



Conroe Symphony Orchestra

Media Contact: Laura Trahan

832-640-3026 / lbtrahan@yahoo.com

<https://conroesyphony.org/>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

World-Class Music. Right Here in Conroe: *Conroe Symphony Orchestra Announces Its Upcoming Season*

[Conroe, Texas, July 15, 2026] The Conroe Symphony Orchestra (CSO) is excited to announce their upcoming season. Spanning from September 2026 until June 2027, the upcoming season offers a five-concert exploration of both domestic and global musical heritage. As a thriving, 29-season community orchestra, the CSO is excited to invite you to experience world-class music. Right here in Conroe. Five concerts. One season. Yours to discover.

Whether you have been with the CSO family since the beginning, or are considering attending a first concert, this season has something for everyone. The CSO is made up of dedicated volunteer musicians who put on performances that repeatedly surprise audiences with their quality and high artistic caliber.

Under the warm and humorous leadership of Maestro Gary Liebst, the CSO built five varied musical journeys. This eclectic program weaves together the energy of big band swing, cherished holiday standards, and the spirited rhythm of Texas Western swing. Audiences will also journey through Italian opera and cinematic favorites, culminating in a grand patriotic finale. Each selection is carefully curated to mirror the impressive versatility of our musicians and the diverse spirit of the Conroe community.

"At the end of the day, I try to pick themes that I think the audience will connect with and enjoy the performance, regardless of the journey we want to take them on," Liebst said.

Swing Swing Swing · September 26, 2026 · Season Opener

The CSO opens its season with a tribute to the golden age of American swing, featuring music from Glenn Miller, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, and more.

The programming builds on the overwhelming response to swing repertoire performed during the orchestra's 2025 concert featuring Sal Viviano. *"The style is lively, rhythmic, and optimistic," Liebst said. "Many people recognize the melodies from the Swing era, whether through classic recordings, films, television, or family memories. This concert also shows that the orchestra is not limited to symphonic, Broadway, and movie repertoire. It showcases the orchestra's flexibility and stylistic range."*

Liebst chose repertoire from bandleaders and composers who were *"at the forefront of the era, set the*

style for the times, and produced the most recognizable melodies" of the swing genre.

Featured Vocalist: Hugh Poland

The concert reunites the CSO with vocalist Hugh Poland, who most recently performed with the orchestra during the 2025 patriotic concert.

"Hugh has always been a big fan of the music of the Big Band era, has a perfect voice for it, and the energy to pull off those exciting arrangements," Liebst said. "I am thrilled that he has agreed to join us for this program."

Treasures of Christmas · December 19, 2026 · Holiday Concert

The CSO's beloved annual holiday concert returns with a program of traditional favorites and fresh new arrangements, including a reimagining of three movements from Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite by arranger Jeff Tyzik, who also arranged the orchestra's Twelve Gifts of Christmas program last season.

"Jeff keeps turning out great arrangements of all types, but he seems to have a special talent for creating new and exciting arrangements for Christmas," Liebst said.

The evening will once again close with the CSO's signature audience sing-along. *"This is always a real highlight for the community and the orchestra," Liebst said, "as everyone joins together to celebrate the season."*

Featured Soloist: Kenneth Gayle

Returning to the CSO stage for the first time since 2023, tenor Kenneth Gayle joins the orchestra for an evening showcasing both traditional holiday favorites and new arrangements curated in collaboration with Liebst.

"Kenneth possesses a remarkable voice, and we have collaborated closely to select a program that features beloved holiday classics alongside fresh arrangements, all designed to highlight his immense artistry," Liebst remarked.

From the Saddle to Symphony Hall · February 6, 2027 · 2:30pm · with Dave Alexander and the Texas Swing Band

The CSO will share the stage with Dave Alexander and the Texas Swing Band for an evening celebrating Western Swing, the distinctly Texan sound pioneered by artists such as Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys and Spade Cooley.

"Western swing and orchestra music complement each other surprisingly well, because they share many of the same musical foundations, even though they developed in different traditions," Liebst explained. "Western swing borrowed sophisticated harmonies from jazz and big band music. Those

colorful chords translate beautifully to a full string section and orchestral woodwinds."

The program honors the region's musical heritage while highlighting the orchestra's stylistic versatility. *"This concert honors our regional heritage to Texas swing and also showcases the orchestra's versatility," Liebst said.*

Featured Guest: Dave Alexander and the Texas Swing Band

Dave Alexander of Dave Alexander Productions brings his Western Swing Pops program to the CSO stage, blending the sound of a full Western swing band with symphonic orchestration.

Viva Italia! · May 1, 2027 · A Musical Journey Through Italy

Billed as "Un Viaggio in Italia" — a journey through Italy — this concert spans classical orchestral works by Respighi, Italian opera by Puccini and Verdi, Nino Rota's iconic score for *The Godfather*, and Italian folk music.

