

Brett Mitchell to take the helm of the Colorado Symphony

by Mike Telin



The [Colorado Symphony](#) announced on September 12 that Brett Mitchell has been appointed music director designate for the 2016-2017 season, and will assume the post of music director in July, 2017. “It’s a great opportunity to be the Music Director of a great orchestra in a great city,” Mitchell said during a recent telephone conversation. “I don’t know how you could ask for more than that. I really don’t.”

Mitchell, 37, has been a member of the conducting staff of The Cleveland Orchestra since 2013 and currently holds the title of associate conductor. He also serves as music director of the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra, having led that ensemble on a tour to China in 2015, its second international tour. A native of Seattle, Mitchell served as assistant conductor of the Houston Symphony from 2007 to 2011, and previously was an assistant conductor to Kurt Masur at the Orchestre National de France from 2006-2009. He and his wife Angela eventually plan to make their home in Denver.

The Colorado Symphony will give Mitchell a year to get to know his new colleagues in Denver — both the administration and musicians. “One of the extraordinary things about the appointment is the timeline that we have been able to develop,” Mitchell said. “Ordinarily the announcement would be made, then the next season you’d be named the music director designate, and become music director the following season — so that would add up to two years. In this case we’re only a year away from the full appointment.”

In order to introduce Mitchell to Denver audiences, the Symphony has created a “Meet Brett Mitchell” subscription series. “The best part is that while I’m getting to work with the staff, I’m also going to conduct five weeks with the orchestra this season. To be

welcomed like that is wonderful, and everybody has gone above and beyond to make this happen. The Colorado Symphony and The Cleveland Orchestra and Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra have been absolutely perfect in working through all of this with me to make sure that I can spend as much time as possible in Colorado. By the time we get down to business in September of 2017 I think we're already going to be old friends and will be able to hit the ground running."

Brett Mitchell joins the Denver-based orchestra at a pivotal moment in its history. Thanks to a new management team and board headed up by Co-Chair and CEO Jerome H. Kern, and with the help of members of the orchestra, the Colorado Symphony now has an expanded concert schedule, new performing opportunities and new financial commitments from corporations and foundations.

"I'm coming into a supremely healthy organization. The nice thing about turning over a new leaf is that the orchestra will have a new artistic leader who will be bringing a completely fresh perspective to the job. The only Colorado Symphony that I know is the one that #1, sounds amazing, #2, is well managed and well run. A lot of the credit for that goes to Jerry Kern and his wife Mary, who have been real miracle workers for that orchestra, and by extension, for that city."

Because his appointment was made over the summer, Mitchell has been an integral part of the planning process for 2017-2018. "We've been going fast and furious with planning the season. It will really be my season and represent my vision for the orchestra," Mitchell said.

One of the things Mitchell will miss is the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra. "The Symphony doesn't have a youth orchestra in the way that Cleveland does, but the city does have the [Denver Young Artists Orchestra](#), and every year they perform a side-by-side concert with the Colorado Symphony. I'm a big fan of music education, and one of the first things I said when I was offered the appointment was that I really wanted to be on the podium for those side-by-side concerts. I think it's a wonderful opportunity for the young players, and to see the older musicians interact with the next generation is a wonderful thing for a conductor to watch."

Dividing his time between two cities means that Mitchell's schedule for this coming year is going to be even busier than usual. "I wouldn't have it any other way," he said. "To get to be with all three of these orchestras in one season is amazing. I'm so grateful for the opportunity."

The Colorado appointment expands Brett Mitchell's already geographically impressive career. "I'm originally from Seattle and I lived for four years in Austin, Texas, two years

in Chicago, then in Houston for six, and Cleveland for four. I've loved being able to live all over the country, and this will be a new place for me. But in some ways it is far more similar to what I grew up with on the West Coast — especially the mountains. That's something I've missed over the past fifteen years.

With the addition of Colorado, Mitchell can also claim to have lived in all four times zones in the lower 48 states. "I finally got to Mountain Time. I've ticked all of the boxes."

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