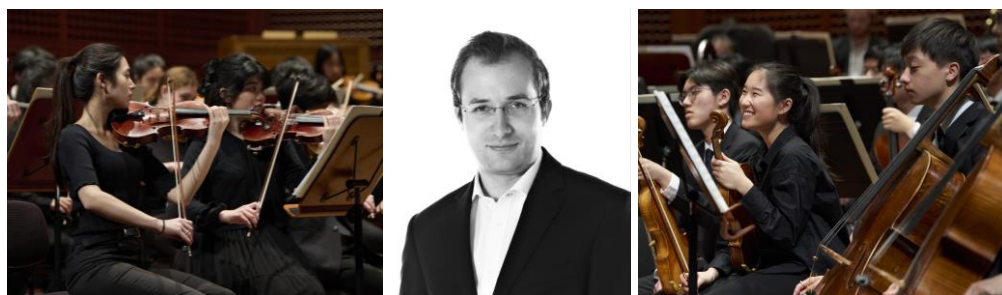


Contact:
Public Relations
San Francisco Symphony
(415) 503-5474
publicrelations@sfsymphony.org
www.sfsymphony.org/press

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Images of Radu Paponiu and the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra are available for download from the [SFSYO Press Kit](#).

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY YOUTH ORCHESTRA AND WATTIS FOUNDATION MUSIC DIRECTOR RADU PAPONIU KICK OFF FIRST SEASON TOGETHER WITH NOVEMBER 24 PERFORMANCE

November 24 concert includes Leonard Bernstein's Overture to *Candide*, Takashi Yoshimatsu's *Cyber Bird* Concerto featuring SFSYO Concerto Competition winner Harry Jo, and Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4

2024–25 SFSYO season also includes the ensemble's annual *Peter and the Wolf* performance (December 15); a concert of works by Gabriela Lena Frank, Arturo Márquez, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Richard Strauss (March 9); and a performance with pieces by Hector Berlioz, Anna Clyne, and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (May 18)

SAN FRANCISCO, CA—The San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra (SFSYO) and newly appointed Wattis Foundation Music Director Radu Paponiu perform four concerts during the 2024–25 season, beginning with their season-opening performance on Sunday, November 24, in Davies Symphony Hall. Comprised of more than 100 musicians ranging in age from 12 to 21 and representing communities from throughout the Bay Area, the SFSYO is recognized internationally as one of the finest youth orchestras in the world. The Youth Orchestra provides a tuition-free orchestral experience of preprofessional caliber to talented young Bay Area musicians, with weekly rehearsals led by Paponiu. SFSYO members benefit from weekly coachings with San Francisco Symphony musicians and have the opportunity to work with world-renowned artists and conductors performing with the San Francisco Symphony.

The **November 24** concert features saxophonist and 2024 SFSYO Concerto Competition winner Harry Jo performing Takashi Yoshimatsu's *Cyber Bird* Concerto with Paponiu and the Orchestra. The annual Concerto Competition provides an opportunity for an exceptional SFSYO student musician to take center stage as a soloist in a Youth Orchestra concert the following season. The November concert opens with Leonard Bernstein's Overture to *Candide* and closes with Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4, dedicated to the composer's patron and confidante Nadezhda von Meck. Tchaikovsky wrote to her that the Symphony was about fate, the "sword of Damocles over our heads."

The season continues on **December 15** with the annual holiday performance of Sergei Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, featuring a guest narrator to be announced. The program opens with Antonín Dvořák's Slavonic Dance in C major, Opus 72, no.7, followed by selections from Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* Suite and the traditional Hanukkah song *Mis Zeh Hidlik*. After *Peter and the Wolf*, Paponiu and the Youth Orchestra invite the audience to join them in a festive sing-along of popular holiday carols. The Youth Orchestra's performance of *Peter and the Wolf* is an annual holiday favorite and has been a regular part of the Orchestra's season since 1985. Past narrators have included Richard Dreyfuss, Tom Kenny, John Lithgow, Bobby McFerrin, Rita Moreno, Kathy Najimy, Linda Ronstadt, Sharon Stone, W. Kamau Bell, SF Symphony Music Director Laureate Michael Tilson Thomas, and the late Leonard Nimoy and Robin Williams, among many other lauded actors, comedians, musicians, and public figures.

