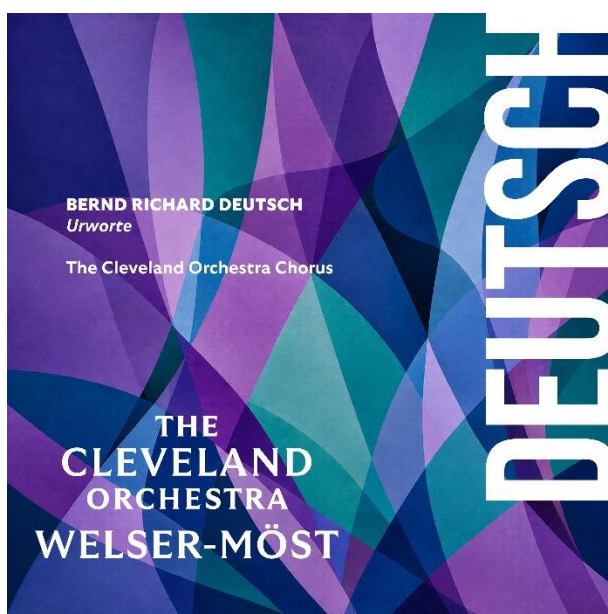




For release: October 1, 2026

The Cleveland Orchestra to release recording of Bernd Richard Deutsch's *Urworte*



CLEVELAND— The Cleveland Orchestra and Music Director Franz Welser-Möst will release [a new spatial audio recording](#) of Bernd Richard Deutsch's monumental *Urworte* on **November 13**. Two sample tracks from the album will be available across all major streaming platforms on **October 2** and **October 16**, coinciding with the Orchestra's [European tour](#), which also includes *Intensity*, another work by Deutsch.

Recorded live during the opening concerts of The Cleveland Orchestra's 2025–26 season at Severance Music Center, the recording captures the North American premiere of Deutsch's hour-long *Urworte*, a sweeping meditation inspired by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's timeless "primal words." The work explores themes of fate, love, necessity, chance, and hope through orchestral and choral forces.

Welser-Möst leads The Cleveland Orchestra and The Cleveland Orchestra Chorus, prepared by Director of Chorus Lisa Wong. The recording showcases the Orchestra's signature precision in a richly textured contemporary score of extraordinary scale and emotional power.

Urworte continues a significant artistic partnership between The Cleveland Orchestra and Deutsch, who served as the Orchestra's 10th Daniel R. Lewis Composer Fellow from 2018 to 2021. Their collaboration previously produced *Okeanos* and *Intensity*, which appears on [Signature Welser-Möst](#), a limited edition, 15-disc vinyl box set celebrating the conductor's 25th and final season as the Orchestra's Music Director. Deutsch was inspired to compose *Intensity* after seeing The Cleveland Orchestra perform an all-Beethoven program in Vienna, making it a fitting inclusion for their final European tour together this October.

The *Urworte* recording is produced by seven-time Grammy Award-winning producer Elaine Martone. The album marks The Cleveland Orchestra's fourth release of 2026, following *Allison Loggins-Hull: The Cleveland Residency* in April; Galina Ustvolskaya's Symphony No. 5 and Francis Poulenc's *La voix humaine* in July; and Giuseppe Verdi's Requiem in August. It is also the 21st release on The Cleveland Orchestra's own recording label since its launch in 2020.



Music Director Franz Welser-Möst conducts The Cleveland Orchestra and The Cleveland Orchestra Chorus in Bernd Richard Deutsch's *Urworte* on September 26, 2025. (Photo: Julian Dubé)

Media Reviewing Access

Access to the recording's audio files for media reviewing is available upon request. Album cover art, digital booklet, and high-resolution images from the performance can be found in the [press kit](#).

Product Information

Deutsch's *Urworte*

The Cleveland Orchestra

Franz Welser-Möst, *conductor*

The Cleveland Orchestra Chorus

Track 1 – I. Daimon: Dämon

Track 2 – II. Tyche: Das Zufällige

Track 3 – II. Eros: Liebe

Track 4 – II. Ananke: Nötigung

Track 5 – II. Elpis: Hoffnung

Audio Production

Elaine Martone, *recording producer*

Gintas Norvila, *recording, editing, and mixing engineer*

Jennifer Nulsen, *stereo mastering engineer*

Alan JS Han, *immersive mixing engineer*

About Deutsch's *Urworte* (by Bernd Richard Deutsch)

In my view, Goethe's five "Primal Words" encompass a kind of "Song of Destiny." I had long wanted to write a piece about the primal forces that shape our lives, and when I encountered this cycle of five poems, I realized that the ideas I wanted to express had been formulated there in exemplary fashion. These five stanzas cover the entire span of a human life: from childhood, youth, and early and middle adulthood through to old age.

