

NORTH CAROLINA SYMPHONY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT

Linda Charlton
919.789.5474

lcharlton@ncsymphony.org

North Carolina Symphony Returns to Live Performances in 2021/22 Season

North Carolinians Welcomed Back with Spectacular Performances and Continued Commitment to Music and Artists Reflecting the Diversity of Our World

Season Features Guest Artists Renée Fleming, James Ehnes, and Aaron Diehl; and Returns by Music Director Laureate Grant Llewellyn, Artistic Advisor Carlos Miguel Prieto, and Popular Guest Conductors



RALEIGH, N.C. – In a year unlike any other, the **North Carolina Symphony kept the music playing, and in the 2021/2022 season, the music will continue to play on—now, in person.** Audiences will again fill the seats at concert halls around the state, welcomed back with a season featuring the extraordinary musicians of the Symphony taking the stage with **renowned guest artists and conductors**, performing **beloved works that have stood the test of time and music that reflects the diverse voices of our world**, and once again creating the **full, rich sound that is unique to an orchestra of exceptionally talented artists.**

“There is an energy and connection between performers and audience members in a live concert that is simply irreplaceable,” says **NCS President & CEO Sandi Macdonald**. “With great excitement, we have worked toward our return to in-person concerts—toward this season in which we will be *together again* with the citizens of North Carolina—and I know that the joy and the dedication to artistry that our musicians will bring to this homecoming will be unmatched.”

The Symphony’s streaming concerts in the 2020/21 season were widely praised for their exceptional quality and were enjoyed with gratitude by many NCS fans in North Carolina and beyond; in the upcoming season, **NCS will continue to stream select concerts**.

The 2021/22 season reflects the **Symphony’s ongoing commitment to diversity, both in the performers appearing with the orchestra and with works representing a diverse range of artistic voices**—from the season opener featuring **William Grant Still’s *Danzas de Panama*** paired with Dvorak’s “New World” Symphony, to **Villa-Lobos’ *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 9*** paired with Mendelssohn and Brahms, to **William Dawson’s *Negro Folk Symphony*** paired with Gershwin’s Piano Concerto in F. Outstanding African American women composers of yesterday and today are represented with **Mary Lou Williams’ *Zodiac Suite*** and **Jessie Montgomery’s *Records from a Vanishing City***.

NCS begins a season-long partnership with composer Anthony Kelley, Associate Professor of the Practice of Music at Duke University. Kelley will create a **new work planned to premiere in June 2022 with free performances throughout North Carolina—including Cary’s Koka Booth Amphitheatre—as part of Juneteenth celebrations**. The project is supported by a **National Endowment for the Arts Grants for Arts Project award** and is made possible in partnership with the **North Carolina African American Heritage Commission**. In addition, another work by Kelley, *Crosscurrents*, will appear on the Classical Series (on a program also featuring Rachmaninoff and Arvo Pärt) and his *Fanfares and Themes of Unity* will be included on the 2021/22 NCS Education Concert. Throughout the year, Kelley will participate in community programs such as composition workshops and other education activities that connect citizens of North Carolina with the Symphony.

Female composers continue to be strongly represented in the Symphony’s programming, building on a commitment that began in 2009. Works by women have appeared on NCS programs each year since then—and in the coming season, in addition to music by **Jessie Montgomery**, the Symphony has championed works by women including **Jennifer Higdon’s Percussion Concerto** performed by Colin Currie, a string orchestra work titled *Entr’acte* by **North Carolina native and 2020 Grammy Award winner Caroline Shaw**, and *Song of the Enchanter* by **Scottish composer Thea Musgrave**. Women will also take the podium, with a return performance by German conductor **Ruth Reinhardt** and the NCS debut of 22-year-old English conductor **Stephanie Childress**.

The Symphony makes its return to the Meymandi Concert Hall stage with **some of the world’s finest guest artists**. **James Ehnes**, one of the most sought-after violinists internationally, will perform Brahms’ Violin Concerto—a work seen by Brahms as a true test of a player’s virtuosity and musicianship; pianist **Conrad Tao**, considered a leading artist in the new generation of classical musicians, offers Beethoven’s sumptuous “Emperor” Concerto; audience favorite **Joëlle Harvey** joins to sing the elegant soprano solo in Mahler’s Symphony No. 4; and pianist **Aaron Diehl** appears on two programs, bringing his signature jazz-infused style to Gershwin’s Piano Concerto in F as well as the work Diehl has helped to revive in recent years—Mary Lou Williams’ *Zodiac Suite*. Williams,

known as the “First Lady of Jazz,” was an African American pianist and composer who served as an artist-in-residence at Duke University from 1977 until her death in 1981.

