Conducting News from the San Diego Symphony:

- Music Director Jahja Ling Receives Yale School of Music ‘Distinguished Service Award’
- Sameer Patel Named Assistant Conductor
- Kensho Watanabe Named Conducting Fellow

San Diego Symphony’s music director Jahja Ling studied orchestral conducting at the Yale School of Music under acclaimed conductor Otto-Werner Mueller and received a Doctor of Music Arts in 1985. In the following years, Ling went onto great musical accomplishments and achievements bringing his dedication, knowledge, enthusiasm and talent to audiences all over the world. All the while, Ling maintained close personal and professional ties to Yale, his alma mater. This association was acknowledged last month as Jahja Ling received The Ian Mininberg Alumni Award for Distinguished Service from the Yale School of Music.

About Ian Mininberg: Ian Mininberg’s distinguished service to Yale spans 60 years including serving as the chairman of alumni affairs for the Yale School of Music for 20 years. Through his personal efforts and leadership, he significantly strengthened the bond between the School of Music and it’s alumni of the years. Mininberg’s extraordinary loyalty, dedication and vision has provided the Yale School of Music with invaluable support and invigorated alumni ties.

In receiving the Distinguished Service Award, Ling stated, “I am honored and forever grateful to Yale, in particular the School of Music, not only for all the education and guidance I received which prepared me to face the challenges of my profession, but more importantly, to instill the spirit of integrity and passion for excellence in all I do.”

Ling went onto comment: “I especially wish to thank Professor Otto-Werner, who was a great teacher and mentor along with many other esteemed faculty members who taught me during my time at Yale. They had such a great influence and impact on my development as an artist.”
My time at Yale is forever inscribed in my memory and has inspired me to pass on this great tradition to the next generation. (Otto-Werner Mueller will celebrate his 89th birthday on June 23 in North Carolina where he is retired.)

In Ling’s acceptance speech at the honors banquet, he thanked Yale School of Music’s Dean Robert Blocker, who still offers Ling guidance, advice and encouragement and who continues to make the school a great and unique institution.

Audiences can look forward to seeing Jahja Ling leading the San Diego Symphony on eight Jacobs Masterworks weekends in the 2015-16 season. Ling and the Symphony open the season with guest artist, pianist Yuja Wang on October 9, 10 and 11 in downtown San Diego’s Jacobs Music Center. Ling will step down as music director of the San Diego Symphony at the conclusion the 2016-17 season upon which he will receive the title: conductor laureate.

**Sameer Patel, Assistant Conductor**

From an applicant pool of more than 165 submissions that ultimately came down to four candidates who conducted the orchestra in a live audition, Sameer Patel has been selected as San Diego Symphony’s new assistant conductor replacing associate conductor Ken-David Masur, who will be moving to Boston this summer to begin his new position as assistant conductor with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Patel’s duties at the San Diego Symphony will include covering all Jacobs Masterworks classical subscription concerts, conducting the Family Festival series, Young People’s Concerts and additional concerts throughout the season.

In addition to the live audition, the final assistant conductor candidates participated in interviews with music director Jahja Ling, musicians and staff. Candidates also gave a presentation of a Young People’s Concert script and program to members of the orchestra and Symphony staff.

“I am thrilled to join the San Diego Symphony as assistant conductor, and I look forward to serving both the organization and the San Diego community,” stated Sameer Patel. “One of San Diego’s crown jewels is its world-class orchestra, which is at the heart of the city’s vibrant cultural life. I am excited to connect with our audience, and I am looking forward to working closely with Maestro Ling, the musicians, the staff and the orchestra’s many supporters.”

In 2013, Patel was one of only six conductors selected by the League of American Orchetras for the Bruno Walter National Conductor Preview with the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra, an event that showcases emerging and talented conductors to orchestra industry professional. Patel was a 2011 Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy Scholar, an honor given to him by former New York Philharmonic music director Kurt Masur. As part of this award, Patel traveled to Europe to
study with and assist Masur with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra.

“We are so pleased to welcome Sameer to the San Diego Symphony,” commented music director Jahja Ling. “He brings a great deal of talent, experience and knowledge to this position, and we look forward to seeing him on stage and watching him grow as an artist.”

Recent and upcoming engagements include appearances with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Knoxville Symphony Orchestra, Phoenix Symphony, Toledo Symphony Orchestra, Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra and the Pacific Symphony. Patel joins the San Diego Symphony after spending three seasons as associate conductor of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic and as a Project Inclusion Conducting Fellow with the Chicago Sinfonietta.

Sameer Patel will begin his role as assistant conductor of the San Diego Symphony later this summer.

Kensho Watanabe, Conducting Fellow

One of the outstanding candidates for assistant conductor was Kensho Watanabe. He was so impressive that the panel making the selection offered him a special designation of “conducting fellow.” In this limited capacity, Watanabe has been offered the opportunity to build on his conducting experience and develop his skills by observing rehearsals, conducting some Kinder Koncerts and work with the Symphony’s education and artistic staff.

"I am extremely grateful to Maestro Ling and the San Diego Symphony for committing to my development as a conductor. I was struck by the energy, drive and outlook of the entire organization, and I am looking forward to developing this intrepid partnership while getting to know the San Diego community."

Watanabe recently completed his tenure as the inaugural Conducting Fellow at the Curtis Institute of Music under the mentorship of Yannick Nézet-Séguin. He received his diploma in conducting from Curtis in 2013 and his Master of Music in Violin from the Yale School of Music in 2010. Recent conducting engagements include the Alabama Symphony Orchestra, L'Orchestre Métropolitain, and the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra.

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For more information about the San Diego Symphony and its 2015-2016 season including the Jacobs Masterworks and Summer Pops, please contact the box office at 619.235.0804 or visit www.sandiegosymphony.com.

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