

# Robert Spano

## Music Director

Endowed Robert Reid Topping Chair

Robert Spano, conductor, pianist, composer and teacher, is known worldwide for the intensity of his artistry and distinctive communicative abilities, creating a sense of inclusion and warmth among musicians and audiences that is unique among American orchestras. Beginning his 20th season as Music Director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and his first as Principal Guest Conductor of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, this imaginative conductor is an approachable artist with the innate ability to share his enthusiasm for music. An avid mentor to rising artists, he is responsible for nurturing the careers of numerous celebrated composers, conductors, and performers. As Music Director of the Aspen Music Festival and School since 2011, he oversees the programming of more than 300 events and educational programs for 630 students and young performers.

Highlights of Spano's 2020/21 season include conducting engagements with the Fort Worth, Houston and New World Symphonies, in addition to multiple programs with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. Spano's 2019/20 season included a return to the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, conducting the world premiere of George Tsontakis's Violin Concerto No. 3 alongside Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony*. He returned to the Indianapolis Symphony for a program of Higdon, Rodrigo and Sibelius, and led the BBC Symphony Orchestra in the world premiere of Dimitrios Skyllas's *Kyrie eleison*, commissioned by the BBC. Conducting debuts included the Wroclaw Philharmonic.

With the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, programs included Spano's quintessentially rich, diverse pairings of contemporary works and cherished classics, welcoming seasoned guest artists and many new faces. The orchestra's 75<sup>th</sup> season featured numerous ASO premieres, including works by living American composers Krists Auznieks, Jessie Montgomery and Jennifer Higdon, and a world premiere by Brian Nabors. The season opened with Joshua Bell joining the ASO for Henryk Wieniawski's Violin Concerto No. 2 and Pablo de Sarasate's *Zigeunerweisen*.

The 2018/19 season featured Spano's highly-acclaimed Metropolitan Opera debut, leading the US premiere of *Marnie*, the second opera by American composer Nico Muhly, with Isabel Leonard, Janis Kelly, Denyce Graves, Iestyn Davies and Christopher Maltman, and the conclusion of the ASO's two-year "LB/LB" celebration commemorating Leonard Bernstein and Ludwig van Beethoven. This celebration featured six Bernstein works and nine Beethoven Symphonies, and vocal masterpieces including Verdi's *Otello*, Beethoven's *Fidelio* and Bernstein's *Candide*. Recent concert highlights have included several world premiere performances including *Voy a Dormir* by Bryce Dessner at Carnegie Hall with the Orchestra of St. Luke's and mezzo-soprano Kelley O'Connor; the Tuba Concerto by Jennifer Higdon, performed by Craig Knox and the Pittsburgh Symphony; *Melodia, For Piano and Orchestra*, by Canadian composer Matthew Ricketts at the Aspen Music Festival; and *Miserere* by ASO bassist Michael Kurth. In addition to his leadership of the ASO, Spano recently returned to his early love of composing. His most recent works include *Sonata: Four Elements* for piano, premiered by Spano in August 2016 at the Aspen Music Festival, and a song cycle, *Hölderlin-Lieder*, for soprano Jessica Rivera. Both works were recorded on the ASO Media label and praised by *Oberon's Grove*: "On this latest release, from ASO, we experience Spano as both an imaginative and evocative composer - with a special gift for writing for the voice - and a poetic pianist."

The Atlanta School of Composers reflects Spano's commitment to American contemporary music. He has led ASO performances at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center and the Ravinia, Ojai and Savannah Music Festivals.

Guest engagements have included the Cleveland, Philadelphia and Minnesota Orchestras, New York and Los Angeles Philharmonics, and the San Francisco, Boston, Chicago, San Diego, Oregon, Utah and Kansas City Symphonies. Internationally, Maestro Spano has led the Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala, BBC Symphony, Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orquestra Sinfonica Brasileira, Orquestra Sinfonica Estado Sao Paulo, the Melbourne Symphony in Australia and the Saito Kinen Orchestra in Japan. His opera performances include Covent Garden, Welsh National Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera and the 2005 and 2009 Seattle Opera productions of Wagner's *Ring* cycles.

With a discography of critically-acclaimed recordings for Telarc, Deutsche Grammophon and ASO Media, Robert Spano has garnered six Grammy™ Awards with the Atlanta Symphony. Spano is on faculty at Oberlin Conservatory and has received honorary doctorates from Bowling Green State University, the Curtis Institute of Music, Emory University and Oberlin. Maestro Spano is one of two classical musicians inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame and makes his home in Atlanta.

