



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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### **Sarasota Concert Association's 2021 Great Performers Series January 14-March 16, 2021**

*SCA's 2021 Great Performers Series is rich in diversity and musical virtuosity. It features four performances at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall and two at the Riverview Performing Arts Center. Highlights include The Cleveland Orchestra, hailed as one of the best American orchestras, and the Takács Quartet, exemplifying chamber music of the highest order.*

(Sarasota, Florida) Sarasota Concert Association (SCA) celebrates its 76th season with a roster of world-renowned classical artists and ensembles. SCA's 2021 Great Performers Series season, which runs January 14 through March 16, features the **Moscow State Symphony Orchestra** with **Pavel Kogan**, music director, and **Blake Pouliot**, violin (January 14, 7:30 p.m., at the Van Wezel); **The Cleveland Orchestra** with **Franz Welser-Möst**, music director, and **Yuja Wang**, piano (January 24, 7:30 p.m., at the Van Wezel); **Bach Collegium Japan** (January 28, 7:30 p.m., at Riverview Performing Arts Center); the **Takács Quartet** and **Joyce Yang**, piano (February 25, 7:30 p.m., at the Van Wezel); **Benjamin Beilman**, violin, and **Yekwon Sunwoo**, piano (March 1, 7:30 p.m., at Riverview Performing Arts Center); and **Emanuel Ax**, piano (March 16, 7:30 p.m., at the Van Wezel). Season subscriptions are on sale now and range from \$450 to \$140 for all six concerts. Single tickets go

on sale on August 1. ***For subscription information, call 941-225-6500 or visit [www.SCAarasota.org/tickets](http://www.SCAarasota.org/tickets).***

“The pandemic has dealt a severe blow to cultural organizations in Sarasota and around the world,” says Joy McIntyre, SCA’s board president. “Our decision to cancel our final concerts was, of course, a great loss. But it was the right thing to do for our patrons and the community.

According to McIntyre, the SCA board still looks forward to a spectacular 2021 season, despite recent economic setbacks. “Our Great Performers Series artists and ensembles are all phenomenal,” she says. “One highlight is The Cleveland Orchestra under the direction of Franz Welser-Möst. They performed to a sold-out audience in 2018, and we have already heard from subscribers purchasing seats this early—a great sign that SCA’s devoted supporters are here to stay!” McIntyre adds that Emanuel Ax and the Takács Quartet will also be returning—both audience favorites from the GPS series of 2018.

“New to our series are two outstanding soloists, who will round out our next season,” McIntyre says. “Violinist Benjamin Beilman, whose parents live in Sarasota, has achieved global acclaim for his compelling and impassioned performances. Pianist Yekwon Sunwoo will be joining him—he’s a powerful and virtuosic performer in his own right and a first prize winner in the 2017 Van Cliburn Competition. The music they create together is transcendent in its power.”

The 2021 Great Performers Series season opens on January 14 with the **Moscow State Symphony Orchestra** with Pavel Kogan, music director, and Blake Pouliot, violin. The MSSO was founded in 1943 by the Kremlin and is one of Russia’s oldest symphony orchestras. The orchestra became renowned around the

globe under the leadership of **Pavel Kogan**, son of the legendary violinist Leonid Kogan. In 1989, he was engaged as music director and chief conductor and immediately enriched the orchestra with European and American classical repertoire. The orchestra's wide-ranging programs combine great orchestral, operatic, and choral classics with equally significant music of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, including many forgotten or neglected works. Joining the orchestra is violinist **Blake Pouliot**, "one of those talents who only comes along once in a lifetime." (Toronto Star). Pouliot has joined the upper echelons of brilliant soloists, establishing himself as a consummate 21<sup>st</sup>-century artist with the rigor and passion to shine for a lifetime.

The season continues on January 24 with **The Cleveland Orchestra**, considered one of the country's "Big Five" and ranking within the uppermost echelon of orchestras around the world. Music Director **Franz Welser-Möst** is among today's most distinguished conductors. The 2021 season marks his 19<sup>th</sup> year as music director of the Orchestra, with the future of this acclaimed partnership extending into the next decade. The *New York Times* declared Cleveland under Welser-Möst's direction to be the "best American orchestra" for its virtuosity, elegance of sound, variety of color, and chamber-like musical cohesion. Under his direction, The Cleveland Orchestra has been praised for its inventive programming, its ongoing support for new musical works, and for its innovative approach to semi-staged and staged opera presentations. The Orchestra has also been hugely successful in building up a new and, notably, a young audience through groundbreaking programs involving families, students, universities, and cross-community partnerships. Performing with the Orchestra will be the pianistic sensation, **Yuja Wang**. Critical superlatives and audience ovations have continuously followed Yuja Wang's

dazzling career. The Beijing-born pianist, celebrated for her charismatic artistry and captivating stage presence, was named Musical America's Artist of the Year in 2017.