There is a strong contrast between ancient and modern concepts of Fate. In Greek mythology, people seem helpless before the gods — think of Oedipus, who fulfills the oracle despite every attempt to resist. To oppose Fate is futile, for greater forces prevail. Modern, enlightened thought, by contrast, focuses on the individual and on shaping one's own destiny, a view that has led to great advances and revolutionary change. Yet the last word is not spoken, and there is always the danger of failing through hubris.

For Goethe, *Daimon* (Demon) was an extremely important concept. It is a force that drives people: character, talent, that certain something, charisma; it represents an elusive yet tangible essence. For Goethe as poet, the *Daimon* is above all the force that drives an artist creatively and makes him or her unique. A central theme of the piece is the question: Does freedom exist, and if so, what does it consist of?

The pair *Daimon* and *Tyche* (The Accidental) express a contrast between two principles: genetic disposition and environmental influences. Both are decisive. A key sentence in the *Tyche* poem reads: "The lamp awaits the flame that will ignite it." For me, this is one of the most important thoughts in the entire cycle. No other phrase is repeated and illuminated musically so often in my composition. *Eros* (Love) follows immediately and reveals that flame: not only love, but another central driving force in every creative activity.

Ananke (Necessity) personifies compulsion and restriction. She can even bring it about that "the most beloved is exiled from the heart," and our alleged freedom ultimately proves to be an illusion.

Elpis (Hope) is, like Fate, indestructible and, like *Daimon*, *Tyche*, and *Eros*, a force that drives us. It lifts and inspires us. The final line — "A wing flap! and behind us lie the eons" — suggests both immortality and the universal validity of the five principles across the ages.

About Deutsch's *Urworte* (by Thomas May)

Composers often set aside ideas that strike them in a flash of inspiration, waiting until the right moment arrives to wrestle them down in detail and give them an enduring form. For Bernd Richard Deutsch, one such idea was to write a work exploring the elemental forces that shape our lives. Franz Welser-Möst provided the occasion when he commissioned a score for The Cleveland Orchestra and Chorus, giving Deutsch *carte blanche* to choose whatever subject he wished. Cleveland audiences already knew the

Austrian composer from his tenure as the Orchestra's Daniel R. Lewis Composer Fellow from 2018 to 2021, which saw performances of his organ concerto *Okeanos* and the world premiere of *Intensity* (performed by the Orchestra in 2022 and 2023, respectively).

Deutsch searched for a text that could carry such breadth and universality and yet be pithy enough to resonate in music rather than overwhelm it. He found it in *Urworte. Orphisch* (Primal Words: Orphic), a cycle of five poems Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote relatively late in his career. Deutsch realized that the cycle readily lent itself to a five-movement form: each poem establishes a contrasting mood and atmosphere as Goethe traces the arc of a human life. Yet taken together, the five poems form a coherent whole, framed at the beginning and end by a cosmic perspective.

In the process, Deutsch found himself reflecting on questions that remain as relevant now as in Goethe's time. "In *Urworte*, Goethe speaks about the forces that influence all of our lives. He does so by considering the whole lifespan of a human being and ending with the concept of hope," Deutsch explains.

Goethe wrote these enigmatic, eight-line stanzas in the fall of 1817, giving each a subtitle that names its respective "primal word": *Daimon* ("Demon," referring to the inborn essence or genius of an individual), *Tyche* ("Chance" or "The Accidental"), *Eros* ("Love" or "Passion"), *Ananke* ("Necessity" or "Limitation"), and *Elpis* ("Hope"). The first four words derive from a late-Classical Roman source that lists Greek words naming divinities presiding over birth. Goethe's own invention was to conclude with the forward-looking concept of Hope (not present in the ancient source).

The full title, *Urworte. Orphisch*, evokes the ancient tradition of poetry attributed to the mythical singer Orpheus — texts dealing with wisdom, creation, and the ordering forces of the cosmos. By invoking this label, Goethe suggested that his five "primal words" are timeless formulas of Fate and existence, distilled for a modern age.

To give these poems and concepts musical form, Deutsch understood that they demanded the largest forces at his disposal. Because Goethe is not speaking from an individual perspective but to humanity as a whole, the score is conceived for chorus as a collective protagonist, without soloists. The instrumentation is correspondingly lavish. Contrabassoon, bass clarinet, and other low winds, reinforced by brass and low strings, form the subterranean foundation of Deutsch's soundworld, while piccolo, high woodwinds, divided strings, and glittering percussion reach into the stratosphere. This vast range creates a spatial dimension that mirrors the cosmic scale of Goethe's vision.

