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Digital Assets



From left: Julia Harguindey (Principal Bassoon), Zhenwei Shi (Principal Viola), Michael Banks (Assistant Principal Bass)

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra appoints Principal Bassoon, Principal Viola, and Assistant Principal Bass

PITTSBURGH — The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (PSO) and Music Director Manfred Honeck are proud to announce three new appointments to its esteemed roster of musicians: beginning in September 2025 **Julia Harguindey,** Principal Bassoon, and **Zhenwei Shi,** Principal Viola, as well as **Michael Banks,** Assistant Principal Bass, who began in May 2025.

Julia Harguindey most recently served as Principal Bassoon of the Nashville Symphony and the Santa Fe Opera Orchestra. She will begin teaching at Pittsburgh's Carnegie Mellon University School of Music as well as Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music in the 2025-2026 academic year. During the 2024-25 season, Harguindey performed with the PSO as Guest Principal for the

season finale of the BNY Classics concerts, including recordings of the World Premiere of Lera Auerbach's *Frozen Dreams* and Shostakovich's Symphony No. 10. Harguindey assumes the Mr. & Mrs. William Genge and Mr. & Mrs. James E. Lee Principal Bassoon Chair.

Zhenwei Shi currently serves as Principal Viola of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, where he was appointed Principal at the age of twenty-three in 2019. Since 2018, he has been a frequent guest player with the San Francisco Symphony and Chicago Symphony Orchestra. He assumes the Cynthia S. Calhoun Principal Viola Chair.

Michael Banks received his bachelor's degree from The Juilliard School in New York City and his master's degree from The Colburn School in Los Angeles. He began playing with the PSO at the end of May for the orchestra's performances of Brahms' Fourth Symphony.

"Each of these three musicians brings a passion and energy to their playing that will add to the vitality of our great orchestra," said Music Director **Manfred Honeck**. "Julia, Zhenwei and Michael continue a long line of incredibly distinguished players in Pittsburgh, and will themselves contribute to our history. I am pleased to welcome all three to the PSO family, excited to perform with them — whether at Heinz Hall, in the community, or abroad — and eager for the music they will inspire and create."

Former Principal Bassoon of the PSO Nancy Goeres joined the PSO in 1984 and retired from the orchestra in August 2024 after the orchestra's most recent European tour. Former Principal Viola Randolph Kelly retired in 2020 after holding the position for 42 years; Tatjana Mead Chamis has been Acting Principal Viola since Kelly's retirement. Betsy Heston served as the PSO's most recent Assistant Principal Bass before retiring in 2019. Heston passed away in 2024 and was honored by PSO bass players at the 2025 Carnegie Mellon Double Bass Symposium.

About the Musicians

Julia Harguindey, Principal Basson, Mr. & Mrs. William Genge and Mr. & Mrs. James E. Lee Chair

Argentinian-born bassoonist Julia Harguindey previously held principal positions with the Nashville Symphony and The Santa Fe Opera Orchestra, and she joins the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra as Principal Bassoon at the start of the 2025-26 season.

She has performed numerous times with the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival and appeared as guest principal bassoon with ensembles including the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and Québec's Les Violons du Roy.

Beginning in the 2025–26 academic year, Ms. Harguindey will also join the faculty of Pittsburgh's Carnegie Mellon University School of Music and Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music.

After moving to Montréal in 1991, she studied at the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal and later at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Her principal teachers include Daniel Matsukawa and Mathieu Harel.

Zhenwei Shi, Principal Viola, Cynthia S. Calhoun Principal Chair

Zhenwei Shi is the newly appointed Principal Violist of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and served as Principal Violist of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra from 2019 to 2025 across six seasons, where he was appointed by Robert Spano at the age of twenty-three.

He has appeared as guest principal with California's Mainly Mozart Music Festival and Minnesota's Lakes Area Music Festival and performs regularly in chamber music ensembles with artists such as cellist Steven Isserlis, violinist Joshua Bell, as well as pianists Robert Spano, and Jeremy Denk. A prizewinner of the Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition, the Johansen International String Competition, and the International String Competition in Hong Kong, he is recognized for his rich tone and nuanced artistry.

His performances have been featured at London's Wigmore Hall, Royal Festival Hall, Buckingham Palace, and Shanghai Concert Hall, as well as on major broadcasts such as BBC Radio and American Public Media's Performance Today®. He serves on the faculty of the Aspen Music Festival and School, and is a graduate of the Royal Academy of Music in London and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

Michael Banks, Assistant Principal Bass

Michael Banks joined the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra as Assistant Principal Bass in May 2025 under the direction of Manfred Honeck. He earned his bachelor's degree in New York City from The Juilliard School as a student of Rex Surany, and his master's degree in Los Angeles from the Colburn School studying with Peter Lloyd.

Michael has performed as a substitute with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the L.A. Phil New Music Group, and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. He has also been a fellow at the Center for Orchestral Leadership at the Aspen Music Festival and School.

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