

For release: January 8, 2026

The Cleveland Orchestra announces three musician appointments



Gareth Zehngut (Photo: Roger Mastroianni), Catherine Van Handel (Photo: Jennifer Brindley), and Sean Juhl (Photo: George Lange)

CLEVELAND— The Cleveland Orchestra is pleased to announce three new musician appointments to its viola and bassoon sections.

Gareth Zehngut, who has been a section violist with The Cleveland Orchestra since 2022, was appointed First Assistant Principal Viola and began the role in October. The Orchestra also welcomes Catherine Van Handel as Assistant Principal Bassoon, beginning in January 2026, and Sean Juhl as a section violist, beginning in May 2026.

Now in his 24th year with the ensemble, Music Director Franz Welser-Möst has appointed more than half of the musicians currently performing with The Cleveland Orchestra.

Gareth Zehngut, First Assistant Principal Viola (Charles M. and Janet G. Kimball Chair)

Violist Gareth Zehngut joined The Cleveland Orchestra during the 2021–22 season. He was previously a member of the Minnesota Orchestra and San Diego Symphony viola sections.

In Cleveland, Zehngut has appeared in chamber music performances in the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Concert Hall and Reinberger Chamber Hall at Severance Music Center. He is a regular performer on the Classically Lakeview chamber series and has also performed with fellow members of The Cleveland Orchestra at Knight Hall at the Adrienne Arsht Center in Miami, Florida.

Zehngut appeared as soloist with the Minnesota Bach Ensemble, for whom he also served as principal violist, and with the Penns Woods Music Festival. Zehngut has served as guest principal violist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and previously served as principal viola for the Oregon Bach Festival Orchestra.

Other festival appearances include Strings Music Festival, Sun Valley Music Festival, Mainly Mozart, Festival Mozaic, La Jolla SummerFest, and the Trinity Alps Chamber Music Festival. He has also performed and taught at the Campanile Music Festival and Luzerne Music Center.

A native of Pennsylvania, Zehngut earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees from The Juilliard School.

"Having been a four-year member of The Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra, getting to join The Cleveland Orchestra four years ago was a dream come true. Every day, I am surrounded by musicians who have taught me and inspired me since I was a teen. Now, to be given the honor and responsibility of sitting in the chair previously held by Lynne Ramsey is an opportunity beyond anything I ever could have imagined. It is a thrill every day to play with this incredible Orchestra," **Zehngut said.**

Catherine Van Handel, Assistant Principal Bassoon (Sandra L. Haslinger Chair)

Born in Taipei, Taiwan, Catherine Van Handel joins The Cleveland Orchestra as Assistant Principal Bassoon in January 2026. She served as principal bassoon of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra from 2017 to 2025. Prior to joining the MSO, Van Handel held a tenured position as associate principal bassoon with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. While a student at the Curtis Institute of Music, she also served as principal bassoon of the Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra.

Van Handel has appeared as guest principal with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, and Grant Park Orchestra, and has performed with numerous other ensembles across the country, including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, The Philadelphia Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, Kansas City Symphony, Virginia Symphony, and Richmond Symphony. As a soloist, Van Handel has performed with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, The Philadelphia Orchestra, the President's Own US Marine Band, and the Juilliard School Pre-College Orchestra, among others.

A dedicated educator, Van Handel has served on the faculties of the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, University of Toronto, and Brevard Music Center. She has given masterclasses at institutions such as the New World Symphony, National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America, National Orchestral Institute and Festival, Glickman-Popkin Bassoon Camp, and Escuela de Artes Musicales in San José, Costa Rica.

Her festival participation includes Marlboro, Tanglewood, the Mainly Mozart Festival, Pacific Music Festival, Music Academy of the West, and Castleton Music Festival, to name a few. In 2023, she released her debut album, *Bassoon Soirée: From Latin America to Paris*, and performed as soloist with the MSO in the recorded premiere of David Ludwig's *Pictures from the Floating World*.

Van Handel earned her Bachelor of Music from the Curtis Institute of Music, studying with Daniel Matsukawa. She began piano at age 4, cello at age 5, and started the bassoon at 14. Her teachers include Joyce Kelley and Marc Goldberg.

Catherine and her husband, Fischer, have a 1-year-old son, Sebastian, and a Samoyed dog named Tofu. When Catherine is not performing, she enjoys spending time with her family, practicing yoga, cooking, hiking, discovering new restaurants, traveling, and scuba diving

“It is an extraordinary honor to join The Cleveland Orchestra, a musical institution whose legacy is woven into the cultural fabric of this city and the world. I’m filled with immense gratitude and excitement as I step into this new chapter, making music with the very musicians who have inspired me throughout my life,” **Van Handel said.**

Sean Juhl, viola

Sean Juhl joins the viola section of The Cleveland Orchestra in May 2026, following three seasons as a member of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

A native of New York City, Juhl began his musical studies on the violin at age 4. He found his voice on the viola at age 14, following in the path of his mother, grandmother, and older cousin, all of whom led professional viola careers in China. His love for orchestral playing was shaped early on by summers at the Kinhaven Music School in Vermont and broadened by international tours of Europe and South America with the National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America (NYO-USA).

Juhl earned his Bachelor of Music degree from The Juilliard School in 2022, where he studied with Carol Rodland and won First Prize in the 2019 Juilliard Viola Concerto Competition. His training also includes summers at the Perlman Music Program and fellowships at the New York String Orchestra Seminar and Music Academy of the West, where he received the London Symphony Orchestra Keston MAX Award.

A dedicated educator, Juhl has coached young musicians at the Pittsburgh Youth Symphony Orchestra and Three Rivers Young Peoples Orchestras, and continues to maintain a private studio. Away from the stage, he enjoys cooking, reading, following Formula 1, and spending time with his cat, Cleo.

“I am deeply honored to be joining The Cleveland Orchestra. Throughout my time growing up and as a student, the quality of this orchestra was a constant inspiration to me, a goal I always aimed for but never quite believed I’d reach. I am still pinching myself that this is real! Orchestral music has always made me feel like part of something bigger than myself, and I look forward to contributing to this orchestra’s legacy and welcoming the challenges ahead,” **Juhl said.**

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