

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 12, 2023

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KWAMÉ RYAN NAMED NEXT MUSIC DIRECTOR OF THE CHARLOTTE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Initial Four-Year Contract to Begin in the 2024–25 Season

**Kwamé Ryan to Serve as Music Director Designate through the 2023–24 Season
He Returns to Charlotte in April 2024 to Conduct Two Performances**

December 12, 2023 | Charlotte, NC – The Charlotte Symphony Orchestra (CSO) is thrilled to announce that Kwamé Ryan, hailed as a “dynamic conductor” by *The Baltimore Sun*, will assume the role of the Orchestra’s next Music Director, beginning in 2024–25, ushering in a new era for the CSO’s 93rd season. Ryan will serve as Music Director Designate through the remainder of the 2023–24 season and will lead two performances of Wang Jie’s Symphonic Overture “America, the Beautiful,” Brahms’s Symphony No. 1, and Tchaikovsky’s Variations on a Rococo Theme on April 5–6, 2024.

“Having witnessed his artistry and extraordinary musicianship in action with the Charlotte Symphony during his recent appearances, I am confident that Kwamé Ryan embodies all of the qualities essential for an exceptional Music Director,” said President and CEO David Fisk. “As a dynamic leader who understands the full potential of the relationship between an orchestra and its community, Kwamé will undoubtedly deepen the Charlotte Symphony’s service to Charlotte and the region, and, with his passion for music education, bring extraordinary, powerful music-making to a wider audience of all ages.”

Born in Canada and raised on the Caribbean island of Trinidad, Kwamé Ryan discovered his passion for conducting at the age of nine. He studied Musicology at Cambridge University and trained in conducting under renowned composer/conductor Peter Eötvös. Ryan previously held the position of General Music Director of Freiburg Opera, and served as Musical and Artistic Director of the National Orchestra of Bordeaux Aquitaine. An active guest conductor, Ryan has led orchestras across the United States including the Baltimore, Dallas, Atlanta, and Houston symphonies, while his international credits include London’s Philharmonia Orchestra, the BBC Proms, Brussels’s Theatre La Monnaie, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, and the Opera Bastille in Paris. In the fall of 2023, Ryan conducted the world premiere of Jake Heggie’s *Intelligence* at Houston Grand Opera. In the spring of 2024, he will make his debut with Opera Theatre of St. Louis and the New York Philharmonic.

When not on the podium, Ryan dedicates his time to educational and community engagement initiatives. He has previously served as Musical Director of the National Youth Orchestra of

France and as Director of the Academy for the Performing Arts at the University of Trinidad and Tobago. Additionally, Ryan is the host of “8 Minute Idea,” a podcast in which he offers insights, tools, and life hacks.

“On my very first visit to Charlotte, I felt instantly connected with the dynamic energy of the city and then profoundly inspired by the wonderful musicians of the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra,” said Kwamé Ryan. “Their dedication to balancing artistic innovation and preservation as a means to engage with their community resonates naturally with my own creative philosophy, and I very much look forward to discovering how this exciting new partnership can enrich the orchestra’s legacy and the cultural fabric of Charlotte.”

Kwamé Ryan’s selection was unanimous by the Music Director Search Committee, comprised of Charlotte Symphony musicians, staff, and members of the Board of Directors. In January 2023, Ryan made his Charlotte Symphony debut leading the Orchestra in Copland’s Symphony No. 3, John Adams’s *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*, and Korngold’s Violin Concerto featuring Bella Hristova as soloist. For Music City Review, critic Joseph Morgan described the performance as, “...exciting, optimistic, and almost manically utopian. When it ended, I realized I had been holding my breath!” Returning in November 2023, Ryan conducted Verdi’s Requiem, earning acclaim from WDAV critic Lawrence Toppman who noted, “He’s cheerfully animated on the podium, attentive to details, unlikely to linger in places where other conductors might do so ... yet unafraid to use silences to make emotional points. He can hold the orchestra in check carefully or let it roar, and it made a monumental sound Saturday.”

