



FORT WORTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
ROBERT SPANO, MUSIC DIRECTOR
KEVIN JOHN EDUSEI, PRINCIPAL GUEST CONDUCTOR
KEITH CERNY, Ph.D., PRESIDENT AND CEO

For Immediate Release

Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra Announces 2023–2024 Season and Contract Extension for Robert Spano

Press Contact

Katie Kelly
Senior Manager - Marketing & Communications
Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra
kkelly@fwsymphony.org
817-665-6500

Fort Worth, TX – January 12, 2023 – The Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra announces the 2023–2024 season programming for the Symphonic, Pops, Chamber, Meet the Artist, and Family Series, five special one-night-only concerts, and a Gala Concert performance featuring Renée Fleming. Music Director Robert Spano has also agreed to an extension of his contract and will remain in his position with the organization through the 2027–2028 season.

The 2023-2024 season boasts a Symphonic Series with the majority of performances being led by Music Director Robert Spano and Principal Guest Conductor Kevin John Edusei. The FWSO has adjusted programming to create the orchestral experience Greater Fort Worth is seeking across our different series including the Pops, Family, Chamber, and Specials. Additionally, there will be collaborations with other arts organizations and local institutions including the Dallas Black Dance Theatre, International Trombone Festival, and Texas Christian University.

"Music and culture are integral to the foundation of any thriving city and Fort Worth is an exemplary beacon of that truth. On behalf of the board, we are honored to have Music Director Robert Spano and President and CEO Keith Cerny, Ph.D. at the helm of a leadership team filled with strong artistic and business minds," said Mrs. Mercedes T. Bass, Chairman of the Board. "The 2023–2024 season will prove to be artistically gratifying for audiences throughout Greater Fort Worth with an all-star lineup of guest artists, collaborations with local performing arts organizations, and our relentless pursuit of excellence through symphonic music."

"It is with great excitement that we announce the 2023-24 season at FWSO, with the return of luminaries such as Edo de Waart and our own Kevin Edusei, and debuts of dynamic conductors and soloists in repertoire that spans continents and centuries. We feel every program is not to be missed," said Music Director Robert Spano.

"As we announce the FWSO's 2023-24 season, I know that our acclaimed Music Director Robert Spano is as excited as I am about the extraordinary range of gifted artists and collaborations we will be presenting," said President and CEO Keith Cerny, Ph.D. "When we announced the 2022-23 season, we set ourselves a very high bar, but I feel confident we have exceeded it for the upcoming year! I know our patrons will enjoy our guest artists, special programs, and innovative Theater of a Concert projects."

Symphonic Season Overview

During the 2023–2024 season, the FWSO will perform twelve Symphonic Series concerts.

Featured soloists include Yunchan Lim, piano; DJ Cheek, viola; Andreas Haefliger, piano; Dallas Black Dance Theatre; Jennifer Corning Lucio, oboe; Joyce Yang, piano; Karita Mattila, soprano; Brandon Jovanovich, tenor; Raymond Aceto, bass; Stephen Waarts, violin; Lukáš Vondráček, piano; Peter Steiner, trombone; Constanze Hochwartner, piano.

Guest conductors include Anna Skryleva, Anne Manson, Edo de Waart, and Tomáš Netopil.

• **September 8–10, 2023: Cliburn Competition's Gold Medalist: Schumann and Brahms Season Opening Weekend!**: Robert Spano, conductor; Yunchan Lim, piano; (BRAHMS: Academic Festival Overture; SCHUMANN: Piano Concerto; BRAHMS: Symphony No. 4)

Once every four years, the Van Cliburn competition pits pianists from around the world against one another in one of classical music's most prestigious competitions. To open the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra's new season, gold medalist Yunchan Lim returns to Cowtown to deliver Schumann's rapturous Piano Concerto, a work of rare sensitivity and appeal. FWSO Music Director Robert Spano also conducts Brahms' Symphony No. 4 as well as the composer's Academic Festival Overture, written as a thank-you for an honorary degree.

• **October 20–22, 2023: Prokofiev and Tchaikovsky**: Robert Spano, conductor; Old Trout Puppet Workshop (TCHAIKOVSKY: Nutcracker Act II; PROKOFIEV: Peter and the Wolf)

Canadian touring group Old Trout Puppet Workshop visits to bring Prokofiev's colorful Peter and the Wolf to life with large-scale puppetry while the orchestra performs the score. Yep, that means puppet Peter, puppet bird, puppet wolf, and the rest. To open the concert,

FWSO Music Director Robert Spano will lead the orchestra in another magical children's tale: the second act of Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker ballet with its striking character dances.

