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**The Solti Foundation U.S.  
Announces  
2016 Solti Foundation U.S. Career Assistance Awards  
to Eleven Young American Conductors**

**Evanston, IL** - The Solti Foundation U.S. today announced the largest number of recipients to receive a Solti Foundation Career Assistance Award by the organization in one year, surpassing last year's nine awards and bringing the number of such grants given by the Foundation in its twelve year history to 46. This year's recipients hold positions throughout the United States with orchestra and opera posts in Arizona, California, DC, Iowa, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Philadelphia, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

In making the announcement, **Penny Van Horn**, Solti Foundation U.S. Board Chair, congratulated the 2016 recipients: **Christopher Allen**, John L. Magro Resident Conductor, Cincinnati Opera, and Associate Conductor, Los Angeles Opera; **Gene Chang**, Assistant Conductor, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and Music Director, Cincinnati Symphony Youth Orchestra; **Ankush Kumar Bahl**, Assistant Conductor, National Symphony Orchestra (four year tenure just completed); **Joshua Gersen**, Assistant Conductor, New York Philharmonic, and Music Director, New York Youth Symphony; **Daniel Black**, Assistant Conductor, and Rae and Ed Schollmaier Foundation Chair, Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, and Music Director of the Oshkosh Symphony Orchestra; **Keitaro Harada**, Associate Conductor, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Associate Conductor, Arizona Opera, and Associate Conductor, Richmond (VA) Symphony Orchestra; **Yaniv Dinur**, Assistant Conductor, The Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra; **Stefano Sarzani**, Conductor, Des Moines Metro Opera; **Stilian Kirov**, Music Director, Symphony in C (Philadelphia, PA), and Music Director, Bakersfield Symphony Orchestra; **Michelle Merrill**, Assistant Conductor and Phillip and Lauren Fisher Community Ambassador, Detroit Symphony Orchestra; and **Sameer Patel**, Assistant Conductor, The San Diego Symphony Orchestra.

She noted that there were several previous awardees amongst the recipients, stating, "The mission of the Solti Foundation U.S. is to identify, support and promote emerging young American conductors as they launch their classical careers. The Foundation is always interested in the long term development of our awardees. We nurture relationships with all our recipients, tracking their progress and offering support when it is merited. We also provide continuing support not only in the form of grants but in valuable access to mentors, door opening introductions and opera residencies."

### **About The Solti Foundation U.S.**

Now in its twelfth year of assisting outstanding young U.S. conductors to further develop their talent and careers, The Solti Foundation U.S. is the foremost organization in the United States dedicated exclusively to helping young conductors.

Established in 2000 to honor the memory of Sir Georg Solti by lending significant support to career-ready young American musicians, in 2004, the Foundation concentrated the focus of its award program to exclusively assist talented young American conductors early in their professional careers (its original mission was of a more general arts nature).

The Foundation endeavors to seek out those musicians who have chosen to follow a path similar to that followed by Sir Georg himself. In keeping with the spirit of Sir Georg's active approach to his career, young conductors must apply to be considered for the awards.

While dedicated to identifying and assisting young conductors early on, the Foundation is also concerned with the long-term development of its award recipients, continuing to offer support and maintaining a constant interest in their growth and achievements.

The Foundation currently awards the following grants annually:

*The Sir Georg Solti Conducting Award.* Among the largest grants currently given to American conductors in the formative years of their careers, the prestigious \$25,000 grant is given annually to a single promising American conductor 38 years of age or younger. The Award, also known as *The Solti Fellow*, includes door-opening introductions, ongoing professional mentoring, and introductions to two of Chicago's most prestigious performing organizations: Lyric Opera of Chicago and Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Recipients include Karina Canellakis, Vladimir Kulenovic, Cristian Macelaru, James Feddeck, Case Scaglione, Eric Nielsen, and Anthony Barrese.

*The Solti Foundation U.S. Career Assistance Award.* The amount of the Career Assistance Awards varies.