At various points throughout this ambitious score, the massive choral-orchestral forces recall the textures of Schoenberg's *Gurre-Lieder*, while pounding ostinatos and stark harmonic repetitions carry a Stravinskian edge. Yet Deutsch refracts these antecedents into a language all his own — by turns playful, severe, luminous.

In the opening preludial passage, a dense, brooding chord is sustained in the lowest and darkest register, setting the work in motion with a thick cluster of sound that seems to rumble up from an ancient source. From this emerges a motive stated by the contrabassoon that seeds the entire first movement, while the brooding, cosmogenic sonority that launches *Urworte* returns at the very end, enclosing the whole work in a great arc.

This lays the foundation for the *Daimon* movement. For Goethe and the ancient Greeks alike, “Demon” did not connote something diabolical. It refers to a neutral force or guiding spirit “that drives people,” according to Deutsch, and “signifies character, talent, that inner essence or charisma that is elusive and yet tangibly present.” But it also encompasses the creative force that makes artists unique, adds Deutsch, and was translated by the Romans into “genius.”

The chorus enters not with melody but in close, hovering harmonies that create a suspended, almost ritualistic atmosphere. At times, it declaims Goethe’s words in massive, block-like sonorities; at others, the writing dissolves into shimmering *melismas*, whispered consonants, or even spoken shouts. At a certain point in each movement, the chorus explicitly enunciates its primal word, as if sealing Goethe’s aphorisms in sound.

Tyche, by contrast, is mercurial and *scherzo*-like, the music darting in unpredictable directions: sudden choral shouts, flickering orchestral colors, restless percussion that rattles and scrapes like Chance itself. The texture feels volatile, unstable, ready to veer off course. The chorus seizes on the stanza’s final verse — “Die Lampe harret der Flamme, die entzündet” (The lamp awaits the flame that will ignite it) — and repeats it ecstatically, fanning the image into a blaze of sound. “No other phrase is repeated and illuminated musically so often,” according to the composer.

The flame is revealed as *Eros*, which begins with the strains of a long flute solo, its voice wandering and searching. “Goethe says that *Eros* comes from chaos, emptiness, loneliness,” notes Deutsch, who reflects the poet’s idea of *Eros* as “both love and creative energy.”

Where *Eros* opened outward, *Ananke* closes in. The music pounds with motoric rhythms, circling obsessively around the same harmonic space as Deutsch implies the narrowing of possibilities with a claustrophobic sound world that refuses release. Goethe’s line that *Ananke* can cause “the most beloved is exiled from the heart” finds its echo in the relentless textures.

Elpis begins in brightness: high strings shimmer, harps glisten, delicate percussion colors rustle like distant bells or rushing wind. The chorus soars in expansive *melismas* before subsiding into hushed, sustained chords. Goethe’s final image is of a wingbeat that spans eons, placing human life in a cosmic frame. Deutsch’s music correspondingly becomes vast, elemental — and, ultimately, unresolved. “It’s more a question mark at the end,” he remarked. “I don’t give an answer.”

About The Cleveland Orchestra

The Cleveland Orchestra, under the leadership of Franz Welser-Möst since 2002, is widely recognized as one of the world’s leading ensembles. Praised by *The New York Times* as “America’s Finest,” the Orchestra is renowned for its virtuosity, elegance of sound, and chamber-like musical flexibility. In his 25th and final season as Music Director, Welser-Möst concludes a transformative partnership that has been marked by exceptional artistic ambition, growing international recognition, and deep community connection.

During his tenure, the Orchestra has achieved major institutional milestones, including groundbreaking residencies at the Musikverein in Vienna — the first by an American orchestra — and at the Adrienne Arsht Center in Miami. In 2023, The Cleveland Orchestra launched the annual Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Opera & Humanities Festival, presenting acclaimed opera productions alongside art exhibits, community events, and civic conversations.

Through concerts, broadcasts, recordings, tours, and digital initiatives, The Cleveland Orchestra reaches an ever-growing audience around the world. Its in-house recording label and streaming platform, Adella.live, capture and share performances from the Welser-Möst era while introducing new generations of fans to the Orchestra's artistry.