• **November 3–5, 2023: The FWSO's DJ Cheek: Bartók and Rachmaninoff:** Anna Skryleva, conductor; DJ Cheek, viola; (BARTÓK: Hungarian Sketches; BARTÓK: Viola Concerto; RACHMANINOFF: Symphonic Dances)

Principal Violist DJ Cheek, appointed in 2021, moves to the front of the stage for Bartók's final composition, his Viola Concerto. That work launches with a pontificating viola solo in dialogue that quickly evolves into a prismatic exploration of musical color. Russian conductor Anna Skryleva returns to Fort Worth for this program, which also features Bartók's folk music-inspired Hungarian Sketches and Rachmaninoff's quick-stepping Symphonic Dances.

• **November 17–19, 2023: Mermaids from Zemlinsky and Brahms:** Kevin John Edusei, conductor; Andreas Haefliger, piano; (ZEMPLINSKY: The Mermaid; BRAHMS: Piano Concerto No. 2)

Zemlinsky's The Mermaid was inspired by the Hans Christian Anderson fairytale, and the music bubbles along with cheer and pathos. But there's more to the story: Zemlinsky wrote the piece after suffering a heartbreak when his paramour left him for another composer, and the score was thought to be long lost. A pair of British music sleuths tracked down the work, however. The evening concludes with Brahms' second piano concerto, which he described as a "very small piano concerto with a very small and pretty scherzo."

• **January 5–7, 2024: Dallas Black Dance Theatre and the FWSO: Mozart and Stravinsky:** Robert Spano, conductor; Dallas Black Dance Theatre; (MOZART: Overture to The Magic Flute; MOZART: Symphony No. 41 (Jupiter); STRAVINSKY: Petrushka)

Founded in 1976, Dallas Black Dance Theatre has performed for more than four million people worldwide. Be there when they partner with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra and Music Director Robert Spano in Bass Performance Hall for Stravinsky's Petrushka Suite, a balletic take on the story of Punch and Judy fame, with its whirling, folk-inspired melodies and high-stepping harmonies. Also on the program are a pair of Mozartian gems, the Overture from The Magic Flute, as well as the esteemed Jupiter symphony.

• **January 26–28, 2024: Edusei conducts Mahler's Seventh:** Kevin John Edusei, conductor (MAHLER: Symphony No. 7)

Hailed for his "tasteful restraint and explosive energy" by The Guardian, German conductor Kevin John Edusei's star is on a meteoric rise. In January, he returns to Fort Worth for a single work, Mahler's epic Symphony No. 7, a symphony of such towering majesty that it demands a program all to itself. The symphony traces a day's journey from dawn to dusk, from the "religious vision" of the first movement through the snarling, biting scherzo and boisterous C Major conclusion.

- **March 1–3, 2024: The FWSO’s Jennifer Corning Lucio: Beethoven, Vaughan Williams, and Carlos Simon:** Anne Manson, conductor; Jennifer Corning Lucio, oboe (SIMON: Amen; VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: Oboe Concerto; BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 7)

Beethoven’s seventh symphony has been called the “Apotheosis of the Dance.” Renowned conductor Anne Manson teams up with FWSO’s principal oboist Jennifer Corning Lucio for Ralph Vaughan Williams’ haunting Oboe Concerto, a work in which each movement ends as it began. The orchestra completes the program with a recent work by Carlos Simon, composer-in-residence at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

- **March 15–17, 2024: Tchaikovsky: Piano Concerto and the Fifth Symphony:** Edo de Waart, conductor; Joyce Yang, piano (TCHAIKOVSKY: Piano Concerto No. 1; TCHAIKOVSKY: Symphony No. 5)

International Record Review called star pianist Joyce Yang’s take on Tchaikovsky’s first piano concerto “hugely enjoyable, beautifully shaped ... a performance that marks her out as an enormous talent.” Now, the Grammy-nominated artist is bringing that thrilling interpretation of a concerto once thought to be unplayable to Bass Performance Hall. Dutch conductor Edo de Waart joins the orchestra for an all-Tchaikovsky program that pairs the concerto with Symphony No. 5 and its famous opening “fate” motif.

