

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Music Director Courtney Lewis to Conduct Paris Opera Ballet's 'The Dante Project'**

Jacksonville, Fla – Jacksonville Symphony Music Director Courtney Lewis has been invited to conduct the Opéra national de Paris (Paris Opera Ballet) during select performances of *The Dante Project*, a ballet by composer Thomas Adès, at the Palais Garnier in Paris, France. Lewis is stepping in to fill the role of conductor for Gustavo Dudamel, Music Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. During his time in Paris, Lewis will share responsibilities for the multi-performance project with Thomas Adès, internationally-renowned composer, pianist and conductor.

*The Dante Project's* journey began in July 2019, when the first section "Inferno," a proverbial love letter from Adès to Hungarian composer Franz Liszt, was one of many substantial premieres celebrating the Los Angeles Philharmonic's centennial. Inspired by his complex, colorful orchestral score, the Paris Opera Ballet and The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, commissioned Adès to compose the score for a three-act ballet inspired by Dante Alighieri's "The Divine Comedy" alongside dynamic British choreographer Wayne McGregor and featuring designs by the artist Tacita Dean.

Adapted from the original work written in the 14th century, *The Dante Project* recounts and dramatizes the journey through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise as described in "The Divine Comedy." In his interpretation of the story, McGregor brings this medieval Christian fantasy to life through dance as a young woman, Beatrice, embodies a promise of love and hope. Through hyperkinetic, complex choreography and evocative orchestral storytelling, *The Dante Project* reconstructs a timeless narrative arc taking audiences on a nonstop journey where sound, movement and light form the substance of a mysterious and changing constellation.

"I am delighted to be working with the Paris Opera for the first time, especially on the music of Thomas Adès, which has meant an enormous amount to me for decades," said Lewis.

Lewis has served as the Jacksonville Symphony's Music Director since 2015, a position permanently endowed by Haskell in 2009. Currently in his eighth season as Music Director, Lewis has designed an ambitious plan to enrich the surrounding community with innovative symphonic programming, creating the highest quality of art possible. Throughout his tenure, Lewis has dramatically reimaged the Symphony's musical offerings, reinvigorated the Symphony's long tradition of commissioning works from today's brightest composers, championed more diversity within the orchestra and pushed the limits of creativity to launch the Jacksonville Symphony on the international stage.

A passionate opera conductor, Lewis introduced symphonically staged productions of *Hänsel und Gretel* in 2017, excerpts from *Götterdämmerung* with Christine Brewer and Jay Hunter Morris in 2018, *Don Giovanni* in 2019 and *La Bohème* in 2022. While Lewis was slated to

conduct this season's production of *The Magic Flute*, Associate Conductor Kevin Fitzgerald will take the podium in his place.

Lewis will return the Jacksonville in time to conduct the Symphony's world premiere of its commission by composer Sean Shepherd on May 19 and 20.

### **About the Jacksonville Symphony**

The Jacksonville Symphony is North Florida's leading music nonprofit offering live performances at Jacoby Symphony Hall in the Jacksonville 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).

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