"Italy has a long tradition of singable and expressive melodies," Liebst said. "Whether it is an opera aria, a folk tune, or a serious orchestral work, Italian music often specializes in telling a story. The opera music in this concert in particular brings the orchestra into the world of human emotion — love, conflict, humor, tragedy, and triumph."

Liebst hopes the community leaves the concert singing of Italy. *"The music becomes a doorway to the journey. The romance of Venice, the energy of Naples, the grandeur of Rome, the traditions of village celebrations are all part of this trip. I hope the audience members all leave singing one of the great Italian melodies they've heard."*

Celebrate America! · June 26, 2027 · Season Finale

The CSO closes its 29th season with the return of its beloved patriotic tradition, honoring veterans, active-duty service members, and their families. Following the orchestra's historic 2026 concert marking the United States Semiquincentennial, this program carries that celebration's spirit forward.

"After commemorating a major anniversary celebration in 2026, the orchestra is not looking backward — it is carrying that spirit forward," Liebst said. "The music says: our story continues, and with our community, we are still creating it together."

A Season Built on Community

The 2026–2027 season continues the CSO's tradition of programming that reflects both artistic ambition and deep community roots.

"This orchestra has grown not only in musical ability, but in purpose and identity," Liebst said. I want audiences who feel that this is their orchestra, a place where they belong, and where they can experience the power of live music together."

Season tickets are on sale now at [ConroeSymphony.org](https://conroesympphony.org). Prior to our September season opener, a Conroe Symphony VIP lanyard will be sent to the season ticket holder's home address. This lanyard serves as an all-access pass for the year, featuring a unique QR code that provides entry to all five performances throughout the 2026–2027 season. Season ticket holders will have guaranteed entrance to all concerts.

All concerts will be held at First Methodist Church Conroe, 4308 W Davis St, Conroe, TX 77304.

The Conroe Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1997. The CSO was created to contribute to the cultural enrichment of the community, assuring a better quality of life for the Conroe area. Its objective is to provide the region with the best possible musical experience, while creating music lovers and connecting the Conroe community. The CSO strives to be recognized as one of the outstanding community orchestras in the state of Texas. As a nonprofit community orchestra, it is supported through individual and corporate donations, grants, and ticket sales. The City of Conroe Arts and Culture grant supports the whole season.

Soloists Bios

Hugh Poland:



Hugh Poland serves as Pastor of Discipleship at Woodridge Baptist Church in Kingwood, where he has served for the past 25 years. A native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, who grew up in the Houston area, Poland holds degrees from Houston Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is also active in the local music community as an accompanist and serves as Jazz Band Director at Kingwood High School. Poland and his wife, Jill, have four children and two grandchildren, with two more on the way.

Kenneth Gayle:



A Seattle native and Houston resident, Gayle's national credits include performances with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Ravinia Music Festival, the Grant Park Music Festival, Seattle Opera, the Seattle Symphony, Opera Omaha, the Omaha Symphony, Opera Idaho, and the Shenandoah Valley Bach Festival.

Locally, Gayle has appeared with the Houston Ebony Opera Guild, the Mukuru: Arts for AIDS series, and Three Mo' Tenors, and performed in the Southwestern premiere of the chamber opera Fragments from Augustine the

Saint at Rothko Chapel. His recent solo engagements include the New York City premiere of John Cornelius' PAX at Carnegie Hall with the Apollo Chamber Players, and Bach's Mass in B Minor with the Shenandoah Valley Bach Festival.

Dave Alexander and the Texas Swing Band:



Throughout his Award winning career, Dave has gained the respect of his peers while mesmerizing audiences with each performance. His long list of awards, Hall of Fame inductions and Grammy nominations exemplify this multi-instrumentalist and vocalist's undying love for Texas Music.

It all began with his love for Western Swing. After graduating from the University of North Texas, Dave assembled "The Legends of Western Swing", a western swing big band featuring former members of Bob Will's Texas Playboys such as Johnnie Gimble, Leon Rausch, Eldon Shamblin, Pee Wee Lynn and Billy Briggs.

Dave was quickly retained as "House Band" for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, held each year in the Houston Astrodome, carving a musical relationship that would last for over 14 years. It was there Dave met other Country and Western Swing Music stars who he would come to know and eventually tour and record with. These stars included George Strait, Willie Nelson, Lyle Lovett, Tracy Byrd, Asleep At the Wheel and Randy Travis just to name a few.

Here are just a few of Dave Alexander's musical accomplishments throughout his career:

- Recognized as one of the Top Selling Western Swing Artists of his time.
- 4 - GRAMMY Award Nominations
- 6 - Will Rogers Awards, from the Academy Of Western Artists, including Entertainer Of The Year, Male Vocalist, Song of the Year, and Album of the Year.
- Texas Western Swing Hall Of Fame.
- The Oklahoma Country Music Hall Of Fame.
- The Sacramento Western Swing Society Hall Of Fame.
- The Seattle Western Swing Society Hall Of Fame.
- The Fort Worth CowTown Music Hall Of Fame.

###

