



## **Kansas City Symphony Extends Contract for Music Director Michael Stern through 2020**

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.** | Oct. 1, 2015 — Kansas City Symphony Board Chair William M. Lyons and Executive Director Frank Byrne today announced Music Director Michael Stern has renewed his contract through the 2019-2020 season.

Stern, whose current contract continues through the 2015-2016 season, will have served as Kansas City Symphony music director for 15 years when the new contract expires.

“The substantial artistic growth of the orchestra over the last decade is a direct result of Michael Stern’s exceptional musical leadership,” Lyons says. “Our Symphony audiences have never been larger, and our financial position has never been stronger. The Kansas City community has embraced Michael, and he has returned the affection with energetic and entertaining performances of the highest quality. We are proud and incredibly happy to have him with us until at least 2020, and we look forward to more great music making under his confident and intelligent direction.”

This announcement follows the release last month of the Kansas City Symphony’s outstanding 2015 fiscal year (July 1, 2014 to June 30) results, showcasing the organization as a highly successful, engaged and thriving American symphony orchestra. After four seasons in its acoustically superb venue at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts — and with strong subscription sales for a fifth season already underway — the Symphony has bucked industry trends through careful strategic planning, superb execution of objectives and growing artistic excellence. Consequently, the Symphony has balanced its budget or posted a surplus in 18 of the past 19 years. For fiscal year 2015, the Symphony posted a modest 2 percent surplus that will be used to build the organization’s undersized operating reserve.

“The renewal of Michael Stern’s contract allows the Kansas City Symphony to move forward with strength and continuity,” Byrne says. “It is a definite ‘win’ for our organization and for Kansas City. Of all the remarkable successes the Symphony has achieved in recent years, artistic excellence has been and remains our highest priority. It is central to all that Michael and I work together to accomplish, and I am proud that we will continue this extraordinary partnership.”

In a joint effort, Stern and Symphony leadership have propelled the organization to reach new heights of artistic excellence. Since becoming music director in the 2005-2006 season, Stern has appointed 35 full-time, tenure-track musicians, representing 44 percent of the current orchestra roster. These hires have included players in a number of key positions, such as:

Concertmaster Noah Geller, Associate Concertmaster Justine Lamb-Budge, Principal Violist Christine Grossman, Principal Bassist Jeffrey Kail, Principal Flutist Michael Gordon, Principal Oboist Kristina Fulton, Principal Clarinetist Raymond Santos, Principal Horn Alberto Suarez, Principal Trumpet Julian Kaplan and Principal Percussionist Christopher McLaurin.

Since 2008, the Kansas City Symphony and Stern have successfully partnered with award-winning audiophile label Reference Recordings to produce five critically-acclaimed albums: *Shakespeare's Tempest*; *Britten's Orchestra*, which won a 2011 Grammy® Award in the "Surround Sound Album" category and whose producer David Frost won "Producer of the Year, Classical;" *Enigma Variations: The Wasps/Greensleeves*, an Elgar/Vaughan Williams project; *Miraculous Metamorphoses*, featuring the music of Hindemith, Prokofiev and Bartók; and most recently, Saint-Saëns Symphony No. 3, "Organ," which Gramophone Magazine named "Editor's Choice" for September 2015. Critics have praised this latest recording, writing, "The Kansas City Symphony is one of America's finest ensembles" (Classical.net), "I've never heard such a well-rounded account of this impressive work" (Classical Music Sentinel), and "The Kansas City Symphony under Michael Stern withstands comparison to any of the competition." (Classicstoday.com).

The Symphony and Reference Recordings have additional projects slated for future release, including an album of music by contemporary American composer Adam Schoenberg (recorded June 2014). Stern led the commissioning of the three Schoenberg compositions featured on this recording: *Finding Rothko*; *Picture Studies*, an expressive interpretation of masterpieces at Kansas City's Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art; and *American Symphony*. Stern and the Kansas City Symphony premiered both *Picture Studies* and *American Symphony*.

In July 2012, the Symphony's concert with internationally celebrated mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato was broadcast nationally on nearly 400 PBS stations for the PBS Summer Arts Series. The Grammy-nominated audio recording of the PBS special, "Homecoming: Kansas City Symphony Presents Joyce DiDonato," is available on iTunes.

