



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## MEDIA ANNOUNCEMENT

### VSO Prepares for Centennial Season and Begins Search for Next Music Director

**HAMPTON ROADS, VA [June 27, 2018]** – Approaching its centennial season in 2020-21, the Virginia Symphony Orchestra (VSO) is expanding into exciting new areas of opportunity – and challenging expectations of what a 21<sup>st</sup> century orchestra can be. At the same time, the VSO is undertaking a search for a new artistic leader to follow JoAnn Falletta, who will be stepping down after 29 successful years as the VSO’s Music Director.

Ideally, the VSO’s new artistic leader will bring not only a solid commitment to expanding the horizons of the orchestra as an ensemble, but also a passion for identifying and supporting the individual creative development of our VSO musicians. Our next Music Director will demonstrate innovation in concert programming across the spectrum of our offerings. We are looking for a transformative, charismatic communicator who will speak to a variety of audiences and bring new creativity to educational, artistic, and community service partnerships in which the VSO will continue to be a driving force.

**Who We Are:** The Virginia Symphony Orchestra (VSO) is the only full-time professional symphony orchestra serving Coastal Virginia. A member of ICSOM (*International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians*), the VSO employs 76 musicians for 35 weeks over a 42-week season on an annual budget of approximately \$6 million. The Symphony also benefits from a 100-voice volunteer Chorus. Established in 1920 as The Norfolk Civic Symphony Orchestra, the VSO is the product of an organizational merger with the Peninsula Symphony Orchestra and the Virginia Beach Pops in 1979. Now in its 98th season, the VSO is a cultural cornerstone of Southeast Virginia, committed to fostering a dynamic, accessible, and creative community. The VSO is the foundation of the performing arts community in southeastern Virginia and regularly collaborates with other arts organizations, providing the professional musicians for partners including the Virginia Opera, the Virginia Arts Festival, and the Richmond Ballet.

**What We Do:** With a full-time professional staff of 18, an Assistant Conductor and a Chorusmaster, the VSO performs for more than 100,000 people throughout Hampton Roads and additionally serves more than 45,000 students and lifelong learners through its education and community engagement programs annually. As the resident orchestra for three separate concert venues in Hampton Roads, the orchestra performs more than 40 concerts and specials each season for its Classics (24), Pops! (9), and Regional Classics (8) concert series. The VSO also performs a free-admission, four-concert outdoor series, “Symphony by the Sea,” in Virginia Beach and a signature four-concert family series each year.

The VSO has successfully expanded its programming beyond the traditional concert format. These include the innovative and thematic four-concert series “#VSOatRoper” in which audience members are encouraged to participate via social media directly from their seats as well as blockbuster concerts like “The Music of Star Wars” and “The Music of Harry Potter.” In an effort to inspire concert experiences that are transformative and relevant to contemporary society, the VSO is recognized for its annual tribute concert honoring the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and *CommUNITY Play-In and Sing-Along*, an inclusive event in which instrumentalists and singers of all ages and skill-levels are invited to perform alongside members of the VSO.

Two years ago, the Virginia Symphony Orchestra made a strategic decision to shift in a direction towards projects that would widen the Symphony’s relevance in the community beyond regular concert goers. The VSO has strategically engaged the health and wellness communities which has resulted in new partnerships, including with Sentara Healthcare, Children’s Hospital of The King’s Daughters and assisted-living and memory care facilities. VSO musicians in our “Generations in Unison” program help to address the physical, emotional, and cognitive needs of residents in partnering memory care and assisted living facilities alongside licensed music therapy practitioners.

With its focus to grow vibrant communities through the arts not only as a cultural resource and a driver of economic activity but as a vital partner in education, the VSO also performs an annual Young People’s Concerts series for students in grades three through five. Since 2016, the VSO has partnered with Carnegie Hall’s Link Up program to provide 26 full-orchestra, interactive performances to students in grades 3-5 across 11 school districts.

The Student/Orchestra Artistic Residency program provides professional VSO musicians in 5 residencies across Hampton Roads public schools. The VSO started an after-school violin instruction and character education program in partnership with the Salvation Army and VSO musicians continue in a teaching and mentoring role through the “Heartstrings” program. The VSO’s “Delta Arts in the Schools” program reaches over 440 underserved children through individual instrumental performances and accompanying literacy activities in partnership with the local chapter of Delta Sigma Theta sorority.

By strengthening the organization’s focus on education, music students at local universities including Christopher Newport University, The College of William and Mary, and Old Dominion University (ODU) benefit directly from VSO programs and interaction with our musicians. A new partnership with ODU includes annual side-by-side performances, major choral performances, and masterclasses in a collaboration that is unique in Virginia and across the nation. Our longstanding partnership with the Bay Youth Orchestras of Virginia has been formalized and discussions are underway regarding further expansion.

The VSO’s “Harmony Project” was one of the first partnerships between a professional orchestra and historically black churches in Hampton Roads (now expanded to 11 locations) providing music for church services and youth programs. It has received national funding and recognition since its conception in 2007.

Looking forward to celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the institution in the 2020-21 season, the Virginia Symphony Orchestra is an optimistic, dynamic organization excited about expanding into new areas of opportunity. We are looking for artistic leadership that will embrace and propel us toward our vision to be in the forefront of authentic community service and citizen engagement, as well as expanding our audiences as we continue to provide live symphonic music of the highest quality.

***The Region We Serve:*** The Hampton Roads metropolitan area consists of nine cities and seven counties with a population of over 1.6 million in southeastern Virginia, boasts one of the world's largest natural harbors and the world's largest navy base, and attracts millions of tourists for the historical and cultural significance of the area and the beaches of the coastline. It's also one of the largest geographical markets in the country served by a single professional orchestra. The VSO is fortunate to perform our major classics concert series in three separate, excellent halls – the Ferguson Center for the Arts on the campus of Christopher Newport University in Newport News, Chrysler Hall in downtown Norfolk, and the Sandler Center for the Performing Arts in the vibrant Town Center area of Virginia Beach. A planned renovation of Chrysler Hall over the next five years will further enhance the concert experience for both audiences and artists.

**Inquiries should be directed to Rodney Martell, VSO Artistic Administrator, [rmartell@virginiasymphony.org](mailto:rmartell@virginiasymphony.org)**



## **Musical Highlights of Recent Seasons**

- Night Owl by Michael Daugherty; World premiere/lead commissioner, accompanied by iconic steam railroad photos by O. Winston Link. Recorded for commercial release.
- The Bass Whisperer; concerto for electric bass featuring world-renowned artist Victor Wooten (a native of Newport News, VA)
- Berlioz Requiem; performed, recorded and commercially released
- Poems of Life by Kenneth Fuchs; world premiere of piece for countertenor, cello and orchestra
- Mahler Symphony No. 8; performance and commercial recording
- Philip Glass: Concerto Fantasy for Two Timpani and orchestra
- Bartok: Bluebeard's Castle with sets by Dale Chihuly
- Bernstein: Mass
- Bernstein: Centennial Celebration with Jamie Bernstein and Robert McDuffie
- Strauss: Alpine Symphony photo-choreographed by Tobias Melle

### Upcoming in 2018-2019:

- Danny Elfman Concerto for violin; first performance by a professional orchestra in the United States
- Mahler Symphony No. 2