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The Florida Orchestra reaches new contract with musicians months ahead of schedule

ST. PETERSBURG, FL – Capping a triumphant 50th anniversary season, The Florida Orchestra and its musicians have reached agreement on a three-year contract that takes big steps to bolster the high artistic caliber of TFO and positions it to thrive for the next 50 years.

It is only the second time in the orchestra's history that a contract has been reached this early – three months before the current contract expires on August 31, 2018. However, since 2009, TFO has settled every contract before the start of the next season, a positive shift historically.

The collective bargaining agreement, which largely defines how TFO's board and management do business with the musicians, will carry through the 2020-21 season. It was negotiated over several months and advances four key goals:

Increases the number of weeks TFO hires musicians. By the end of the new agreement, musicians will be guaranteed at least 33 weeks of employment, which provides a more stable work environment. This season was 31 weeks, growing steadily from 24 weeks in 2011-12. The contract now includes two weeks of paid vacation for the musicians, which they have not had since 2009.

Provides steady increases in musician wages. The new agreement will grow musician pay each of the next three years, making it 10 consecutive years of increases. It is progress as TFO strives to be more competitive with other orchestras at attracting and retaining musicians of the highest caliber.

Adds two full-time musicians to the orchestra. During the 2010-11 and 2011-12 seasons, TFO decreased the number of fulltime musicians from 72 to 66 for budget reasons, making up the difference with substitutes. Adding two full-time musicians over the next three years allows the orchestra to increase its high standard of artistic excellence with consistency and shows Music Director Michael Francis' dedication to making great music.

Allows TFO to experiment with summer performances. The change gives TFO an option to explore new ways to serve the community and add weeks to the season. Typically TFO's season runs late September through May with no summer concerts.

"The early resolution of this negotiation reflects that the musicians, management and board share the same bold aspirations for The Florida Orchestra. This new agreement puts us on a path toward becoming a truly world-class organization," said Andrew Karr, chair of The Florida Orchestra Musicians

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Committee. “These negotiations took on a cooperative and productive tone thanks to TFO’s administration, led by Michael Pastreich, and the guidance of our board under its chair, Janet Paroo. We are excited about what her leadership means for the future of this institution. Michael Francis’ artistic vision has also opened new possibilities for this orchestra.”

TFO President & CEO Michael Pastreich echoed that the agreement signals a renewed sense of collaboration within the orchestra as it focuses on serving the Tampa Bay community.

“During the talks, our conversations focused purely on how to use our various strategies to reach the same goals,” Pastreich said. “I am so proud of this organization and everyone’s tireless pursuit of the extraordinary. With this new agreement, our 50th anniversary season has been a success on virtually every level and lays the foundation for our next half-century.”

As the premier and largest orchestra in the state, The Florida Orchestra has celebrated one success after another in recent years. Paid attendance has increased 45 percent since 2009, and the 50th anniversary gala featuring Sting sold out the Mahaffey Theater in a week and raised a record \$1.5 million. TFO stays true to its core classical Masterworks series but also continues to diversify programs with video game and movie concerts, including the Harry Potter and Star Wars series. This season it added family-friendly Tampa Bay Times Masterworks and Raymond James Pops weekend matinee series, which exceeded attendance expectations.

Under the bold leadership of Maestro Francis, whose contract goes through the 2020-21 season, the orchestra has reached new heights of excellence in and out of the concert hall. In the 2016-17 season, TFO sold a record more than 100,000 seats in the halls, and reached 80,000 people through education and community programs in hospitals, parks, museums and more – most for free.

“The new contract with the musicians is only one piece in building a stable foundation for the future. We are incredibly grateful for the generous support of patrons and donors who put their faith in TFO, and we look forward to sharing our message of artistic excellence and community outreach to an even larger audience,” said Board Chair Janet Paroo. “We will need the strong support of this community to build TFO into the world-class orchestra that Tampa Bay deserves. We hope everyone will join us and share in the excitement as we grow right along with vibrant Tampa Bay.”

For more Florida Orchestra news and features, [click here for the TFO Blog](#).

[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.