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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Metropolitan Youth Symphony Names New Music Director

Portland, OR-The Board of Directors of Metropolitan Youth Symphony (MYS) has announced the selection of Raúl Gómez-Rojas as the organization's next Music Director, effective August 1, 2016. Selected from over 50 national and international applicants, Gomez received his Master of Music in Violin Performance and Doctor of Musical Arts in Conducting, studying with Carlos Riazuelo, at Louisiana State University, and was a conducting fellow at the Aspen Music Festival in 2011. He is currently the Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Mississippi Youth Symphony Orchestra, and conductor with the Premier Orchestral Institute. He has had multiple appearances with the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, where he receives the unqualified support of Music Director Carlos Miguel Prieto. Other highlights include appearances with the Chamber Orchestra of San Antonio and Acadiana Symphony Orchestra, as well as conducting engagements in Mexico, Brazil and Costa Rica.



During his six years with YOA Orchestra of the Americas (YOA), an orchestra consisting of young professionals from top universities and conservatories in North and South America, Mr. Gómez served as Head of Music Programs and Education Advisor. He is currently on the YOA conducting staff and will be touring the Baltics, northern Europe and Scandinavia with the organization in July.

Mr. Gómez remains active as a violinist and violist with a special interest in chamber music, jazz and Latin American music. His significant experience with chamber music will enhance his work with MYSfits, MYS' mid-winter chamber music program, and our weeklong summer camp, Portland Summer Ensembles. His interest in jazz is a special benefit for the organization. "One of the aspects of MYS that excites me the most," says Mr. Gómez "is that it has a jazz program. Having

lived in New Orleans, jazz is close to my heart, and I even occasionally sat in at jazz gigs on Frenchmen and Bourbon Streets myself. This unique offering sets MYS apart, and I can't wait to help it grow over the next few years."

A firm believer in the power of music to transform lives, in 2011 Mr. Gómez served as the founding Artistic Director of Kids' Orchestra, a year round program designed to foster social change and nurture promising futures for youth in Baton Rouge. In the first year alone, Mr. Gómez led a team of teachers that impacted nearly 100 students. Today he continues his involvement as Artistic Advisor. His work with Kids' Orchestra made him the recipient of the Hildegard Behrens Foundation Young Artist Humanitarian Award in 2012.

Throughout his career, Mr. Gómez has worked with musicians from renowned institutions such as the Berlin Philharmonic, and Juilliard, who have been consistent in their high regard for his musicianship and leadership.

"I have known Raúl ...through our work together at YOA. At first meeting, he immediately impressed me with his enthusiasm, integrity, calm yet strong leadership skills, trustworthy and reliable personality but most importantly his tremendous knowledge and love for music. Raul is an enormously accomplished musician and a highly gifted conductor. His ability to inspire children and young adults to make music to the best of their ability is astonishing. He is a very rare breed indeed." *Dominic Seldis, Principal Double Bass-The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Amsterdam, Professor of Double Bass-The Royal Academy of Music, London.*

As Music Director, Mr. Gómez will conduct the Symphony Orchestra and the advanced MYSfits string ensemble, as well as oversee the artistic integrity and expansion of MYS programs, build collaborative partnerships within the local community and beyond, represent MYS to its many constituencies, and lead through his passion for youth and music. “MYS has seen unparalleled artistic and programmatic growth over the past four years. We were struck not only by the high quality of Mr. Gomez’s conducting and instrumental performance experience, but by the variety and quality of the programs he has overseen. His commitment to innovation and community building will be key as we develop initiatives that involve the broader community,” said Executive Director Diana Scoggins.

Said MYS President David Ludwig, “We are excited that Mr. Gomez has accepted the offer of MYS to become its next Music Director. His extraordinary talent as a conductor and musician combined with his passion for music education and his strong commitment to excellence makes him an exceptional fit for us.”

The MYS Search Committee chaired by MYS board member Mary Ann Coggins Kaza and comprised of musicians from the Oregon Symphony, and representatives from MYS conducting staff, parent and alumni communities, administrative staff, and music educators, invited six finalists to conduct MYS ensembles early this winter. Working with each of the finalists created provided a unique opportunity for MYS musicians, whose feedback after each audition was an important part of the process.

## **ABOUT MYS**

MYS provides music education and performance opportunities for young musicians of all ages and levels of experience. Now in its 42<sup>nd</sup> year, MYS enrolls over 500 youth from 10 counties throughout the Portland Metro and SW Washington areas. MYS offers 13 ensembles including orchestra, band, jazz, and strings. Additionally, MYS offers a mid-winter chamber music program, a one-week summer chamber music camp, Portland Summer Ensembles, theory and bass classes and a tuition-free Beginning Strings program for students from underserved schools. MYS has a strong financial aid program that welcomes all students regardless of their financial circumstances. This season MYS musicians will perform 3 concerts at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, 8 community concerts throughout the metropolitan area, and 18 outreach concerts at schools throughout Oregon and in Washington, reaching over 5,000 students.

To find out more about MYS, purchase tickets, or to register to audition next season, visit online at: [www.playmys.org](http://www.playmys.org) or call 503-239-4566.

metropolitan youth symphony

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