



Ulysses James, Music Director, **Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic**  
David Weigert, Music Director, **Washington Metropolitan Youth Orchestra**  
Randy Ward, Music Director, **Washington Metropolitan Concert Orchestra**  
Caroline Mousset, Executive and Artistic Planning Director

## PRESS RELEASE: WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN PHILHARMONIC ANNOUNCES FOUR FINALISTS IN SEARCH FOR NEXT MUSIC DIRECTOR

**The Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic announces the FOUR finalists who will guest conduct four concerts during the 2022/2023 Season. They include [Erin Freeman](#) (October 16), [Anna Binneweg](#) (December 11), [Glen Cortese](#) (February 11), and [Michelle Di Russo](#) (March 26).**

Separately, Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic is also announcing the full 2022/2023 five-concert Season schedule and programs with each finalist serving as Guest Conductor for one concert during the Season. For the Season Finale Concert, retired Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic Music Director Laureate Ulysses James will return to the podium on May 20, 2023 to conduct some of his favorite works with celebrated local musician friends.

Selected from over 50 applicants, the final candidates are a diverse and talented group of conductors. In selecting the finalists, Search Committee Chair and Executive Director Caroline Mousset states, "we were presented with a very broad and skilled group of candidates, all of whom demonstrated a commitment to music education along with strong leadership and musical talent. It was a challenge to narrow the field, but we believe these four conductors share the same values and forward-thinking approach as the Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic."

While Mousset leads the Music Director Search Committee, she is joined by other members of the Board of Directors and Philharmonic Musicians in vetting the candidates and selecting the four finalists. As part of the selection process, the Search Committee reviewed resumes, watched hours of conducting videos, and held video interviews to get a well-rounded understanding of each prospective conductor.

The candidates submitted program recommendations for the 2022/2023 Season as part of their continuing interview process. Mousset continues, "We expect to see a mix of classical and contemporary works that explore a full range of styles and themes in keeping with the Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic's strong reputation for presenting a wide diversity of composers, championing works by living composers, and featuring American works. The entire Philharmonic looks forward to sharing with our community how each conductor will make their concert unique and appeal directly to our very discerning audience."

Along with announcing the 2022/2023 Season concerts in June, Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic will begin offering Season Flex Passes starting in August. The entire community is invited to join the Philharmonic for these audition concerts. Audience members will have an opportunity to meet the candidates after each performance and submit surveys distributed at each concert. In spring 2023, the WMPA Board of Directors will announce the new Music Director, who will take the podium beginning with the 2023/2024 Season.

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### **FINALIST: Erin Freeman (October 16)**

Conductor and artistic leader Erin Freeman serves in multiple capacities throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia and maintains a national, international, and online presence through guest conducting and speaking engagements. Freeman is Director of the Richmond Symphony Chorus, Artistic Director of Wintergreen Music, Resident Conductor of the Richmond Ballet, and Director of Choral Activities at Virginia Commonwealth University. Guest conducting includes the Buffalo Philharmonic, Orchestre Symphonique Bel'Arte, Portland Symphony Orchestra, South Carolina Philharmonic, Savannah Symphony, Charlottesville Symphony Orchestra, Virginia Symphony Orchestra, and additional ensembles throughout the United States. She has conducted at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, La Madeleine in Paris, and Boston Symphony Hall, was recently named nominee (2021) and finalist (2019) for Performance Today's Classical Woman of the Year, and has received accolades in Opera News, ClevelandClassical.com, and Musicweb-International.com, among others. Freeman holds degrees from Northwestern University, Boston University, and Peabody Conservatory.

### **FINALIST: Anna Binneweg (December 11)**

"Collaborative ... Engaging ... Audience - ingratiating ..." - Baltimore Sun

As the Music Director/Conductor of the Lontontowne Symphony Orchestra, the AACC Symphony Orchestra at Anne Arundel Community College (Annapolis, MD) and a frequent guest conductor on the national and international scene, Anna Binneweg has performed in some of the nation's most reputable concert venues including the Kennedy Center's Concert Hall (Washington, D.C.), the Meyerhoff Symphony Hall (Baltimore, MD) and the Walt Disney Concert Hall (Los Angeles, CA). Her international conducting experiences include tours to Austria, Spain, Ukraine, and Belarus. She has worked with conductors Leonard Slatkin, Daniel Barenboim, Robert Spano, James Paul, Michael Morgan, Duaine Wolfe, Nurhan Arman and David Effron. Earning a doctorate degree of music in orchestral conducting from Northwestern University where she studied with Victor Yampolsky, she has also served on the conducting faculties at Loyola University, the Sherwood Conservatory of Music, and American University. Binneweg is the recipient of the 2015 Annie Award for the Performing Arts awarded by the Arts Council of Anne Arundel County.

### **FINALIST: Glen Cortese (February 11)**

Glen Cortese has had hundreds of guest engagements as the conductor of dozens of orchestras, opera and ballet companies and summer festivals around the world, including New Jersey Symphony, North Carolina Symphony, Florida Philharmonic, Belarus State Philharmonic, Sofia Philharmonic, National Romanian Radio Orchestra, Slovak Radio Orchestra, and Mexico City Philharmonic. A champion of new music, Cortese has conducted over 150 premieres, working in direct collaboration with composers Milton Babbitt, Elliott Carter, John Corigliano, George Crumb, Richard Danielpour, Peter Maxwell Davies, Lukas Foss, Hans Werner Henze, and Ralph Shapey. He was an assistant conductor to the New York Philharmonic from 1990–92 for Zubin Mehta and in July of 1993, he was invited by Kurt Masur to guest conduct a reading with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall. At present he is artistic director of the Schenectady Symphony Orchestra and artistic director of the Western New York Chamber Orchestra. He just completed twelve seasons as music director of the Greeley Philharmonic Orchestra and was named music director emeritus of the Oregon Mozart Players after serving as artistic director for nine seasons.

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### **FINALIST: Michelle Di Russo (March 26)**

A graceful yet powerful force on the podium, Argentinian-Italian conductor Michelle Di Russo is known for her compelling interpretations, passionate musicality, and championing of contemporary music. Recently appointed Interim Director of Orchestras at Cornell University and as the new Assistant Conductor of North Carolina Symphony, she is a Freeman Conducting Fellow in Chicago Sinfonietta's prestigious Project Inclusion program and The Dallas Opera Hart Institute. A native of Argentina, Di Russo holds a Doctoral Degree in Orchestral Conducting from Arizona State University and a Master of Music in Orchestral Conducting from the University of Kentucky.

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### **About Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic**

Having celebrated its 50th Anniversary Season in 2021/2022, Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic is a modern, diverse orchestra with a strong focus on presenting a wide diversity of composers, championing works by living composers, and featuring American works. As a firm proponent of diversity and inclusion, the Philharmonic is dedicated to creating innovative and exhilarating experiences through memorable performances for the community of both well-known and rarely-played classical repertoire.

### **About Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic Association:**

A performing arts organization whose mission is to enrich, inspire, and educate through live performances of high-quality music, WMPA is comprised of several major programs, including Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic, Washington Metropolitan Youth Orchestra (grades 9-12), Washington Metropolitan Concert Orchestra (grades 6-9), the Lyceum Chamber Music Series presenting weekly concerts throughout the summer at Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum, and offering more than 50 on-demand, full-length online concerts. WMPA continues to grow and has earned a reputation for bringing adventurous and engaging programs to the community.

[www.wmpamusic.org](http://www.wmpamusic.org)

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