage to Wagner by incorporating a chorale-like second theme, for which Bruckner reintroduces the Wagner tubas. Another less obvious response to Wagner's death, suggests Bruckner scholar Timothy Jackson, was his use of a variation of sonata form that mirrors a characteristic of tragic literary plots. As Aristotle recognized in

his *Poetics*, a key ingredient for tragedy is *peripety*—a shift to the opposite of what would normally occur “because of some mistake of great weight and consequence.” Musically this corresponds to a kind of “reverse sonata form” rarely but significantly used after 1770. In such pieces as Brahms’s *Tragic Overture* or *Schicksalslied*, Liszt’s *Hamlet*, Wagner’s *Tannhäuser Overture*, or Mahler’s Sixth Symphony finale—all pieces connected with tragedy or fate—the main themes return in reverse order in the recap *and* the all-important return to the home key is displaced.

In Bruckner’s finale, the recall of his three themes in reverse order and his remarkable journey toward the home key makes a similar connection. In contrast to the dark endings of other “tragic reverse” movements, however, Bruckner’s finale ends in triumphant splendor, in the manner of victory-over-adversity symphonies such as Beethoven’s Third, Fifth, or Ninth. Thus Bruckner’s lament over Wagner’s death concludes by celebrating the immortality of his legacy.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Kurt Masur

Kurt Masur, one of the most widely admired musicians of his generation, is well known to orchestras and audiences not only as a distinguished conductor but also as a humanist. After serving as music director of the New York Philharmonic from 1991 to 2002 he was named the orchestra's music director emeritus, becoming the first New York Philharmonic music director to receive that title, and only the second (after Leonard Bernstein, who was named Laureate Conductor) to be given an honorary position. The New York Philharmonic established the "Kurt Masur Fund for the Orchestra" to endow conductor debut week at the Philharmonic in perpetuity. Since leaving the New York Philharmonic in 2002, other orchestras he has had an association with include the London Philharmonic, where he served as principal conductor for seven years, and the Orchestre National de France, where he served as music director since 2002 and, in 2008, assumed the title of Honorary Music Director for Life. As the Leipzig Gewandhaus Kapellmeister from 1970 to 1996, Maestro Masur led nearly a thousand performances. He was named its first Conductor Laureate in 1996. Since 1992 he has held the lifetime title of Honorary Guest Conductor of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. He celebrated 60 years as a professional conductor in 2008.

Since 1989, when he played a central role in the peaceful demonstrations that led to Germany's reunification, his leadership has attracted worldwide attention. Among his many honors have been the Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1995; the titles of Commander of the Legion of Honor from the government of France (1997) and Grand Officer of the Legion of Honor (2007), a rank rarely given to foreign citizens; the Great Cross of the Legion of Honor with Star and Ribbon from Horst Köhler, the president of Germany (2007); and the Freedom Prize from the city of Münster in 2004.

Maestro Masur recorded Beethoven's Symphonies No. 2 and 6 with the Orchestre National de France in 2004, followed by Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5 and Shostakovich's 7th Symphony, all on the Naïve label. Two of Mr. Masur's more than thirty recordings with the New York Philharmonic for Teldec Classics won Record of the Year from *Stereo Review* (Shostakovich's *Babi Yar* and Mahler's Ninth Symphony). For Deutsche Grammophon, he recorded a Grammy-nominated album of Brahms and Schumann with the

New York Philharmonic and Anne-Sophie Mutter. Mr. Masur has made well over 100 other recordings with numerous orchestras, including the complete symphonies of Beethoven, Brahms, Bruckner, Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Tchaikovsky. He and the London Philharmonic created a record label on which they have released recordings of Shostakovich's Symphonies No. 1 and 5 and Britten's *War Requiem*.

Born in Brieg, Silesia, in 1927, Mr. Masur studied piano, composition, and conducting at the Music College of Leipzig. In 1974 Kurt Masur made his U.S. debut with the Cleveland Orchestra and took the Gewandhaus Orchestra on its first American tour. He made his New York Philharmonic debut in 1981.

