NEWS RELEASE | May 28, 2026
CONTACT: Kelly Smith, Chief Communications Officer ksmith@floridaorchestra.org

THE FLORIDA ORCHESTRA ANNOUNCES 2026-27 SEASON

For the 59th season, Music Director Michael Francis and The Florida Orchestra continue to redefine how audiences connect with music – from Beethoven to The Beatles to Bollywood

---

Hough Family Foundation Masterworks series celebrates American voices shaping the next generation of music, while rediscovering Beethoven in unexpected ways

---

Maestro Francis leads the orchestra's first-ever performance of Beethoven's *Fidelio* in concert with full cast of internationally acclaimed vocalists

---

Masterworks series explores major masterpieces and their connections to modern life: Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*, Mahler's *Symphony No. 1*, Rachmaninoff's *Symphony No. 2*, Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* and Verdi's *Requiem*

The Raymond James Pops series celebrates The Beatles, Bollywood, John Williams and Broadway in big, bold productions powered by the full orchestra

---

Orchestra welcomes acclaimed guest artists and rising stars to Tampa Bay stages, including pianists Jeneba Kanneh-Mason, Joyce Yang and Tzimon Barto and violinists Tessa Lark, Charles Yang and Noah Bendix-Balgley

---

World-renowned guest conductors take the podium, including Leonard Slatkin, JoAnn Falletta and Carlos Miguel Prieto

---

Florida Orchestra musicians take center stage as featured soloists across the season's Masterworks and Morning Matinees concerts

---

Resident Conductor Chelsea Gallo leads the Morning Matinees series filled with storytelling and familiar favorites

---

Expanded lower-priced seating options, simplified season ticket packages and diverse programming continue the orchestra's commitment to accessibility across Tampa Bay

---

Season ticket packages on sale May 29

Explore the digital brochure | Download photos

ST. PETERSBURG, FL — The Florida Orchestra today announced its 2026-2027 season, built around epic masterpieces paired with innovative American voices, bold experiences for all generations and the belief that meaningful live music should be accessible to everyone — whether you're a longtime patron or discovering the orchestra for the very first time.

"This season is about new discovery and familiar connection," said **Music Director Michael Francis**, who will enter his 12th season with the largest professional orchestra in Florida. "We're performing some of the most powerful works ever written, while pairing them with music that feels fresh and unexpected. We're asking: What are the American voices shaping the next 250 years? At the same time, we're re-examining Beethoven – arguably the most influential composer ever – in surprising ways. What excites me most is helping audiences experience these works in a way that feels personal. I want people to leave feeling like they've reconnected with themselves, with each other and with something larger than everyday life."

Hough Family Foundation Masterworks: Major works. Engaging stories.

The heart of the season lives in the classical **Hough Family Foundation Masterworks series**, where Michael Francis has curated 14 programs that each weave a story or reveal a deeper human connection.

Inspired by America's 250th anniversary, the season focuses ahead as much as it looks back. American composers take center stage, from George Gershwin and Florence Price to Joan Tower, Michael Torke and Christopher Theofanidis. Together, they explore a living, evolving sound that's defining music for the next generation. Even Frank Zappa joins the conversation, with *The Yellow Shark* bringing electric energy and a sense that anything can happen.

At the same time, the orchestra rediscovers Beethoven with a fresh perspective ahead of the 200th anniversary of his death in 2027. Maestro Francis introduces audiences to three Beethoven works the orchestra has never performed before, from the drama of the full *Egmont* music and the explosive power of *Wellington's Victory* to the profound humanity of his only opera, *Fidelio*. Audiences also will experience Beethoven's *Symphony No. 1*, a preview of the revolutionary voice that would change music forever.

The season begins with a full blast of musical firepower as Maestro Francis launches **Opening Weekend** with Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*, Beethoven's *Wellington's Victory* and Rossini's *William Tell Overture* (Oct. 2 & 4, 2026).

From there, audiences will experience some of classical music's most powerful works through a distinctive lens. Michael Francis' storytelling-driven approach connects great masterpieces to the emotions and questions we navigate in everyday life.

- **Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*** (Oct. 16 & 17, 2026): Courage through storytelling.

- **Mahler's *Symphony No. 1*, "Titan"** (Feb. 19-21, 2027): Hope amid chaos.
- **Rachmaninoff's *Symphony No. 2*** (April 16-18, 2027): Resilience in the face of failure.
- **Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*** (May 1 & 2, 2027): Finding your voice by breaking all the rules.
- **Verdi's *Requiem*** (May 28 & 30, 2027): Confronting loss with strength.

In a centerpiece of the season, Maestro Francis will conduct the orchestra's first-ever performance of ***Fidelio*** in concert (March 20 & 21, 2027). No sets. No costumes. The spotlight lands squarely on the music, revealing the full force of Beethoven's only opera and its timeless message of courage and freedom.