Stern also took part in the Symphony's successful transition into Helzberg Hall, its new performance home at the \$413 million Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts in downtown Kansas City, Mo. The Symphony's ongoing artistic development and visionary leadership — in concert with the spectacular acoustics of Helzberg Hall — have helped spur Kansas City's growth as a world-class cultural destination. The Symphony has attracted ticket purchasers from 10 foreign countries, all 50 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and Puerto Rico since the Kauffman Center's opening in 2011, contributing to Kansas City's tourism and solidifying its identity as "America's Creative Crossroads."

Recently, Stern and the Symphony have garnered national attention for several high-profile appearances. The Symphony's nationally-televised performance of "The Star-Spangled Banner" on the field at Kauffman Stadium before Game 6 of the 2014 World Series reached 13.4 million television viewers. Stern also has led the Symphony 10 times for its annual Bank of America Celebration at the Station, an outdoor Memorial Day weekend concert which draws an

audience of more than 50,000 and reaches more than 1 million viewers each year through Kansas City Public Television and regional affiliate broadcasts. The 2012 concert broadcast won a regional Emmy Award for special event coverage.

Stern says these last 10 years have been extraordinarily gratifying for him, both personally and professionally.

“I am overjoyed that the musical rapport on stage, and all the bonds we have forged with our growing audiences, will continue,” Stern says. “During our time together, the Kansas City Symphony has established its real primacy as a leader of the performing arts in our region. We also have forged one of the most capable artistic and organizational orchestral teams in the country. Most of all, we have built a genuine sense of community and trust among the musicians, staff, and board, as well as with our audiences. I take none of this for granted, and I am truly fortunate to be part of such an incredible team.

“I was honored to join the Kansas City Symphony family more than a decade ago, and I am even more grateful now for the board’s trust and support as we embark on our second decade of musical adventure and accomplishment. With much yet to be done and so many exciting things on the horizon, I am thrilled that we will have a chance to do all of it together.”

To learn more about the Kansas City Symphony, including its 2015-2016 concert offerings, please visit [kcsymphony.org](http://kcsymphony.org) or call the Symphony Box Office at (816) 471-0400.

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#### **About the Kansas City Symphony and Chorus**

Founded in 1982, the Kansas City Symphony has established itself as a major force in the cultural life of the community. Praised for performances of uncompromising standard, the orchestra is the largest in the region and enjoys a national reputation under the artistic leadership of Music Director Michael Stern. The Kansas City Symphony Chorus is a volunteer, 160-member ensemble led by multi-Grammy® award-winning conductor, Charles Bruffy, that continues its long tradition of excellence as the choral voice of the Kansas City Symphony. The Kansas City Symphony performs more than 100 concerts each year, while also serving as the orchestra for the Kansas City Ballet and Lyric Opera of Kansas City, and it often welcomes guests of international acclaim as part of its Classical and Pops Series.

Complementing its full schedule of concerts, the Symphony enriches the lives of Kansas City residents by providing music education opportunities for children and adults, such as KinderKonzerts, Young People’s Concerts, an instrument petting zoo and concert comments. Highlights each season include a range of free masterclasses, events and concerts reaching more than 200,000 community members, including the annual Bank of America Celebration at the Station concert each Memorial Day weekend and Symphony in the Flint Hills every summer. Additionally, the Symphony has released five CDs with Reference Recordings — *Shakespeare’s Tempest*, the Grammy®-winning *Britten’s Orchestra*, an Elgar/Vaughan Williams project, *Miraculous Metamorphoses* that highlights composers Hindemith, Prokofiev and Bartók, and most recently, the Saint-Saëns Symphony No. 3, “Organ.” Two additional projects have been recorded and slated for future release, including the music of contemporary composer Adam Schoenberg (recorded June 2014) and Holst’s *The Planets* (recorded January 2015).

The Symphony and Michael Stern also have recorded for the Naxos label. Kansas City Symphony performances can be heard locally each week on KCUR 89.3 FM, Kansas City's NPR affiliate. More information on the Kansas City Symphony is available at [kcsymphony.org](http://kcsymphony.org).