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Pasadena Symphony Association

Pasadena Symphony & POPS

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DOWNLOAD PHOTOS <https://tinyurl.com/brettmitchell>

PHOTO CAPTION: Brett Mitchell, Pasadena Symphony Music Director

PHOTO CREDIT: Roger Mastroianni

**Pasadena Symphony Appoints
Brett Mitchell Music Director**

**Highly Acclaimed Conductor
Assumes Post on April 1, 2024**

PASADENA, CA (March 22, 2024) – Pasadena Symphony Board President **Kimberly Winick** today announces that the Board of Directors has appointed highly acclaimed conductor **Brett Mitchell** Music Director. Mitchell has been hailed for his “deftly rendered” performances (*The Plain Dealer*) and “engaging, in-depth explorations of thoughtfully curated programs” (*Cascade A&E*). A passionate advocate for classical music who is also known for his love of popular music and “warm, down-to-earth demeanor” (*Houstonia Magazine*), Mitchell begins his five-year tenure with Pasadena Symphony on April 1, 2024. His first performance as Music Director will be the orchestra’s season-opening concert on October 26, 2024 (2024/25 season details to be announced).

Mitchell is the Artistic Director and Conductor of Oregon’s **Sunriver Music Festival**, a position he has held since 2022 and will maintain in conjunction with his new Pasadena Symphony post. He previously served as Music Director of the **Colorado Symphony** in Denver from 2017 to 2021, after four years with **The Cleveland Orchestra**, rising from Assistant Conductor to Associate Conductor, and an earlier four-year post as Assistant Conductor of the **Houston Symphony**.

An in-demand guest conductor as well, Mitchell’s recent engagements include appearances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl; the Cleveland and Minnesota orchestras; the Dallas, Detroit, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, National, San Francisco, and Vancouver symphonies, among others; and a two-week tour with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. Mitchell also regularly collaborates with the world’s leading soloists, including Yo-Yo Ma, Renée Fleming, Itzhak Perlman, Kirill Gerstein, Conrad Tao, Rudolf Buchbinder, James Ehnes, Augustin Hadelich, Leila Josefowicz, and Alisa Weilerstein.

Winick states, “Brett Mitchell emerged from our competitive music director search as our all-around favorite, and I am delighted to welcome him as our new artistic leader. His energy and talent will engage, sustain, and help to broaden our musical community.”

Pasadena Symphony CEO **Andrew Brown** adds, “We are excited Brett Mitchell is joining the orchestra at this significant time in the orchestra’s history, with our centennial just four years away. Brett is a tremendous talent. With his deeply creative programming, broad vision, collaborative spirit, and innate ability to keep classical music fresh and inspire musicians and audiences alike, he is the right person to lead the orchestra into its second century.”

Mitchell says, “I’m deeply honored and absolutely thrilled to be joining the Pasadena Symphony as its next Music Director. From the first moment we made music together in March 2022, it was very clear that there was a special connection between the musicians and me, and that same chemistry has since extended beyond the stage to our friends in the audience and throughout our community. I couldn’t be more excited for the musical journey that lies ahead for our entire community as we embark together on this next chapter of the Pasadena Symphony’s story.”

Orchestra’s Sixth Music Director in Nearly a Century

Mitchell is the sixth conductor to serve as Music Director of the Pasadena Symphony since the orchestra was founded in 1928. He succeeds distinguished Music Directors Reginald Bland (1928-1936); Dr. Richard Lert (1936-1968); Daniel Lewis (1971-1982); Jorge Mester (1984-2010); and David Lockington (2013-2022). Pasadena Symphony, which has garnered considerable critical and public acclaim throughout its history, is a “virtuoso orchestra” lauded for “zesty, swaggering performances” (*Los Angeles Times*) and celebrated for its “superb tonal clarity and rich instrumental brilliance” (*Pasadena Star News*).

In addition to overseeing all artistic aspects of the Pasadena Symphony, Mitchell will collaborate on the orchestra’s highly regarded community and education programs, including the **Pasadena Youth Symphony Orchestras**, which encompass eleven award-winning ensembles serving students of all musical abilities in grades 5-12. Mitchell is well known for his affinity for working with and mentoring young musicians aspiring to be professional orchestral players. His tenure as Music Director of the **Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra** from 2013 to 2017 was highly praised. He has also served on the faculties of the schools of music at **Northern Illinois University** (2005-07), the **University of Houston** (2012-13), and the **University of Denver** (2019). During the 2022-23 academic year, Mitchell

served as Adjunct Professor of Music at the University of Denver, acting as Interim Director of Orchestras and Professor of Conducting.

Mitchell, who has been on Pasadena Symphony's radar for several years, was previously named an Artistic Partner for the orchestra's 2021-22 season. Based on the strength of that initial appearance, he was invited to return as an Artistic Partner during the orchestra's 2023-24 season, leading its well-received opening concerts last fall.

