



NEWS RELEASE | September 12, 2018

CONTACT: Kelly Smith, Public Relations Manager, ksmith@floridaorchestra.org; 727.362.5448

The Florida Orchestra overhauls youth concerts, adds second teaching artist

- TFO self-produces youth concerts tailored to Tampa Bay schools
- Teachers, TFO team up to produce teaching guide, lesson plans
- TFO's first-in-the-nation Teaching Artist program adds violist



Daniel Black

ST. PETERSBURG, FL – The Florida Orchestra is teaming up with Tampa Bay school districts to strengthen music education in the classroom and beyond in new ways, including a complete overhaul of TFO's annual youth concerts so they better fit teachers' needs, and the expansion of TFO's first-in-the-nation Teaching Artist partnership to boost orchestra programs in Pinellas schools.

The biggest change is a redesign of TFO's free youth concerts, a 50-year tradition that reaches more than 26,000 students a year in Pinellas, Hillsborough and Pasco counties – often a student's first full orchestra experience. For the first time in nearly a decade, TFO is self-producing the concerts and visuals so they match the needs of local music classes better than a one-size-fits-all national program.

The orchestra worked side-by-side with Tampa Bay teachers to develop a [44-page teacher guide \(click for guide\)](#) around this year's concert theme, "Heroes," including activities, composer bios, music terms and details on how students will interact with the orchestra through movement, recorders and singing. TFO performs youth concerts in October, but teachers will use the lesson plans all year to help students explore music written by heroes, for heroes and about heroes.

"As the premier orchestra in Florida, TFO is in a unique position to take the lead in supporting music education in Tampa Bay schools. We can offer expertise like no one else," said TFO Community Engagement Director Erin Horan. "Teaching music is important, because it helps kids' brains develop and process information in every subject, from math to literature."

Also new this year, the youth concerts will have their own dedicated conductor, new Assistant Conductor [Daniel Black](#), who joins TFO with a wealth of experience conducting and hosting school youth programs. Black also will conduct other TFO community concerts in parks, hospitals, schools and more. This new position is generously sponsored by Monroe and Suzette Berkman.

The Florida Orchestra overhauls youth concerts, adds second teaching artist

This year TFO will perform youth concerts on multiple dates throughout October at the Straz Center for the Performing Arts in Tampa, the Mahaffey Theater in St. Petersburg, Ruth Eckerd Hall in Clearwater, and the Center for the Arts at River Ridge and the Center for the Arts at Wesley Chapel in Pasco County.

Music teachers who helped develop the teacher guide and lesson plans are Kathryn Jurado and Jennifer Moats in Hillsborough; Kori Barber and Timothy Trese in Pasco; and Meghan Alfaro and Maria Athanasulis in Pinellas. District supervisors also played an integral role: Melanie Faulkner, Hillsborough's elementary music supervisor; Thomas Viking, Pasco's fine arts program coordinator; and Jeanne Reynolds, Pinellas' performing arts supervisor.

TFO adds second teaching artist, picks partner schools



Kristin Baird

The Florida Orchestra's unique Teaching Artist partnership with Pinellas County schools has been so successful that a second musician has been hired. Violist Kaitlin Springer joins TFO's pioneer teaching artist and violinist Kristin Baird to work with orchestra programs in Pinellas public schools.

This is the second full school year for the first-in-the-nation program, in which professional musicians split their time between schools and performing on stage with The Florida Orchestra as extra musicians. The teaching artists are embedded within existing music and arts programs and provide expertise in artistry and education to teachers and students in as many as 40 schools throughout Pinellas, mostly middle and high schools. They try to reach as many schools as possible through occasional seminars, direct coaching, and attending All County auditions and Music Performance Assessments.



Kaitlin Springer

"This partnership is important because it supports orchestra programs that were completely cut in the 1990s," said TFO Community Engagement Director Erin Horan. "Thanks to the support of the school board and Superintendent Michael Grego over the past few years, music and art programs have seen tremendous support. Since our partnership began, the level of the county's string programs has increased and teachers report they are more confident in their work and enjoy more job satisfaction overall. We are improving the cultural life in Pinellas County through this program."

Pinellas County Performing Arts Supervisor Jeanne Reynolds agreed. "We felt an immediate impact from this innovative Teaching Artist program," Reynolds said.

"Student achievement at all three partnership schools increased dramatically. We are excited about what this program is doing for our schools!"

As part of the program, schools can apply to receive intensive instruction as one of three partner schools. This year's partner schools are **Palm Harbor High School, Clearwater Fundamental Middle School** and **Lakewood High School**, which will work primarily with teaching artist Baird. Springer will work primarily with last year's partner schools, **Dunedin High School, Tarpon Springs Middle School** and **Thurgood Marshall Fundamental Middle School**, to help provide consistency in the face of teacher turnover. Both Baird and Springer also will work with teachers who are new to strings instruction or who request extra help. Typically extra time is spent coaching for Music Performance Assessments, All County auditions, or before a school concert.

The Florida Orchestra overhauls youth concerts, adds second teaching artist

Teachers at the partner schools receive professional development credit through the school district for their time spent with the teaching artists. TFO also encourages partner school groups to perform in the lobby before a Florida Orchestra concert, as well as attend concerts.

The cost of the partnership is split between the Pinellas County School District through referendum funding and The Florida Orchestra, which has several generous sponsors for the program.

Teaching artist [Kristin Baird](#), who was hired in 2017, studied violin and Suzuki pedagogy at the Cleveland Institute of Music.

[Kaitlin Springer](#), who started in August, was previously artist-in-residence at The Conservatory School in North Palm Beach. She studied viola at Boston University, the Hartt School of Music, and Lynn Conservatory.

The Florida Orchestra will launch its 51st season Sept. 28-30 with Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*, led by Music Director Michael Francis. Season highlights include Disney in Concert: *Tale as Old as Time*, *The Planets*, Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, Music of John Williams, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and many more at concerts in Tampa, St. Petersburg and Clearwater. [Full concert calendar here](#).

[About Music Director Michael Francis](#)

Maestro Francis took over as music director of The Florida Orchestra in the fall of 2015 and instantly became a huge hit. Quickly establishing an international presence, the British conductor also is music director of the Mainly Mozart Festival in San Diego and a popular guest conductor around the nation and the globe. [Click for a full bio](#).

[About Assistant Conductor Daniel Black](#)

Daniel Black previously was assistant conductor and then associate conductor at the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra (2014-17) and is Director of Instrumental Music at Arkansas' Wildwood Arts and Music Academy. [Click for a full bio](#).

[About The Florida Orchestra](#)

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. This is its 51st season. 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 buy tickets: floridaorchestra.org and 727.892.3337 or 1.800.662.7286.