

BERLINER PHILHARMONIKER

Questions and Answers: From America to the New World

Thursday, January 22, 2026 · 20:00 · Philharmonie Berlin

Lahav Shani, conductor · Daishin Kashimoto, violin

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	IVES 1874–1954 <i>"The Unanswered Question"</i>	6'
2	SHOSTAKOVICH 1906–1975 <i>Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 1 in A minor, Op. 77</i>	37'
3	DVORAK 1841–1904 <i>Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Op. 95 "From the New World"</i>	42'
TOTAL MUSIC		85'

Charles Ives

1874–1954

"The Unanswered Question"

6 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

"The Unanswered Question," composed around 1908, is one of the most remarkable works in the orchestral repertoire: a six-minute meditation on existence that anticipates developments in music that would not become widespread for another half century.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The three independent layers of sound, each in its own tempo. Notice how the flutes' responses become increasingly frantic and dissonant with each attempt, while the trumpet's question and the strings' "silence" remain unchanged.

Dmitri Shostakovich

1906–1975

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 1 in A minor, Op. 77

37 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

The First Violin Concerto was composed during one of the darkest periods of Shostakovich's life. He began it in 1947 with the great violinist David Oistrakh in mind as the dedicatee.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The darkness of the opening Nocturne, which sets the tone for this deeply personal work. In the Scherzo, listen for the DSCH motif (the notes spelling out Shostakovich's initials in German). The Passacaglia's grinding bass line and the extended cadenza that follows are among the most demanding passages in the violin repertoire. The finale's relentless energy drives to a conclusion that is triumphant yet somehow hollow, a characteristic Shostakovich ambiguity.

Antonin Dvorak

1841–1904

Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Op. 95 "From the New World"

42 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

The “New World” Symphony is one of the most popular works in the entire orchestral repertoire. Dvorak began composing it in late 1892, shortly after arriving in New York, and completed it in May 1893. The premiere, on December 16, 1893, at Carnegie Hall under Anton Seidl, was a sensation; the audience erupted in applause after each movement.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The syncopated rhythms of the first movement’s main theme, which suggest the influence of spirituals. In the Largo, the unforgettable cor anglais solo: try to hear it fresh, despite its familiarity. The scherzo’s “Indian” rhythms and the finale’s integration of themes from all four movements make for a deeply satisfying conclusion. Astronaut Neil Armstrong carried a recording of this symphony to the Moon in 1969.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/bp-2026-01-22-shani>

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