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ROBERT SPANO APPOINTED MUSIC DIRECTOR OF FORT WORTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



Conductor Robert Spano. Photo by Jason Thrasher.

FORT WORTH, TEXAS (Feb. 9, 2021) — Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra President and CEO Dr. Keith Cerny and Board Chair Mercedes T. Bass today announced the appointment of conductor Robert Spano as the orchestra’s next Music Director. His initial three-year term will begin with the 2022–23 season. Having worked with the orchestra as Principal Guest Conductor since 2019, Robert Spano will become Music Director Designate on April 1, 2021, and will serve in this capacity until assuming the title of Music Director on Aug. 1, 2022.

Dr. Cerny said:

"It is an exciting day for the FWSO to welcome Robert Spano as our next Music Director. I know that he will build on the outstanding legacy of our previous Music Director, Miguel Harth-Bedoya, and lead the orchestra to even greater musical acclaim. On a personal note, I am greatly looking forward to working with Maestro Spano to support his musical vision, and to further develop the FWSO's reputation on the national and international stage.

"I am also proud that the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra has remained financially healthy during these trying times and has continued to bring live music to audiences safely throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, putting us in the forefront of American orchestras."

Ms. Bass said:

“We are beyond thrilled to have Maestro Spano join the FWSO as the Music Director and Conductor. I have long admired his brilliant work with the Aspen Music Festival and School, and I am confident that under Maestro Spano's baton, the FWSO will reach ever higher levels of musicianship. This is a dream come true for me and I know the community of Fort Worth will welcome him with open arms. He is gentle and kind as well as a very interesting and fun person. We are extremely lucky to have him as part of the Fort Worth community and FWSO family.”

Robert Spano will be the tenth Music Director in the history of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, which was founded in 1912. In addition to conducting six out of the orchestra's ten symphonic programs per season, he will be responsible for overseeing the orchestra and music staff; working closely with Dr. Cerny to shape the artistic direction of the orchestra and drive its continued growth; and serving as an ambassador for the orchestra and classical music in the Fort Worth community. Maestro Spano will soon relocate to Fort Worth and be on the ground working with the orchestra throughout his time as Music Director Designate. Among the responsibilities he will fulfill during this period are planning future seasons, overseeing orchestral auditions, and conducting two symphonic programs during the 2021–22 season.

Robert Spano made his FWSO debut in March 2019 conducting Mahler's Fifth Symphony and Strauss's *Four Last Songs* at the orchestra's principal venue, Bass Performance Hall. His next FWSO performances take place [March 16–18, 2021](#), when he conducts Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 25 in C major, featuring Jeremy Denk, and Beethoven's Seventh Symphony.

Robert Spano said:

“I am thrilled to be joining the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra and looking forward to getting better acquainted with the vibrant culture of this remarkable city. Every facet of the orchestra is clearly committed to its success—the management team, the supporters, the audience, and certainly the marvelous musicians who make up the orchestra itself. I look forward with tremendous excitement to our concerts next season, and to creating an inspirational 2022–23 season, which will be our first complete season together.”

Among the many strengths that Maestro Spano brings to the FWSO is his gift for innovative programming, which—says *The New York Times*—is characterized by “an engaging reciprocity between the old and the new, the familiar and the fresh.” He is an ardent and adventurous advocate for contemporary music, particularly by American composers. In 2018, he made his widely acclaimed Metropolitan Opera debut leading the world-premiere production of Nico Muhly's second opera, *Marnie*. Additional world premieres in recent seasons include works by American composers Bryce Dessner, Jennifer Higdon, and George Tsontakis, among many others.

This season, he concludes his celebrated, two-decade tenure as Music Director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (2001–21), which he transformed “into a world-class ensemble and an incubator for new American music” (*NPR*). Highlights of his tenure include the creation of The Atlanta School of Composers, championing the work of contemporary classical composers including Michael Gandolfi, Osvaldo Golijov, Jennifer Higdon, Christopher Theofanidis, and Adam Schoenberg, as well as six Grammy Award-winning recordings, numerous commissions, and tour performances at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and the Ravinia, Ojai, and Savannah Music Festivals. He is one of two classical musicians inducted in the Georgia Hall of Fame.