The Pasadena Symphony is part of the larger entity, the Pasadena Symphony and POPS. **Michael Feinstein** continues in his role as Principal Pops Conductor of the Pasadena POPS, which presents an annual summer series at the Los Angeles County Arboretum.

Breadth of Experience

In addition to his extensive guest conducting work and artistic leadership positions with the **Colorado Symphony** and **Sunriver Music Festival**, Mitchell has held several other notable posts. He served on the conducting staff of **The Cleveland Orchestra** from 2013 to 2017, joining the orchestra as Assistant Conductor before being promoted to Associate Conductor in 2015, becoming the first person to hold that title in over three decades and only the fifth in the orchestra's hundred-year history. He conducted the orchestra in several dozen concerts each season at Severance Hall, Blossom Music Center, and on tour.

Prior to that, from 2007 to 2011, Mitchell led more than 100 performances as Assistant Conductor of the **Houston Symphony**. He also held Assistant Conductor posts with the **Orchestre National de France**, where he worked under **Kurt Masur** from 2006 to 2009, and the **Castleton Festival**, where he worked under **Lorin Maazel** in 2009 and 2010. In 2015, Mitchell completed a highly successful five-year appointment as Music Director of the **Saginaw Bay Symphony Orchestra**.

As an opera conductor, Mitchell has served as music director of nearly a dozen productions, principally at his former post as Music Director of the **Moore's Opera Center in Houston**.

Stepping into the Spotlight

Mitchell came to public prominence in 2014 after stepping in as a last-minute substitute for The Cleveland Orchestra's indisposed Franz Welser-Möst, a performance hailed by critics. *The Plain Dealer* proclaimed, "The star of the show was the Cleveland Orchestra's assistant conductor, Brett Mitchell. When Franz Welser-Möst phoned in sick on Friday afternoon, it was Mitchell's time to shine."

Another last-minute Cleveland Orchestra substitution in 2015, this time for an indisposed Stanislaw Skrowaszewski, also drew considerable praise. *ClevelandClassical.com* reported, “Mitchell did himself proud by Weber, Mozart and Shostakovich on a night that will no doubt be inscribed in the annals of Assistant Conductors' Big Opportunities. The results Mitchell and the orchestra achieved on Sunday were amazing.” *The Plain Dealer* hailed the performance as “propulsive, fiercely focused...and flawlessly paced. The conductor himself may have been a late addition to the program Sunday, but his actual work, a controlled, emphatic performance defined by effective use of silence, was hardly that of a newcomer.” *Seen and Heard International* added, “Mitchell came through with flying colors Sunday evening, providing consistently strong leadership without ever putting a stranglehold on the orchestra’s flexibility.”

Coming Full Circle

Mitchell – who was born in 1979, raised in Seattle, Washington, and now resides in Denver, Colorado with his family, where they plan to remain – vividly recalls the music from the *Star Wars* and *Superman* films having a tremendous impact on him as a child. “The first time I heard an orchestra was in a movie theater on a film soundtrack,” he explains, inspiring him to earn a degree in music composition from **Western Washington University**. “I wanted to be a film composer but ended up writing orchestral works that, in a twist of fate, I started conducting, which I discovered was my true passion.” That led to him earning both Master’s and Doctorate degrees in conducting from the **University of Texas at Austin**.

He continues, “In many ways, joining the Pasadena Symphony as Music Director is really coming full circle for me. So many of our musicians are these iconic studio players whose work I’ve known and loved for decades. To now be able to work with them and experience their artistry in person is a thrill beyond words.”

For information on the Pasadena Symphony, visit www.pasadenasympphony-pops.org.

ABOUT BRETT MITCHELL

Hailed for presenting engaging, in-depth explorations of thoughtfully curated programs, American conductor Brett Mitchell is in consistent demand on the podium at home and abroad. He has served as Artistic Director & Conductor of Oregon’s Sunriver Music Festival since August 2022.

Working widely as a guest conductor, Mitchell’s recent engagements have included appearances with the Dallas, Detroit, Edmonton, Fort Worth, Houston, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, National, North Carolina, Oregon, Pasadena, San Antonio, San Francisco, and Vancouver symphonies; the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl; the Cleveland and Minnesota orchestras; the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra; the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra; the Grant Park Festival Orchestra; and a two-week tour with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

Mitchell also regularly collaborates with the world's leading soloists, including Yo-Yo Ma, Renée Fleming, Itzhak Perlman, Kirill Gerstein, Conrad Tao, Rudolf Buchbinder, James Ehnes, Augustin Hadelich, Leila Josefowicz, and Alisa Weilerstein.

