

Barbara Smith-Sorooca, CEO of Stamford Symphony, Retires After 39 Years

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At the Stamford Symphony's opening concert on Oct. 14, the Orchestra and Stamford community will pay tribute to CEO and President Barbara Smith-Sorooca, who has announced her retirement from the leadership position she has held for 39 years.

— *This is an announcement from the Stamford Symphony.*

Ms. Soroca came to the organization in 1979, when Skitch Henderson was music director, the orchestra was comprised of passionate, accomplished amateur musicians, and performances were held at West Hill High School.

Under Ms. Soroca's leadership the orchestra has grown to be the pre-eminent music ensemble in the region, employing top professional musicians from the New York City metro area, boasting robust music education and community engagement programs, and performing at the Palace Theatre's beautifully restored venue.

The organization has announced that Russell Jones, who has specialized in orchestra administration throughout his career both in the United States and Great Britain, has been selected as Ms. Soroca's successor. The two administrators will overlap until Ms. Soroca's departure in January, ensuring a seamless leadership transition.

"It has been a privilege to have worked with the Stamford Symphony's musicians, board, and staff for the past 39 years," said Barbara Smith-Soroca. "Together, we transformed a community orchestra into the highly respected, fully professional orchestra it is today. We have become the leading arts institution in the area, providing performances, and education programs that enrich the cultural life of the community. I cannot conceive of a better career choice, this is an experience that I will always treasure, and I am grateful for the opportunity."

In addition to the administration transition, the organization is currently involved in a search for a new music director to succeed Eckart Preu, who concluded his 12-year tenure at the end of last season.

In 2017-18, five esteemed candidates will each have an opportunity to conduct a subscription weekend to help decide who will be the Orchestra's next artistic leader.

Concert Program

- The Opening Weekend concerts on Saturday, Oct. 14 at 8 p.m. and Sunday, Oct. 15 at 3 p.m., feature an all-Russian program led by Lidiya Yankovskaya, one of the five music director contenders.
- Yankovskaya will conduct Glinka's *Ruslan & Lyudmilla* Overture, Rimsky Korsakov's Symphony No. 1, and the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto with Avery Fisher Career Grant winner Stefan Jackiw.
- Subscriptions for the 2017-18 season are available online or via patron Services at 203.325.1407, ext. 10. Single tickets available via the box office at 203.325.4466 or [online](#).

Honoring Barbara Soroca

The Saturday, Oct. 14 concert serves as the organization's annual fundraising gala, with proceeds to benefit the Orchestra and its education programs.

Festivities will include tributes to Ms. Soroca from the musicians and board of directors, as well as the mayor of Stamford and state-wide government representatives.

Prior to the concert, there will be a black and white-themed, black tie dinner, where Ms. Soroca will be honored with a gold baton in recognition of her long and distinguished service to the organization.

"We are eternally grateful for Barbara's faithful and steady leadership, her unwavering dedication, and her extraordinary vision creating and shaping the superb orchestra we have today," said Alan McIntyre, chairman of the symphony's governing board.

"From humble beginnings, Barbara has created a cultural gem, and one of the leading professional regional orchestras in America."

"The musicians are so grateful that Barbara has dedicated her career to the Stamford Symphony Orchestra its community," said Peter Weitzner, bassist and musician's liaison to the board.

"It has been her vision and persistence that have allowed the orchestra to grow into one of the country's premier regional arts institutions. We're glad to welcome our new CEO, Russell Jones, to join our family and know that Barbara will be an inspiration to us all for a long time."

Ms. Soroca's legacy will be further commemorated through The Soroca Fund for American Music. This endowed fund will allow the orchestra to perform more American music.

"It is essential that American orchestras perform not just the cherished European classics, but inspire our audiences with the music of our own country," Soroca said.

"The fund will allow the Stamford Symphony to showcase the music we play in both a historical and contemporary context consistently representing the evolution of repertoire composed by American: Bernstein, Gershwin, Copland, Higdon, Cage and many others will now be part of the Stamford Symphony repertoire."

To date, the fund has raised more than \$125,000.

Leadership Transition

Russell Jones brings a wealth of fundraising and leadership experience to his new role as incoming president and CEO of the Stamford Symphony, having held various positions in arts management on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the United Kingdom he held posts with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and Scottish Chamber

Orchestras, and before moving to the United States in 2007 he was director of the Association of British Orchestras.

From 2007-2012 he was vice president of marketing and membership at the League of American Orchestras where he was involved in the rebranding of the organization, developed its website and created "The Hub" — the league's news and media portal.

In 2012 he moved to the New York Philharmonic as the institution's director of the friends program and planned giving, and he held several other positions, notably that of director, major gifts.

About the Stamford Symphony

The Stamford Symphony is one of Connecticut's pre-eminent cultural institutions, championing the lifelong appreciation of classical music among all populations of Fairfield County through passionate, professional performances of the highest caliber, diverse and innovative programming, and inspirational education initiatives.

The orchestra is comprised of professional musicians from the Tri-State Area, drawing its members from premiere ensembles including the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Ballet, the American Symphony Orchestra, the New York Pops, and the Orchestra of St. Luke's.

Originally formed in 1919, the Stamford Symphony thrived under the leadership of Clayton Hotchkiss, music director of the Stamford public schools, until after World War II, when many of its musicians returned to their homelands.

It languished until its rebirth in 1967 as a regional orchestra of amateur musicians. Skitch Henderson was appointed music director in 1974, and with the hiring of Barbara Smith-Soroca as general manager in 1979, the orchestra began its ascent to a fully professional orchestra and an integral part of the cultural fabric of Fairfield County.

The year 1980 brought a new music director, Roger Nierenberg, who spent the next 24 years recruiting top musicians from the New York metro area and crafting a balanced ensemble of remarkable versatility.

Maestro Nierenberg expanded the Orchestra Classics Series and created new music and education programs, developing the Stamford Symphony as a valuable classical music resource for Stamford and its surrounding communities.

His successor, Eckart Preu, was the most recent leader of the ensemble, appointed in October 2005, following an international search that attracted more than 250 applicants. He concluded his final season with Stamford Symphony in 2017.

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In the current season, five guest conductors will each have a week of concerts to determine who will become the Orchestra's next music director.

The [Stamford Symphony](#)'s home is at the Palace Theatre, where most performances occur in the beautifully restored venue.

Music education programs serving 6,000 students have grown to include free tickets for kids under 18, Concerts for Students: The American Experience, the Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute Link-Up Program, master classes with students from the HARTT School of music and more.