Since 2011, Robert Spano has also served as Music Director of the Aspen Music Festival and School. In this capacity he oversees the programming of more than 300 events and educational programs for 630 students and young performers. His tenure in Aspen remains ongoing.

Born in Elkhart, Indiana, Robert Spano studied at the Oberlin Conservatory, where he is now on faculty, and at the Curtis Institute of Music. He went on to serve as an Assistant Conductor at the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Seiji Ozawa, then spent several years as a highly active guest conductor around the world. In 1996, he began his first music directorship, with the Brooklyn Philharmonic. Over the course of his eight-year tenure, he “turned the Brooklyn Philharmonic from a respected ensemble in an outer borough into an essential contributor to the cultural life of greater New York” (*The New York Times*).

Robert Spano was appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the FWSO on March 15, 2019. He and the orchestra quickly developed a rapport, discovering a shared musical sensibility and desire to continue deepening their artistic connection.

Principal keyboardist Buddy Bray, who serves as Chair of the Orchestra Committee, said:

“The musicians of the FWSO are delighted to welcome Robert Spano as the next Music Director of the orchestra. We’ve enjoyed the working relationship we already have with Maestro Spano, and we look forward to a new phase of growth under his leadership.”

Robert Spano most recently led the FWSO last month, Jan. 8–10, at Will Rogers Memorial Auditorium, the orchestra’s temporary home during the pandemic. In contrast to the vast majority of American orchestras, the FWSO was able to continue performing for live audiences despite the coronavirus outbreak in March 2020. With Bass Hall unable to accommodate patrons safely, the orchestra transitioned to performances at the larger Will Rogers Memorial Auditorium, where effective social distancing can be practiced for reduced-size ensembles and audiences. Maestro Spano’s January performances featured a chamber contingent of the orchestra performing for audiences of approximately 450 people. The program comprised Jennifer Higdon’s “Celestial Blue” from *Dance Card*, Prokofiev’s Violin Concerto No. 2 featuring Stefan Jackiw, and Dvorák’s Serenade in E major.



Robert Spano conducts Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra at Will Rogers Memorial Auditorium on Jan. 9, 2021. Photo by Karen Almond.

During his 16 months as Music Director Designate, Robert Spano will be closely involved in the orchestra's efforts to transition back to pre-pandemic music-making, if health and safety guidelines permit. Among the many aspects of the live concert experience that are unique to the present circumstances are social distancing in the audience and on stage, temperature screening, mandatory masks in the audience and—where feasible—on stage, comprehensive testing, and contact tracing. The FWSO has conducted more than 1,200 COVID-19 tests of musicians, administrative staff, and venue personnel, with a less than 1% positive rate.

By successfully innovating its business model to reopen safely for live audiences, the FWSO has been able to continue paying its musicians and staff in full during the ongoing pandemic. The new approach has required an exceptional level of collaboration with the musicians and the local and national unions to design and ratify safety plans. The implementation of this business model has been made possible by generous support from Mercedes T. Bass, the Kleinheinz Family Foundation for the Arts and Education, and Ed Schollmaier, in memory of Rae Schollmaier.

For more information about Robert Spano, visit RobertSpanoMusic.com.
For press materials, including photos, [click here](#).

ABOUT FORT WORTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra is deeply committed to uniting its community through performance, education, and outreach, reaching an audience of more than 200,000 annually. Since its beginnings in 1912, the FWSO has been an essential thread in the city's cultural fabric and the very foundation of Fort Worth's performing arts. As the principal resident company of the acoustically superb Nancy Lee and Perry R. Bass Performance Hall, the Orchestra performs a full season of concerts featuring internationally acclaimed guest artists and works by living composers. The Orchestra performs and partners with the Texas Ballet Theater, Fort Worth Opera, The Cliburn, and Performing Arts Fort Worth. Each summer at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden, the FWSO presents *Concerts in the Garden* – a series of family-friendly concerts that has become a city-wide tradition. Additionally, the orchestra hosts an annual Festival of Orchestras, providing an opportunity for non-professional orchestras across the state of Texas to perform in Bass Performance Hall. The FWSO keeps exceptional musical experiences at the heart of its community. After all—life is better with music! For more information, visit FWSymphony.org.