On **March 9**, Paponiu conducts Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's fiery 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 romantic Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*, which incorporates waltzes from the opera, and Arturo Márquez's *Danzón* No. 2, an extremely popular Mexican contemporary classical work.

Closing out the SFSYO's season on **May 19**, Paponiu leads the Orchestra in Anna Clyne's *This Midnight Hour*, inspired by two poems by Charles Baudelaire and Juan Ramón Jiménez. Clyne wrote about the work, "Whilst it is not intended to depict a specific narrative, my intention is that it will evoke a visual journey for the listener." The concert also includes Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's *Petite Suite de Concert*, partially based on Hans Christian Andersen's *The Clown and Columbine*, and Hector Berlioz's semi-autobiographical *Symphonie fantastique*, a virtuosic orchestral showpiece.

Radu Paponiu, Wattis Foundation Music Director

Radu Paponiu joins the San Francisco Symphony as Wattis Foundation Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra (SFSYO) in the 2024–25 season. Paponiu recently finished his five-year tenure as associate conductor of the Naples Philharmonic and his 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.

Harry Jo, winner of the 2024 SFSYO Concerto Competition

Harry Jo is a member of the first violin section in the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra and a senior at Amador Valley High School. He began his musical journey at age five on the piano, took up violin at eight, and finally, alto saxophone at 11. He joined the SFJazz High School All-Stars Band in 2022, where he is currently lead alto saxophone and a member of the combo ensemble. He recently toured with the award-winning group to New Orleans and New York.

On saxophone, Jo has performed on NPR's *From the Top* and was recognized as a 2023 National YoungArts Winner in Jazz. He is also the winner of a 2023–24 Jazz at the Ballroom Scholarship Award and a 2024 Creative Youth Awards Presidential Award. In 2020 and 2021, he was a member of the Junior High Jazz Band at the California All-State Music Education Conference and received the Scholarship Award at the Campana Jazz Festival in 2020 and 2023. He is also a recipient of the MTAC Certificate of Merit Panel Honors.

As a violinist, Jo has performed with the National Symphony Orchestra Summer Music Institute at the Kennedy Center, and as the winner of the American Protégé Music Competition, he performed at Carnegie Hall. He has won many additional awards for both violin and piano.

About the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra

The San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra (SFSYO) has earned a reputation as one of the finest youth ensembles in the world. Founded in 1981 to provide preprofessional training to the Bay Area's most gifted young musicians at no cost, the orchestra has toured Europe and Asia to rave reviews, winning the prestigious City of Vienna Prize at the International Youth and Music Festival in 1986 and performing to packed houses in the great halls of Europe. The SFSYO has performed for Queen Elizabeth II of England and been featured on BBC radio. In the summer of 1996, the Youth Orchestra opened the San Francisco Symphony's groundbreaking American Mavericks Festival, performing John Cage's music with members of the Grateful Dead under Michael Tilson Thomas' baton.

The SFSYO was established during the summer of 1981, when eighty-five musicians aged 11 to 20, and representing communities from Napa to Santa Cruz, were selected after 12 days of competitive auditions. The ensemble played its inaugural concert in January 1982, led by founding Music Director Jahja Ling. Over the years, Ling was succeeded as music director by David Milnes, Leif Bjaland, Alasdair Neale, Edwin Outwater, Benjamin Schwartz, Donato Cabrera, Christian Reif, and Daniel Stewart. In 2024, Radu Paponiu was appointed as the San Francisco Symphony's Wattis Foundation Youth Orchestra Music Director. Today, 109 musicians, chosen from more than 300 applicants per season, perform with the Youth Orchestra.

As part of the orchestra's innovative, tuition-free training program, musicians from the San Francisco Symphony coach the young musicians every week before the full ensemble rehearses with the Music Director. 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.

CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

Tickets:

Tickets for concerts at Davies Symphony can be purchased via [sfsymphony.org](https://www.sfsymphony.org) or by calling the San Francisco Symphony Box Office at 415.864.6000. 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.

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>

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

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK Slavonic Dance in C major, Opus 72, no.7

PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY Selections from *The Nutcracker* Suite

TRADITIONAL *Mis Zeh Hidlik*

JOHANN STRAUSS, JR. *Thunder and Lightning* Polka

SERGEI PROKOFIEV *Peter and the Wolf*

TRADITIONAL Carol Sing-along

Tickets: \$15–150. 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>

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 *Elegía 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>

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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