



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Empire State Youth Orchestra

432 State Street
Schenectady, NY 12305
www.Esyo.org

Contact: Justin Cook
Marketing & Publication Manager
Phone: 518.382.7581
Email: jcook@esyo.org

DATE: MARCH 7, 2022

SPIRIT OF INNOVATION, FRESH PERSPECTIVES, AND BELONGING TOP LIST OF PRIORITIES FOR NEW ESYO MUSIC DIRECTOR

*Renowned Conductor, Violinist and Creative Entrepreneur Etienne Abelin To Serve as
the Empire State Youth Orchestra's Next Music Director*

Schenectady-NY Empire State Youth Orchestra, regionally and nationally known as a creative and dynamic force in artistic and ensemble-based music education, today announced that its Board of Directors appointed Swiss conductor, violinist and creative entrepreneur Etienne Abelin to be ESYO's new Music Director beginning on March 7, 2022. Hailed as a "post-classical pioneer" by *BBC Music Magazine* and an "icon of new ways in classical music" by *Musica Viva Magazine Brazil*, Abelin brings a spirit of innovation and fresh perspectives to an established regional leader in the arts and education.

ESYO's interim Board Chair and public school music teacher, Omar Williams, said, "*Etienne stood out from a global pool of conductors as an extraordinary musician, an inspiring educator, and a visionary in the field. He is creative, dynamic, and thoughtful. His holistic approach to music-making creates a culture of belonging and inclusion that is at the core of ESYO's mission. ESYO is excited to have Etienne at the podium leading our organization in the service of our student-musicians.*"

Etienne Abelin, who moved to the Capital Region from Basel, Switzerland, has a storied career. He studied violin at the Musik-Akademie Basel, Oberlin College, and Indiana University, earned an Executive MBA from the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland and later studied conducting at the Eastman School of Music and the University of Delaware.

Etienne won the exceptional privilege of being a musical collaborator of 18 years with classical music legend conductor Claudio Abaddo. Handpicked by Mr. Abaddo to be a founding member of the prestigious Lucerne Festival Orchestra and the principal second violin of the Orchestra Mozart Bologna, Etienne's artistry is internationally renowned.

As a conductor, he has performed with orchestras throughout Europe, including the Beethoven Orchester Bonn, the Musikkollegium Winterthur, the Ensemble Orchestral de Paris and the Orquestra Sinfónica Portuguesa in venues such as the Royal Festival Hall London, Teatro alla Scala Milano and the Odeon of Herodes Atticus in Athens. His enthusiasm for new, genre-crossing music led him to conduct world premieres by Gabriel Prokofiev and William Britelle as well as Swiss premieres of works by Nico Muhly, Sarah Kirkland Snider, Fabrizio Cassol, and others. Etienne has made headlines in Europe and the United States for co-founding the Ynight-Classical Music in Clubs Series and the Apples & Olives Indie Classical Festival. Recently he enjoyed the distinction of being featured as one of five visionary conductors in the documentary series *Conducting the Future* alongside Marin Alsop, former ESYO music director Paavo Järvi, Lars Vogt, and Miguel Perez Iñesta.

Etienne, who is just as passionate about education and technology as he is about music, is excited to be part of the creative landscape in New York's "Tech Valley" region:

"There are many fascinating developments in music and music education today, and I'm especially looking towards integrating with other music genres and art forms, particularly through technology. I'm excited to help position ESYO as an incubator for new collaborations and for new ways of connecting our young musicians with local communities," said Abelin.

Most recently, Etienne co-created Music:Eyes — See what you Hear, a music tech-ed start-up platform that harnesses the power of music animation to support education in the classroom and the concert hall. Since its creation, Music:Eyes has evolved into a non-profit association with international partnerships with such organizations as the Berlin Philharmonic, the European Union Youth Orchestra, Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, Columbia University and the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen. Etienne shared the concept of Music:Eyes on the TEDx stages of Amsterdam, Netherlands and Zurich, Switzerland. A founding member of Sistema Europe, Abelin currently serves as a member of the Sistema Europe Board of Directors and in 2013 co-founded the Sistema Europe Youth Orchestra (SEYO) and helped develop the "7 Dimensions of Musical Excellence" framework that guides the SEYO program today.

Rebecca Calos, ESYO's Executive Director, is excited to partner with Abelin to realize the vision outlined in the organization's strategic plan. "Etienne possesses that rare combination of brilliant vision and compassionate empathy. Our students were captivated from his first moment in rehearsal and since then they have been abuzz about his creative energy and passion. I am so excited to partner with Etienne as we build a strategic roadmap out of the pandemic and toward a bright future for our youth and for our musical community," said Calos.

Etienne's vision for ESYO focuses on empowering young musicians using an approach he calls "Music NOW": "Music is full of powerful stories, full of profound emotions. In addition to helping celebrate diverse heritages and their histories, music can create bridges and belonging in our painfully polarized world - especially since it can do so without words. But in order to bring music to life and to move the people around us, it's essential for us to learn how to move ourselves, breathe together, listen, and tell captivating stories when we play music together," said Abelin.

"I envision ESYO as a laboratory for this kind of musicianship and being, where we'll work with dancers, actors, and artists of all kinds in order to become fully present and expressive, to shape the moment, enter states of flow, and live in a spirit of improvisation even when we play composed music. I believe in using legacy to create something new, at times raw, at times tender. In doing so, we become "NOW-musicians" and healers in a fractured world. I'm thrilled to embark on this journey with the fabulous young musicians of ESYO and the wonderful ESYO team and board I'm currently having the pleasure to get to know and to begin this profound work with," he continued."