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ADDENDUM

Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra Announces 2021-2022 Symphonic Season

Symphonic Season Overview

During the 2021–2022 season, the FWSO will perform favorites from the symphonic repertoire, two world premieres, and works by contemporary composers.

Featured soloists include: Ray Chen, violin; Victor Agudelo, composer; Joyce Yang, piano; Augustin Hadelich, violin; Randall Goosby, violin; Orion Weiss, piano; Kevin Burdette, baritone; Stanislav Chernyshev, clarinet; Angela Cheng, piano; Artyom Dervoed, guitar; and Kyle Sherman, trumpet.

Guest conductors include: Kevin John Edusei, Anna Skryleva, Carlo Montanaro, Lidiya Yankovskaya, Henrik Nánási, and David Briskin.

2021–2022 Symphonic Series

- September 17–19, 2021: Kevin John Edusei, conductor; Ray Chen, violin (BRIAN RAPHAEL NABORS: Pulse for Orchestra; SIBELIUS: Violin Concerto; DVOŘÁK: Symphony No. 8)
- October 8–10, 2021: Miguel Harth-Bedoya, conductor; (Victor Agudelo, visiting composer; VICTOR AGUDELO: Algo va a suceder ... (WORLD PREMIERE); RIMSKY-KORSAKOV: Capriccio Espagnol; BRAHMS: Symphony No. 3)
- October 29–31, 2021: Anna Skryleva, conductor; Joyce Yang, piano; (MUSSORGSKY/Orch. Rimsky-Korsakov: A Night on Bald Mountain; LISZT: Totentanz; STRAVINSKY: Pétrouchka)
- December 3–5, 2021: Carlo Montanaro, conductor; Augustin Hadelich, violin; (DEBUSSY: Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun; MENDELSSOHN: Violin Concerto in E minor; BRAHMS: Symphony No. 1)
- January 14–15, 2022: Robert Spano, conductor; Randall Goosby, violin; (WALKER: Lyric for Strings; MOZART: Violin Concerto No. 5; RIMSKY-KORSAKOV: Scheherazade)
- March 11–13, 2022: Lidiya Yankovskaya, conductor; Orion Weiss, piano (GERSHWIN: An American in Paris; GERSHWIN: Rhapsody in Blue; DAWSON: Negro Folk Symphony)
- Mar 25–27, 2022: Henrik Nánási, conductor; Kevin Burdette, baritone; Stanislav Chernyshev, clarinet (R. STRAUSS: Don Juan; VERONIKA ÁGNES FÁNCSIK: “From hence your memory death cannot take (WORLD PREMIERE); TCHAIKOVSKY: Symphony No. 5)
- April 8–10, 2022: Robert Spano, conductor; Angela Cheng, piano (JENNIFER HIGDON: Blue Cathedral; RACHMANINOFF: Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini; RESPIGHI: Fountains of Rome; RESPIGHI: Pines of Rome)

- April 29–May 1, 2022: David Briskin, conductor; Artyom Dervoed, guitar (MENDELSSOHN: The Hebrides Overture, “Fingal’s Cave”; JOBY TALBOT: Ink Dark Moon; BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 3, “Eroica”)
- May 13–15, 2022: Miguel Harth-Bedoya, conductor; Kyle Sherman, trumpet; Women of Voices of Fort Worth; Wesleyan Women’s Chorus of Texas Wesleyan University (J.S. BACH/Orch. Respighi: Passacaglia in C Minor; TOMASI: Trumpet Concerto; HOLST: The Planets)

Pops Season Overview

During the 2021–2022 season, the FWSO has multiple rescheduled performances from the previous seasons including Kenny G, Back to the Future, Troupe Vertigo, and more! The FWSO Pops Series provides programming from film and popular music to favorites such as "Home for the Holidays" and "The Music of John Williams!"