The 2021 Great Performers Series continues on January 28 with the **Bach Collegium Japan**, an ensemble of instrumentalists and singers formed in 1990 by Masaaki Suzuki, the internationally renowned and highly reputed Bach performer, organist, harpsichordist, conductor and musicologist. Suzuki founded the group with the aim of introducing Japanese audiences to period instrument performances of great works from the baroque period. Comprised of both baroque orchestra and chorus, their activities include an annual concert series of Bach's cantatas and a number of instrumental programs.

The **Takács Quartet**, performing on February 25, exemplifies chamber music of the highest order; it's the only quartet named to Gramophone's first-ever Hall of Fame. The New York Times recently lauded the ensemble for "revealing the familiar as unfamiliar, making the most traditional of works feel radical once more," and the Financial Times described a recent concert at the Wigmore Hall: "Even in the most fiendish repertoire these players show no fear, injecting the music with a heady sense of freedom. At the same time, though, there is an uncompromising attention to detail: neither a note nor a bow-hair is out of place." Based in Boulder at the University of Colorado, Edward Dusinberre, Harumi Rhodes (violins), Geraldine Walther (viola) and András Fejér (cello) perform 80 concerts a year worldwide. Blessed with "poetic and sensitive pianism" (Washington Post) and a "wondrous sense of color" (San Francisco Classical Voice), Grammy-nominated pianist **Joyce Yang** captivates audiences with her virtuosity, lyricism, and interpretive sensitivity. She first came to international attention in 2005 when she won the silver medal at

the 12<sup>th</sup> Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. The youngest contestant at 19 years old, she took home two additional awards: Best Performance of Chamber Music (with the Takács Quartet), and Best Performance of a New Work. In the last decade, Yang has blossomed into an “astonishing artist” (Neue Zürcher Zeitung), showcasing her colorful musical personality in solo recitals and collaborations with the world’s top orchestras and chamber musicians. She received the 2010 Avery Fisher Career Grant and earned her first Grammy nomination for her recording of Franck, Kurtág, Previn & Schumann with violinist Augustin Hadelich.

Up next, on March 1 is violinist **Benjamin Beilman** who is winning global acclaim for his compelling and impassioned performances, his deep rich tone and searing lyricism. The Scotsman has described him as “a remarkable talent, delivering playing of rare insight and generosity, as captivating as it is gloriously entertaining” and the New York Times has praised his “handsome technique, burnished sound, and quiet confidence [which] showed why he has come so far so fast.” Joining Beilman for the March 1 concert is the equally outstanding pianist, **Yekwon Sunwoo**. The first South Korean to be awarded a Gold Medal at the Van Cliburn Competition, Sunwoo “strives to reach for the truth and pure beauty in music.”

No more fitting conclusion to the season could be conceived than with the March 16<sup>th</sup> appearance of esteemed pianist, **Emanuel Ax**, a Sarasota favorite. Ever since winning the first Artur Schnabel Piano Competition in 1974, Ax has established himself as a preeminent recitalist, chamber musician and guest soloist with orchestra, but above all, a consummate musician. “His greatness, his

overwhelming authority as musician, technician and probing intellect emerges quickly as he plays.” – Los Angeles Times

Four of the Great Performers Series concerts are at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, 777 North Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. Two concerts are at the Riverview Performing Arts Center, 1 Ram Way in Sarasota. Subscriptions for all six concerts are \$140, \$200, \$264, \$355, and \$420. Single tickets and online purchases go on sale on August 1. For subscription information, call 941-225-6500. Forms for subscriptions can also be downloaded at [SCAsarasota.org/tickets](http://SCAsarasota.org/tickets).

SCA also presents Music Matinees, a free concert series that includes performances by high-caliber, area-based artists. The series is designed to offer a variety of musical genres, including classical, jazz and opera, and features vocal and instrumental performers. The 2020-2021 season will be announced in August.

### **About the Sarasota Concert Association**

The Sarasota Concert Association (SCA) is a nonprofit organization that fosters greater appreciation for world-class classical music by offering the community two engaging programs from December to April. The Great Performers Series, in its 76th season, brings world-renowned orchestras and chamber groups to the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall and the Riverview Performing Arts Center. The Music Matinee Series features outstanding regional artists in free community concerts at Beatrice Friedman Symphony Center and other venues. For more information about SCA, visit [www.scasarasota.org](http://www.scasarasota.org).

**Photos courtesy of the artists.**