Etienne begins his tenure as ESYO's new full-time Music Director on Monday, March 7, 2022, with rehearsals for his debut ESYO performance on Sunday, April 3, 2022, at the Troy Savings Bank Music Hall. The matinee performance, which begins at 3:00 PM, features Elgar's deeply expressive Cello Concerto performed by Eujeong Choi, Niskayuna Sophomore, and the 2022 Lois Lyman Concerto Competition Winner. . Etienne will also lead the Symphony Orchestra at the 2022 Playathon, ESYO's musical marathon event at Crossgates Mall on Saturday, March 26, 2022.

###

About Empire State Youth Orchestra: Empire State Youth Orchestra (ESYO) challenges and inspires young people to achieve excellence through music in a progressive learning environment leading to high-level performance opportunities. More than 500 youth from New York's Capital Region and western New England are selected by audition each year to perform in ESYO. With 13 performing ensembles and orchestras suiting a range of playing levels, members receive training from outstanding conductors and coaches, and tutelage from extraordinary guest artists.

In 2015, ESYO launched CHIME (Creating Harmony Inspiring Musical Excellence) in Schenectady to address fundamental inequities preventing universal access to high level music opportunities for youth. Today, this free after school program serves more than one hundred K-12 students in partnership with Capital Region school districts.

Founded in 1979, ESYO is a not-for-profit organization that has been recognized as a premier music education/performance program for youth and has received three ASCAP awards. For more information, visit esy.org.

About Etienne Abelin: Swiss conductor **Etienne Abelin** has been described as a "post-classical pioneer" in the *BBC Music Magazine* and an "icon of new ways in classical music" by the *Musica Viva Magazine Brazil*. His gripping, emotionally charged performances have been hailed as "always unforgettably fine" by eminent conducting mentor Jorma Panula.

Abelin won the exceptional privilege of being a musical collaborator for 18 years with classical music legend conductor Claudio Abbado, who has been described as one of the three greatest conductors of all time by BBC Music Magazine. As such, Etienne was handpicked by Mr. Abbado to be a founding member of the Lucerne Festival Orchestra and the Orchestra Mozart Bologna, where he was the Principal Second Violin for seven years. With these orchestras, he performed in the world's most prestigious concert halls and recorded for labels such as Deutsche Grammophon and Harmonia Mundi.

As a conductor, he has performed with orchestras throughout Europe, including the Beethoven Orchester Bonn, the Musikkollegium Winterthur, the Ensemble Orchestral de Paris and the Orquestra Sinfónica Portuguesa in venues such as the Royal Festival Hall London, Teatro alla Scala Milano, Birmingham Symphony Hall, Teatro São Carlos Lisbon, the the Odeon of Herodes Atticus in Athens and Beethovenfest Bonn. His enthusiasm for new, genre-crossing music led him to conduct world premieres by Gabriel Prokofiev and William Brittnelle as well as Swiss premieres of works by Nico Muhly, Sarah Kirkland Snider, Fabrizio Cassol, and others. Etienne has made headlines in Europe and the United States for co-founding the Ynight-Classical Music in Clubs Series and the Apples & Olives Indie Classical Festival.

A gifted communicator, Etienne Abelin has presented on multiple occasions as a TEDx speaker and performer and has hosted numerous concerts of orchestras such as the Orquestra Sinfónica Portuguesa and the Sistema Europe Youth Orchestra in Lisbon, Istanbul, Milano and Athens with audiences up to 4500. He is a frequent contributor on Swiss National radio and television on a wide range of topics, from genre-crossing music to new concert formats, conductors, and also blind comparison of recordings, a fun feature of Swiss Radio.

Abelin's passion for entrepreneurship, technology, education and social change through music have, over the years, led him to co-found and co-direct the Pan-European [Sistema Europe Youth Orchestra](#), the Swiss EI Sistema-inspired program [Superar Suisse](#), the [Apples&Olives Indie Classical Festival](#) Zurich, the [Ynight-Classical in Club](#) series and most recently [Music: Eyes - See what you Hear](#), a music tech-ed platform based on music animation. Recent Music: Eyes projects include collaborations with such organizations as the Berlin Philharmonic, the European Union Youth Orchestra, Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, Columbia University and the

Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen. As an educator, he developed a "7 Dimensions of Musical Excellence" framework for the Sistema Europe Youth Orchestra. With his chamber music ensembles [BachSpace - Bach&Electronics](#) and [Nik Bärtsch's Mobile Extended - Ritual Groove Music](#), Abelin has released albums on the Neue Meister and ECM labels. In 2021 he enjoyed the distinction of being featured as one of five visionary conductors in the Karajan Foundation's documentary series [Conducting the Future](#) alongside Marin Alsop, Paavo Järvi, Lars Vogt, and Miguel Perez Iñesta.

Born in Bern, Switzerland, Etienne Abelin studied the violin at the Musik-Akademie Basel, Oberlin College and Indiana University, executive business administration at the University of St. Gallen and conducting with teachers such as Jorma Panula, Neil Varon, Larry Rachleff, Johannes Schläfli, James Allen Anderson and Don Schleicher at the ZHdK Zurich, the University of Delaware and Eastman School of Music where he's currently on leave of absence from his doctoral studies in conducting.

Etienne Abelin resides in the Capital Region of New York, and outside of music pursues his passion for coffee and gelato all over the world. He particularly enjoys light Ethiopian single origin brews and Stefino Gelato from Bologna, Italy.