- September 3–5, 2021: Warner Bros. Presents: BUGS BUNNY AT THE SYMPHONY 30th Anniversary Edition – George Daugherty, Conductor. (Created by the Emmy Award-winning team of Daugherty and David Ka Lik Wong, this new edition celebrates the 30th Anniversary of Bugs Bunny at the Symphony and the 80th Birthday of Bugs Bunny with classics like What’s Opera, Doc?, The Rabbit of Seville, and Rhapsody Rabbit, plus new additions Dynamite Dance, Wet Cement, and three new 3-D Wile E. Coyote and Road Runner Looney Tunes shorts.)
- October 15–17, 2021: Legends: Paul Simon Songbook – William Waldrop, conductor; Paul Loren, vocalist; Emily Drennan, vocalist; Daniel Berryan, vocalist; (Hear Paul Simon's catalogue, from the Simon and Garfunkel years on through the solo albums including Graceland and Rhythm of the Saints.)
- November 26–28, 2021: "Home for the Holidays" – William Waldrop, conductor; Denzal Sinclair and Dee Daniels, vocalists; (featuring seasonal holiday favorites performed by the orchestra and special guests.)
- February 11–13, 2022: “Back to the Future” – Ron Spigelman, conductor; (See the full-length feature film on the big screen with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra performing Alan Silvestri’s dazzling musical score live in synch with the film.)
- March 4–6, 2022: “The Music of John Williams” – Richard Kaufman, conductor; (featuring music from cinematic masterpieces like Superman, Jurassic Park, Star Wars, Raiders of the Lost Ark, Harry Potter, Jaws, Close Encounters of the Third Kind, and more.)
- March 18–20, 2022: Kenny G – Kenny G, saxophone; Andres Franco, conductor; (featuring GRAMMY Award-winning saxophonist and highest-selling instrumental musician of our time performs hits such as “Havana,” “Forever in Love,” “Heart and Soul,” “Silhouette,” and “My Heart Will Go On.”)

- May 6—8, 2022: Troupe Vertigo – Cirque Carnaval; Stuart Chafetz, conductor; (featuring world-class aerial artists, contortionists, and ballet dancers, the Los Angeles based company fuses cirque acrobatics, classical dance, and contemporary theater to create a spellbinding show for the ages centered on the power of expressive movement.)

Family Series Overview

The 2021–2022 Family Series makes symphonic music accessible for even the youngest fans with age-appropriate programming, performance times, and concert lengths that cater to a family schedule.

- October 16, 2021: Halloween Spooktacular - The spookiest performance in town featuring music from In the Hall of the Mountain King, The Firebird, Danse Macabre, Star Wars, Frozen, Harry Potter, and much more.
- March 5, 2022: When Instruments Roamed the Earth® - “When Instruments Roamed the Earth!®” is a story-and-music event for the whole family, an exploration of the sounds, people and experiences provided by symphony orchestras
- April 30, 2022: The Music of Harry Potter - featuring your favorite tunes from the films, like "Hedwig's Theme," "Nimbus 2000," and more.

Special Concerts and Gala

There are four stand-alone concerts including the Orchestra’s annual gala in the 2021–2022 season. These programs include the FINAL FANTASY VII - World Concert Tour, the New Year's Eve performance *Swing is the Thing*, and *A Gala Evening with Sarah Chang*.

- August 27–28, 2021: FINAL FANTASY VII - World Concert Tour; Arnie Roth, conductor; Fort Worth Chorale (Experience all new symphonic arrangements, including the FINAL FANTASY VII REMAKE Theme song "Hollow", the latest original composition from Nobuo Uematsu, performed by an orchestra and chorus of over 100 musicians)
- December 31, 2021: Swing is the Thing - William Waldrop, conductor (featuring favorites by Duke Ellington and Glenn Miller, to Bill Haley and the Comets and Jerry Lee Lewis in this acrobatic homage to one of America's most popular and enduring styles of dance music.)
- February 26, 2022: A Gala Evening with Sarah Chang Patrick Summers, conductor; Sarah Chang, violin (KODÁLY: Dances of Galánta; DVOŘÁK: Violin Concerto; RAVEL: Boléro)

For ticket information or changes, please contact the Fort Worth Symphony Box Office by email to boxoffice@fwsymphony.org or phone at 817-665-6000 or [Ticketmaster.com](https://www.ticketmaster.com).

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