



News Release | September 27, 2018

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

The Florida Orchestra extends Michael Francis' contract through 2024

[Photos: Click for photos and video of Michael Francis](#)

ST. PETERSBURG, FL – Internationally acclaimed conductor Michael Francis will continue to lead The Florida Orchestra through at least the 2023/24 season, extending his contract with the state's largest professional orchestra to nine years. The announcement comes in the glow of the orchestra's record-breaking 50th anniversary last season, and as TFO opens its new season with Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5* this weekend.

At age 42, Francis is in top demand around the globe. This summer alone he conducted The Cleveland Orchestra and orchestras in Finland and Germany, along with the Mainly Mozart Festival in San Diego, where he is also music director. But he has no qualms about making a long-term commitment to The Florida Orchestra.

"I'm so excited by what we have achieved together in three years. What could happen if we double – triple – that time? When you consider the tremendous talent of the musicians, board and staff, along with the explosive growth of Tampa Bay, the potential is mind-boggling," said Francis. "I feel privileged and honored to be music director of The Florida Orchestra. There is something absolutely extraordinary happening right here, right now in Tampa Bay."

Entering his fourth season with TFO, Maestro Francis has been a game-changer since he took over as music director in the fall of 2015. He has earned applause for raising the orchestra's standard, spread his passion for taking music into the community, and used a lively blend of wit and analysis to help audiences listen deeper to the music.

"The Florida Orchestra is the premier orchestra in the third-largest state in the country. We aim to use music to help people of any age understand themselves and the lives of others around them. We can teach tolerance, civility, beauty and empathy – all through the power of music," said Francis, who was born near London, but lives in Tampa Bay with his wife, Cindy, and daughter, Annabella.

TFO's Board of Directors approved the contract extension this week. It's the second three-year extension for Francis, who was an instant hit in Tampa Bay. The first extension was announced a little more than a year into his tenure.

The Florida Orchestra extends Michael Francis' contract through 2024

“No one in the past three years has energized this orchestra quite like Michael Francis. His passion for music and the community has transformed the entire organization on stage and off, and the real winners are the people of Tampa Bay,” said Board Chair Janet Paroo. “I am honored to work side-by-side with the maestro. I’m proud of what we have accomplished so far and can’t wait to see what we build in the years ahead.”

Maestro Francis programmed and led the orchestra’s 50th anniversary 2017/18 season, which earned rave reviews, had record ticket sales of about 125,000 – including more than 9,000 patrons at performances of Handel’s *Messiah* – a sold-out gala concert with rock legend Sting, a series of works showcasing Florida composers, and live-recorded broadcasts of select Masterworks concerts on Classical WSMR radio, which will continue this season.

In his three years with TFO, Francis has led a number of key successes:

Expanded lecture series: Francis’ engaging style has been a magnet for free Pre-concert Conversation audiences, which have swelled from dozens to nearly a thousand at some classical Masterworks concerts. In his first season, Francis introduced a talk-and-play Inside the Music series that has attracted thousands. He is a passionate advocate for the orchestra, speaking about everything from why the orchestra is essential to the community to the meaning of *Star Wars* music.

Hospital concerts: Francis believes in taking music to the people, especially those who can’t come to a concert hall. Even before he joined the orchestra, he conducted TFO’s first-ever hospital concert at Moffitt Cancer Center. Since then, hospital performances have grown from a handful to more than dozen last season, serving at least 1,500 patients, staff and families.

New Community Engagement Department: Shaped by Francis’ vision, TFO has built a robust team dedicated to expanding the orchestra’s community and education partnerships in meaningful ways, including new teaching artists in Pinellas schools, free violin lessons for kids through the Prodigy Cultural Arts Program, master classes and revamped Family Concerts and Youth Concerts, which serve 26,000 students every year.

Sing Out! Tampa Bay: This unique community sing-along that Francis initiated in his first season has become a popular tradition. The casual concert includes a community chorus that rehearses and sings on-stage with The Florida Orchestra, led by Francis.

New commissions: Francis believes music is a living art form. He and his wife have sponsored commissions of new music that showcase Florida talent, including a major work called *Triptych* for the orchestra’s 50th anniversary and another new work for the 2018/19 season.

Michael Francis is only the fourth music director in TFO’s 51-year history. After several years as a tenured double-bass player in the London Symphony Orchestra, he came to prominence as a conductor in January 2007, when he filled in for an indisposed conductor for LSO concerts. That led to more occasions where he replaced prominent conductors on short notice and soon built a stellar reputation beyond his native England. He now conducts throughout North America, Europe and Asia. He also is music director of the Mainly Mozart Festival in San Diego, and was previously chief conductor and artistic advisor of the Norrköping Symphony Orchestra from 2012 to 2016. [Click here for a full bio](#)

**The Florida Orchestra extends
Michael Francis' contract through 2024**

[Click for full concert calendar](#)

[TFO Blog:](#) Tune into news about The Florida Orchestra you won't find anywhere else

[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. Its 51st season runs from the end of September through May. 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.