



## NEWS RELEASE | Feb. 27, 2023

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# The Florida Orchestra CEO to leave in May



ST. PETERSBURG, FL – The Florida Orchestra President & CEO Mark Cantrell, who provided critical leadership to keep the orchestra performing during the Covid pandemic, will leave TFO to take the next step in his career, the orchestra announced today. He will depart in May to become CEO of the Colorado Symphony in Denver.

“This is a bittersweet moment for me. I’m so proud of all we’ve accomplished together at TFO, but I’m excited for the new challenge of a larger orchestra in an area that holds great meaning personally. In addition to music, my life has been dedicated to the great outdoors, and since I was a little boy, I have dreamed of living in the mountains. While I will miss working with Michael Francis, the musicians and the entire TFO team, this is an opportunity of a lifetime for me. I have no doubt the orchestra will continue to grow and make a positive impact on this community,” said Cantrell, whose varied career includes professional musician, sled-dog racer, commercial pilot and furniture maker.

Core leadership remains strong for the orchestra, which celebrates 55 years this season. Internationally acclaimed Music Director Michael Francis, in his eighth season with TFO, will continue to lead the orchestra’s phenomenal artistic success with 71 full-time professional musicians and conductors. TFO’s senior staff will continue to run the day-to-day operations of the organization with oversight by TFO’s Board of Directors. The board has initiated a national search to identify a new CEO who will build on the orchestra’s successes and carry TFO’s momentum forward.

Board Chair Gregory Yadley expressed his appreciation for Cantrell’s contributions during his four years with TFO. “Mark’s leadership during the Covid pandemic was critical to our success. Mark galvanized TFO together as a team in partnership with Michael Francis and TFO’s board to boldly keep TFO performing when almost no other orchestras did. TFO played 86 concerts for live audiences in the 2020-21 season alone, before returning to full strength the following year. The orchestra emerged in a solid financial position, thanks to Mark’s oversight, Maestro Francis’ creative programming, and the steadfast support of donors and patrons.”

The orchestra continues to grow attendance post-Covid, attract new major sponsors, and form partnerships with local organizations and museums to ensure TFO is meeting the needs of schools and diverse groups on both sides of the bay.

Maestro Francis expressed his gratitude for Cantrell. “Mark Cantrell has been a tremendous partner to help make TFO what it is today – a cultural arts leader in our community. He developed an outstanding relationship with TFO’s musicians, and one of his greatest achievements was to negotiate a successful contract that keeps our world-class orchestra growing at the same pace as our thriving Tampa Bay. Mark leaves TFO in a great position to build on our success onstage and throughout our community. I wish him, his wife, Carolyn, and his family all the best in Colorado.”

As the largest professional orchestra in the state, The Florida Orchestra’s mission is to inspire, educate and unite our community through the power of music. This season, TFO will perform more than 100 concerts in venues throughout Tampa Bay, including a wide range of classical, popular, film, rock and family-friendly music. Coming up March 11, Maestro Francis will conduct the orchestra’s biggest event of the season, the [55th Celebration](#) benefit concert featuring legendary violinist Itzhak Perlman at the Mahaffey Theater. The Hough Family Foundation Masterworks series continues with [Beethoven’s Symphony No. 4](#) (April 1 & 2), [Mendelssohn’s Elijah](#) (May 5-7) and [Wagner’s The Ring Without Words](#) (May 20 & 21). In the Raymond James Pops series, upcoming concerts include [Harry Potter vs Star Wars](#) (March 18 & 19) and [Wild West](#) (April 15 & 16) in partnership with the James Museum of Western and Wildlife Art. Tickets for all concerts are on sale now at [FloridaOrchestra.org](#).

### **[About The Florida Orchestra](#)**

*The Florida Orchestra (TFO) is recognized as Tampa Bay’s leading performing arts institution, the largest professional orchestra in Florida, and one of the most vibrant and innovative orchestras in America. Under the leadership of Music Director Michael Francis, TFO performs series of classical, popular, and morning coffee concerts in Tampa, St. Petersburg and Clearwater, as well as free Pops in the Park concerts. The orchestra is dedicated to connecting to the community both in-person and virtually, with family and youth concerts and other educational programs. For tickets and information: [FloridaOrchestra.org](#). The Florida Orchestra is a non-profit 501(c)3 EIN: 59-1223691 CH#1830. To learn more how you can support the power of music in building community, contact: [sweymouth@floridaorchestra.org](mailto:sweymouth@floridaorchestra.org) To donate now: [FloridaOrchestra.org/donate](#)*