The performance features an internationally acclaimed cast led by one of the world's foremost heroic tenors, Stuart Skelton as Florestan, alongside The Master Chorale of Tampa Bay, the principal chorus of The Florida Orchestra.

Through his engaging commentary and storytelling from the podium, Maestro Francis continues to redefine how audiences connect with the music. Whether it's your first concert or your hundredth, the experience feels welcoming and full of discovery, often with a surprise "mystery piece" along the way.

Orchestra brings world-class guest artists to Tampa Bay stages

The season brings an exceptional lineup of internationally acclaimed guest artists and rising stars to Tampa Bay stages, with programs that feature concertos from American composers, the revolutionary influence of Beethoven and bold new perspectives from around the world.

One of the season's most exciting debuts comes from pianist **Jeneba Kanneh-Mason**, a rising international star from Britain's Kanneh-Mason family of musicians. While many may recognize the family name, Jeneba is quickly building a unique artistic identity of her own. She makes her Florida Orchestra debut performing *Piano Concerto in One Movement* (Oct. 16 & 17, 2026), a work shaped by the fearless spirit of its trailblazing American composer, Florence Price.

The orchestra also welcomes renowned conductor **Leonard Slatkin**, one of America's most respected musical leaders and a six-time Grammy Award winner, for Bernstein's *The Age of Anxiety* and Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 5* (April 2 & 3, 2027)

- **Pianist Joyce Yang** returns, bringing her trademark intensity to *Piano Concerto (Homage to Beethoven)* by Joan Tower (Jan. 16 & 17, 2027).
- **Blue grass-classical violinist Tessa Lark** makes her TFO debut in *Sky Violin Concerto* by Michael Torke, a work written specifically for her that draws inspiration from her Kentucky bluegrass roots (April 16-18, 2027).
- **Genre-defying violinist Charles Yang** blends the energy of rock, pop and improvisation for Kris Bowers' *For a Younger Self* (Jan. 29 & 31, 2027).

- **First Concertmaster of the Berlin Philharmonic Noah Bendix-Balgley** performs his own *Fidl-Fantazye: A Klezmer Concerto*, inspired by the klezmer tradition where the violin laughs, cries and soars (Feb. 19-21, 2027).
- **Pianist, poet and former bodybuilder Tzimon Barto** brings his larger-than-life artistry to Brahms' *Piano Concerto No. 2* (Feb. 26-28, 2027).
- **Conductor Carlos Miguel Prieto** infuses a vibrant program centered on Latin music traditions with his trademark electricity (Nov. 6-8, 2026).
- **Grammy Award-winning conductor JoAnn Falletta** returns to lead a program on the rollercoaster of love, culminating in Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* (Jan. 16 & 17, 2027).

The season highlights standout performances from within the orchestra itself, including **Concertmaster Jeffrey Multer** for Mozart's *Violin Concerto No. 5* (May 14-16, 2027)**, Principal Harp Anna Kate Mackle** for Ginastera's *Harp Concerto* (Nov. 6-8, 2026) and **Principal Cello Yoni Draiblate** for Friedrich Gulda's *Cello Concerto* (Nov. 20 & 21, 2026).

Raymond James Pops: Bold experiences. Full orchestra power.

The **Raymond James Pops** series delivers large-scale, crowd-pleasing experiences with the power of a live orchestra, including popular, rock, Broadway and film music.

This season is anchored by two big productions.

Revolution: The Music of The Beatles (Oct. 9 & 10, 2026): It's a ticket to ride through the history of The Beatles. Part rock concert, part visual documentary, it's one of the biggest Pops events of the season. Featuring hundreds of rare photos from the Beatles Book Photo Library and stunning video, along with top vocalists singing hits like *Penny Lane, Get Back, Here Comes the Sun* and *Hey Jude*.

Dreams of Bollywood (May 21 & 22, 2027): In spectacular color, the global phenomenon of Bollywood bursts onstage with lavish dances and unstoppable rhythms in an innovative, high-impact production. The international cast features the Veils of Bollywood dancers, vocalists and acclaimed tabla virtuoso Shawn Mativetsky. It will be an experience unlike anything the orchestra has presented before.

Other Pops highlights include:

- **John Williams @ 95** (Oct. 30 & Nov. 1, 2026): Tribute to the legendary film composer who made us believe in movie magic.
- **Holiday Pops** (Dec. 10-13, 2026): Tampa Bay's beloved holiday tradition returns under the direction of Resident Conductor Chelsea Gallo. By popular demand, a sixth performance has been added.
- **Soul Sisters** (Jan. 8 & 9, 2027*)*: A celebration of legendary voices including Aretha Franklin, Whitney Houston and other icons of soul and blues.
- **The Wonderful Music of Oz** (Jan. 22 & 24, 2027): Music from *The Wizard of Oz*, *Wicked* and *The Wiz* in one magical concert experience.