- **April 19–21, 2024: Wagner’s *Die Walküre* and Sibelius’ Sixth:** Robert Spano, conductor; Karita Mattila, soprano; Brandon Jovanovich, tenor; Raymond Aceto, bass; James Robinson, stage director (SIBELIUS: Symphony No. 6; WAGNER: *Die Walküre* Act 1)

Die Walküre is the second of Wagner’s four-opera Ring Cycle. The first act narrates the tale of a forbidden romance with Wagnerian grandeur and themes that call the cycle’s other operas and characters to mind. FWSO Music Director Robert Spano leads the orchestra and star vocalists in a special concert version of this act, preceded by Sibelius’ Symphony No. 6, which the composer poetically described as “cold spring water” and the “scent of first snow.”

- **May 3–5, 2024: Beethoven’s Violin Concerto: Beethoven and Shostakovich:** Robert Spano, conductor; Stephen Waarts, violin (BEETHOVEN: Egmont Overture; BEETHOVEN: Violin Concerto; SHOSTAKOVICH: Symphony No. 5)

When Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 5 premiered in Leningrad, listeners gave an ovation that lasted longer than half an hour, catapulting this gripping, emotional work to immediate and lasting success. It’s one of the few works to unite both critics and the public in their positive opinions. To open the concert, Beethoven’s Egmont Overture suggests societal unease in its churning rhythms before five famous knocking notes open Beethoven’s Violin Concerto. Youthful violinist Stephen Waarts takes to the stage for this staple of violin repertoire while FWSO Music Director Robert Spano helms the orchestra.

- **May 24–26, 2024: Dvořák’s Eighth: Dvořák and Chopin:** Tomáš Netopil, conductor; Lukáš Vondráček, piano (DVOŘÁK: Slavonic Dance No. 1; CHOPIN: Piano Concerto No. 1; DVOŘÁK : Symphony No. 8)

While writing his masterful eighth symphony, Czech Dvořák told a friend that “melodies simply pour out of me.” Indeed, this symphony is perhaps Dvořák’s most melodic, from the rhapsodic first movement to the electrifying finale. Czech conductor Tomáš Netopil has paired the symphony alongside Dvořák’s lively Slavonic Dance No. 1, originally composed as piano duets to earn some cash early on in his career. Finally, pianist Lukáš Vondráček takes to the stage for Czech-tutored composer Chopin’s first piano concerto, written at the tender age of 20.

- **May 31– June 2, 2024: Season Finale: Jennifer Higdon, Kevin Day, and Mahler 5:** Robert Spano, conductor; Peter Steiner, trombone (DAY: Double Concerto for Trombone and Piano; HIGDON: Low Brass Concerto; MAHLER: Symphony No. 5)

In partnership with the International Trombone Festival and Texas Christian University, The FWSO’s season finale goes out with a blast, spotlighting the brass instruments of the orchestra. Music Director Robert Spano will lead the ensemble in a brand-new double concerto for trombone and piano by Texas Christian University alumnus Kevin Day as well as Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Jennifer Higdon’s uniquely imaginative Low Brass Concerto. For the big finish: Mahler’s Symphony No. 5.

Pops Season Overview

The 2023–2024 Pops Series programming will contain 6 concert weekends with a variety of music including film scores, and popular genres. Our annual “Home for the Holidays” performance will be led by Assistant Conductor Taichi Fukumura. All performances will take place at Bass Performance Hall.

- **September 1–3, 2023: Hotel California: A Salute to the Eagles:** Albert-George Schram, conductor

The only tribute show to have ever received “Official Authorization” to perform the Eagles catalog of music, Hotel California will perform the Eagles' greatest hits.

- **November 10–12, 2023: Bond and Beyond:** Taichi Fukumura, conductor; Morgan James, soprano

Beginning with Bond’s own theme, this program will feature music from different crime thrillers in the James Bond franchise as well as hits from Mission: Impossible, The Incredibles, Pink Panther, and more.

- **November 24–26, 2023: Home for the Holidays:** Taichi Fukumura, conductor

A classic Fort Worth holiday tradition featuring seasonal tunes.

- **January 19–21, 2024: Elton John and Billy Joel Tribute:** Ron Spigelman, conductor; Michael Cavanaugh, vocalist

This tribute to both Billy Joel and Elton John will feature hits including “Bennie and the Jets,” “Just the Way You Are,” “Tiny Dancer,” “Rocket Man,” “Uptown Girl,” and more.

- **March 8–10, 2024: John Williams Celebration:** Richard Kaufman, conductor

This tribute to Williams includes music from Hook, Superman, Schindler’s List, Harry Potter, Star Wars, and more.

