

Florida West Coast Symphony

New Member Orchestra
Adam DeSorgo, Delegate

Music Director – Leif Bjaland

Executive Director – Joseph McKenna

The Florida West Coast Symphony, based in Sarasota, Florida, serves Sarasota, Manatee, and Charlotte counties. The FWCS is currently in its 57th consecutive season and is the oldest continuing orchestra in the state of Florida.

The organization has three inter-dependent parts to the whole: The Symphony and its Chamber Ensembles, the Sarasota Music Festival, and the Youth Orchestra/Education program. The Symphony grew from a community orchestra first by employing a full time string quartet during the 1960's and then adding a wind and brass quintet in the mid 1980's. The players of the Chamber Ensembles also serve as principals in the Symphony. Currently, the Symphony has a total of 81 musicians, 41 that have full-time core contracts and 40 that have per-service contracts. The Symphony's season is 37 weeks from September to May. There are seven weeks of "Masterworks" concerts, two weeks of "Composer Series" chamber orchestra concerts, six weeks of Light Pops concerts using only the core and three Pops series using the full orchestra. The remaining weeks are mainly devoted to Chamber Ensembles: The Florida String Quartet, Florida Wind Quintet, Florida Brass Quintet, and New Artists Piano Quartet perform a wide variety of programs, ranging from full recitals to outreach and educational concerts.

The Symphony performs in several venues; the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall and Beatrice Friedman Symphony Center in Sarasota, Manatee Community College in Bradenton, and venues in North Port and Englewood in South Sarasota County. The Symphony and its musicians enjoy broad community support and the venues are regularly sold out. The Board of Directors recently announced plans for a new \$141 million concert hall in downtown Sarasota. The operating budget for this season is \$5.6 million and the FWCS has an endowment of just over \$8.6 million. Base salary for FWCS musicians this season is just over \$19,000 and a new contract is currently being negotiated.

The Symphony continues to evolve. In 2002 the musicians voted overwhelmingly to be represented by the AFM. In 2005, the musicians voted unanimously to join ROPA in order to be a part of a community of musicians at large and have meaningful connections with our colleagues across the country.