Founded by Adella Prentiss Hughes, The Cleveland Orchestra gave its inaugural concert in December 1918. Over more than a century, it has grown into a treasured community institution, enriching lives through music, education, and a deep commitment to Northeast Ohio. Today, more than 400,000 people attend Cleveland Orchestra concerts each year. From its year-round home at Severance Music Center to its summer season at Blossom Music Center in Cuyahoga Valley National Park, the Orchestra continues to serve audiences across the region.

Seven Music Directors — Nikolai Sokoloff, Artur Rodziński, Erich Leinsdorf, George Szell, Lorin Maazel, Christoph von Dohnányi, and Franz Welser-Möst — have shaped the ensemble's distinctive musical identity and celebrated "Cleveland sound." Welser-Möst's tenure as the longest-serving Music Director in Cleveland Orchestra history stands as a defining chapter in that evolution.

About Franz Welser-Möst

Franz Welser-Möst has forged one of the most transformative artistic legacies in the history of The Cleveland Orchestra, as its seventh and longest-serving Music Director. Now in his 25th and final season, he has shaped its sound with extraordinary care and imagination, cultivating greater warmth and flexibility, while preserving precision and transparency. Since beginning his tenure in 2002–03, his leadership has characterized a quarter century of artistic excellence, community outreach, and global prominence.

Welser-Möst first appeared with The Cleveland Orchestra as a guest conductor in February 1993 and has returned every season beginning in 1995. By the end of the 2026–27 season, he will have led the Orchestra in more than 1,200 performances in 93 cities spanning 15 US states and 26 countries, including 701 concerts at Severance Music Center. He has appointed 56 of the Orchestra's 100 current musicians, profoundly shaping its sound for a new generation. Welser-Möst's tenure ushered in major milestones, from innovative opera stagings to the launch of its streaming platform, Adella.live, and its recording label.

Widely admired for his interpretations of Central European and Russian repertoire, Welser-Möst has also championed living composers, specifically through the Orchestra's Daniel R. Lewis Composer Fellowship. His artistic partnerships have resulted in dozens of commissions and co-commissions, and at the close of the 2026–27 season, he will have led The Cleveland Orchestra in 27 world premieres and 21 US premieres.

Welser-Möst has made opera an annual tradition at Severance Music Center, culminating in the creation of the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Opera & Humanities Festival in 2023. Acclaimed productions of Dvořák's *Rusalka*, Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*, Puccini's *La fanciulla del West*, and Mozart's *The Magic Flute* demonstrated his commitment to large-scale storytelling. In May 2027, Welser-Möst leads a fully staged production of Richard Strauss's *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, a fitting capstone to his enduring artistic vision and remarkable legacy with The Cleveland Orchestra.

A defining aspect of Welser-Möst's Cleveland career has been his work with The Cleveland Orchestra Chorus. He has consistently advocated for the all-volunteer ensemble as an essential artistic partner in performances ranging from symphonic masterworks to staged opera productions. In 2010, Welser-Möst appointed Lisa Wong to work with the Chorus and, in 2018, he named her Director of Choruses. Together, they have elevated the Chorus with performances at home and on the road.

Beyond Cleveland, Welser-Möst maintains a distinguished international career, marked by a longstanding artistic partnership with the Vienna Philharmonic. He regularly leads the ensemble at the Musikverein and on major international tours, and has already conducted the celebrated annual New Year's concert three times. In 2024, he was named an Honorary Member of the Vienna Philharmonic, one of its highest honors. He is also celebrated for his interpretations of opera, conducting productions which have been widely acclaimed at the Salzburg Festival and the Vienna State Opera.

About Lisa Wong

Lisa Wong, a distinguished choral conductor and educator, serves as Director of Choruses for The Cleveland Orchestra, where she has prepared The Cleveland Orchestra Chorus and Blossom Festival Chorus for acclaimed performances under conductors Franz Welser-Möst, Klaus Mäkelä, John Adams, Jane Glover, Susanna Mälkki, and Eric Whitacre, among others.

Wong served for 16 years as the Olive Williams Kettering Professor of Music at The College of Wooster. As director of the award-winning Wooster Chorus, she elevated the ensemble to national prominence through annual tours, performances at state and regional conferences, and the premieres of 15 new works. Her expertise in music education is informed by 32 years of classroom experience and extensive work as a clinician, adjudicator, and guest conductor.

About The Cleveland Orchestra Chorus

Now in its 75th season, The Cleveland Orchestra Chorus is celebrated for its versatility and refined musicianship, appearing regularly with The Cleveland Orchestra at Severance and Blossom music centers. As one of the few all-volunteer, professionally trained choruses affiliated with a major American orchestra, it received the 2019–20 Distinguished Service Award, recognizing extraordinary service to the Orchestra.

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