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**CHICAGO SINFONIETTA SELECTS FIRST MEMBERS FOR
PROJECT INCLUSION CONDUCTING FELLOWSHIP**

*Nation's Most Diverse Orchestra Chooses Two Career-Ready Conductors
to Launch Groundbreaking Conductor Training Program*

Chicago, IL, August 6, 2014 - Chicago Sinfonietta, a professional orchestra focused on promoting diversity, inclusion, and innovative programming in the field of classical music, has chosen two candidates to be personally mentored by Music Director Mei-Ann Chen, distinguished faculty comprised of classical music industry leaders, and the Chicago Sinfonietta administrative staff through its Project Inclusion Conducting Fellowship (PICF). Roderick Cox and Sameer Patel are career-ready conductors who will be the inaugural members of the PICF program. Maestro Paul Freeman founded Project Inclusion in 2008 to cultivate diverse orchestral musicians. With this expansion of Project Inclusion, the program will now include emerging professional conductors, furthering the mission of institutional inclusiveness in classical music. What is unprecedented about PICF is that the conducting fellows will receive both on-the-podium training and off-the-podium guidance as well, receiving a more practical and holistic approach to conductor training.

"It is my pleasure to welcome young conductors Roderick Cox and Sameer Patel to the Chicago Sinfonietta family as the first recipients of Project Inclusion's Conducting Fellowship. I look forward to working with these talented artists, contributing to their growth and development, and helping them to shape their achievements as they work towards developing potentially significant careers", said Mei-Ann Chen, Music Director, Chicago Sinfonietta.

Both Maestro Paul Freeman, who founded the Sinfonietta in 1987, and Chen come from backgrounds that are underrepresented in classical music. Freeman, a pioneer in the field, was a leading African-American conductor who conducted over fifty orchestras worldwide. Chen, a native of Taiwan, is one of America's most dynamic young conductors.

An alumnus of Northwestern University and Columbus State University, [Roderick Cox](#) is the winner of the Aspen Music Festival's 2013 Robert H. Harth Conducting Prize. There, he was a conducting fellow in the acclaimed American Academy of Conducting and has worked with Robert Spano, Hugh Wolff, and Larry Rachleff. Cox is the current Assistant Conductor of the Alabama Symphony Orchestra and Music Director of the Alabama Symphony Youth Orchestra. He led ASO's annual tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., featuring new works commemorating the Civil Rights struggle in Birmingham and drawing not only the largest audience in the concert's history but a five-star review.

[Sameer Patel](#) has received both his undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Michigan. He recently spent three seasons as Associate Conductor of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic, conducting over 100 performances, and was one of only six conductors selected for the Bruno Walter National Conductor Preview with the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra. In 2011, he received an award presented by former New York Philharmonic Music Director Kurt Masur and assisted Masur with orchestral engagements abroad. Patel's upcoming and recent engagements include performances with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and the San Diego Symphony.

Through the PICF program, both fellows will have opportunities to conduct live ensembles with leading music organizations and educational institutions in Chicago. They will also receive personalized instruction from [Cliff Colnot](#), DePaul University's Director of Orchestral Activities and Wind Ensemble, the Principal Conductor of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, and the Principal Conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's contemporary MusicNOW Ensemble. Colnot also conducts ensembles at the University of Chicago and Indiana University. He is an experienced arranger and bassoonist and has worked with the Lyric Opera Orchestra of Chicago, Music of the Baroque, and the Contemporary Chamber Players.

In addition, former Chicago Symphony Orchestra CEO and former League of American Orchestra CEO [Henry Fogel](#) will provide mentoring and audition preparation advice for the fellows. Fogel is the former Executive Director of the National Symphony Orchestra of Washington, D.C. and was Orchestra Manager of the New York Philharmonic. Currently, Fogel serves as the Dean of the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University. He received a Cultural Leadership Citation from Yale University and was named an Illinois Arts Legend by the Illinois Arts Alliance.

Additional instruction will cover arts administration responsibilities including board development, financial statement analysis, marketing and audience development, working with a unionized labor force, fundraising, and stewarding long-term relationships with funders and donors. The program will also be observed by auditors who will attend PICF sessions to observe and foster their own professional network.

All participants are thrilled to be guided by Chen. “Maestro Chen is a deep artist and an inspiring leader...she brings a contagious energy to her music making and understands the importance of the conductor’s role in galvanizing positive change in our communities through the spirit of music,” states Patel.

This seminal program is made possible through support from [The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation](#), [The Chicago Community Trust](#), the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation and the [League of American Orchestras](#). “These organizations have been instrumental in allowing the Chicago Sinfonietta to expand Project Inclusion,” confirms Chen.

The Chicago Sinfonietta’s season begins on September 20th with a five-concert series at Wentz Concert Hall in Naperville, IL and Symphony Center in downtown Chicago. The season will feature innovative programming unlike traditional orchestral concerts. For more information on the season, please visit www.chicagosinfonietta.org or call 312-284-1554. Follow Chicago Sinfonietta on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), Instagram and #redefineclassical.

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