Yoon Sang Timothy Cho

Yoon Sang Timothy Cho, from Seoul, South Korea, is a dedicated violinist and conductor in New York City. Yoon is performing this season with the Berkshire Bach Society, Ensemble du Monde, and The Element and has appeared in renowned venues such as Carnegie Hall, Forrest Theatre, Smetana Hall, and Dvořák Concert Hall. He collaborates with several rising producers and bands. In 2012 he performed with Young the Giant (Universal Records) and Grouplove (Universal Records) for their East Coast tour at venues such as House of Blues, Electric Factory, Terminal 5, and 9:30 Club.

Mr. Cho's commitment to education and leadership is second to none. He has been engaged as violin/conducting faculty with New York School of Music and Art and Grace Music School. He is currently Director of the Amadeo Symphony Orchestra under the United Methodist Church. He has worked with the New York Classical Symphony Orchestra as assistant conductor for four seasons and with the Greenwich Symphony Orchestra this year.

Mr. Cho began his career in San Jose, California with several award-winning performances in the San Jose Young Artist Concerto Competition and California Young Artist Concerto Competition. He has also toured with the San Jose Youth Symphony as concertmaster in Eastern Europe and South America, where the orchestra was awarded the Ambassador Award for Cultural Diplomacy by the U.S. Ambassador, the Hon. April H. Foley. He has also engaged as the lead violinist in annual benefit concerts for the Red Cross.

Benjamin Grow

Conductor Benjamin Grow is active in many different areas of the musical world. He has conducted a wide array of new music ensembles in New York, including the Con Vivo Ensemble, Our Silent Canvas, and Red Light New Music. He has also conducted several recording sessions at the Juilliard School and the studio recording of *I Have No Stories to Tell You*, a new opera by Opera Philadelphia's Composer-in-Residence, Lembit Beecher. In 2012, he conducted Beecher's oratorio, *And Then I Remember*, in "an expert performance" (WKCR) at the DiMenna Center.

As a trumpeter, he has performed throughout the U.S., Mexico, Panama, and the West Bank; his interest in early music has led him to performances on cornetto and harpsichord and as a singer with both period and modern ensembles in New York, Montreal, and Houston. His arrangements and compositions have been performed by the Caravel Quartet, the Toomai Quintet, DZ4 woodwind quartet, Ensemble Counterpoint, and the Strangetet. He wrote music that was featured in a video for Michter's Whiskey when they were named Distiller of the Year by *Wine Enthusiast* magazine in 2012.

A dedicated music educator, Mr. Grow was the founding conductor of the 92nd Street Y Youth Orchestra and currently conducts the chamber orchestra at the School for Strings, where he is also a music theory instructor. For several years, Mr. Grow co-presented an annual lecture at the 92nd Street Y, "The Physics of Music," as part of their Mysteries of Science series, and he has given pre-concert talks at the Museum of Biblical Art. He received his Bachelor of Music degree at Rice University and currently studies with Jeffrey Milarsky at Manhattan School of Music.

Norman Huynh

As Assistant Conductor of the Portland Symphony Orchestra for the 2013–14 season, Norman Huynh was responsible for conducting a wide variety of concerts, including the Discovery Family Series, Pops Series, and run-out concerts to multiple communities throughout the state of Maine. He also covered all subscription concerts for Music Director Robert Moody and guest conductors. Mr. Huynh was previously a cover conductor for the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, working closely with Marin Alsop and guest conductors Jaunjo Mena, Christoph König, and Vasily Petrenko.

Norman Huynh is a co-founder of the Occasional Symphony, an organization that spreads orchestral music throughout the community by performing in distinctive venues across the Baltimore area. Occasional Symphony performs only on holidays, presenting innovative programs that resonate with the venue.

In 2010 and 2011, Huynh won the International Conducting Workshop and Competition held in Macon, Georgia. Orchestras that Huynh has conducted include the Baltimore Symphony, Charlotte Symphony, Virginia Symphony, Macon Symphony, and Peabody Symphony Orchestra. He has served as an assistant conductor for Opera Carolina, the Lyric Opera of Baltimore, Peabody Opera Theatre, Peabody Singers, and the Peabody Symphony Orchestra.

Huynh received his Master's degree in orchestral conducting at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University, where he studied with Gustav Meier, Markand Thakar, Edward Polochick, and Marin Alsop. Other conducting teachers include John Ratledge and Adrian Gnam. Huynh earned his Bachelor's degree in music education from the University of Alabama.

