CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ASSOCIATION

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DECEMBER PROGRAMMING AT SYMPHONY CENTER AND IN THE COMMUNITY

CHICAGO — The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association (CSOA) presents a variety of programs this December, featuring the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) and renowned guest artists performing at Symphony Center and in community venues.

The CSO performs the world premiere of the CSO-commissioned song cycle *Song of the Reappeared,* written by former CSO Sir Georg Solti Conducting Apprentice Matthew Aucoin featuring soprano Julia Bullock (December 4-7). Conductor Gianandrea Noseda returns to the podium alongside soloist James Ehnes for Britten's Violin Concerto and Prokofiev's Fourth Symphony (December 11-13). Zell Music Director Designate Klaus Mäkelä leads Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, and Yunchan Lim plays Robert Schumann's enchanting Piano Concerto (December 18-20).

Additionally, the Elysian Trio performs on December 2 as part of the CSO Chamber Music series, and CSO for Kids: Once Upon a Symphony begins with The Ugly Duckling on December 6. Further highlights include performances of holiday favorite Home Alone in Concert (December 12-14) and the CSO brass section's annual December spectacular. Principal Conductor Ken-David Masur leads the Civic Orchestra of Chicago in a performance of Bach's *Brandenburg* Concertos at Fourth Presbyterian Church on December 15.

Audiences can also look forward to this season's holiday concerts, including A Chanticleer Christmas (December 9) and seven performances of the annual family-friendly favorite Merry, Merry Chicago! with members of the CSO and the Chicago Symphony Chorus (December 19-23).

Tickets and more information are available at cso.org.

Explore a chronological list of December 2025 concert programs.

MARY LOUISE GORNO *Chair, Board of Trustees* | JEFF ALEXANDER *President*

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Till Eulenspiegel & Bullock Sings Aucoin (December 4-7)
Richard Strauss brings humor and charm to *Till Eulenspiegel*, a lively portrait of the mischievous prankster. Brahms never revealed a story behind his Third Symphony, but its four movements are infused with a yearning, bittersweet beauty. Star soprano Julia Bullock gives the world premiere of a new song cycle *Song of the Reappeared*, written for her by former CSO Sir Georg Solti Conducting Apprentice Matthew Aucoin. Set to the poetry of Chilean writer Raúl Zurita, the piece explores themes of memory, language and spirituality.

On Saturday, December 6, the CSO African American Network and Latino Alliance co-host a postconcert event. Tickets are required for entry. Learn more about the event at CSO African American Network or CSO Latino Alliance.

Noseda Conducts Debussy & Prokofiev 4 (December 11-13)
A work of dark, searching grandeur, Prokofiev's Fourth Symphony gathers sumptuous themes from his ballet music, revised in the postwar shadow of Stalin's Russia. Britten's Violin Concerto, a searing response to the Spanish Civil War, features James Ehnes, "a flawless technician and a serious, ever-perceptive musician" (*The Guardian*). Providing contrast is Debussy's dreamy and sensuous *Prelude to The Afternoon of a Faun*.

Klaus Mäkelä & Yunchan Lim (December 18-20)
Zell Music Director Designate Klaus Mäkelä leads Beethoven's buoyant Seventh Symphony alongside two contemporary works inspired by Beethoven from composers Unsuk Chin and Jörg Widmann. Yunchan Lim, the youngest-ever winner of the Van Cliburn Competition, performs the enchanting, heartfelt Piano Concerto of Robert Schumann — a composer with the soul of a poet.

CSO Chamber Music

Elysian Trio (December 2)
The Elysian Trio explores the richly expressive world of clarinet, cello and piano trios. From the balanced textures of Beethoven and the lyrical warmth of Bruch to the sweeping drama of Brahms, this program highlights the intimate scale and emotional range of chamber music. Experience it up close in Orchestra Hall with seating on the stage or in the Terrace.

General admission seating for both sections is first come, first seated. Space is limited and early arrival is recommended — doors open approximately 45 minutes before the concert. This concert is pay what you wish, starting at $15.

