

**CONDUCTOR AND PIANIST SERGEY NELLER JOINS THE JACKSONVILLE SYMPHONY IN
*CLASSICAL CONVERSATIONS***

Jacksonville, FL (April 18, 2018) --- In a concert of classical and neoclassical favorites, Russian conductor and pianist Sergey Neller will make his North American debut with the Jacksonville Symphony in *Classical Conversations*. During Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21, Neller will not only play the piano, but also conduct the orchestra from the piano, as Mozart often would.

WHO: Born in Russia, **Sergey Neller** studied at Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory, before becoming a Fellow of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation at the Universitat der Künste in Berlin. A rising talent on today's conducting scene, Neller achieved critical acclaim and distinction in 2016 when he took second prize at the prestigious Gustav Mahler Conducting Competition, hosted by the Bamberg Symphony.

In the current season and beyond, Neller will make his debut with the South Netherlands Philharmonic, the Janáček Philharmonic of Ostrava, the Jacksonville Symphony, Nürnberg Symphony and Szczecin Philharmonic Orchestras.

As a gifted composer, from 2002 to 2006 Neller was the recipient of the renowned Mstislav Rostropovich Foundation Award, during which period he composed his first opera, *Tintagiles* and premiered it at the Helikon Opera in Moscow. Composed to an original libretto based on Maurice Maeterlinck's play *The Death of Tintagiles*, the work attracted the attention of the international press and resonated strongly with Russian audiences. In 2010, Neller completed his second opera, *Phaedra*, composed to a libretto by the contemporary Russian poet and playwright Alexey Parin. Neller has also enjoyed considerable success as a pianist, having won international competitions in Austria, Bulgaria, Italy and the United States, and given concerts throughout Europe, North America and Australia.

WHAT: *Classical Conversations* will feature well-known works by Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Igor Stravinsky and Sergei Prokofiev.

Haydn's Symphony No. 102 is lighthearted and joyful and gave his audiences exactly what they wanted out of a Haydn symphony. Symphony No. 102 is one of the last three symphonies that Haydn wrote and, while being one of his shortest, is also one of his most mature works.

For Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21, Neller will combine his incredible skillsets and conduct from the piano, just as Mozart often would. After being featured in the Swedish film *Elvira Madigan*, the piece started to be known as the *Elvira Madigan* concerto. You may also recognize the concerto from Neil Diamond's "Song Sung Blue." Diamond drew inspiration from the second movement of Mozart's piano concerto.

Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* Suite was completed in April of 1920. The ballet *Pulcinella* presents quite a different feel than the disruptive *The Rite of Spring* only seven years earlier. "Pulcinella was my discovery of the past," Stravinsky wrote—"the epiphany through which the whole of my late work became possible."

Although its official name is Symphony No.1, Prokofiev's First Symphony is almost always referred to by its nickname, the "Classical" Symphony. No work of Prokofiev's is performed more frequently than the "Classical" Symphony. When all of the pieces began to come together, Prokofiev gave this as the reason for renaming his work:

“And when it began to hang together, I renamed it the *Classical Symphony*. First because that was simpler. Second, out of mischief...and in the secret hope that in the end I would be the winner if the symphony really did prove to be a classic.”

WHEN: The concerts will take place on Friday, April 27 and Saturday, April 28 at 8p.m.

WHERE: All concerts will take place in The Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts in Jacoby Symphony Hall.

TICKETS: For more information or to purchase tickets, please call the Ticket Office at 904.354.5547 or visit JaxSymphony.org.

SPONSORS: *Classical Conversations* is a part of the Florida Blue Masterworks Series.

###

The Jacksonville Symphony is North Florida's leading music nonprofit offering live performances at Jacoby Symphony Hall in the Times-Union Center for the 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 JaxSymphony.org, like them at facebook.com/JaxSymphony; follow them on @jaxsymphony, on Instagram at JaxSymphony and on YouTube at JacksonvilleSymphony.