*Opera Residency Program.* Introduced in the 2014-15 season, the program places former award recipients with a distinguished opera house for one-on-one mentoring and coaching of an opera during the company's professional season. Conductors cannot apply, but are instead selected by the Artistic and Awards Committee.

The Foundation is currently the only American Foundation to grant these kinds of awards each year to young American conductors. Citizens or permanent residents of the United States who are career-ready artists in the field of conducting are eligible to apply.

Applicants for all Solti Foundation U.S. awards must be able to demonstrate that he/she is developing a career as a symphonic/operatic conductor. All applications from The Sir Georg Solti Conducting Award are considered for a Solti Foundation U.S. Career Assistance Award. Applications are reviewed by an awards committee comprised of a panel of professionals with broad musical and conducting experience. The Foundation reserves the right to withhold a grant in any given year if the Awards Committee does not find suitable applicants in one or more of the various award categories.

For further details on The Solti Foundation U.S., its past awardees, their biographical information, the Foundation's newsletter, as well as guidelines for the upcoming 2017 Awards and a downloadable application form, please visit the Foundation's website at: [www.soltifoundation.us](http://www.soltifoundation.us).

**The Dropbox link** to download pdfs of this release and the full-length biographies of the 2016 awardees is: [https://www.dropbox.com/sh/4q35a47elyzinhi/AADM1Dl-cy3hwhsMughw\\_uCxa?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/4q35a47elyzinhi/AADM1Dl-cy3hwhsMughw_uCxa?dl=0)

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**Sameer Patel, conductor, 2016 Solti U.S. Career Assistance Award Recipient**



Currently in his first season as Assistant Conductor of the San Diego Symphony, Sameer Patel is increasingly recognized by audiences and musicians for his musicality and passionate communication. He previously spent three seasons as Associate Conductor of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic, where he conducted over 100 performances and invigorated the orchestra's engagement with the community. In 2013 Mr. Patel was one of only six conductors selected by the League of American Orchestras for the Bruno Walter National Conductor Preview with the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra, an event that showcases emerging and talented conductors to orchestra industry professionals. He was also 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, Mr. Patel traveled to Europe to study with and assist Maestro Masur with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and the Finnish

Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Recent and upcoming engagements include appearances with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Knoxville Symphony Orchestra, Pacific Symphony, Phoenix Symphony, Fresno Philharmonic, Toledo Symphony Orchestra, Alabama Symphony Orchestra, Naples Philharmonic, Reading Symphony Orchestra, Muncie Symphony Orchestra, Leipziger Sinfonieorchester, the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra and the Chicago Sinfonietta. Additionally, Mr. Patel has worked with the Tonhalle-Orchestra Zürich, Orquestra Sinfónica Simón Bolívar of Venezuela, Lucerne Festival Strings, Orchestra da Camera di Trento, the Ensemble Zandonai, the Festival Orchestra of Sofia at the Accademia Musicale Chigiana, the Oslo Chamber Orchestra and the Royal Northern College of Music Orchestra at the Stresa Festival. He has also conducted at the David Oistrakh Festival and the Leigo Music Days Festival in Estonia in appearances with the Estonian National Youth Symphony and the St. Petersburg Festival Orchestra.

Mr. Patel began his musical training as a pianist and received both his graduate and undergraduate degrees at the University of Michigan, where he studied conducting with Kenneth Kiesler. He furthered his training internationally with acclaimed conductors Gianandrea Noseda, Kurt Masur, Bernard Haitink, David Zinman, Neeme Järvi, Paavo Järvi, Larry Rachleff, Günther Herbig, and Mei-Ann Chen. He has held prestigious conducting fellowships with the Boston Philharmonic and the Chicago Sinfonietta, and he credits his time with these organizations for developing his passionate approach to engaging with audiences of all backgrounds and to reimagining the concert experience. Also an enthusiastic advocate for music education, Sameer Patel has worked with school and youth orchestras in North America, South America, and Europe.

[www.sameer-patel.com](http://www.sameer-patel.com)