Composer, clarinetist, and conductor Jörg Widmann has been appointed to the Richard and Barbara Debs Composer’s Chair for the 2019–2020 season. Mr. Widmann’s captivating and powerfully visceral music has won him numerous high-profile commissions and countless performances from soloists, chamber ensembles, and major orchestras around the world. A much sought-after virtuoso clarinetist and dynamic conductor, he has performed his own works—as well as works by other composers—with Daniel Barenboim, Mitsuko Uchida, the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, and a host of other great artists. Mr. Widmann’s residency showcases his musical versatility and imaginative vision with his powerful orchestral works performed by The Cleveland Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, and The MET Orchestra. The series also recognizes the striking originality in his chamber music with an all-star ensemble headlined by violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter, who gives the New York premiere of his new work for string quartet. He displays his formidable skills as a clarinetist, playing his own music as well as works by Schumann and Mozart in a trio with violist Tabea Zimmermann and pianist Dénes Várjon. He does triple duty with the Irish Chamber Orchestra, conducting his own music and playing the clarinet, and with the International Contemporary Ensemble in a program devoted to his works. As part of his residency, he returns to his alma mater to conduct the Juilliard Orchestra at Alice Tully Hall. The series additionally features two lectures in which he discusses dissonance and beauty, as well as Beethoven’s lasting impact.

Jörg Widmann is one of the most versatile and intriguing artists of his generation. He has recently appeared as soloist with orchestras such as the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and Valery Gergiev; Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra with Bertrand de Billy; Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra with Sylvain Cambreling; City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra with Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla; SWR Symphonieorchester with Peter Rundel; and Orchestre de Paris with Daniel Harding. Mr. Widmann is the first Gewandhaus Composer, and was commissioned by the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and Boston Symphony Orchestra to compose a new work, Partita, which premiered in Leipzig in March 2018 and was performed by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Stern Auditorium / Perelman Stage the following month—both conducted by Andris Nelsons.

Chamber music performances during the past seasons include a tour with the Hagen Quartet in performances of Mr. Widmann’s new Clarinet Quintet in Paris, Lugano, Amsterdam, Essen, Berlin, London, and Salzburg, as well as Zankel Hall in March 2019; trio recitals with Tabea Zimmermann and Dénes Várjon in Helsinki and Freiburg, and at the Philharmonie in Cologne, Pierre Boulez Saal in Berlin, London’s Wigmore Hall, and Zankel Hall; recitals at San Francisco Performances and Tokyo’s Toppan Hall; and the premiere of a new piece written for him by Mark Andre at Wittener Tage für neue Kammermusik in Germany. Among his regular chamber music partners are renowned soloists such as Sir András Schiff and Elisabeth Leonskaja.

As a conductor, Mr. Widmann performs this season with the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, Boulez Ensemble, Kammerakademie Potsdam, and on tour in Germany with the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie. As principal conductor, he leads the Irish Chamber Orchestra in concerts in Ireland, Europe, and on a tour to South America.

Mr. Widmann is a fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin, a full member of the Bayerische Akademie of Schönen Künste, and, since 2007, the Freien Akademie der Künste Hamburg, the Deutsche Akademie der Darstellenden Künste, and the Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur Mainz. Recently, he was awarded the Robert Schumann Prize for Poetry and Music. He is professor for composition at the Barenboim-Said Academy in Berlin.
The Cleveland Orchestra
Franz Welser-Möst, Music Director and Conductor
Yefim Bronfman, Piano
Jörg Widmann, Conductor and Clarinet

Irish Chamber Orchestra
Clarion McFadden, Soprano

Munich Philharmonic
Valery Gergiev, Music Director and Conductor
Leonidas Kavakos, Violin

The Metropolitan Opera
Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Music Director and Conductor

The MET Orchestra
Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Music Director and Conductor

Meesun Hong Coleman
Stern/Perelman

Elza van den Heever
Stern/Perelman