Jooan Mun

Jooan Mun, born in Seoul, South Korea, has studied orchestral conducting with Martin Sieghart as well as opera coaching and conducting with Wolfgang Bozic. He was awarded a Bachelor of Music degree in Graz, Austria and is now studying with Ulrich Windfuhr at the Music University Hamburg in Germany. In September 2013, he was one of four student conductors who participated in conducting master classes with Kurt Masur at Germany's Usedom Music Festival. On September 5, 2012, he made his conducting debut with the Graz University Orchestra leading Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll*. Since his debut, Mr. Mun has also conducted the Hamburger Symphoniker, Hungary Savaria Orchestra Szombathely, Baltic Youth Philharmonic, and Branimir Slokar Academy Youth Orchestra.

Melissa Panlasigui

Melissa Panlasigui is a conductor with a wide breadth of musical interests ranging from classical to contemporary. She served for three years as co-music director for the UC Berkeley Summer Symphony and Chamber Orchestra, with whom she performed works by Beethoven, Brahms,

Prokofiev, Wagner, Copland, and Schubert. With the UC Berkeley Symphony Orchestra, she served as assistant director and violist for four years. Panlasigui is currently pursuing a Master's degree in orchestral conducting at Manhattan School of Music, studying with George Manahan and David Gilbert. She completed her undergraduate studies at the University of California, Berkeley and holds a dual Bachelor's degree in music and physics. While there, she studied orchestral conducting with David Milnes and choral conducting with Marika Kuzma. She has also participated in master classes with Marin Alsop, Daniel Lewis, John Farrer, and Donald Thulean.

Lukáš Pohůnek

Lukáš Pohůnek is a graduate of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, where he studied with Leos Swarovsky. In addition, he has worked with Tadeusz Strugała at the Academy of Music in Cracow, as well as participating in classes at the Accademia Musicale Chigiana with Gianluigi Gelmetti, at Lovro von Matačić Foundation in Zagreb with Prof. Colin Metters, and at Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester with Prof. Mark Heron. During his university studies he served as an assistant to Oliver von Dohnányi.

Among the orchestras that he has conducted throughout Europe are the Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra Ostrava, Valencia's Spanish Youth Symphony Orchestra, Slovak Sinfonietta Žilina, the Ensemble Orquestra de Cadaqués, North-Czech Philharmonic Orchestra Teplice, Penderecki's Beethoven Academy Orchestra in Cracow, Croatian Chamber Orchestra, Orchestra della Fondazione Bulgaria Classic, Prague's Academic Chamber Soloists, and the Moravian Sinfonietta Ostrava. As a trumpet player, he has performed with the Slovak Philharmonic, Martinů Philharmonic Orchestra Zlín, Bratislava Conservatory Symphony Orchestra, Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra, and Slovak Sinfonietta, under the batons of Jakub Hrůša, Karol Kevický, and others.

In the 2014–15 season he is serving as a guest conductor of the State Philharmonic Orchestra Košice and the Slovak Sinfonietta Žilina. He has also been appointed as an assistant conductor at Slovak National Theatre in Bratislava.

Kyle Ritenauer

Kyle Ritenauer, born and raised in Macedonia, Ohio, is a graduate of the Interlochen Arts Academy and received his Bachelor's degree from Manhattan School of Music, studying orchestral percussion. Currently studying with Jeffrey Milarsky in the brand new Contemporary Conducting Program at MSM, he has spent his past four summers studying conducting at the Pierre Monteux School in Hancock, Maine. In the summer of 2013, he was selected to lead the 100th anniversary reading of *Le Sacre du printemps* at the school started by the man who premiered it in 1913. Kyle Ritenauer has worked with some of New York City's most up and coming music ensembles, such as the Nouveau Classical Project, with which he led a performance of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*. In December, he made his opera debut, leading the filming of *Cities of Salt*, a brand new opera by Syrian composer Zaid Jabri. That same month he performed Schoenberg's *Kammersymphonie*, op. 9, and Copland's *Appalachian Spring* (original version).

