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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE / JUNE 24, 2024**



**SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY YOUTH ORCHESTRA WELCOMES  
CONDUCTOR RADU PAPONIU AS NEW WATTIS FOUNDATION MUSIC  
DIRECTOR, BEGINNING IN 2024–25 SEASON**

**Paponiu will conduct the SFSYO in four concerts during the 2024–25 season,  
beginning with the Orchestra’s season-opening performance on November 24**

**SAN FRANCISCO, CA—**The San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra (SFSYO) welcomes conductor Radu Paponiu as its new Wattis Foundation Music Director, beginning in the 2024–25 season for a three-year term. As SFSYO Music Director, Paponiu will lead the SFSYO—recognized internationally as one of the finest youth orchestras in the world—in rehearsals and concerts throughout the season.

“I am thrilled to be joining this most wonderful tradition of excellence in music making and education,” said Paponiu. “Throughout the audition process, I was so inspired by the level of talent, commitment, and musicianship displayed by these extraordinary young musicians and I cannot wait to begin our work together.”

Paponiu conducts the SFSYO in four concerts throughout the 2024–25 season, beginning November 24 with a program including Leonard Bernstein’s Overture to *Candide*; Takashi Yoshimatsu’s *Cyber Bird* Concerto, featuring 2024 SF Symphony Youth Orchestra Concerto Competition winner, saxophonist Harry Jo; and Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 4.

On December 15, Paponiu leads the SFSYO in the annual holiday performance of Sergei Prokofiev’s *Peter and the Wolf* and other festive selections to be announced.

On March 9, Paponiu conducts Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s Symphony No. 35, *Haffner*, and Gabriela Lena Frank’s *Elegía Andina*, which Frank said was “one of my first written-down compositions to explore what it means to be of several ethnic persuasions, of several minds.” The program also features Richard Strauss’s Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier* and Arturo Márquez’s *Danzón* No. 2.

Closing out the SFSYO’s season on May 18, Paponiu leads the Orchestra in Anna Clyne’s *This Midnight Hour*, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor’s *Petite Suite de Concert*, and Hector Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique*.

Paponiu succeeds Daniel Stewart, who completed his five-season tenure as SFSYO Music Director with a performance of Gustav Mahler’s Symphony No. 5 in May.

Founded by the San Francisco Symphony in 1981, the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra (SFSYO) is recognized internationally as one of the finest youth orchestras in the world. The SFSYO’s purpose is to provide an orchestral experience of preprofessional caliber, tuition-free, to talented young musicians from the greater Bay Area. The more than 100 musicians, ranging in age from 12 to 21, represent communities from throughout the Bay Area. SFSYO musicians are chosen from more than 300 applicants in annual competitive auditions. Jahja Ling served as the SFSYO’s first Music Director, followed by David Milnes, Leif Bjaland, Alasdair Neale, Edwin Outwater, Benjamin Shwartz, Donato Cabrera, Christian Reif, and Daniel Stewart.

As part of the Orchestra’s innovative, tuition-free training program, musicians from the San Francisco Symphony coach the young musicians every week before full ensemble rehearsals. Youth Orchestra members also gain invaluable experience working with world-renowned artists, which have included Esa-Pekka Salonen, Michael Tilson Thomas, Herbert Blomstedt, Kurt Masur, John Adams, Yo-Yo Ma, Isaac Stern, Yehudi Menuhin, Wynton Marsalis, Midori, Joshua Bell, Mstislav Rostropovich, Sir Simon Rattle, Gustavo Dudamel, Ray Chen, and many others. Of equal importance, the young musicians are able to speak with these established artists about their professional and personal experiences, and about music. In addition to critically acclaimed appearances at home, the Youth Orchestra has toured Europe and Asia, giving sold out concerts in such legendary halls as Berlin’s Philharmonie, Vienna’s Musikverein, Saint Petersburg’s Mariinsky Theater, Paris’ Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, and Hamburg’s Elbphilharmonie. Its alumni have won positions in many major orchestras throughout the US and in Europe.

