



# KANSAS CITY SYMPHONY

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## **New Kansas City Symphony Agreement is Testament to Harmony, Vision and Commitment**

*Symphony musicians, management buck national trends by ratifying new 4-year contract without attorneys and more than a year ahead of schedule*

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.** | June 6, 2016 — Symphony orchestra contract negotiations are often contentious and protracted. Not so for the Kansas City Symphony.

In only eight meetings, Kansas City Symphony musicians and management renewed their four-year collective bargaining agreement — extending the contract through June 2021. This four-year renewal, completed on May 25, was accomplished more than one year in advance of the expiration of the current agreement, which concludes June 2017. Not only did the musicians and management conduct negotiations in a harmonious and collaborative atmosphere but the meetings, for the first time, also took place without the presence of attorneys.

Symphony leaders explained that both parties chose this highly cooperative path based on years of positive relationships, and the outcome was remarkably successful.

“A stable and positive working environment for our talented Symphony musicians is essential to artistic excellence and growth,” said Symphony Board Chair William Lyons. “With this new contract, we believe we have set a new standard for a productive working relationship based on trust and transparency. I congratulate both the Symphony’s musicians and professional staff for ensuring the seamless continuity of one of Kansas City’s great cultural assets.”

The new agreement makes substantial investments in musician salaries and benefits, with a 19.7 percent increase over the 2017-18 through 2020-21 seasons. The current base musician salary for the 2015-16 season is \$51,537. In the 2020-21 season, or the final fiscal year of the new contract, the base musician salary will be \$63,315. This new contract also successfully addresses other topics, including scheduling and workload, a commitment to cover greater costs of family healthcare premiums, and improved long-term disability coverage.

“This negotiation was the most rewarding in memory and I am very proud of what we accomplished,” Symphony Executive Director Frank Byrne said. “Our record of success and our investments in organizational culture allowed us to have candid conversations that wisely balanced our dreams with our long-term objectives. We felt a sense of shared aspiration with our common goal to put the music first.”

The negotiations also gave musicians and management the opportunity to formalize their shared mutual goals of becoming a “destination” orchestra for musicians.

As chair of the Musicians' Negotiating Committee, Symphony trumpet player Brian Rood said he's proud and grateful that the management and board are committed to continuing to identify ways and foster the conditions needed to draw and retain top talent.

"We're confident that this new agreement will make Kansas City an even more attractive place for musicians to call home and allow the Symphony to achieve even greater artistic heights," Rood said.

Rood brought ample experience and insight to the process, having participated in six previous negotiations and having served as president of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (ICSOM).

"Typically, attorneys or outside negotiators are engaged to participate during orchestra negotiations," Rood explained. "Given the mutual trust and respect developed over the past 20 years between our Kansas City Symphony constituencies, members of management and the executive committee along with the Musicians' Negotiating Committee, we were able to discuss and agree upon new contract terms directly without the need for any outside participation at the table."

Musicians' Committee chair and Associate Principal Horn David Sullivan reiterated Rood's observation that the mutual respect and rare absence of attorneys at the negotiating table demonstrates the cohesion and team mentality of the Kansas City Symphony.

"This new agreement is a public testament to everything I have experienced in the last four years of my committee service," Sullivan said. "It shows what's possible when everyone comes together to create an environment that extends well beyond mutual trust and understanding. This organization is a family in the truest sense of the word, and I feel very grateful and proud to be able to call it and this wonderful city my home."

Music Director Michael Stern said this successful process bodes extremely well for the organization as a whole.

"This new agreement represents far more than just a fair and positive negotiation — it's inspirational," Stern remarked. "Frank Byrne, our executive director, and Brian Rood, who led the musicians' negotiations, together guided everyone to begin an extraordinary new chapter, in a welcome climate of respect and harmony, in record time, and most astonishingly, with the absence of any attorneys. Together, they changed the conversation, and they changed the culture, which reflects the spirit of the entire organization. I am honored to be part of this great team."