- **Come Swing with Me** (Feb. 12 & 13, 2027): A journey through the Great American Songbook featuring the music of Frank Sinatra, Bobby Darin and the Rat Pack era.

Morning Matinees: Casual, joyful daytime concerts

The **Morning Matinees presented by the Helen Torres Foundation** offer a relaxed daytime option for audiences who love lighter programming.

Led by **Resident Conductor Chelsea Gallo**, these concerts explore themes ranging from Paris to Great Britain, Mozart and animals — all while showcasing Florida Orchestra musicians as featured soloists. Featured music includes Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Mozart's *Symphony No. 36*, John Williams' music from *Harry Potter*, Saint-Saens' *Carnival of the Animals* and Debussy's *Clair de Lune*.

Featured TFO musicians include **Associate Principal Oboe James Riggs**, **violinist Eugeniu Cheremoush**, **cellist David Bender**, **Associate Principal Bassoon Maggie O'Leary**, **Principal Double Bass Ryan Sujdak** and **Principal Percussionist John Shaw.**

Music for everyone across Tampa Bay

The Florida Orchestra continues to expand how audiences experience live music across Tampa Bay, with performances at a variety of venues including its three primary concert halls: Mahaffey Theater in St. Petersburg, Straz Center for the Performing Arts in Tampa and Ruth Eckerd Hall in Clearwater. Through its partnership with the University of South Florida, the orchestra will perform two Masterworks concerts at Zinober Hall on the Tampa campus for the first time: Rimsky-Korsakov's Scheherazade in October and The Blue Danube & Beyond in November.

This season also makes it easier than ever to experience the music. The orchestra has simplified season ticket packages by venue and series, while offering more pricing flexibility. The orchestra has expanded lower-priced seating options across all series, with season package seats now starting at $22 for Morning Matinees and $25 for Masterworks and Pops concerts, all fees included. By popular demand, evening concerts will now start at 7:30 pm.

The changes reflect the orchestra's broader commitment to accessibility — not only through pricing, but through programming that welcomes a wide variety of audiences.

"Our goal is to create more pathways for people to experience live orchestral music," said President and CEO Ignacio Barrón Viela. "That means programming that reflects many different interests and backgrounds, performing across all of Tampa Bay and making it easier and more affordable for audiences to find a concert that feels right for them."

Season ticket packages are on sale May 29 | Single tickets go on sale Aug. 11, 2026

Explore the digital brochure | Download photos

Community and special concerts coming soon

In the fall, the orchestra will perform the free Raymond James Pops in the Park concert in Vinoy Park in St. Petersburg and is planning a wide variety of community partnerships for the 2026-27 season. A full schedule of TFO's film, special, benefit and community concerts such as Soundwaves Chamber Orchestra concerts, Inside the Music, Sing Out Tampa Bay, Play Out Tampa Bay and full-orchestra Family Concerts will be announced by the fall.

About Michael Francis

With more than a decade of bold innovation and passionate performances, Music Director Michael Francis has raised artistic excellence to new heights, strengthened the audience's connection to the music and reinvigorated TFO's community and education programs. The internationally acclaimed conductor also is music director of the Mainly Mozart Festival in San Diego and principal conductor of Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz in Germany. For more, click here

About Chelsea Gallo

Resident Conductor Chelsea Gallo has been praised for her ability to "lead the orchestra with grace and fiery command." Now in her fourth season with TFO, she returns in the fall as lead conductor for the Morning Matinees series. For more, click here

About The Florida Orchestra

The Florida Orchestra's mission is to INSPIRE | EDUCATE | UNITE to build community through the power of music. As Tampa Bay's premier performing arts institution — and the largest professional orchestra in Florida — TFO is led by internationally acclaimed Music Director Michael Francis and features 70 full-time musicians and conductors. Now celebrating its 58th season, TFO is widely recognized as one of the most vibrant and innovative orchestras in the nation. Each year, the orchestra reaches more than 150,000 people through more than 100 world-class performances and robust education and community impact programs across Tampa Bay. Its diverse programming spans classical masterworks, popular and film music, family-friendly concerts and collaborations with global artists. Beyond the concert hall, TFO brings music to schools, youth and senior centers and underserved communities, ensuring access to the arts for all. As a cornerstone of the region's cultural landscape, TFO plays a vital role in strengthening Tampa Bay's creative and economic vitality by attracting audiences, tourism and related business activity.
***For tickets and information**: FloridaOrchestra.org.*
***To donate now:** FloridaOrchestra.org/donate*

The Florida Orchestra is a non-profit 501(c)3 EIN: 59-1223691 CH#1830.