- **April 26–28, 2024: Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back:** Miguel Harth-Bedoya, conductor

This performance will feature the film with live orchestra performing the score. As Imperial Forces launch an all-out attack on the Rebel Alliance, Han Solo and Princess Leia flee to Cloud City where they are captured by Darth Vader. Luke Skywalker journeys to the mysterious, marshy planet of Dagobah, where the wise Jedi Master Yoda teaches the young hero the ways of the Force. Presentation licensed by Disney Concerts.

Chamber Series Overview

The 2023–2024 Chamber Series at the Kimbell Art Museum features three performances showcasing the exceptional talent of FWSO musicians in the intimate Renzo Piano Pavilion.

- **October 29, 2023, at 2:00 PM: Buddy Bray and Keith Cerny:** Keith Cerny, piano; Buddy Bray, piano (featuring Bartók Sonata for 2 Pianos and Percussion and Mozart Quintet in G minor K. 516)

The FWSO’s Principal Keyboard, Shields-Collins “Buddy” Bray, needed a duet partner, and he found one in the ensemble’s President and CEO. Together, Cerny and Bray will tackle Bartók’s fiendish Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion. Next, musicians from the orchestra perform Mozart’s G minor quintet — a string quartet plus an extra viola — in which three dark, serious movements resolve in one of Mozart’s frothiest finales.

- **February 11, 2024, at 2:00 PM: Hidden Gems: Music by Mozart, Carter, Böhme, McKee, and Britten:** FWSO musicians (featuring Overture to The Magic Flute, Britten Phantasy Oboe Quartet, Böhme Sextet, Carter Sonata for Piano and Cello, and McKee Vuelta del Juego)

Mozart composed his opera, *The Magic Flute*, as an allegory for the Masonic initiation. In this program, FWSO brass deliver a bright arrangement of the opera's Overture as well as offerings by composers Oskar Böhme and Kevin McKee. Also on the program are Elliot Carter's grave Sonata for Piano and Cello and one of Britten's first published works, the rarely heard *Phantasy Oboe Quartet*.

- **April 14, 2023, at 2:00 PM: Piano Stampede!**: Robert Spano, piano; FWSO musicians and Guests (featuring Saint-Saëns' *Danse macabre* for two pianos, eight hands, and George Crumb's *Celestial Mechanics*)

One piano, two pianos, four hands duets, eight hands quartets — this concert has it all. FWSO Music Director Robert Spano and his long-time collaborator Pedja Mužijević, along with pianist Shields-Collins "Buddy" Bray, and FWSO's President and CEO Keith Cerny command the stage. See them stampede the keys with a dozen high-energy works for multiple pianists by composers ranging from Bach to John Cage and Schumann to George Crumb, with favorites like Saint-Saëns' *Danse macabre* for two pianos, eight hands, and Crumb's *Celestial Mechanics* anchoring the program.

Meet the Artist Series Overview

Formerly known as Meet the Composer, Meet the Artist offers an expansion on the original concept by including Artistic Directors, dancers, and composers at the Renzo Piano Pavilion at the Kimbell Art Museum. This is an opportunity for listeners to learn more about the many contributors to a "Theater of a Concert" concept.

- **Thursday, October 19, 2023: The Old Trout Puppet Workshop featuring the Co-Artistic Directors Pete Balkwill, Pityu Kenderes, and Judd Palmer**

Canadian touring group Old Trout Puppet Workshop will discuss how they will bring Prokofiev's colorful *Peter and the Wolf* to life with large-scale puppetry for the October 20–22, 2023, performances of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* and Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Act II* of the Symphonic Series.

- **Thursday, January 4, 2024: Dallas Black Dance Theatre featuring conversations with Melissa Young and Sean Smith**

Artistic Director Melissa Young and Dancer/Co-Rehearsal Director Sean Smith discuss how the Dallas Black Dance Theatre and the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra will bring this collaboration to life through the choreography of Stravinsky's *Petrushka Suite*.

- **Thursday, May 30, 2024: Composer Jennifer Higdon**

Jennifer Higdon discusses her career, compositional style, and her Low Brass Concerto which is on the program for the Symphonic Series Season Finale from May 31– June 2, 2024. These performances will feature works that showcase brass instruments as part of a collaboration between the FWSO, Texas Christian University, and the 2024 International Trombone Festival which will be hosted in Fort Worth.

Family Series Overview

The 2023–2024 Family Series provides a one-hour-long concert at 11:00 AM on Saturday to introduce children who may not be ready for a full concert to age-appropriate, symphonic music conducted by FWSO Assistant Conductor Taichi Fukumura.