In contrast to orchestras across the world that are struggling to stay in sync either with their resources or musician-management relations, the Kansas City Symphony story is unique according to Steven Bronfenbrenner, a California-based nonprofit advisor and co-founder of B Squared Consulting.

"The Kansas City Symphony continues to set a high standard for the American orchestra in all respects," Bronfenbrenner said. "The Kansas City Symphony's sustained financial

performance reflects a blending of strong board governance and skilled management. These resources combine to foster continued artistic excellence and service to the community. Taken together, what you have in Kansas City is beautiful and extraordinary.”

The Symphony’s positive outcomes also extend to other areas of distinction. Through astute planning and programming, a commitment to artistic excellence, superb customer service, and vigilant expense control, the Kansas City Symphony not only has balanced its budget for nearly 20 years, but also has posted a modest surplus in each of the past four years — and is expected to do so again for the 2015-16 season.

Since the opening of the Symphony’s acoustically superior performance home, Helzberg Hall at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, in 2011, the Symphony has posted high-sold capacities and increased ticket revenues season after season. Furthering its “destination” reputation, the Kansas City Symphony has for each of the past five seasons attracted attendees from nearly all 50 states, Washington, D.C., Guam, Puerto Rico, and a dozen foreign countries. The Symphony prides itself on diverse programming, presenting more than 100 performances each season of 45 different programs, plus performing 60 presentations of eight different programs as the orchestra for the Kansas City Ballet and Lyric Opera of Kansas City.

“We are relentless in our commitment to success,” Executive Director Frank Byrne insisted. “The future is bright and our potential is thrilling. Please come and experience firsthand what makes the Kansas City Symphony so inspiring.”

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### **About the Kansas City Symphony and Chorus**

Founded in 1982, the Kansas City Symphony has established itself as a major force in the cultural life of the community. Praised for performances of uncompromising standard, the orchestra is the largest in the region and enjoys a national reputation under the artistic leadership of Music Director Michael Stern. The Kansas City Symphony Chorus is a volunteer, 160-member ensemble led by multi-Grammy® Award-winning conductor, Charles Bruffy, that continues its long tradition of excellence as the choral voice of the Kansas City Symphony. The Kansas City Symphony performs more than 100 concerts each year, while also serving as the orchestra for the Kansas City Ballet and Lyric Opera of Kansas City, and it often welcomes guests of international acclaim as part of its Classical and Pops Series.

Complementing its full schedule of concerts, the Symphony enriches the lives of Kansas City residents by providing music education opportunities for children and adults, such as KinderKonzerts, Young People’s Concerts, an instrument petting zoo and concert comments. Highlights each season include a range of free master classes, events and concerts reaching more than 200,000 community members, including the annual Bank of America Celebration at the Station concert each Memorial Day weekend and Symphony in the Flint Hills every summer. Additionally, the Symphony has released five CDs to date with Reference Recordings — “Shakespeare’s Tempest,” the Grammy® Award-winning “Britten’s Orchestra,” an Elgar/Vaughan Williams project, “Miraculous Metamorphoses” that highlights composers Hindemith, Prokofiev and Bartók, and most recently, the Grammy® Award-nominated “Saint-Saëns Symphony No. 3, ‘Organ.’” Two additional projects have been recorded and slated for future release, including the music of contemporary composer Adam Schoenberg (recorded June 2014) and Holst’s *The Planets* (recorded January 2015). The Symphony and Stern will record three one-movement symphonies (Barber’s Symphony No. 1, Sibelius’ Symphony No. 7 and Scriabin’s *Poem of Ecstasy*) in late June on the Reference Recordings label.

The Symphony and Michael Stern also have recorded for the Naxos label. Kansas City Symphony performances can be heard locally each week on KCUR 89.3 FM, Kansas City's NPR affiliate. More information on the Kansas City Symphony is available at [kcsymphony.org](http://kcsymphony.org)