The artistry of the Symphony’s own musicians will be featured front-and-center stage in two programs: **Associate Concertmaster Dovid Friedlander and Principal Cello Bonnie Thron** will be soloists in the masterful **Beethoven Triple Concerto**, joined by their frequent collaborator, pianist **Solomon Eichner**; and **Assistant Concertmaster Karen Strittmatter Galvin and Principal Second Violin Jacqueline Saed Wolborsky** will perform the hauntingly beautiful **Tabula rasa** by **Arvo Pärt**, on a program also featuring Rachmaninoff’s Symphony No. 2.

NCS will bring to North Carolina young artists who have quickly made names for themselves on the classical stage. Pianist **George Li**, praised by *The New York Times* for a style that combines “youthful abandon with utter command,” will be perfectly matched with **Rachmaninoff’s Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini** on Opening Night. With an “exquisite tone and sheer virtuosity” (*The New York Times*), **Randall Goosby** will share **Mozart’s Violin Concerto No. 5** on an all-Mozart program. NCS audiences will hear a violinist who is “on the cusp of a major career” with her “lovingly lyrical, occasionally frisky playing,” when **Simone Porter** joins for **Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto**.

Grant Llewellyn will make his much-anticipated return to North Carolina in his new role as Music Director Laureate. Having completed his tenure as Music Director in 2020—and entering his 18th season with NCS—**Llewellyn will return twice during the season** to conduct the Symphony musicians with whom he shares a unique musical bond. He will share the stage with **soprano superstar Renée Fleming** and will display his skill as an interpreter of choral repertoire in the unparalleled **Beethoven Symphony No. 9**, performed with the North Carolina Master Chorale. Both programs were previously postponed due to the pandemic, and will mark Llewellyn’s first appearances with the Symphony since recovering from a stroke in 2020.

NCS will see the returns of guest conductors who have been audience and musician favorites in recent years. **Carlos Miguel Prieto**, who begins his tenure as NCS Artistic Advisor in the coming season, will lead the orchestra in two programs, including Tchaikovsky’s “Pathétique” Symphony and Mahler’s Symphony No. 4; **Joshua Gersen** conducts Stravinsky’s *The Firebird*; **Ruth Reinhardt** takes the podium for Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Scheherazade*; and **Douglas Boyd** leads a program including Sibelius’ Symphony No. 2 and Tchaikovsky’s Violin Concerto with the charismatic and compelling violinist Chee-Yun.

With timeless music from a variety of genres, the **Pops Season is expected to draw new audiences** to the Symphony while showcasing the orchestra’s vast musical range. NCS musicians will deliver tribute performances to the iconic music of **Tina Turner, Carole King, Pat Benatar**, and other women who forever changed rock and roll; Motown sensations like **The Temptations and Stevie Wonder**; and **ABBA**. Broadway voices will join the Symphony for beloved showtunes from *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Chicago*, and *Little Shop of Horrors*. On Pops Opening Night, the Symphony **celebrates John Williams’ epic movie scores** with music from *Harry Potter*, *E.T.*, *Jurassic Park*, and of course, *Star Wars*. Continuing its longstanding tradition of bringing its community together through music at the holidays, the Symphony will be the starting point for memories with friends and family, thanks to the heart-warming annual **Holiday Pops** concert.

In partnership with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, the Symphony’s extensive education program engages students of all ages across North Carolina—in the 2020/21 school year, **100,000 learners in total** through in-person and digital programs. The Symphony will continue to offer a **mix of in-person and online (both synchronous and**

asynchronous) programs in the coming year. For 4th and 5th graders around the state, NCS will release a new **virtual Education Concert**—teaching core musical concepts such as tempo, rhythm, and dynamics, in alignment with the state curriculum—**featuring a range of musical cultures** with selections by American composers of diverse backgrounds including Jessie Montgomery, Anthony Kelley, Carlos Simon, and Scott Joplin, Mexican composer Arturo Márquez, and more.

The Symphony has already begun to resume in-person education activities and, in alignment with current health and safety guidelines, will continue to do so throughout the coming season—including an in-person Teacher Workshop in October, which each year provides training and resources for statewide educators; Ensembles in the Schools, which brings chamber groups into classrooms; PNC “Grow Up Great” Music Discovery, which combines music with storytelling for preschool students; Tune-Up Workshops, through which advancing instrumentalists are coached by NCS musicians; and, ultimately, a return to in-person Education Concerts. Additionally, during the past season, NCS launched a new initiative, Adopt-a-School—pairing Symphony musicians with schools and teachers around the state to support students and classroom goals. The impact of this program has been extremely valued by teachers and it is planned to become a staple of the NCS education program.

