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**Pasadena Symphony Association
Pasadena Symphony & POPS
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DOWNLOAD PHOTOS:

Brett Mitchell, Pasadena Symphony Music Director

Akiko Suwanai, violin

(photo caption and credit included in each file name)

**Pasadena Symphony
Launches 2024-25 Season
with Monumental Program
to Begin a New Era Under
Recently Appointed Music Director Brett Mitchell**

Saturday, October 26, 2024, 2 pm and 8 pm, at Ambassador Auditorium

**Mitchell, in his Debut as Orchestra's Music Director,
Opens Orchestra's 97th Season, with:**

- Mahler's Landmark Symphony No. 1, "Titan";
- Korngold's Violin Concerto, Featuring International Tchaikovsky Competition Winner Violinist Akiko Suwanai;
- *New Beginnings* by Altadena-Resident Peter Boyer, who Previously Served as Pasadena Symphony's 2012-13 Composer in Residence;

Mitchell Is Only the Sixth Conductor to Helm Pasadena Symphony Since Its Inception in 1928

PASADENA, CA (September 19, 2024) – Pasadena Symphony launches its 2024-25 season and a new era under Music Director **Brett Mitchell** – only the sixth music director to lead the orchestra since it was founded in 1928 – with a program filled with symbolism on Saturday, October 26, 2024, at 2 pm and 8 pm, at Pasadena's Ambassador Auditorium. Mitchell conducts Mahler's Symphony No. 1, "Titan," Korngold's Violin Concerto with renowned violinist **Akiko Suwanai**, winner of the International Tchaikovsky Competition, and *New Beginnings* by Peter Boyer. The monumental program, deeply rooted in Pasadena, simultaneously looks both forward and back while also reflecting the orchestra members' strong ties to the film and television recording industry. This marks the acclaimed orchestra's 97th season.

Mitchell commences his tenure with *New Beginnings*, a dazzlingly celebratory fanfare by Boyer, a prolific film score orchestrator and GRAMMY-nominated composer based in Altadena who served as Pasadena Symphony's 2012-13 Composer in Residence and has contributed orchestrations to more than 35 film scores. One of the composer's earliest orchestral commissions, *New Beginnings* has been

heard from Carnegie Hall to the Kansas prairie and adapted for background music on *CBS This Morning*. It has been hailed as “a well-crafted piece that mixes blazing fanfare-like material with a sweet secondary tune that could have come from the pen of Aaron Copland” (*The Providence Journal*).

Also embracing the orchestra’s cinematic connections and musical virtuosity, Suwanai, hailed for her “round, beautiful sound and perfect technique” (*Opus Magazine*), performs the Violin Concerto by Korngold, a masterful composer who brilliantly straddled both Hollywood and the rigorous Viennese Classical musical tradition from which he emerged. Referred to as a “Hollywood Concerto,” the beloved Violin Concerto integrates themes from films the composer scored during the Golden Age of cinema. It offers a subtle nod to the numerous Pasadena Symphony artists past and present whose work in the film recording industry spans the decades. In 2019, Mitchell conducted the work to great critical acclaim with Suwanai and the Orquesta Sinfónica del Principado de Asturias in Spain.

Mitchell caps his first program as music director of the Pasadena Symphony with Mahler’s landmark Symphony No. 1, “Titan,” a staggering work of tremendous emotional depth for massive forces. The symphonic poem melds traditional and modernist musical ideas while shifting moods from joy and exuberance to introspection and melancholy. NPR states, “It’s hard to resist the pull of a piece that begins like Mahler’s First: The strings play a single note spread out over seven octaves.”

Says Mitchell, “I’m truly thrilled that the Pasadena Symphony’s season launch and my debut as music director is finally here! What better way to connect with the Pasadena community than by opening my tenure with the brilliant music of a world-renowned composer from right up the road in Altadena? I am proud to kick off my first subscription series with the orchestra with Peter Boyer’s *New Beginnings* and a masterpiece by one of Hollywood’s most legendary composers: Erich Wolfgang Korngold’s sumptuous Violin Concerto, performed by the exquisite Akiko Suwanai. At the heart of my relationship with the Pasadena Symphony is, of course, my joyful collaboration with our masterful musicians. I’m very excited their talent will be on display front and center on one of the greatest orchestral showpieces of all time: Gustav Mahler’s Symphony No. 1, ‘Titan.’ This promises to be an inspirational, stimulating start to our time together, and I can’t wait to share it with you all!”

Pasadena Symphony President & CEO **Andrew Brown** states, “Pasadena Symphony’s season-opening program on October 26th is a major milestone in the orchestra’s history as we officially welcome to the podium Brett Mitchell as our stellar new music director. The launch of Brett’s musical leadership marks the beginning of a significant new era of exciting musical possibilities for the acclaimed orchestra. We look forward to all that Brett will bring to the Pasadena Symphony, which has

been a beloved and celebrated part of the community’s cultural landscape since its inception in 1928, entertaining, inspiring, and captivating generations of audiences with its musical virtuosity.”

This is the first of six distinctive programs Mitchell will lead this season, all of which will spotlight the critically acclaimed orchestra’s artistry, deep community roots, and unwavering commitment to championing emerging and established composers.

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’s five-year tenure with the Pasadena Symphony began on April 1, 2024.

Pre-Concert Talk, Tickets, and Information

Single tickets (\$49-\$142) are available now. Tickets include admission to a pre-concert conversation held one hour prior to the concert hosted by KUSC Classical California’s Brian Lauritzen, who will interview Brett Mitchell, offering a deep and entertaining dive into the program. For tickets and information, visit pasadenasympphony-pops.org or call the box office at (626) 793-7172.

EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

WHAT/WHO:

Pasadena Symphony Presents Mahler Symphony No. 1
Brett Mitchell, conductor
Akiko Suwanai, violin

WHEN:

Saturday, October 26, 2024
2 pm and 8 pm

WHERE:

Ambassador Auditorium
131 South St. John Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91105

PROGRAM:

PETER BOYER *New Beginnings*
KORNGOLD Violin Concerto
MAHLER Symphony No. 1, “Titan”

TICKETS/INFORMATION:

\$49 – \$142

www.pasadenasympphony-pops.org

(626) 793-7172

Artists, program, ticket prices, date and venue subject to change.

ABOUT PASADENA SYMPHONY MUSIC DIRECTOR 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 is the Music Director of Pasadena Symphony and 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 assumed 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.pasadenasymphony-pops.org

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