MICHAEL FRANCIS

— CONDUCTOR —

MUSIC DIRECTOR, THE FLORIDA ORCHESTRA
CHIEF CONDUCTOR, DEUTSCHE STAATSPHILHARMONIE RHEINLAND-PFALZ
MUSIC DIRECTOR, MAINLY MOZART FESTIVAL

Michael Francis has developed an international reputation for sharing the power of music through his dynamic conducting and engaging speaking.

PHOTO: FELIX BROEDE

Appointed Music Director of The Florida Orchestra in 2014, he is now entering his twelfth season with a contract extension through 2030, and his role in building transformative community-engagement initiatives has helped grow the organisation significantly. Francis has been Music Director of the Mainly Mozart Festival in San Diego since 2014, with a contract renewal through the summer of 2029; Mainly Mozart is the largest gathering of concertmasters and principal players in North America. Now in his eighth season, Francis continues as Chief Conductor of the Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz with a contract extension through 2029. Previously, he was Chief Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Norrköping Symphony Orchestra from 2012 to 2016.

This season, Francis returns to MDR Leipzig, the Orquesta Sinfónica de RTVE Madrid, Komische Oper Berlin, the North Carolina Symphony and the Charleston Symphony, and makes his debut with the Colorado Symphony, the Orchestre National Bordeaux Aquitaine and the Belgrade Philharmonic. Previous highlights include North American performances with The Cleveland Orchestra and the symphony orchestras of St. Louis, San Diego, Houston, Atlanta, Pittsburgh, Minnesota, Toronto and Montreal, as well as the National Youth Orchestra of Canada. In Europe he has conducted the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Dresden Philharmonic, among others. In the UK — his home country — he has worked with the London Symphony, Royal Philharmonic, Philharmonia, BBC Philharmonic, BBC National Orchestra of Wales and the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland. In Asia, Maestro Francis has worked with the NHK Symphony and the philharmonic orchestras of Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia and Seoul.

Michael Francis has collaborated with notable soloists such as Yo-Yo Ma, Lang Lang, Arcadi Volodos, Itzhak Perlman, Christian Tetzlaff, Anne-Sophie Mutter, Javier Perianes, Anna Vinnitskaya, Håkan Hardenberger, Maximilian Hornung, Miloš, Benjamin Grosvenor, Emanuel Ax, Ian Bostridge, James Ehnes, as well as popular artists such as Sting, Cynthia Erivo, Josh Groban, Seal, and many others.

Continuing his work with young musicians, Francis and The Florida Orchestra have launched a multi-year partnership with the University of South Florida, where he conducts the symphony orchestra and masterclasses. Alongside this extensive educational work, Francis is passionate about sharing the hidden truths in music with audiences worldwide through his acclaimed podium talks. His “Inside the Music” series and pre-concert talks in Florida have greatly helped develop new audiences, and an exciting series of “Keynote” presentations with the Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz was released on Naxos.

The Michael Francis Foundation for Music and Meaning

Inspired by Francis’ gift for communicating the meaning of music, an anonymous donor created a substantial, multi-year grant-making foundation in his honour in 2026. The Michael Francis Foundation for Music and Meaning is dedicated to advancing the understanding of how classical music enriches human flourishing — in education, health, society and in our individual lives. In its first phase, the grants will empower select orchestras with the resources to share music’s transformative power more effectively with their communities and beyond. In June 2026, Mainly Mozart Festival received the inaugural multi-year gift. An announcement of a substantial multi-year gift to The Florida Orchestra will be made in early 2027.

Francis’s discography includes a recently released cycle of Mahler’s re-orchestrations of Beethoven’s symphonies and overtures with the Staatsphilharmonie on Capriccio, and the symphonic poems of Augusta Holmès on CPO. A recording of Dohnányi’s Symphony No. 2 will be released this autumn. Francis has also conducted the Rachmaninov piano concertos with Valentina Lisitsa and the LSO on Decca, and Wolfgang Rihm’s *Lichtes Spiel* with Anne-Sophie Mutter and the New York Philharmonic for Deutsche Grammophon.

A former double-bass player in the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO), Michael Francis came to prominence as a conductor in January 2007, stepping in for Valery Gergiev and John Adams with the LSO.