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Franz Welser-Möst announces the conclusion of his tenure as Music Director of The Cleveland Orchestra in 2027 after 25 years of artistic innovation, deep-rooted community engagement, and international acclaim



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CLEVELAND — Franz Welser-Möst announced today that he will not renew his contract as Music Director of The Cleveland Orchestra beyond June 2027, when his current contract ends. By that time, he will have become the longest-serving musical leader in the ensemble’s history.

Since 2002, Welser-Möst has reshaped The Cleveland Orchestra, maintaining its precision and clarity while adding an unmistakable warmth and flexibility. His time as Music Director has enhanced the Orchestra’s reputation as one of the world’s top symphonic ensembles today.

Under Welser-Möst’s leadership, The Cleveland Orchestra has been internationally recognized for its inventive artistic programming, innovative opera presentations, extensive educational and community engagement initiatives, and dedication to commissioning and supporting new music. *The New York Times* has declared Cleveland under Welser-Möst to be “America’s most brilliant orchestra,” praising its virtuosity, elegance of sound, variety of color, and chamber-like musical cohesion. Describing the dawn of a new era in Cleveland, *Musical America* has proclaimed “...the performances over which [Welser-

Möst] presides are masterful, the work of an ensemble in peak form. This is no longer George Szell's orchestra. It is Welser-Möst's."

"I am immensely grateful for the extraordinary journey that I have had with The Cleveland Orchestra since I first came to Severance more than 30 years ago," said **Welser-Möst**, who holds the Kelvin Smith Family Endowed Chair. "It is both a special and an emotional moment as I reflect on what we have accomplished together. But perhaps what matters most to me is the shared passion, the inspiring creativity, and the lasting friendships that I have had the privilege of building with our musicians, audiences, and fans around the world. The city of Cleveland, its people, and especially this wonderful orchestra will forever hold a special place in my heart."

"Today's a bittersweet day for all of us at The Cleveland Orchestra," said **André Gremillet, the Orchestra's President & CEO**. "While we reflect upon and begin to celebrate the incredible artistry and legacy of Franz Welser-Möst, a great musician, a dear friend, and the chief architect of the Cleveland Sound in the 21st century, we recognize that we will deeply miss his passion, intellect, curiosity, and profound musicianship. We are however comforted to have three and a half more years of exceptional music-making ahead of us with Franz as Music Director, and many more opportunities beyond that. His leadership has transformed this organization, instilling a flexibility and lyricism to the Cleveland Sound that is instantly recognizable."

"Franz's impact on both this Orchestra and this city has been immeasurable," said **Richard K. Smucker, Chairman of the Board of The Cleveland Orchestra**. "The stability of his artistic leadership throughout his tenure has been unparalleled, and his deep love and dedication to Cleveland and its citizens have inspired so many of us. It is Franz's vision and reputation as one of the world's greatest conductors that have ensured that we can continue to hire and retain the best musicians, attract the leading guest artists of our era, and enjoy a reputation that reflects the very highest standards in our art form today. On behalf of the board, staff, and fans of The Cleveland Orchestra near and far, we thank you, Franz, for your leadership and your artistry."

A Culture of Artistic Innovation

Franz Welser-Möst made his conducting debut with The Cleveland Orchestra in February 1993 with a program featuring Martinů's Symphony No. 5, Schubert's Symphony No. 3, and Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 24 with Yefim Bronfman. His artistic partnership with The Cleveland Orchestra has since flourished over the course of more than 1,100 performances that have seen him lead the ensemble in 15 US states and 85 different cities across 21 countries, including landmark residencies in Vienna and Miami and 29 appearances at Carnegie Hall.

Throughout his tenure with The Cleveland Orchestra, Welser-Möst has built a remarkable track record of identifying, partnering with, and often accelerating the careers of some of the world's most promising composers. These creative partnerships have yielded 37 new commissions to date from acclaimed composers such as Johannes Maria Staud, Jörg Widmann, Bernd Richard Deutsch, and, most recently, Allison Loggins-Hull, the Orchestra's current and ninth Daniel R. Lewis Composer Fellow under Welser-Möst.

Cleveland with Welser-Möst has also witnessed a resurgence in opera presentations that continue to showcase the Orchestra's versatility and artistic ambition as one of the country's premier symphonic and opera ensembles. The 20 operas that Welser-Möst has conducted in Cleveland since 2002, including

critically acclaimed productions of Dvořák's *Rusalka* and Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*, recently culminated in the inaugural Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Opera & Humanities Festival in 2023. The second edition, which will be held in Cleveland in May 2024, is a series of concerts, exhibitions, and conversations headlined by four fully staged performances of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*.

A Legacy for the 21st Century

Since 2002, Franz Welser-Möst has appointed 52 of the 105 current members of the Orchestra, nurturing a unique, symbiotic relationship with musicians and shaping the Orchestra's distinct sound in the 21st century. In addition to the national and international acclaim that the ensemble's cohesion and artistic partnership have generated, The Cleveland Orchestra now boasts one of the youngest audiences in the United States, a testimony to Welser-Möst's vision, programming, and sustained community outreach efforts.

Welser-Möst's tenure has also witnessed a significant expansion in The Cleveland Orchestra's digital media offerings and partnerships, which have amplified the ensemble's footprint around the world. In October 2020, under Welser-Möst's leadership, the Orchestra launched its proprietary digital platform, Adella.Live, named for founder Adella Prentiss Hughes. The platform continues to grow, giving audiences an in-depth look at the extraordinary music-making of Welser-Möst, The Cleveland Orchestra, and dozens of celebrated guest artists.

In recent years, Franz Welser-Möst has also expanded the Orchestra's extensive recording catalog. Since the Orchestra's in-house record label launched in 2020, 11 releases have captured and shared the unique Welser-Möst/Cleveland Orchestra partnership with audiences in Cleveland and around the world, with more recordings scheduled in the coming years. Recent releases have featured works by Tchaikovsky, Schubert, Richard Strauss, Berg, Prokofiev, Walker, Schnittke, and Krenek, all captured through state-of-the-art, immersive audio technology, bringing listeners as close as possible to experiencing in person Welser-Möst and The Cleveland Orchestra in Severance's superb acoustics.

Over the years, Welser-Möst has been awarded some of the industry's and Cleveland's highest honors, including the Gold Medal in the Arts by the Kennedy Center International Committee on the Arts, the Vienna Philharmonic's "Ring of Honor," honorary membership of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna, The Cleveland Orchestra's Distinguished Service Award, two Cleveland Arts Prize citations, honorary membership in the Vienna Singverein, appointment as an Academician of the European Academy of Yuste, the Kilenyi Medal from the Bruckner Society of America, and recognition from the Western Law Center for Disability Rights.

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