### **About Radu Paponiu**

Radu Paponiu is currently finishing up his five-year tenure as Associate Conductor of the Naples Philharmonic, and seven-year tenure as Music Director of the Naples Philharmonic Youth Orchestra. Additionally, for the past two seasons, he served as Music Director of the Southwest Florida Symphony Orchestra. From 2017–2019, he also worked as Assistant Conductor of the Naples Philharmonic. As a guest conductor, Paponiu has appeared with the Romanian National Radio Symphony, Teatro Comunale di Bologna Orchestra, 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, Emanuel Ax, Gil Shaham, Midori, Vladimir Feltsman, Robert Levin, Charles Yang, Nancy Zhou, Stella Chen, and the Ébène Quartet. As cover conductor Paponiu has worked with the Dallas Symphony, St. Louis Symphony, and Konzerthausorchester Berlin, and he has assisted conductors including Andrey Boreyko, Iván Fischer, Fabio Luisi, Stéphane Denève, 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.

In his spare time, Paponiu enjoys chamber music reading parties, fishing, biking, and playing tennis.

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### **CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:**

#### **Tickets:**

SF Symphony Youth Orchestra subscription packages are available for purchase now via [sfsymphony.org](https://sfsymphony.org) or by calling the San Francisco Symphony box office at 415.864.6000. Single tickets for the 2024–25 season go on sale on Saturday, July 20, at 12:00pm PT. Tickets for children under 18 are 50% off for the SFSYO's *Peter and the Wolf* performance on December 15.

**Location:**

Davies Symphony Hall is located at 201 Van Ness Avenue in San Francisco.

**Health & Safety Information**

Davies Symphony Hall is currently operating at full audience capacity. Proof of COVID-19 vaccination and masking are no longer required for entry to Davies Symphony Hall. However, patrons are encouraged to wear masks and maintain up-to-date COVID vaccinations to protect themselves. These policies are subject to change. Visit [sfsymphony.org/safety](https://www.sfsymphony.org/safety) for the San Francisco Symphony's complete up-to-date health and safety protocols.

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**YOUTH ORCHESTRA****San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra**

Sunday, November 24, 2024, at 2:00pm

**Radu Paponiu** conductor

**Harry Jo** saxophone

Winner, 2024 SF Symphony Youth Orchestra Concerto Competition

**San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra**

**LEONARD BERNSTEIN** Overture to *Candide*

**TAKASHI YOSHIMATSU** *Cyber Bird* Concerto

**PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY** Symphony No. 4

Tickets: \$30–65

Ticket link: <https://www.sfsymphony.org/Buy-Tickets/2024-25/youth-orchestra-nov>

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**HOLIDAY****San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra: *Peter and the Wolf***

Sunday, December 15, 2024, at 2:00pm

**Radu Paponiu** conductor

**Narrator to be announced**

**San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra**

**SERGEI PROKOFIEV** *Peter and the Wolf*

Tickets: \$30–129. Tickets for children under 18 are 50% off for this performance.

Ticket link: <https://www.sfsymphony.org/Buy-Tickets/2024-25/peter-and-the-wolf>

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**YOUTH ORCHESTRA****San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra**

Sunday, March 9, 2025, at 2:00pm

**Radu Paponiu** conductor  
**San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra**

**WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART** Symphony No. 35 in D major, K.385, *Haffner*

**GABRIELA LENA FRANK** *Elegia Andina*

**RICHARD STRAUSS** Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*

**ARTURO MÁRQUEZ** *Danzón* No. 2

Tickets: \$30–65

Ticket link: <https://www.sfsymphony.org/Buy-Tickets/2024-25/youth-orchestra-mar>

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## **YOUTH ORCHESTRA**

**San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra**  
Sunday, May 18, 2025, at 2:00pm

**Radu Paponiu** conductor  
**San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra**

**ANNA CLYNE** *This Midnight Hour*

**SAMUEL COLERIDGE-TAYLOR** *Petite Suite de Concert*

**HECTOR BERLIOZ** *Symphonie fantastique*

Tickets: \$30–65

Ticket link: <https://www.sfsymphony.org/Buy-Tickets/2024-25/youth-orchestra-may>

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