Young People’s Concerts for families will also resume in-person performances, with programming to be announced over the summer. Joining the Symphony’s artistic leadership team to conduct Education Concerts, Young People’s Concerts, and other performances, is **Michelle Di Russo, who has been named NCS Assistant Conductor**. Di Russo recently earned her doctoral degree in orchestral conducting from Arizona State University and is the recipient of the 2020 American Austrian Foundation/Faber Young Conductors Fellowship. **Wesley Schulz, after nearly four years as Associate Conductor, concludes his tenure at the end of the 2020/21 season.**

Other important initiatives expanding access to classical music and increasing the Symphony’s presence in the community include the free **Concerts in Your Community** series presented in outdoor settings throughout the state each summer as well as chamber music concerts to be announced. The **Young Professionals of the Symphony** program will return with in-person events, inviting those in their 20s, 30s, and 40s to the Symphony for mainstage concerts and after-parties, in addition to presenting free chamber music concerts at popular downtown Raleigh locations. Dates and details for these programs will be announced throughout the season.

The Symphony’s concert seasons in Chapel Hill, Wilmington, New Bern, Southern Pines, and Fayetteville will offer many of the programs performed in Raleigh, as well as programs and guest artists heard only in those communities. 2021/22 programs for series across the state will be announced at a later date.

[VIEW SEASON BROCHURE](#)

HOW TO PURCHASE

Online: ncsymphony.org (*Ticketmaster fees apply*)

By phone: 919.733.2750 (*\$8 processing fee applies*)

In-person: NCS State Headquarters Offices (3700 Glenwood Ave., Suite 130, Raleigh)

About the North Carolina Symphony

Founded in 1932, the North Carolina Symphony (NCS) is a vital and honored component of North Carolina's cultural life. Each year, the North Carolina Symphony's 300 concerts, education programs, and community engagement events are enjoyed by adults and schoolchildren in more than 90 North Carolina counties—in communities large and small; in concert halls, auditoriums, gymnasiums, restaurants, clubs, and outdoor settings; and, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, online.

In immediate response to the pandemic, NCS began creating high-quality digital education and performance content in March 2020. The Symphony's streaming concert series has now been enjoyed by more than 143,000 people.

NCS's state headquarters venue is the spectacular Meymandi Concert Hall at the Duke Energy Center for the Performing Arts in downtown Raleigh. The Symphony's service across the state includes series in Chapel Hill, Fayetteville, New Bern, Southern Pines, and Wilmington, as well as the UNC Health Summerfest series at its summer home, the outdoor Koka Booth Amphitheatre in Cary. NCS brings some of the world's greatest talents to North Carolina and embraces home-state artists from classical musicians to bluegrass bands, creating live music experiences distinctive to North Carolina.

Committed to engaging students of all ages across North Carolina, NCS leads the most extensive education program of any symphony orchestra. In alignment with the curriculum set by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, the Symphony provides training and resources for teachers, sends small ensembles into classrooms, offers introductions to the instruments, and presents full-orchestra Education Concerts that bring the fundamentals of music to life. Music Discovery for preschoolers combines music with storytelling, and at the middle and high school levels, students have opportunities to work directly with NCS artists and perform for NCS audiences. In the 2019/20 season, the Symphony engaged more than 100,000 learners—across North Carolina, in all 50 U.S. states, and around the world—through its in-person and online programs.

NCS is dedicated to giving voice to new art, and has presented more than 50 U.S. or world premieres in its history. In 2017, NCS appeared at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., as one of four orchestras chosen for the inaugural year of *SHIFT: A Festival of American Orchestras*—an honor that recognized the Symphony's creative programming and innovative community partnerships.

The first state-supported symphony in the country, NCS performs under the auspices of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. To learn more, visit ncsymphony.org.

The North Carolina Symphony, in grateful acknowledgement of its generous grant-in-aid, performs under the auspices of the State of North Carolina, the Honorable Roy Cooper, Governor. The North

Carolina Symphony gratefully acknowledges financial support from Wake County, the City of Raleigh, and the Town of Cary.

The North Carolina Symphony appreciates generous support from individuals, businesses, and foundations statewide, who help sustain and advance the mission of the orchestra.