Kyle Ritenauer is also an active freelance percussionist in New York City and serves as Principal Percussionist of the Hudson Valley Philharmonic. This fall, he made his Broadway debut, subbing the percussion book for *Pippin*. He also performs frequently with the Malaysia Philharmonic in Kuala Lumpur. In 2015, he will make his solo debut performing the world premiere of William C. White's Percussion Concerto with the Youth Orchestra of Prince William and the Hudson Valley Philharmonic. Mr. Ritenauer also serves as a teaching artist for The Learning Arts, an organization that serves approximately 50 school districts within the Adirondack State Park. In October 2013, he was very fortunate to premiere Paolo Marchettini's *Brotherhood's Journey* alongside his two brothers Sean and Kevin, who are also percussionists in New York City.

Vlad Vizireanu

Recently appointed the Chautauqua Conducting Fellow 2013, Vlad Vizireanu was selected among the final 7 out of 230 applicants from around the world to study with Bernard Haitink at the Lucerne Easter Festival, where he conducted the Lucerne Festival Orchestra. In September 2013 he made his debut at the renowned George Enescu International Festival in Bucharest, where he conducted a side-by-side concert with the Pittsburgh Symphony and the Romanian Royal Camerata. He was invited as one of

16 international candidates to participate in the 1st Solon Michaelides Conducting Competition, as well as the Cadaqués International Conducting Competition 2013.

Mr. Vizireanu participated in a master class given by Maestro Franz Welser-Möst as part of the Cleveland Orchestra Residency Program at Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. He also worked with guest conductor Maestro James DePriest in a master class at Arizona State University and with Marin Alsop and Gustav Meier at the Cabrillo Festival in 2011. 2013 marked his operatic debut with the ASU Lyric Opera Theater and a production of *Die Fledermaus*. He also served as Assistant Conductor to Timothy Muffitt on *Dialogues of the Carmelites* with the Chautauqua Music Festival Opera. Currently a doctoral student at Arizona State University, Mr. Vizireanu serves as Assistant Conductor to the ASU Symphony under Timothy Russell and the Lyric Opera Theater under William Reber.

MSM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

VIOLIN 1

Henry Wang,
Concertmaster
Yoojin Baek
Susan Hwang
Cathy Yang
Ahra Cho
Naxin Yin
Lulu Huang
Yigit Karatas
Tian Qiu
Daniela Lancara
Zhongyu Ren
Elizabeth Beck
Mariya Polishchuk
Ann Kim
Jesse MacDonald

VIOLIN 2

Ji Min Lee,
Principal
Elizabeth Wright
Ke Zhu
Kyulee Seo
Sarah Kenner
Zihao Zhou
Maxfield Panish
Jihye Sung
Jin Young Song
Keyi Shen
Siyng Ge
Xiu Yi Kow
Siyu Zhang

VIOLA

Damon Taheri,
Principal
Midori Witkoski
Jenna Sobolewski
Aline Vartanian
Daniel Lamas
Yi-Syuan Wu
Shannon Elliott
Zhen Huang
Yingshuang Tong

CELLO

Songhee Lee
Calvin Chan
Vivian Chang
Shao-Chia Lee
Yoobin Chung

Jacob Nordlinger
Duane Fields
Camille Dietrich
Irene Han
Kezia Gorevic-Fisher

DOUBLE BASS

Kevin Schmidt,
Principal
Ivy Wong
Luiz Bacci
Abraham Masso
Samuel Zagnit
Avery Cardoza
Andrew De Stackelberg
Christopher Jones
Griffin Meinbresse

FLUTE

Kayla Burggraf*
Katherine Francist†
Alyssa Greengrass
Imogen Morrall
Megan Natoli

CLARINET

Andy Cho*
Taylor Marino
Jingjing Wang†‡

OBOE

Hsuan-Fong Chen*
Cathryn Jones
Si Yoon Park†‡
Young Sun Yoo

BASSOON

Brenton Foster*†‡
Jamie Yoon Ji Kang
Travis Larson

HORN

Wing Lam Au
Luke Breton
Corinne Cook*
Sarah Everitt†
Andrew Johnson-Scott†
Pin-Chun Liu
Victoria Matthews
Kristen Miller
Emma Reber
Nicole Rodriguez

Jonathan Sales
Daniel Shapiro
Yi Hsun Tang

WAGNER TUBEN

Wing Lam Au
Emma Reber
Pin-Chun Liu
Nicole Rodriguez

TRUMPET

Alejandro López
Samamé*
Robert Patrick
Casey Tamanaha
Atse Theodrost†
Trevor Wells

