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SINGAPORE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA APPOINTS HANS GRAF AS CHIEF CONDUCTOR



The **Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO)** has announced Austrian maestro **Hans Graf** as its Chief Conductor designate. Graf will assume the position from the 2020/21 concert season, beginning mid-2020.

The Austrian conductor is currently Conductor Laureate of the Houston Symphony Orchestra. He was Music Director of the Houston Symphony Orchestra from 2001 to 2013, making him the longest-serving Music Director in the orchestra. Graf's extensive experience also includes helming Mozarteum Orchestra of Salzburg (1984–1994), Calgary Philharmonic (1995 – 2003) and Orchestre National Bordeaux Aquitaine (1998–2004).



Houston Symphony – 2011 class photo, maestro Hans Graf conducting, and sections.

New chief conductor role

This SSO appointment follows the conclusion of a 22-year career by Music Director Lan Shui, who stepped down in January 2019.

The Music Director role was thereafter reorganised into two functions: a Chief Conductor who plans and presents a set number of concerts per year, and a Director of Artistic Planning who programmes the rest of the orchestra and chamber music seasons. (The latter role was assumed by [Hans Sørensen](#) in January.)

“I feel in them the joy of making music”

The Singapore Symphony Group which manages the SSO, held a global search for the position of Chief Conductor. The process involved seeking the views of the orchestra musicians, the administrative staff, as well as major stakeholders.

On the appointment, Graf said, *“When I first came to Singapore, I found an orchestra of international level. Now I am pleased and honoured to be invited to work with them in the future: I feel in them the joy of making music which fuels their assiduous effort to reach ever higher levels, and it will be my goal to lead and go forward with them in this noble passion.”*

“Singapore is a metropolis in many ways and also in the arts, and we will expand this importance with pride and commitment — and with our contagious love of great music — for the world and for the music lovers here in town,” he added.

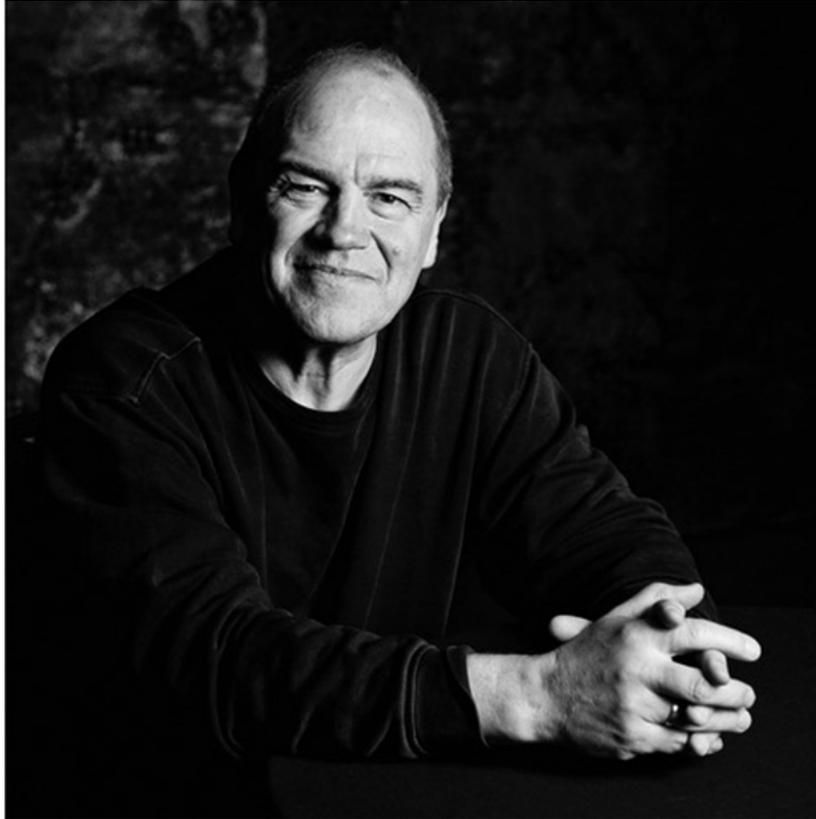


Photo credit: Singapore Symphony Orchestra

Singapore Symphony Group Board Chairman Goh Yew Lin shared his thoughts on the announcement: *"I am delighted to welcome Hans Graf as our Chief Conductor. He brings with him a wealth of experience and insightful musicianship, in repertoire ranging from the core classical repertoire to the peaks of the 20th century repertoire. His rapport with SSO musicians was exceptional from their first concert together [in 2015 followed by another in 2108]. I look forward to working with him as we continue to build on the strong foundations that have been established over the past forty years by our first two music directors."*

International accolades

In Graf, SSO has appointed an internationally established maestro with highly regarded expertise in core orchestral repertoire. His background and work in Vienna, Salzburg and Graz makes him especially at home in Austro-German repertoire that is crucial in developing a symphonic orchestra. His rapport with the audience and the orchestra was a major factor in his appointment.

Said Singapore Symphony Group CEO Chng Hak-Peng, *"As the national orchestra, we place our audience at the centre of what we do, and their enthusiastic response to both concerts that Graf conducted matched the warmth that our musicians felt as well. When we approached him, we were delighted that the feeling was mutual. Together, we are looking forward to presenting audiences in Singapore and overseas even more compelling and memorable musical experiences in the years ahead."*

Hans Graf studied violin, piano and conducting. His teachers include 20th century luminaries such as Franco Ferrara, Sergiu Celibidache and Arvid Jansons. Graf has received numerous accolades throughout his career, which include the Chevalier de l'Ordre de la Légion d'Honneur by the French Government and the Grand Decoration of Honour of the Republic of Austria. In 2018, Graf won a Grammy award for best opera recording (Alban Berg's Wozzeck with the Houston Symphony in 2017).



Photo credit: Singapore Symphony Orchestra

Graf to guest conduct SSO before assuming role

The incoming SSO Chief Conductor will plan and conduct six concert weeks in the 2020/21 season, as well as work with the SSO to develop an artistic vision for the orchestra that will guide the shaping of the orchestra's seasons ahead. Subsequent seasons will have Graf conducting the SSO for eight concert weeks each.

Before his official appointment commences, Graf will be conducting the SSO for the [SSO Gala: Kavakos Plays Korngold with Leonidas Kavakos](#) in January 2020. Graf last conducted the SSO in August 2018, presenting the Singapore premiere of Zemlinsky's *The Mermaid*.

As the SSO looks to its next chapter with Maestro Graf, who has the wealth of experience in raising standards of music-making, the 2020/21 season looks set to expand SSO's repertoire under the steady hands of the new Chief Conductor.

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