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# Jennifer Barlament

## Executive Director

Jennifer Barlament joined the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra in January 2016 as Executive Director. Together with Music Director Robert Spano, Jennifer will continue to define and execute the strategic vision for the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, both artistically and financially, while engaging key audiences to make that vision a reality.

Jennifer has more than 15 years of experience leading orchestras across the country, most recently as General Manager of the Cleveland Orchestra, where she has served since 2013. In Cleveland, she managed the operations of the Orchestra and its two performance venues, Severance Hall and the Blossom Music Center.

A lifelong musician, Jennifer previously served as Executive Director of the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra and General Manager of the Omaha Symphony. In 1998, Jennifer was accepted into the highly competitive Orchestra Management Fellowship Program of the League of American Orchestras. She worked in all aspects of orchestra management during Fellowship assignments with the San Francisco Symphony, the New Jersey Symphony, and the Detroit Symphony. Following the Fellowship, she returned to the Detroit Symphony as Director of Special Projects and was then appointed Concert Manager of the Baltimore Symphony.

Jennifer earned her Bachelor's degree in music with a minor in physics at Emory University, where she received awards for both music and academic performance. She earned a Master's degree in clarinet performance from the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY, where she also founded the New Eastman Symphony. In 2013, Jennifer was the recipient of the League of American Orchestras' prestigious Helen M. Thompson Award, given every two years to an early-career executive director.

Jennifer resides in the Midtown area with her husband Kenneth Potsic, a bassoon repair and restoration specialist, and their son David.

# Sir Donald Runnicles

## Principal Guest Conductor

Endowed Neil and Sue Williams Chair

Sir Donald Runnicles is the General Music Director of the Deutsche Oper Berlin and Music Director of the Grand Teton Music Festival (Jackson, Wyoming), as well as Principal Guest Conductor of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. He is also the Conductor Emeritus of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, having served as its Chief Conductor from 2009-2016. Maestro Runnicles enjoys close and enduring relationships with many of the most significant opera companies and symphony orchestras. He is especially celebrated for his interpretations of Romantic and post-Romantic symphonic and opera repertoire which are core to his musical identity.

In the 2018-19 season, maestro Runnicles will conduct the world premiere of Detlev Glanert's new opera *Oceane* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, along with new productions of Berg's *Wozzeck* and Zemlinsky's *Der Zwerg* as well as six revival titles. Guest engagements this season include the Cincinnati Symphony, Dallas Symphony, Toronto Symphony, Tonhalle Orchester Zürich, and a production of Strauss' *Elektra* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. This past summer, he conducted the complete Ring Cycle with the San Francisco Opera, and took the Deutsche Oper Berlin Orchestra on tour to the Ravello Festival in Italy. In addition, he led the World Orchestra for Peace performing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony at the 2018 Proms, and conducts the orchestra again in November in a special concert in Künzelsau, Germany, commemorating the centennial of the Armistice.

Sir Donald Runnicles' previous posts include Music Director of the San Francisco Opera (1992-2008), during which he led world world premieres of John Adams's *Doctor Atomic*, Conrad Susa's *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, and the U.S. premiere of Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise*; Principal Conductor of the Orchestra of St. Luke's in New York City (2001-2007); and General Music Director of the Theater Freiburg and Orchestra (1989-1993).

Maestro Runnicles' extensive discography includes complete recordings of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Britten's *Billy Budd*, Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, and Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*. His recording of Wagner arias with Jonas Kaufmann and the Orchestra of the Deutsche Oper Berlin won the 2013 Gramophone prize for Best Vocal Recording, and his recording of Janáček's *Jenufa* with the Orchestra and Chorus of the Deutsche Oper Berlin was nominated for a 2016 GRAMMY award for Best Opera Recording.

