



Pictured: Abel Selaocoe (credit: Mlungisi Mlungwana)

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Cellist Abel Selaocoe to become SPCO's newest Artistic Partner

Selaocoe's tenure will begin in the 2022.23 season, and he will lead the SPCO in a week of performances in April 2023

SAINT PAUL, MN, May 5, 2022 — The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra (SPCO) announces today that South African cellist Abel Selaocoe has been named the orchestra's newest Artistic Partner.

Selaocoe has exploded onto the music scene — defying genres, pushing boundaries and moving effortlessly between Western classical and African folk traditions. In March 2022, Selaocoe made his SPCO debut with a captivating weekend of performances that had musicians and audience members alike dancing out of their seats and, at times, even on stage. When Selaocoe began to sing a lullaby inspired by Johann Sebastian Bach's Sarabande from Cello Suite No. 3 in C Major, he welcomed the audience to sing along, and the Ordway resonated with their voices. The performance was captured on video and is now available for free, on-demand streaming in the SPCO Concert Library.

The orchestra met the week following Selaocoe's collaboration and voted to offer him the position of Artistic Partner.

"Abel Selaocoe is one of the most exciting and communicative artists I have ever come across and the possibilities for his Artistic Partnership with the SPCO are limitless," said SPCO Artistic Director and Principal Violin Kyu-Young Kim. "His performances with the SPCO were some of the most electric and transformational concerts we've ever done, and that is just the beginning of this journey."

"I am beyond excited to be taking up an Artistic Partnership with the SPCO," said Selaocoe of his appointment. "The wonderful thing about this collaboration is that it is based on curiosity, a high level of creativity, playing around with the unknown and really celebrating the known. Each concert will have an essence that reflects society or brings a message of well-being for the community. This is a very exciting venture for me and I'm so grateful for it."

"His joy is infectious and the humanity that he evokes through sound is deeply inspiring," said SPCO violinist Maureen Nelson. "I will never forget Abel's first words to us: 'this is not a place of fear, this is a place of curiosity.'"

Selaocoe's Artistic Partnership with the SPCO will begin with concerts in April 2023 around the theme of "Ethereal Voices," demonstrating his unique ability to use his voice, cello and improvisational abilities to communicate a message of beauty and hope.

PRESS COVERAGE

"There are few musicians who are able to move seamlessly between headlining the BBC Proms with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales one night and improvising at the London Jazz Festival the next. Abel Selaocoe is one such musician — able to master virtuosic performance with improvisation, singing and body percussion." — *BBC Music Magazine*

"Abel Selaocoe is billed as a cellist and composer but that doesn't begin to cover his talents. The South African musician also sings, improvises, dances and directs, seemingly sculpting sound with his hands ... Yet Selaocoe's greatest gift is his irresistible energy, sweeping the audience up into the music in an entirely wholehearted way." — *The Times*

"From the throngs of the township church to the transcendental power of house, it's clear that Selaocoe has never been a stranger to letting music embody the inner self ... As anyone who has seen Selaocoe perform will know, his presence on stage is accompanied by an extraordinary degree of unselfconsciousness that radiates out into the audience." — *The Strad*

PHOTOS

[Link to hi-res photos available for download](#)

VIDEOS

[Selaocoe's full SPCO concert debut in March 2022: **Where's My Refuge? with Abel Selaocoe**](#)

[Selaocoe performs with the SPCO, March 2022: **Abel Selaocoe: Ka bohaleng**](#)

[Selaocoe performs with the SPCO, March 2022: **Abel Selaocoe: Qhawe**](#)

[Selaocoe performs with the SPCO, March 2022: **Johann Sebastian Bach: Sarabande from Cello Suite No. 3**](#)

ABOUT ABEL SELAOCOE

South African cellist Abel Selaocoe is a rapidly rising star who is redefining the parameters of the cello. He moves seamlessly across a plethora of genres and styles, from collaborations with world musicians and beatboxers, to concertos and solo performances. Selaocoe combines virtuosic performance with improvisation, singing and body percussion, and is devoted to composing works and curating programs that highlight the links between Western and non-Western musical traditions, broadening the horizons of classical music to reach a more diverse audience.

In 2016, Selaocoe formed Chesaba — a trio specializing in music from the African continent, including many of his own compositions. He enjoys close collaborations with musicians from a medley of genres, including Bernhard Schimpelsberger, Tim Garland, Seckou Keita, Giovanni Sollima, Famoudou Don Moye and Gwilym Simcock. He has a close partnership with Manchester Collective, with whom he devised the hugely successful Sirocco programme which has been enjoyed both live and digitally by audiences since 2019. In 2020/21, Selaocoe performed at Kings Place, Norfolk & Norwich and Ryedale Festivals, and performed with ensembles including BBC Concert Orchestra at the EFG London Jazz Festival, Manchester Collective and Britten Sinfonia.

Selaocoe made his solo BBC Proms debut in August 2021, curating a program with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Chesaba and Gnawa Ensemble. Other highlights of the 2021/22 season include a tour with Manchester Collective and Chesaba of their new collaboration, The Oracle; debuts with The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and at Stanford Live; and performances both solo and with Chesaba throughout the UK and Europe.

Abel Selaocoe is an exclusive recording artist with Warner Classics and his debut album 'Hae Ke Kae' on the subject of home and refuge will be released in autumn 2022.

Selaocoe completed his International Artist Diploma at the Royal Northern College of Music in July 2018. In May 2021, he was announced as an inaugural Power Up Music Creator participant in PRS Foundation's new initiative to address anti-Black racism and racial disparities in the music sector and in July 2021, he received a Paul Hamlyn Foundation award for his compositional work.

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 63rd concert 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 uncondensed ensemble that performs a broad range of repertoire from Baroque to new music and works in close collaboration with a dynamic roster of Artistic Partners.

The virtuoso musicians of the SPCO present more than 100 concerts and educational programs in the Twin Cities each year. The orchestra's free online Concert Library receives more than 350,000 visits annually and offers both live and on-demand videos of concerts that can be viewed anytime, anywhere, completely free of charge. Through its partnership with YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio and American Public Media, the SPCO is regularly heard on public radio programs that reach nearly 850,000 listeners each week on over 250 stations. Additionally, the SPCO has released 68 recordings, including its recent critically-acclaimed album of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Piano Concertos with Artistic Partner Jeremy Denk and the 2018 Grammy Award-winning recording of Franz Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* with violinist and former Artistic Partner Patricia Kopatchinskaja. The SPCO has commissioned 162 new works and tours nationally and internationally, including recent engagements in Europe and New York City, and a prestigious residency with violinist Joshua Bell at the 2021 Bravo! Vail Music Festival.

The SPCO is nationally recognized for its commitment to broad community accessibility and its innovative audience engagement efforts. 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 ticket prices 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 \$9 per month to attend unlimited concerts. The SPCO's award-winning CONNECT

education program reaches over 3,000 students and teachers annually in 10 Minneapolis and Saint Paul public schools.

The SPCO is a proud member of the Arts Partnership, a 501(c)(3) organization composed of the four organizations that perform regularly at the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts – Minnesota Opera, the Ordway, the SPCO and Schubert Club. The Partnership's mission is to strengthen its organizations in service to the community through growing collaboration and stewardship of its shared assets. The Partnership works together to maintain the Ordway venue, to expand access for other community arts organizations to perform in the Concert Hall and to engage in collaborative artistic programming.

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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