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The Florida Orchestra gala event with Sting raises record \$1.5 million

ST. PETERSBURG, FL – The Florida Orchestra’s 50th anniversary gala on Saturday, featuring a sold-out performance by renowned artist Sting, was the orchestra’s most successful ever, raising a record \$1.5 million to support TFO’s growing community programs and high standard of artistic excellence.

“An Intimate Evening with The Florida Orchestra and Sting” captured all the excitement and momentum of the orchestra’s 50th anniversary season in one extraordinary night as 2,000 patrons packed the Mahaffey Theater. The 90-minute concert, under the baton of Music Director Michael Francis, won rave reviews in the media ([click here for articles, photos and video](#)) and put the orchestra in the spotlight as the 16-time Grammy winner performed symphonic arrangements of his biggest hits, including *Fields of Gold*, *Roxanne* and *Every Breath You Take*.

The Florida Orchestra’s Sting concert was one of the hottest tickets in town the moment it was announced. People lined up down the block outside the orchestra offices in St. Petersburg when tickets went on sale in September. Tickets sold out in a week.

Support for the orchestra’s only major fundraiser of its 50th anniversary season has been tremendous from all corners of Tampa Bay. In addition to the concert, more than 300 patrons attended a reception and catered dinner with Sting as part of the gala event. The \$1.5 million raised through the gala includes fundraising donations and concert-only ticket sales. The funds will support TFO’s free community programs, which last season reached about 80,000 people in hospitals, schools, parks, museums and more, as well as artistic initiatives that bring top talent to Tampa Bay stages.

The Florida Orchestra is the premier – and largest – orchestra in the state and regularly performs concerts in Tampa, St. Petersburg and Clearwater.

TFO elects new chair for Board of Directors



With its big moment in the spotlight, the orchestra also announced the passing of the baton in leadership of its Board of Directors. Janet Paroo was elected last week as the new board chair, taking over for retiring chair Tom Farquhar, who will remain a board member.

“My role is to fuel the incredible success and momentum of The Florida Orchestra as we head into the next 50 years,” Paroo said. “We have a phenomenal board and staff, and a

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dynamic music director in Michael Francis, and together we are raising the bar on how this orchestra serves Tampa Bay.”

Gregory C. Yadley, a senior partner at the law firm of Shumaker, Loop & Kendrick, is vice chair of the orchestra’s Board of Directors. Yadley also chairs TFO’s Governance Committee and is a longtime member of the Executive Committee. Along with past chairs Jim Gillespie and Tom Farquhar, Paroo and Yadley will provide core leadership to The Florida Orchestra as it celebrates its 50th season.

Paroo joined the Board in December of 2014, and quickly became a vital member of the leadership team, taking over as treasurer in July of 2016. In addition to her work with TFO, Paroo is the treasurer of the Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg. She is a St. Petersburg native, who traveled the world as she created a highly successful career in commercial and investment banking, co-founded Qualitas Healthcare and founded NewSpring Ventures. She brings vast experience in governance, having served in leadership roles for profit and nonprofit boards primarily in Philadelphia and Silicon Valley, CA.

Retiring Chair Tom Farquhar’s eight-year term is the longest in TFO history. There is no doubt that he has left an indelible mark on the orchestra. During his tenure, the orchestra has become dramatically healthier and more vibrant, with a 70% growth in the Annual Fund and a 20% increase in the number of individual Annual Fund donors. TFO also retired all long-term debt under his watch. He oversaw the hiring of TFO’s three artistic leaders, Michael Francis, Jeff Tyzik and Stuart Malina, and the expansion of TFO’s concert programming. In 2011, he championed the Accessibility Initiative, which lowered ticket prices, simplified packages and diversified programming. The bold move paid off, with a 44% increase in paid attendance. (Last season’s paid attendance crossed the 100,000 mark for the first time in TFO history).

[About The Florida Orchestra](#)

Celebrating its 50th anniversary in the 2017-18 season, The Florida Orchestra is recognized as Tampa Bay’s leading performing arts institution, the largest professional symphony orchestra in Florida, and one of the most vibrant and innovative orchestras in America. Under the leadership of Music Director Michael Francis, it performs more than 130 concerts a season, with series of classical, popular, and morning coffee concerts in Tampa, St. Petersburg and Clearwater, as well as free Pops in the Park concerts. Dedicated to bringing music to all people, connecting to the community is a priority, with pre-concert talks, family and youth concerts and other educational activities. Kids and teens get in free to classical Masterworks concerts with Classical Kids tickets. To subscribe or buy tickets: 727.892.3337 or 1.800.662.7286; floridaorchestra.org.