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Colorado MahlerFest Announces Continued Growth and Investment Including Hiring an Executive Director

Boulder, CO – The Colorado MahlerFest, having recently finished a successful 31st season, has announced continued major investment in the future of the festival with the hiring of its first Executive Director, Ethan Hecht. The move comes after bringing Kenneth Woods to the festival as Artistic Director in 2015. Since that time, the festival has added a workshop and masterclass for young conductors, expanded the chamber music offerings, and introduced celebrated musicians as festival artists. Hecht has previously appeared as principal violist with the MahlerFest Festival Orchestra (2006 to 2010) and has served as the orchestra personnel manager since 2015.

The Colorado MahlerFest was founded in 1987 by Maestro Robert Olson, then a professor at the University of Colorado – Boulder. Under Olson's long tenure, and with significant contribution from board president Stan Ruttenberg, the festival presented all of Mahler's music, tackled ambitious challenges such as performances of Mahler's 8th Symphony, the "Symphony of a Thousand," in 1995 and 2009, and won international recognition including being awarded the Mahler Gold Medal by the International Gustav Mahler Society in Vienna. Each May, the festival's weeklong celebration includes two Festival Orchestra performances of a major work by Mahler in Macky Auditorium, chamber music concerts, film screenings, a free symposium at which internationally recognized Mahler scholars discuss recent research, and music by other composers who influenced Mahler or were inspired by him.

When Maestro Olson lowered his baton on the Festival Orchestra for the final time in 2015, an era ended. Undeterred by the retiring of the festival's founder, the board recruited Kenneth Woods, the dynamic American conductor of the English Symphony Orchestra, to continue bringing Mahler's music to life for Front Range audiences.

Woods's tenure has been marked by significant artistic growth. In his first season, he created a conducting workshop in which three accomplished young conductors study with Woods. The workshop culminates in a free, public masterclass in which each conductor leads Festival Orchestra musicians through portions of a Mahler work. Woods has added major international musicians including this season's concertmaster Jorja Fleezanis, principal second violin Karen Bentley Pollick, and principal cellist Parry Karp. Over the past three years, Woods has also created a place within the festival for visiting composers, welcoming the outstanding young American composer Jesse Jones; the eminent Viennese

master, Kurt Schwertsik; and the renowned British composer and Mahlerian, David Matthews.

As the festival continues to invest in and build its future within Maestro Woods' artistic vision, the board looked to expand the administrative operations of the festival. Hecht has worked for the Colorado Music Festival and Center for Musical Arts as well as Pro Musica Colorado Chamber Orchestra. He is currently the Executive Director of the Boulder Chorale.

"This is a major investment in the future of the festival. With Ken, we found someone to expand the festival with an exciting, long-term artistic vision and the skill to follow through. With that growth, the board of directors felt it was important to find an executive director that would make major contributions in all aspects of presenting the festival. Having worked with Ethan over the past few years, it was clear that he would be the ideal candidate for the position. Not only is he familiar with MahlerFest but he also has a great working knowledge of the Denver/Boulder music community and is greatly respected by that community. We are very excited he has joined the team," said board president David Auerbach.

Maestro Woods comments, "The Colorado MahlerFest is a truly unique organization with a historic past and a bright future. After a few seasons entrenching myself in the workings of the festival it became clear that we needed someone to partner with the board and assist in achieving our plans and that Ethan was the right person to do so."

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