Sir Donald Runnicles was born and raised in Edinburgh. He was appointed OBE in 2004, and holds honorary degrees from the University of Edinburgh, the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

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# Jerry Hou

## Associate Conductor & Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra Music Director

Jerry Hou joined the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra as ASO Associate Conductor and Music Director of the Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra in September 2020. Recognized for his dynamic presence, insightful interpretations, versatility, and commanding technique, Taiwanese-American conductor Jerry Hou is making his mark in concert halls and opera houses in the United States and abroad. He has conducted the Dallas Symphony, Houston Symphony, St. Louis Symphony, Grand Teton Music Festival Orchestra, Orchestra of St. Luke's, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, National Arts Centre Orchestra, Luxembourg Philharmonic, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Teatro Colon, Rochester Philharmonic, and San Antonio Symphony, amongst others.

Last summer, Hou led to much acclaim the opening concerts of the Grand Teton Music Festival, in a program of Copland, Aaron Jay Kernis, and Rachmaninoff's First Piano Concerto with renowned soloist Daniil Trifonoff. For three summers, he served as Associate Conductor of the Grand Teton Music Festival. Known for his flexibility in many styles and genres, he has conducted a broad range of repertoire from classical to contemporary, leading projects in a variety of settings including orchestra, opera, theater, multimedia, and mixed ensemble. This past spring, Hou led performances of a new collaboration between composer Steve Reich and artist Gerhart Richter to commemorate the opening of New York City's new performing arts space and center for artistic invention, The Shed.

He worked at the Lincoln Center Festival with Gorillaz members Damon Albarn and Jamie Hewlett, director Chen Shi-Zheng, and Ensemble Signal with Brad Lubman, on the opera *Monkey Journey to the West*. Hou returned to Lincoln Center to make his conducting debut with Ensemble Signal for the *American Songbook: Steve Reich and Stephen Sondheim in Conversation*. A leading interpreter and conductor of contemporary music, he has collaborated with internationally acclaimed composers including Steve Reich, John Adams, Steve Stucky, George Lewis, Bernard Rands, Gyorgy Kurtag, Helmut Lachenmann, Unsuk Chin, Brett Dean, Mark Anthony-Turnage, James MacMillan, John Luther Adams, Aaron Jay Kernis, Melinda Wagner, and Peter Eötvös.

In addition, he worked closely with the next generation of leading composers including Kate Soper, Anna Clyne, and Andrew Norman. Hou has conducted leading contemporary music ensembles Ensemble Modern, Ensemble Signal, Remix Ensemble, Musiq, and Alarm Will Sound. He is on the faculty of the Shepherd School of Music, Rice University in Houston, Texas where he leads the contemporary ensemble and works with the symphony orchestra, chamber orchestra, chamber music program, and opera. He is a founder and artistic director of the music series, Hear&Now.

# Norman Mackenzie

## Director of Choruses

The Frannie and Bill Graves Chair

Norman Mackenzie's abilities as musical collaborator, conductor and concert organist have brought him international recognition. As Director of Chorus for the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO), since 2000, and holder of its endowed Frannie and Bill Graves Chair, he was chosen to help carry forward the creative vision of legendary founding conductor Robert Shaw.

During his tenure, the Chorus has made numerous tours and garnered several GRAMMY® awards, including Best Classical Album and Best Choral Performance. Mr. Mackenzie's acclaimed Terlarc recording of a *capella* sacred music, featuring the Vaughan Williams *Mass in G-Minor*, represents the ASO Chamber Chorus' first recording apart from the Orchestra.

At the ASO, he prepares the Choruses for all concerts and recordings, works closely with Robert Spano on the commissioning and realization of new choral-orchestral works and conducts holiday concerts. Mr. Mackenzie also serves as Director of Music and Fine Arts for Atlanta's Trinity Presbyterian Church, and pursues an active recital and guest-conducting schedule. In his 14-year association with Mr. Shaw, he was keyboardist for the ASO, principal accompanist for the ASO Choruses and ultimately assistant choral conductor. In addition, he was musical assistant and accompanist for the Robert Shaw Chamber Singers, the Robert Shaw Institute Summer Choral Festivals in France and the United States and the famed Shaw/Carnegie Hall Choral Workshops.

Mr. Mackenzie was choral clinician for the first three workshops after Mr. Shaw's passing, and in 2011 he partnered with Robert Spano for the Carnegie Hall Workshop featuring the Berlioz *Requiem*. He also prepared the ASO Chorus for its acclaimed 2003 debut and successive 2008 and 2009 performances in Berlin with the Berlin Philharmonic, in Britten's *War Requiem*, Berlioz's *Grande Messe des Morts* and Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem*, respectively, conducted by ASO Principal Guest Conductor Donald Runnicles.