



## THE SAINT PAUL **CHAMBER** ORCHESTRA

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### **Richard Belcher appointed to cello position with the SPCO**

**SAINT PAUL, MN, JULY 23, 2019** — The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra (SPCO) announces today that Richard Belcher has been appointed as the newest member of the orchestra's cello section effective at the beginning of the 2019.20 season.

A native of New Zealand, Richard Belcher moved to the United States in 1998 to study with Aldo Parisot at Yale University. It was there that he co-founded the Grammy-nominated Enso String Quartet. For two decades the quartet toured regularly and performing frequently in many of the great concert halls throughout the world, as well as making several highly acclaimed recordings.

Belcher has been Principal Cello of ROCO (River Oaks Chamber Orchestra) in Houston, Texas since 2008, and after the Enso Quartet disbanded in 2018, he became Artistic Director of the chamber music series Music on the Hill in Mankato, Minnesota. He is a frequent guest at festivals throughout the United States and is in demand as a teacher and chamber music coach. He is married to Cecilia Belcher, the Assistant Principal Second Violin of the Minnesota Orchestra.

Belcher was unanimously chosen for this cello position by the SPCO's musician-comprised audition committee. In the upcoming season, he will be featured as cello soloist on former SPCO Composer-in-Residence Chen Yi's piece, *Sound of the Five* for Solo Cello and String Quartet in December 2019.

“We are so excited to welcome Richard Belcher into the orchestra next season,” said SPCO Principal Cellist Julie Albers. “He’s a beautiful cellist and musician and we feel very fortunate that he has chosen to join the SPCO! He has a rich and varied musical background including tons of chamber music, which is a true asset for our group!”

Regarding his appointment, Richard Belcher said, “I’m thrilled to be joining such a stellar group of musicians at the SPCO. Having spent most of my career playing in a string quartet, it’s wonderful to be surrounding myself with people who share that love of chamber music. I’m excited to explore and get to know the music of the great composers through the lens of the chamber orchestra.”

## **PHOTO**

Attached

## **ABOUT RICHARD BELCHER**

New Zealander cellist Richard Belcher joined the SPCO in 2019 after a twenty-year career as founding cellist of the Grammy-nominated Enso String Quartet. With the quartet he earned highly critical accolades from recording and concertizing in many of the world’s major concert halls such as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and Kennedy Center in the United States, as well as abroad in Europe, South America, Australia and New Zealand.

Belcher is the Artistic Director of Music on the Hill in Mankato, Minnesota, and since 2008 has been Principal Cellist of ROCO (River Oaks Chamber Orchestra) in Houston, Texas. He has taught and performed at many festivals including St. Bart’s, Festival d’Aix en Provence, Prussia Cove, Madeline Island, Campos do Jordao International Winter Festival, SummerFest La Jolla and the San Miguel de Allende International Chamber Music Festival.

In demand as a teacher and chamber music coach, he has previously served as Adjunct Faculty at Rice University’s Shepherd School of Music and has given numerous masterclasses around the world.

Belcher moved to the United States in 1998 to study with Aldo Parisot at Yale University, and it was there that he founded the Enso String Quartet. Richard’s other principal teachers include Norman Fischer, Marc Johnson and Alexander Ivashkin. He plays an N.F. Vuillaume cello made in 1856, and is married to Cecilia Belcher, Assistant Principal Second Violin of the Minnesota Orchestra.

## **ABOUT THE SAINT PAUL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA**

Renowned for its artistic excellence, remarkable versatility of musical styles and adventurous programming, The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra is widely regarded as one of the finest chamber orchestras in the world. Now in its 60th season, the SPCO has recently undergone transformational change with the opening of its new home, the Ordway Concert Hall, the addition of a new generation of players, and significant changes in its artistic vision. The SPCO is primarily an uncondacted ensemble that performs a broad range of repertoire from Baroque to new music and works in close collaboration with a diverse series of Artistic Partners, including British Baroque specialist Jonathan Cohen, American pianist Jeremy Denk, Swedish clarinetist Martin Fröst, Moldovan violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja and Finnish violinist Pekka Kuusisto. Past Artistic Partners include Roberto Abbado, Pierre-Laurent Aimard, Joshua Bell, Douglas Boyd, Nicholas McGegan, Stephen Prutsman, Dawn Upshaw, Christian Zacharias and Thomas Zehetmair.

The virtuoso musicians of the SPCO present more than 130 concerts and educational programs in the Twin Cities each year. The orchestra's free online Concert Library receives more than 80,000 visits annually and offers both live and on-demand videos of concerts that can be viewed anytime, anywhere, completely free of charge. The SPCO is regularly heard on public radio programs that reach nearly 1 million listeners each week on over 250 stations. Additionally, the SPCO has released 67 recordings, including the 2017 Grammy® Award-winning recording of Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* with violinist and Artistic Partner Patricia Kopatchinskaja. The SPCO has commissioned 150 new works and tours nationally and internationally, including recent engagements in Europe and New York City, and a prestigious residency with Cal Performances at the University of California, Berkeley.

The SPCO is nationally recognized for its commitment to broad community accessibility, its innovative audience outreach efforts, and its educational and family programming. Regular subscription series are performed in a variety of different venues across the Twin Cities metropolitan area each season, a unique commitment to geographic accessibility for a major orchestra. The SPCO offers the most affordable tickets of any professional orchestra in the United States, with over 50 percent of tickets available for \$15 or less, and has expanded accessibility even further by offering free tickets for children and students starting in the 2016.17 season as a part of the New Generation Initiative. The orchestra also offers an innovative ticket membership model in which members pay \$7 per month to attend unlimited concerts. The SPCO's award-winning CONNECT education program reaches over 5,000 students and teachers annually in 12 Minneapolis and Saint Paul public schools, and its Free Family Music program, generously supported, in part, by Target®, provides engaging and educational experiences for thousands of Twin Cities children and families each year. The SPCO's Liquid Music Series (named "Best of Classical" by *The New York Times*) develops innovative new projects with iconoclastic artists in unique presentation formats and invites adventurous audiences to discover the new and the fascinating within the flourishing landscape of contemporary chamber music.

### **MISSION OF THE SAINT PAUL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA**

Our mission is to sustain a world-class chamber orchestra at the highest standards of artistic excellence that enriches the Twin Cities community by sharing dynamic, distinctive and engaging performances. We are actively committed to accessibility and intentional inclusivity in all aspects of our work and continually strive to provide all people in our community with opportunities to connect with the music we perform.

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