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The Venice Symphony Names Debbi Benedict as Chair and Welcomes Three to Board of Trustees

Venice, FL – June 18, 2020– The Venice Symphony announces the appointment of three new members to its Board of Trustees with three-year terms beginning on June 1, 2020. Joining the Board are Bob Bartholomew, Andy Leisenring and Victoria Stultz. Also, on June 1, Debbi Benedict assumed the role of Chair of The Venice Symphony Board of Trustees.

Bob Bartholomew moved to Venice from Grand Rapids, MI in 2010. After receiving a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from Georgia Tech, Bartholomew worked at Amway for more than 25 years before retiring in 2000. He went on to receive a Master of Management degree from Aquinas College in 1994 and post-retirement, served as a business consultant, and adjunct professor at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids. Bartholomew is the immediate past-president of the Hospital Volunteers of Venice and a past president of the Venice Newcomers Club. Bartholomew is also a mentor with Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Sun Coast. Of joining the Symphony Board, he said, "I am looking forward to attending concerts this season and hope to help The Venice Symphony continue to grow and prosper."

Andy Leisenring has served in law enforcement for 20 years and is currently a patrol lieutenant with a local law enforcement agency. A Michigan native, he lives in Venice with his wife Melissa, a physical therapist, and daughters Olivia and Madison. Leisenring earned a master's degree from Boston University is active in the community and is a graduate of the inaugural class of the Venice Area Chamber of Commerce Leadership Venice program. "The Venice area has an amazing artistic community and the Venice Symphony has worked hard to place itself as one of the leaders of this community," said Leisenring. "I am humbled to have the opportunity to serve on the Board of Trustees and am looking forward to finding ways to contribute to its continued development."

Victoria Stultz has been in the real estate industry for 20 years and is currently a Realtor with Premier Sotheby's International Realty. Originally from Boston, Stultz moved to Cincinnati and began visiting Venice when she was a teenager. She moved here in 2006 with her husband Andy Stultz, who owns Atlas Building Company, and daughter Andrea, now a senior at Furman University in Greenville, SC. She has served on many nonprofit boards, is the immediate past-chair of the Venice Area Chamber of Commerce, and a member of the Venice-Nokomis Rotary Club. Stultz said "I grew up attending the Boston Pops and later the Cincinnati Pops, and now The Venice Symphony. I am looking forward to serving on the Board to help make an impact by bringing awareness of the Symphony's amazing musical performances and to help enhance and grow the youth orchestra.

As of June 1, **Debbi Benedict** assumed the role of Chair of the Board of Trustees. Benedict served as vice chair in 2019-20. A Midwesterner by birth, but a Floridian for the past 40 years, Benedict is a longtime local magazine columnist and gardening enthusiast. She currently writes a column in Judy Gallagher's *My Cooking Magazine*, and maintains Benhaven Farm at her home, growing more than 100 fruit trees, shrubs, vines and native plants. Benedict served as president for the Junior League of Sarasota County, and on the boards of many local nonprofits in the Sarasota community. She has initiated and chaired many luncheons and galas over the past 30 years, including the 2019 Venice Symphony Gala. Debbi and her husband, Jan, have two grown daughters and four grandchildren. "I treasure having the opportunity to serve on the VSO board at this time because music truly is the one voice that can encompass all languages and cultures. I value serving at a time of having the ability and space for creating a new normal for the way we experience music, not only classical works, but all types of music."

Returning members of The Venice Symphony Board Trustees are Maureen Bentley (secretary), David Chivas, Penny Corell, Barbara Freeman, Bob Hite, David Joyner, Floyd Juday (vice president), Steven Ledbetter, Alicia King Robinson, Casey Riley (treasurer) and Paul McCullough (emeritus). Retiring from the Board after fulfilling their terms, are Robert "Bob" Anderson and Janice Zarro Wood.

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About The Venice Symphony: Founded in 1974, The Venice Symphony is a 501 (c)(3) professional orchestra deeply rooted in its community, offering a variety of concerts, special events and long-standing music education programs for adults and in area schools throughout the year.