- **November 11, 2023: Storybook: Cinderella:** Taichi Fukumura, conductor (featuring Saint-Saëns' Carnival of the Animals and Mussorgsky's Night on Bald Mountain)
- **March 9, 2024: Beethoven Lives Upstairs:** Taichi Fukumura, conductor (featuring the world-famous production which portrays a lively exchange of letters between young Christoph and his Uncle regarding the “madman” upstairs neighbor – Ludwig van Beethoven)
- **April 27, 2024: Harry Potter Children's Suite:** Taichi Fukumura, conductor (featuring selections from Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone)

Special Concerts and Gala

There are six one-night-only concerts in the 2023–2024 season including the Gala Concert and Dinner featuring Renée Fleming and Rod Gilfry, Disney Princess: The Concert, Lasting Impressions (an immersive concert experience), Game ON! featuring music from Player Unknown's Battlegrounds, FLY Dance Company: Breakin' Classical, and Stars of the Symphony featuring FWSO musicians Buddy Bray, Stas Chernyshev, Josh Elmore, and Nick Sakakeeny.

- **Stars of the Symphony – August 26, 2023, at Bass Performance Hall:** Taichi Fukumura, conductor; Buddy Bray, piano; Stas Chernyshev, clarinet; Josh Elmore, bassoon; Nick Sakakeeny, percussion

This program features Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra musicians collaborating in virtuosic roles in works such as Strauss' Duett-Concertino, Toshio Mashima's Marimba Concerto, and Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue.

- **FLY Dance Company: Breakin' Classical – September 23, 2023, at Will Rogers**

Auditorium: Taichi Fukumura, conductor

Houston-based FLY combines street dance and classical music to form “theatrical hip hop” with choreography and a variety of musical selections. Founded in 1992, FLY has performed in Washington’s Kennedy Center, Vail International Dance Festival, Lincoln Center, and Bob Hope Theater.

- **Game ON! – October 7, 2023, at Will Rogers Auditorium:** Andy Brick, conductor

This program will include the world premiere of the spellbinding Player Unknown’s Battlegrounds orchestral suite accompanied by stunning HD Video and a mesmerizing new score under the baton of game music legend Andy Brick.

- **Gala Concert: Renée Fleming and Rod Gilfry – February 17, 2024, at Bass Performance**

Hall: Robert Spano, conductor; Renée Fleming, soprano; Rod Gilfry, baritone

Four-time GRAMMY Award-winning soprano Renée Fleming and internationally renowned baritone Rod Gilfry in a one-night-only performance of some of Broadway’s greatest hits. Music Director Robert Spano leads the orchestra in a program featuring the likes of “Some Enchanted Evening” from South Pacific, “Til There Was You” from The Music Man, “Tonight” from West Side Story, “Climb Every Mountain” from The Sound of Music and more.

- **Lasting Impressions – May 11, 2024, at Will Rogers Auditorium:** Taichi Fukumura, conductor

This immersive orchestral experience creates an opportunity for audiences to rediscover the emotional power of art through witnessing the spellbinding transformation of the Impressionist masterworks, brought to moving life by a team of artists using cutting-edge 3D Motion Sculpting technology.

- **Disney Princess: The Concert – February 9 & 10, 2024, at Will Rogers Auditorium:** Taichi

Fukumura, conductor

This program celebrates the courage, kindness, and music of 12 Disney princesses and two Frozen queens portrayed by Broadway performers. Amplified by full animation projections, the performers appear as themselves and share behind-the-scenes stories of their time portraying these characters on Broadway and beyond.

Ticket Information

Subscriptions for the 2023–2024 season go on sale on April 4, 2023, and can be purchased by calling 817-665-6000 or online at [fwsymphony.org](https://www.fwsymphony.org). Symphonic 12-concert subscription package

for the 2023–2024 season range in price from \$240.00–\$948.00. Pops 6-concert subscription packages range from \$179.00– \$499.00.

Single tickets will go on sale on July 10, 2023, for 2023–2024 regular season concerts. For tickets to all FWSO concerts, contact the FWSO Ticket Office at 817-665-6000 or visit www.fwsymphony.org

About Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra

The Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra under Music Director Robert Spano 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. The FWSO has performed at Carnegie Hall and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts as part of SHIFT: A Festival of American Orchestras. The FWSO has released 13 recordings – with several being world premiere releases – garnering international acclaim. The FWSO has embraced creative collaborations through residencies, partnerships, and commissions. 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 have become a city-wide tradition. The FWSO keeps exceptional musical experiences at the heart of its community. For more information, visit fwsymphony.org.

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