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JACKSONVILLE SYMPHONY 2017-2018 SEASON EXPANDS TO 38 WEEKS; INTRODUCES OPENING NIGHT FANFARE; 2018 GALA FEATURES FAMED SOPRANO RENÉE FLEMING; FABIO MECHETTI RETURNS; POPS OPENS WITH THE MAMBO KINGS AND FILM SERIES EXPANDS TO FOUR BLOCKBUSTER MOVIES

Jacksonville, FL (February 21, 2017) --- Jacksonville Symphony's 2017-2018 will feature a variety of soul-stirring music. The season will open with *Fanfare*, a one-night only, season opening concert on Saturday, September 16 led by Music Director Courtney Lewis and featuring violinist Charlie Siem and Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony. The year will include 12 Florida Blue Masterworks Series concerts, 12 Fidelity National Financial Series Pops concerts, numerous special presentations and a January 20th Gala featuring world-renowned soprano Renée Fleming. Former Music Director Fabio Mechetti will be returning to Jacoby Symphony Hall in November to lead the orchestra in Faure's *Requiem* and Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique*.

Other highlights of the Masterworks Series will be "Beethoven and The Blind Banister" featuring Jonathan Biss playing Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 2 (September 29, 30, Oct. 1), Mozart's most famous opera, *Don Giovanni* (symphony-staged, March 16 and 18), and Masterworks season-ending *Twilight of the Gods* (June 1 & 2) which includes selections from Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*. Conductor Kazem Abdullah will present "American Landscapes" (May 28, 29 & 30) with Julian Schwartz performing Lowell Lieberman's cello concerto, co-commissioned by the Jacksonville Symphony, Duke Ellington's *Three Black Kings* and Leonard Bernstein's *On the Waterfront*.

There will be three of the popular Thursday evening 'after-work' bestbet Symphony in 60 concerts. Symphony in 60 includes a happy hour with free drinks and hors d'oeuvres, one hour concert presentation complete with video screen of the orchestra and an after concert chance to meet and greet musicians and have your picture taken on the conductor's podium.

The Symphony's Gala with National Medal of Arts recipient soprano Renée Fleming promises to be an especially exciting evening. Ms. Fleming, known as "America's beautiful voice," has had a career that includes a wide range of musical styles and diversity. She has made many appearances with the Metropolitan Opera in New York and other distinguished opera houses around the world.

The Pops season opens the weekend of September 22nd featuring The Mambo Kings celebrating Hispanic Heritage month with their explosive blend of Afro-Cuban-Latin rhythms. Two blockbuster movies: *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Oct. 14 & 15) and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Feb. 16 & 17) will be presented with live soundtrack provided by the Symphony. Other Pops highlights include "The Doo Wop Project" on Nov. 17 & 18 with all your favorites from the '50's and early '60's, Conductor Steven Reineke returning to present "Rodgers and Hammerstein" classics (May 4 & 5) and vocalist N'Kenge with Associate Conductor Nathan Aspinall providing the music of the "Legends: Diana Ross, Billie Holiday, Beyoncé and more" (March 23 & 24).

Two holiday films with orchestra will be part of the Symphony's special presentations this season. *Home Alone* on November 15 and Frank Capra's *It's A Wonderful Life* on Dec. 22. Other holiday presentations include the traditional First Coast *Nutcracker* (Dec. 15, 16 & 17) and Handel's *Messiah* (Dec. 16 & 17).

"We have listened to our patrons and added events and presentations that will continue to enhance the magic of the symphonic experience," said Robert Massey, President and CEO of the Jacksonville Symphony. "There are many ways to see the Symphony and subscribers get valuable benefits in addition to the music."

Season ticket purchases have a number of benefits for patrons. In addition to free exchanges for subscribers, subscribers don't pay ticket fees, get priority seating and are eligible to purchase discounted pre-paid parking. Create Your Own Series purchases start at six concerts and include a discount of 10% off the ticket price. Ten to 14 concerts purchases net a discount of 20% and 15 or more save with 25% off. Subscribers can purchase a particular series – Masterworks or Pops – or mix it up. Also, this year the Symphony is introducing "dynamic pricing" which means that single ticket sale prices will fluctuate based on demand for events. Season ticket purchasers will have their prices locked in for all events they have purchased as part of their package.

"We are playing music from 32 different composers this season," said Courtney Lewis, Music Director. "The variety of music will be a great opportunity for patrons to hear their favorites and develop new ones. I'm excited about the expansion of the season program, the Gala with Ms. Fleming and bringing opera back to Jacksonville."

Season ticket packets are in the mail to current subscribers. New subscriptions will go on sale to the public in early May. For more information about ticket purchase, visit jaxsymphony.org or call 904-354-5547.

The Jacksonville Symphony is North Florida's leading music nonprofit offering live performances at Jacoby Hall in the Times-Union Center for Performing Arts and other venues throughout the area. In addition, the Symphony provides music instruction for youth and operates the Jacksonville Symphony Youth Orchestras. For more information about the Symphony, visit www.jaxsymphony.org, like them at www.facebook.com/JaxSymphony, follow them on Twitter @jaxsymphony, on Instagram at JaxSymphony and on YouTube at JacksonvilleSymphony.