



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Louisville Orchestra Names Jude Vaclavik as Chief Executive Officer

Acclaimed arts executive and music industry leader to partner with Music Director Teddy Abrams in shaping the Orchestra's next chapter

LOUISVILLE, KY. (July 14, 2026) – The Louisville Orchestra has appointed Jude Vaclavik as Chief Executive Officer, welcoming an internationally respected arts leader whose career spans music publishing, artist development, education, composition, and nonprofit leadership. Vaclavik joins the Orchestra following leadership roles at Universal Music Group and a distinguished career that has included Houston Grand Opera, Boosey & Hawkes, and The Juilliard School.

Following a national search led by the Louisville Orchestra Board of Directors, Vaclavik was selected to partner with Music Director Teddy Abrams and the Louisville Orchestra's musicians, board, staff, and supporters to build upon one of the most dynamic periods in the organization's history while advancing its vision for the future.

"Jude brings a rare combination of artistic insight, business acumen, and entrepreneurial thinking," **said Board Chair Jordan Harris.** "As the Louisville Orchestra continues to grow its impact locally and nationally, we were looking for a leader who could build on our historic momentum while staying true to the innovative spirit that has defined this organization for generations. Jude is exactly that leader."

"Jude shares in the belief that orchestras can be engines for creativity and community," **said Teddy Abrams, Music Director of the Louisville Orchestra.** "He brings a remarkable understanding of artists, audiences, and the evolving landscape of our field, along with a genuine passion for helping bold ideas become reality. I'm excited to partner with him as we continue building an orchestra that is creating the future of music from Louisville."

The appointment reflects a natural alignment between Vaclavik's career and the Louisville Orchestra's identity as one of America's leading champions of new music. Through its landmark First Edition Recordings project, the Orchestra commissioned and recorded hundreds of works by living composers, helping shape the course of American classical music. Today, that legacy continues through the Louisville Orchestra Creators Corps, recording projects, commissions, and community-based initiatives that position Louisville as a national center for musical innovation.

Under Abrams' leadership, the Louisville Orchestra has earned national acclaim for artistic excellence and innovation, including a 2024 Grammy Award for *The American Project*. The Orchestra

recently completed a landmark season marked by record audiences, nineteen sold-out performances, the highest number of sold-out concerts in its history, and continued growth in statewide community engagement through initiatives including In Harmony: The Commonwealth Tour.

Most recently, Vaclavik served as Vice President of U.S. Classical Publishing and Promotion at Universal Music Group, where he led one of the fastest-growing classical music publishing businesses in the world. Throughout his career, he has worked alongside leading composers, artists, conductors, and performing arts organizations worldwide, developing new works, cultivating artistic partnerships, and expanding audiences for classical music. Vaclavik emphasized the importance of building relationships across Louisville and continuing the Orchestra's role as a cultural and civic leader throughout the Commonwealth.

A composer himself, Vaclavik has received commissions and performances from organizations including the New York Philharmonic, New York City Ballet Choreographic Institute, The Juilliard School, and leading universities and ensembles across the United States. His experience as both an artist and administrator gives him a unique perspective on the creative and organizational forces that shape the future of the performing arts.

"I've admired the Louisville Orchestra for years because it continues to redefine what an orchestra can be," **said Vaclavik.** "It honors an extraordinary legacy while embracing new ideas, new music, and new ways of serving its community. Few organizations have contributed more to the future of this art form, and I'm honored to help lead its next chapter alongside Teddy, the musicians, board, staff, and supporters who have built such remarkable momentum."

The appointment has been enthusiastically welcomed by the Orchestra's musicians.

"What stood out to us during the search process was how much Jude understands musicians and our artistic needs," **said Louisville Orchestra Musicians Committee Chair Jonathan Mueller.** "As a pianist and composer, he has firsthand experience with the creative process and is committed to maintaining artistic excellence. We're looking forward to working together to propel the mission of this community asset."

Looking ahead, Vaclavik sees tremendous opportunity for the Louisville Orchestra to deepen its impact both locally and globally.

"The opportunities ahead are extraordinary," **said Vaclavik.** "We will continue bringing world-class artists to Louisville, investing in new music through initiatives like the Creators Corps, and creating experiences that inspire deeper connections with our community. The Louisville Orchestra has earned a national reputation for innovation and artistic excellence, and I look forward to helping share that story with audiences here at home and around the world."

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About the Louisville Orchestra

The Louisville Orchestra was created in 1937 and sprung up in a time of need, just after the great flood and in the wake of the depression. Robert Whitney was invited to conduct the newly established orchestra, known then as the Louisville Philharmonic, and arrived from Chicago that same year. In its formation, the goal was to create a new model for the American symphony orchestra, as it was conceived through an ambitious effort that emphasized innovation through the commissioning, performance, and recording of new works by contemporary composers. The Louisville Orchestra garnered international critical acclaim, became the first orchestra to establish a record label, and cemented a place in history for its contribution to contemporary classical music. In its first two decades, the Louisville Orchestra commissioned/recorded up to 52 new works annually and ultimately created 150 vinyl recordings (LPs) of more than 450 works.

The Louisville Orchestra continues to be recognized as a cornerstone of the Louisville performing arts community. Music Director Teddy Abrams has helmed the Louisville Orchestra since 2014, and the Louisville Orchestra has returned to its origins of commissioning new music and recording, having released two albums under the prestigious Decca Gold label. A wide variety of immersive and innovative concert performances and educational programming continue to receive national attention. Recent press coverage includes articles and mentions in The New Yorker, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Rolling Stone, Pitchfork, and CBS Sunday Morning. Accolades include three invitations to perform at Carnegie Hall; the Leonard Bernstein Award for Excellence in Educational Programming; the League of American Orchestras 2019 Ford Musician Awards for Excellence in Community Service; and 19 American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) awards for adventurous programming in use of contemporary music.

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