

For release: June 18

The Cleveland Orchestra announces four new musician appointments



Gawon Kim (Photo: Roger Mastroianni), Zubin Hathi (Photo: Abigayle Elise), Brandon Mason (Photo: Cybelle Codish), and Peter Nichols (Photo: Robert Cummerow)

CLEVELAND— The Cleveland Orchestra is pleased to announce the addition of four outstanding musicians to its ensemble.

The Orchestra welcomed Second Violinist Gawon Kim last fall, and this summer will welcome three more members: Zubin Hathi as Principal Timpani and Brandon Mason as Section Bass in July, followed by Peter Nichols as Assistant Principal Timpani and Section Percussion in August. Hathi will hold the Otto G. and Corinne T. Voss Chair. Peter Nichols will hold the Mr. and Mrs. Richard K. Smucker Chair

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

Gawon Kim, second violin

Violinist Gawon Kim began playing with The Cleveland Orchestra in the fall of 2024. Originally from Seoul, she joined the Curtis Institute of Music in 2017 and received a Bachelor of Music degree in 2022. She also completed her Master of Music degree at Curtis, studying with Shmuel Ashkenasi as an Efrem Zimbalist Fellow.

Kim has performed with the Bucheon Philharmonic Orchestra, Gangnam Symphony Orchestra, Camerata Orchestra, Orchestre de l'Opéra national de Lorraine, and the Gunpo Prime Philharmonic Orchestra, among others. She has won prizes at the Seoul International Music Competition and Mirecourt International Violin Competition.

Kim has participated in numerous music festivals, such as the Heifetz International Music Institute, Morningside Music Bridge, and Chamber Music Seminar at The Perlman Music Festival. She has also performed recitals in Belgrade, Budapest, Dubai, Warsaw, Philadelphia, Busan, Incheon, and Seoul. In addition, Kim has been featured in broadcasts by Amadeus TV.

“Joining The Cleveland Orchestra has been one of the most important moments of my career. From the start, I felt truly honored and excited to be part of such a great group of musicians with a long tradition of excellence. My first year has been full of amazing music and a wonderful sense of teamwork. I’m looking forward to continuing to learn, grow, and contribute to the Orchestra’s legacy in the years to come,” **Gawon Kim** said.

Zubin Hathi, principal timpani (Otto G. and Corinne T. Voss Chair)

A native of Roanoke, Virginia, Zubin Hathi was appointed Principal Timpani of The Cleveland Orchestra in May 2025. Prior to this, he held the same position with the Dubuque Symphony Orchestra and San Francisco Ballet Orchestra, respectively. Zubin has participated in a number of festivals, including as Principal Timpani with the National Repertory Orchestra and as fellowship recipient in the Pacific Music Festival, National Orchestral Institute, and New York String Orchestra Seminar. He has also attended the Aspen Music Festival and School, and participated in the Sun Valley Music Festival, St. Barts Music Festival, and ChamberFest Cleveland. Additionally, Hathi has performed with the orchestras of San Francisco, Detroit, Buffalo, Rochester, Columbus, and India, among others.

Hathi holds a bachelor’s degree from the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied with Don Liuzzi, Robert van Sice, and Eric Millstein. During his time at Curtis, he consistently made the Dean’s List in recognition of academic excellence. He completed his master’s degree and additional post-graduate studies at the Cleveland Institute of Music under the tutelage of Marc Damoulakis and Paul Yancich.

Hathi is a proud endorser of Evans Drumheads and Freer Percussion Products. He has recorded with The Cleveland Orchestra and can also be heard on recordings distributed by the Orchid Classics, Naxos, and Cedille labels.

“Joining The Cleveland Orchestra has been a lifelong dream of mine, and one I never thought possible. It’s an immense honor to be included in the tradition of excellence that has been established by this storied ensemble over the course of more than a century. The culture of group effort that the Orchestra brings to the stage day in and day out is infectious, and something very unique to this particular group of musicians,” **Zubin Hathi** said. “Furthermore, I’m beyond excited to have been given the chance to carry on the 80-plus-year lineage established by my legendary teacher, Paul Yancich, as well as his equally illustrious teacher, Cloyd Duff. It’s a big responsibility, and I couldn’t be more eager to get started.”

Brandon Mason, bass

Brandon Mason joins the bass section of The Cleveland Orchestra in July 2025. He comes to Cleveland following five seasons with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, preceded by five seasons with the Kansas City Symphony. Since 2019, he has been a regular member of the Grand Teton Music Festival Orchestra in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. He has also performed with major ensembles across the country, including the Boston, Houston, and Dallas symphonies. In 2020, he appeared as guest Principal Bass with the

Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Earlier in his career, he spent summers studying at the Tanglewood Music Center, Aspen Music Festival and School, and Music Academy of the West.

Originally from Arlington, Texas, Mason began playing the bass in his public school's 5th grade orchestra program. He credits a strong and well-supported public music education system for inspiring his early love of classical music and guiding him toward a life in the arts. He earned his Bachelor of Music degree from Boston University, studying with Edwin Barker, and his Master of Music degree from Rice University's Shepherd School of Music under Paul Ellison.

"I'm honored to join The Cleveland Orchestra and step into its extraordinary legacy. To make music under the direction of Franz Welser-Möst, alongside such remarkable colleagues, is both a privilege and a dream fulfilled. I'm deeply grateful and filled with excitement for all that lies ahead," **Brandon Mason** said.

Peter Nichols, assistant principal timpani (Mr. and Mrs. Richard K. Smucker Chair) and section percussion

Peter Nichols joins The Cleveland Orchestra as Assistant Principal Timpani and Section Percussion in August 2025. Prior to his appointment, Nichols served as Principal Timpanist of the Toledo Symphony Orchestra from 2023 to 2025. He has performed frequently with the Cleveland, Detroit, National, West Virginia, and Maryland symphony orchestras, and has taken part in a range of collaborative projects, including the Grammy-nominated album *Sila: The Breath of the World* by John Luther Adams, recorded with The Crossing, JACK Quartet, and musicians from the University of Michigan.

A native of Nitro, West Virginia, Nichols began studying percussion at the age of 11, inspired after hearing his older brother perform in his middle school drumline. He holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he studied with Marc Damoulakis and Paul Yancich, and a Master of Music degree from the University of Michigan, where his teachers included Thomas Sherwood and Jeremy Epp. In 2015, Nichols toured as a member of the National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America. In 2016, he won first place in Division II of the Modern Snare Drum Competition.

Outside the concert hall, Nichols enjoys hiking in national parks and spending time with his wife, Brittany, their son, Miles, and two cats, Ollie and Nitro.

"Hearing The Cleveland Orchestra at Severance for the first time as a high school student was truly life-changing—the sound shaped my approach to music and has inspired me ever since. I feel incredibly honored to now be making music with this extraordinary group of musicians," **Peter Nichols** said.

###

Media Contact:

Jen Steer, jsteer@clevelandorchestra.com, 216-231-7637