From 2017 to 2021, Mitchell served as Music Director of the Colorado Symphony in Denver; he previously served as Music Director Designate during the 2016-17 season. During his five-season tenure, he is credited with deepening the orchestra's engagement with its audience via in-depth demonstrations from both the podium and the piano. He also expanded the orchestra's commitment to contemporary American repertoire—with a particular focus on the music of Mason Bates, Missy Mazzoli, and Kevin Puts—through world premieres, recording projects, and commissions. In addition, Mitchell spearheaded collaborations with such local partners as Colorado Ballet, Denver Young Artists Orchestra, and El Sistema Colorado. In summarizing his tenure, *The Denver Post* wrote that "Mitchell has been a bright and engaging presence over the years, delving into the history of certain well-worn pieces while leading expert renditions of them."

From 2013 to 2017, Mitchell served on the conducting staff of The Cleveland Orchestra. He joined the orchestra as Assistant Conductor in 2013, and was promoted to Associate Conductor in 2015, becoming the first person to hold that title in over three decades and only the fifth in the orchestra's hundred-year history. In these roles, he led the orchestra in several dozen concerts each season at Severance Hall, Blossom Music Center, and on tour.

From 2007 to 2011, Mitchell led over one hundred performances as Assistant Conductor of the Houston Symphony. He also held Assistant Conductor posts with the Orchestre National de France, where he worked under Kurt Masur from 2006 to 2009, and the Castleton Festival, where he worked under Lorin Maazel in 2009 and 2010. In 2015, Mitchell completed a highly successful five-year appointment as Music Director of the Saginaw Bay Symphony Orchestra, where an increased focus on locally relevant programming and community collaborations resulted in record attendance throughout his tenure.

As an opera conductor, Mitchell has served as music director of nearly a dozen productions, principally at his former post as Music Director of the Moores Opera Center in Houston, where he led eight productions from 2010 to 2013. His repertoire spans the core works of Mozart (*The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Magic Flute*), Verdi (*Rigoletto* and *Falstaff*), and Stravinsky (*The Rake's Progress*) to contemporary works by Mark Adamo (*Little Women*), Robert Aldridge (*Elmer Gantry*), Daniel Catán (*Il Postino* and *Salsipuedes*), and Daron Hagen (*Amelia*). As a ballet conductor, Mitchell most recently led a production of *The Nutcracker* with the Pennsylvania Ballet in collaboration with The Cleveland Orchestra during the 2016-17 season.

In addition to his work with professional orchestras, Mitchell is also well known for his affinity for working with and mentoring young musicians aspiring to be professional orchestral players. His tenure as Music Director of the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra from 2013 to 2017 was highly praised and included a four-city tour of China in June 2015, marking the orchestra's second international tour and its first to Asia. Mitchell is regularly invited to work with the talented young musicians at this country's high-level training programs, such as the Cleveland Institute of Music, the National Repertory Orchestra, Texas Music Festival, Sarasota Music Festival, and Interlochen Center for the Arts. He has also served on the faculties of the schools of music at Northern Illinois University (2005-07), the University of Houston (2012-13), and the University of Denver (2019); during the 2022-23 academic year, Mitchell will again serve as Adjunct Professor of Music at the University of Denver, acting as Interim Director of Orchestras and Professor of Conducting.

Born in Seattle in 1979, Mitchell holds degrees in conducting from the University of Texas at Austin and composition from Western Washington University, which selected him as its Young Alumnus of the Year in 2014. He also studied with Leonard Slatkin at the National Conducting Institut and was selected by Kurt Masur as a recipient of the inaugural American Friends of the Mendelssohn Foundation Scholarship in 2008. Mitchell was also one of five recipients of the League of American Orchestras' American Conducting Fellowship from 2007 to 2010. <https://www.brettmitchellconductor.com/>

ABOUT THE PASADENA SYMPHONY ASSOCIATION

Formed in 1928, the Pasadena Symphony and POPS is an ensemble of Hollywood's most talented, sought-after musicians. With extensive credits in film, television, recording and the orchestral industry, the artists of the Pasadena Symphony and POPS are some of the most heard in the world.

Brett Mitchell assumes the post of Pasadena Symphony Music Director on April 1, 2024. Michael Feinstein – the multi-platinum-selling, two-time Emmy and five-time Grammy Award-nominated entertainer dubbed “The Ambassador of the Great American Songbook” – leads the POPS as Principal Pops Conductor, succeeding Marvin Hamlisch.

The Pasadena Symphony and POPS performs in two of the most extraordinary venues in the United States: Ambassador Auditorium, known as the Carnegie Hall of the West, and the Los Angeles Arboretum & Botanic Garden.

A hallmark of its robust education programs, the Pasadena Symphony Association has served the youth of the region for over five decades through the Pasadena Youth Symphony Orchestras (PYSO). PYSO offers supplemental in-class instruction within the Pasadena Unified School District and eleven performance ensembles, serving over 700 4th-12th grade students from all over Southern California. The PYSO has performed at venues across the globe as well as on the television show GLEE.

The Pasadena Symphony Association provides people from all walks of life with powerful access points to the world of symphonic music. www.pasadenasympphony-pops.org

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