



Radu Paponiu

Wattis Foundation Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra

Radu Paponiu joined the San Francisco Symphony as Wattis Foundation Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra (SFSYO) in the 2024–25 season. Prior to joining the SFSYO, he completed a five-year tenure as Associate Conductor of the Naples Philharmonic and a seven-year tenure as Music Director of the Naples Philharmonic Youth Orchestra.

Additionally, he has served as Music Director of the Southwest Florida Symphony Orchestra. As a guest conductor, Paponiu has appeared with the Romanian National Radio Symphony, Teatro Comunale di Bologna Orchestra, Rhode Island Philharmonic, Transylvania State Philharmonic Orchestra, Banatul Philharmonic, Louisiana Philharmonic, Rockford Symphony, Colorado Music Festival Orchestra, North Carolina Symphony, California Young Artists Symphony, and National Repertory Orchestra. He has collaborated with notable soloists such as Evgeny Kissin, Yefim Bronfman, Midori, Vladimir Feltsman, Robert Levin, Charles Yang, Rachel Barton Pine, Nancy Zhou, Stella Chen, and the Ébène Quartet. Paponiu has served as cover conductor with the Dallas Symphony, St. Louis Symphony, and Konzerthausorchester Berlin, and he has assisted conductors including Iván Fischer, Fabio Luisi, Stéphane Denève, Andrey Boreyko, Hans Graf, Donald Runnicles, Cristian Măcelaru, Bernard Labadie, and Ludovic Morlot. Paponiu has served on the conducting faculty of the Juilliard Pre-College, as well as conductor for the Summer Performing Arts with Juilliard in Shanghai, China, and the Southeast Asia Music Festival in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Paponiu completed his Master of Music degree in orchestral conducting at the New England Conservatory of Music, where he studied with Hugh Wolff. While in Boston, he was also conductor apprentice with the Handel and Haydn Society. In the summer of 2017, Paponiu was appointed assistant conductor of the National Repertory Orchestra in Colorado, as well as conducting fellow for the Cabrillo Festival Workshop in California. He participated in the American Academy of Conducting at the Aspen Music Festival and School as the recipient of both the Albert Tipton Aspen Fellowship and the David A. Karetsky Memorial Fellowship. In Aspen, Paponiu furthered his studies under the guidance of Robert Spano, Larry Rachleff, Leonard Slatkin, Patrick Summers, and Federico Cortese.

Paponiu began his musical studies on the violin at age seven, studying privately with Carmen Runceanu and Ștefan Gheorghiu. After coming to the United States at the invitation of the Perlman Music Program, he completed two degrees in violin performance under the guidance of Robert Lipsett at the Colburn Conservatory in Los Angeles. As a soloist and chamber musician, he has appeared in festivals throughout Europe and North America, collaborating with artists such as Itzhak Perlman, Clive Greensmith, Martin Beaver, Merry Peckham, and Vivian Hornik Weilerstein.

Paponiu currently resides in San Francisco with his wife, Blair Francis Paponiu, SF Symphony Associate Principal Flute. In his spare time, he enjoys chamber music reading parties, fishing, biking, and playing tennis.