



## AMERICAN YOUTH SYMPHONY ANNOUNCES PERMANENT CLOSURE

(Wednesday, March 13, 2024, Los Angeles, CA) – After 59 years of offering exceptional fellowships and training to talented young adults, the **American Youth Symphony (AYS)** will permanently cease operation effective March 15, 2024 as a result of financial challenges and the inability to sustain operations.

AYS's final concert, "AYS Up Close," took place at the New Roads School on February 25, 2024.

"Despite our best efforts, the challenges of maintaining our operations have become insurmountable," said Kevin Dretzka, Board Chairman. "COVID-19 amplified AYS's unsustainable financial infrastructure. We have exhausted every effort and hope the larger orchestral industry and classical music philanthropic community take note to shore-up these important pre-professional orchestras like AYS which directly benefit them."

"It is with a heavy heart that we announce the closure of our beloved organization. The Board of Directors has made the difficult decision to dissolve American Youth Symphony," said Executive Director Isabel Thiroux. "We extend our deepest gratitude to our talented artists, dedicated staff, supportive patrons, and generous donors who have been instrumental in our journey. While this chapter may be closing, we are proud of the legacy we leave behind and the impact we have made in the lives of many."

Carlos Izcaray, who served as AYS Music Director since 2015, said, "It is extremely regrettable that an organization of the caliber and history of AYS has to shut down. I am proud of the work that the staff did under incredible pressure, and will remain in awe of the progress our fellows showed throughout the last years. Many of them joined some of the best orchestras in the country, and several others became top studio musicians, composers, administrators, and entrepreneurs in the field. Unfortunately we were not able to secure the funding to pivot to a more sustainable model. Many memories from our programs and projects will remain, such as monumental symphonies by Mahler and Brahms, tone poems by Strauss and Schrekker,

American canonic works, the introduction to repertoire such as Esa-Pekka Salonen, Brian Raphael Nabors, and Jennifer Higdon, collaborations with rock star Steve Vai, Britten's War Requiem with the National Children's Choir, our signature Hollywood Project, and many other creative endeavors with our fellows as soloists and involved co-creators. I remain inspired by all of them, and look forward to learning how their careers evolve."

The success of AYS also reflects the legacy of Alexander Treger's leadership during his 17-year tenure as AYS music director from 1998 to 2015.

Established in 1964 by the esteemed conductor Mehli Mehta, AYS has played a crucial role in nurturing the next generation of professional musicians and fostering a vibrant artistic community. AYS presented ambitious seasons of thoughtful programming of exceptionally high quality, covering a breadth of symphonic music, including beloved classics, film scores, chamber works, and contemporary pieces, while championing many of today's composers.

Recent milestones include AYS's 2019 world premiere performance of composer Fil Eisler's new violin concerto with famed violinist Sarah Chang for the inaugural event of the AYS Korngold Commission Project, designed to unite great composers of film with top classical soloists to create and premiere new works.

In 2020, AYS gave the world premiere performance of composer Kris Bowers' new violin concerto, *For A Younger Self*, at Walt Disney Concert Hall. The concerto was commissioned by AYS and performed by violinist Charles Yang. AYS recorded *For a Younger Self* which is part of an album due for release on Orchid Classics in July 2024.

AYS concerts welcomed all and were presented for free or low cost at world-class concert halls, including Royce Hall and Walt Disney Concert Hall, and local community venues alike, with the goal of welcoming anyone who is interested to enjoy this beautiful art form.

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