“From the outset, there was an incredible chemistry between Kwamé Ryan and the musicians which created an atmosphere of collaboration and inspiration,” said Bassist Jeffrey Ferdon and Principal Violist Benjamin Geller, who served as co-leaders on the Music Director Search Committee. “Kwamé’s dynamic performances, as well as his ability to connect with audiences in a meaningful way, truly distinguished him. We are thrilled to welcome this exceptional conductor to Charlotte!”

“On behalf of the Board of Directors, it is with great enthusiasm that we welcome Kwamé Ryan as our next Music Director,” said Chair of the Board of Directors Linda McFarland Farthing. “Kwamé’s incredible talent and passion promises an exciting future for our orchestra and greater community. We extend our gratitude to the members of the Music Director Search Committee for their unwavering commitment and efforts in bringing us such a remarkable leader.”

As the Charlotte Symphony’s 12th Music Director, Kwamé Ryan will begin his four-year contract in the 2024–25 season, succeeding Christopher Warren-Green after a 12-year tenure.

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About Kwame Ryan

Born in Canada and raised on the Caribbean island of Trinidad, Kwamé Ryan discovered his passion for conducting at the age of nine. He read Musicology at Cambridge University and

studied conducting under the guidance of renowned composer/conductor Peter Eötvös. Ryan held the position of General Music Director of Freiburg Opera between 1999 and 2003 and served as Musical and Artistic Director of the National Orchestra of Bordeaux Aquitaine between 2007 and 2013.

Beginning in the 2024–25 season, Ryan will begin his tenure as the 12th Music Director of the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, having served as Music Director Designate through the 2023–24 season. Ryan last appeared with the Charlotte Symphony in November 2023, for two critically acclaimed performances of Verdi's Requiem. Additional highlights of the 2023–24 season include return visits to the BBC Concert Orchestra and Charlotte Symphony, as well as debuts at Opera Theatre St. Louis, the New York Philharmonic, and Houston Grand Opera for the world premiere of *Intelligence*, the long-anticipated new stage work by acclaimed composer Jake Heggie.

An active guest conductor in the United States and the UK, Ryan has led the Baltimore, Dallas, Detroit, Indianapolis, Atlanta, and Houston symphony orchestras, as well as Boston Lyric Opera, English National Opera, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Royal Scottish Symphony Orchestra, and London's Philharmonia Orchestra. He is a regular guest conductor at the BBC Proms and most recently returned to Brussels's La Monnaie for the world premiere of Kris Defoort's *The Time of our Singing*, which won the International Opera Award for World Premiere of the Year in 2021.

As a guest conductor in Germany, he has conducted the Stuttgart and Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestras, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, Berlin Konzerthausorchester, Saarbrücken Staatsoper, and Stuttgart Staatsoper. In France, he has worked at Opera Bastille, Opéra National de Lyon, and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France.

A recipient of international awards for outstanding work in the field of music education, Ryan has served as Musical Director of the National Youth Orchestra of France and as Director of the Academy for the Performing Arts at the University of Trinidad and Tobago.

About the Charlotte Symphony

One of the premier music organizations in the Southeastern United States and the oldest operating symphony orchestra in the Carolinas, the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra (CSO) connects with more than 130,000 music lovers each year through its lively season of concerts, broadcasts, community events, and robust educational programs. The CSO is committed to its mission of uplifting, entertaining, and educating the diverse communities of Charlotte-Mecklenburg and beyond through exceptional musical experiences. The CSO employs 65 professional full-time orchestra musicians, fosters three youth orchestras, and offers significant educational support aimed at serving the under-resourced areas of our community. Founded in 1932, the Charlotte Symphony plays a leading cultural role in the Charlotte area and serves the community as a civic leader, reflecting and uniting our region through the transformative power of live music.

Tenures of Previous Music Directors of the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra

Guillermo S. de Roxlo	1932–1944
Guy Hutchins	1945–1948
Lamar Stringfield	1948–1949
James Christian Pfohl	1949–1957
Henry Janiec	1958–1963
Richard Cormier	1963–1967
Jacques Brouman	1967–1976
Leo Driehuys	1977–1993
Peter McCoppin	1993–2000
Christof Perick	2001–2010
Christopher Warren-Green	2010–2022

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