TROMBONE

Chia-Hsien Lint†
Masamitsu Ohtaket†
Christian Paarup
David Westen*

BASS TROMBONE

Preston Judd

TUBA

Tyler J. Schwirian

TIMPANI

Kevin Ritenauer

PERCUSSION

Michelle Cozzi
Eric Goldberg
Sung Eun Kim
Kexin Li

HARP

Yeon Hwa Chung

WIND & BRASS PRINCIPALS

*Bruckner Symphony No. 7 in E Major (Cahis13)

†Wagner Overture to *Tannhäuser*, WWV70 (Dresden version)

‡Wagner Prelude to *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*

KURT MASUR CONDUCTING SEMINAR



Earl Lee, 2013 Kurt Masur Conducting Seminar

Manhattan School of Music is honored to host the Kurt Masur Conducting Seminar. This unique program offers direct instruction to a select group of conductors, hand-picked by Maestro Masur from an international pool of applicants. Each day, in a series of open rehearsals, the participants are given the opportunity to conduct an orchestra of Manhattan School of Music students, chosen especially for the seminar, in a master-class format, followed by post-rehearsal discussion and critique with Kurt Masur. The seminar concludes with a concert led by Maestro Masur and the seminar participants he has selected to conduct.

Kurt Masur has had a longstanding relationship with Manhattan School of Music, playing a significant role as a Guest Conductor of the School's orchestras in concerts, orchestral readings, and rehearsals since 1992. He has also been the key figure in symposia on Brahms and Mendelssohn. In 1993, Manhattan School of Music awarded Kurt Masur the Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts, *honoris causa*.

2015 Kurt Masur Seminar Staff

Heidi Stubner, Assistant Dean for Performance Operations and the Graduate Program in Orchestral Performance

Nolan Robertson, Orchestra Manager

Abby McGill, Manager of Performance Operations, Orchestral Performance and Chamber Music

Dr. Manly Romero, Performance Librarian

Tong Chen, Prep and Cover Conductor

Mark Broshinsky, Winds, Brass, Percussion Sectional Coach

Maureen Hynes, String Sectional Coach

R. Allen Spanjer, Brass Sectional Coach (MSM faculty)

ABOUT MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Manhattan School of Music is deeply committed to excellence in education, performance, and creative activity; to the humanity of the School's environment; and to the cultural enrichment of the larger community. Recognized as one of the world's leading music conservatories, MSM inspires and empowers highly talented individuals to realize their potential. We take full advantage of New York's abundant learning and performance opportunities, preparing our students to be passionate performers, composers and teachers, and imaginative, effective contributors to the arts and society.

Founded as a community music school by Janet Daniels Schenck in 1918, today MSM is recognized for its superbly talented undergraduate and graduate students who come from more than 50 countries and nearly all 50 states; a world-renowned artist-teacher faculty; and innovative curricula. The School is dedicated to the personal, artistic, and intellectual development of aspiring musicians, from its Precollege students through those pursuing postgraduate studies.

Orchestral Studies

In the tradition of the classical music conservatory, the orchestral studies program at Manhattan School of Music forms the heart of the performing experience for instrumentalists. All students, placed by competitive audition, are required to participate in at least one of the School's three major orchestras—the MSM Philharmonia, Symphony, and Chamber Sinfonia—under the guidance of George Manahan, Director of Orchestral Activities. The three orchestras' many performances each year give the students ample opportunities to develop their audition and ensemble technique, as well as knowledge of orchestral repertoire. In addition to Maestro Manahan, the orchestras work regularly with resident conductor David Gilbert and guest conductors such as Philippe Entremont and Kurt Masur. April 2014 marked the MSM Symphony's debut in Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium, performing under the baton of Leonard Slatkin.

Graduate Studies in Conducting

The conducting program provides specialized training for graduate students who intend to become professional conductors and courses for graduate and undergraduate students who wish to develop the skills and sensitivities required for many musical disciplines. The conducting major is offered for graduate students only, at the Master's level for orchestral conductors and at the Master's, Professional Studies, and doctoral levels for choral conductors. The graduate programs in orchestral conducting and choral conducting are highly selective, allowing each student extensive experience with MSM ensembles.