

## JACKSONVILLE SYMPHONY EXTENDS CONTRACT WITH MUSIC DIRECTOR COURTNEY LEWIS

Jacksonville, FL (August 12, 2020) --- In the midst of planning to open its 2020/21 season, the Jacksonville Symphony and Music Director Courtney Lewis signed a three-year contract extension that will retain Lewis as the artistic leader of Northeast Florida's largest performing arts institution through the 2023/24 season.

"Having the opportunity to work with Courtney was one of the things that drew me to the Jacksonville Symphony," says Symphony President & CEO Steven Libman. "Under his exemplary leadership, the orchestra's artistic product has blossomed. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to continue working with Courtney over the next three years."

Recently, the Jacksonville Symphony Board of Directors unanimously voted to renew Lewis' contract as music director, a position permanently endowed by Haskell in 2009. The renewal extends the current agreement by three years. This is the second extension of Lewis' contract, providing stability during uncertain times.

Lewis first joined the Jacksonville Symphony in 2015, coming from New York City where he served as the assistant conductor for the New York Philharmonic. Since joining the Jacksonville Symphony, Lewis has played a leading role in reinvigorating the Symphony's brand and cultural role within the community. He created the Symphony in 60 Happy Hour Series to engage a younger audience and has dramatically reimaged programming at the Jacksonville Symphony. He firmly believes in both challenging the orchestra and audience to broaden the musical experiences in the concert hall. Lewis has expanded the repertoire the orchestra performs, guaranteeing a symphonic experience for all musical tastes.

"There was absolutely no question about wanting Courtney to continue his tenure here with us," said David Strickland, Chair of the Jacksonville Symphony Board of Directors. "He has transformed our orchestra to be a leader in artistic excellence and I know I speak for the entire Board when I say we are eager to see where he leads this organization in the coming seasons."

As music director, Lewis played a significant role in the Jacksonville Symphony's acceptance into the 2020 SHIFT: A Festival of American Orchestras\*. Applications were judged on artistic excellence, community engagement, and creativity of programming. From those categories, the Symphony was selected as one of only four orchestras from throughout the country to participate.

"In a time of great uncertainty, it is reassuring to know that we will be able to continue our artistic growth in partnership with our Music Director, Courtney Lewis," says associate principal bassist Todd Lockwood. Lockwood also serves as the chair of the orchestra committee, a group of elected musicians responsible for representing the orchestra in liaising with the administration. "We also want to thank the Board for their ongoing commitment to the orchestra and the Jacksonville community."

For the 2018/19 season, Lewis helped pave the way for the orchestra to secure its first Composer-in-Residence through a special donation, subsequently called the Mary Carr Patton Composer-in-Residence for the 2018/19 season. The Symphony welcomed composer Courtney Bryan and her residency concluded with a performance of *Bridges*, a piece written for and about the City of Jacksonville. Lewis also spearheaded hosting *EarShot*, a program in partnership with the American

Composers Orchestra that brings young composers together to hear their pieces performed by a professional orchestra.

“At a time when everything feels unsteady, I am delighted to be able to make this announcement,” said Lewis. “Each week I spend with the orchestra is one spent working with inspiring musicians for whom I have the utmost respect. The growth of the orchestra over the past six years is a point of enormous pride to us all. The musicians here are outstanding, our staff never stops working, and the Board supports us in ways that continue to allow us to grow as an institution. I would be remiss if I did not thank the community we serve for supporting us and the music we perform. I am greatly looking forward to the next three years with the Symphony and the Jacksonville community. I sincerely hope to see a full, albeit physically distanced, concert Hall for our opening night performance on September 26.”

Outside of his tenure in Jacksonville, Lewis has conducted orchestras all over the world, including the Atlanta Symphony, Colorado Symphony, Washington National Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Minnesota Orchestra, Detroit Symphony, Vancouver Symphony, Houston Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, Louisiana Philharmonic, San Diego Symphony, RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, Lausanne Chamber Orchestra and Ulster Orchestra, among others. In addition to his former position with the New York Philharmonic, Lewis has served as the associate conductor of the Minnesota Orchestra and Dudamel Fellow with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. From 2008 to 2014, Lewis was the music director of Boston’s acclaimed Discovery Ensemble, a chamber orchestra dedicated not only to giving concerts of contemporary and established repertoire at the highest level of musical and technical excellence, but also bringing live music into the least privileged parts of Boston with workshops in local schools.

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\*The SHIFT Festival was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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](http://jaxsymphony.org), like them at [facebook.com/jaxsymphony](https://www.facebook.com/jaxsymphony), follow them on @jaxsymphony, on Instagram at JaxSymphony and on YouTube at JacksonvilleSymphony.