

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CHARLOTTE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AND MUSICIANS REACH NEW THREE-YEAR CONTRACT AGREEMENT

August 28, 2024 | Charlotte, NC – The Charlotte Symphony Orchestra and the American Federation of Musicians, Local 342 negotiating committee, representing the musicians of the CSO, announced today that a new three-year contract has been agreed upon and ratified by both the musicians and the CSO's Board of Directors, ahead of the current agreement's expiration. The new contract, effective September 1, 2024, through August 31, 2027, provides stability for the orchestra and its musicians; positions the CSO as an industry leader in audition and tenure practices, as in other areas; and introduces greater flexibility to ensure that the orchestra remains responsive and innovative as it enters Kwamé Ryan's inaugural season as Music Director.

Key points in the new agreement include:

- **Salary Increases:** 13.5% increase in weekly salary for all full-time musicians over the three-year term.
- **Season Expansion:** The addition of one week beginning in the second year of the contract, increasing the number of working weeks from 38 to 39. This expansion allows the Symphony to bring more music to the community and provide a more stable work environment for musicians. With the salary increase, and the additional week of work, the minimum salary for musicians rises from \$45,861 to \$53,709 over the course of the contract.
- **Industry-Leading Tenure Process:** Updates to the tenure process that align with and support the CSO's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. These new provisions offer additional support for musicians during the probationary period, with clear and transparent feedback mechanisms. The changes were heavily informed by guidance from the Black Orchestral Network and the study of best practice in the League of American Orchestras, both of which aim to increase diversity in American Orchestras.
- **Increased Flexibility:** Updated work practices that allow for more flexibility in planning, enabling the CSO to be more collaborative and responsive to the evolving needs of the community, while preserving CSO musicians' ability to organize their working lives effectively, including other personal performance and teaching opportunities as residents of the Charlotte region.

Principal Horn Byron Johns and 2nd Trumpet Jon Kaplan, co-chairs of the musicians' negotiating committee, said: "This new collective bargaining agreement comes after months of cordial and productive discussions with our management. We are confident that it will enhance our ability to serve new audiences and communities while continuing to support our mainstage performances. With this agreement in place, and the continued partnership between our musicians, staff, managers, Board of Directors, and our new Music Director Kwame Ryan, we believe the Charlotte Symphony is set to achieve thrilling new artistic heights."

“I’m deeply appreciative of the dedication shown by the musicians’ negotiations committee, and their collaborative spirit, toward our shared goal of amicably forging this new agreement well ahead of the current contract’s expiration,” said President and CEO David Fisk. “As we head into this exciting new era for the Charlotte Symphony under Kwamé Ryan’s leadership, I’m grateful to have this solid contractual foundation in place that supports our musicians and allows us to focus on delivering exceptional performances and strengthening our connections with the Charlotte community.”

“I congratulate the negotiations committee and the Charlotte Symphony management on their collaborative efforts in reaching this new agreement,” said Music Director Kwamé Ryan. “The spirit of openness and cooperation that defines the CSO is truly inspiring. I’m excited to begin my tenure with a new contract in place that not only supports our talented musicians but also upholds the mission, vision, and values of the Charlotte Symphony.”

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 four 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.

About Local 342, American Federation of Musicians

Local 342 was chartered on July 13, 1934, as the Charlotte Musicians’ Association. Over the years, its geographic area has grown to include the metropolitan areas of Greensboro, Winston-Salem and Asheville, NC and Greenville, SC. Local 342 represents members working in all genres of music and has represented the musicians of the Charlotte Symphony in collective bargaining since 1975. Freelance musicians benefit from the use of Live Engagement contracts whether playing at churches, nightclubs, or weddings. The American Federation of Musicians (AFM) and Local 342 also provide contracts to protect the recorded works musicians produce from being exploited. The AFM is the largest union of musicians in the world, now in its 127th year of improving the lives of working musicians. With members ranging from Herbie Hancock to Hillary Hahn, James Taylor to Bruce Springsteen to everyday working musicians, AFM members can be found wherever music is playing.

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