CSO for Kids

Once Upon a Symphony: The Ugly Duckling (December 6)
A young duckling is teased for being different. After facing loneliness and other struggles, the duckling matures into a stunning swan, realizing true beauty comes from within. Explore this musical portrait of self-discovery, acceptance and inner strength, with vivid storytelling and small ensemble performances. Produced and presented in partnership with Chicago Children's Theatre, Once Upon a Symphony is designed to introduce children ages 3 to 5 to the world of classical music and the musicians of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

CSO at the Movies

Home Alone in Concert (December 12-14)
This true holiday favorite features John Williams' charming and delightful score performed live to picture by members of the CSO and The Deerfield Singers directed by Anastasia Cameron Balmer. Macaulay Culkin stars as Kevin McCallister, an 8-year-old boy who is accidentally left behind when his family leaves for Christmas vacation and must defend his home against two bungling thieves. Hilarious and heart-warming, *Home Alone* is fun for the entire family!

© 1990 Twentieth Century Fox

Holiday Concerts

A Chanticleer Christmas (December 9)
"The one Christmas concert to rule them all" (*San Francisco Classical Voice*), Chanticleer's signature holiday program returns to Orchestra Hall. The Grammy Award-winning men's chorus presents an evening of joyous carols including Joy to the World, popular Christmas songs like Ave Maria and its medley of Christmas Spirituals.

Merry, Merry Chicago! (December 19-23)
With the hall trimmed in festive decor, guest conductor John Morris Russell — conductor of the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra — returns to Orchestra Hall to lead members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Chicago Symphony Chorus, prepared by Chorus Director Donald Palumbo, in a program of traditional music of the season and festive songs. Program highlights include *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, Carol of the Bells*, *Sleigh Ride* and a rousing rendition of the cherished local favorite *Christmas in Chicago*.

On Saturday, December 20, the CSO Latino Alliance hosts the annual Noche navideña to gather friends and family for the holiday celebration. Tickets are required for entry. Learn more about the event at CSO Latino Alliance.

On Sunday, December 21, before the 4:30 p.m. performance, the CSO African American Network hosts a preconcert event. Tickets are required for entry. Learn more about the event at CSO African American Network.

Symphony Center Presents

Chicago Symphony Orchestra Brass (December 16)
Celebrated around the world for its mighty sound and razor-sharp precision, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra brass section presents its annual December spectacular. CSO trombone Michael Mulcahy conducts a program spanning Baroque favorites to symphonic masterworks arranged for the ensemble.

Civic Orchestra of Chicago

Civic Bach Marathon Finale (December 15)
Steeped in the grandeur and intricacy of the Baroque age, J.S. Bach's *Brandenburg* Concertos are a showcase for his inexhaustible imagination. Hear four of these beloved concertos — 3, 4, 5 and 6 — alongside two imaginative arrangements of J.S. Bach's music by composers Max Reger and Eric Nathan. Ken-David Masur conducts the program's finale in a perfect complement to the holiday season.

This concert takes place at Fourth Presbyterian Church (126 E. Chestnut St., Chicago). Tickets are pay what you wish, starting at $5 and go on sale Monday, December 1, at 10 a.m.

Food and Beverage

Explore Symphony Center's on-site dining options for a seamless preconcert experience. Preorder a Sound Bites meal to enjoy in the Rotunda at Symphony Center before the concert — or make a reservation to dine at the Thomas Club, offering a prix fixe menu featuring traditional American fare and a spectacular view of Lake Michigan. View menus and learn more at cso.org/dining.

Parking and Transit Options

Exclusive parking rates are available through Millennium Garages, the Preferred Parking Partner for Symphony Center. The closest parking garage is the Grant Park South Garage, located at 325 S. Michigan Ave. Valet parking is available for select

performances at Symphony Center's 67 E. Adams St. entrance. A round-trip North Shore Shuttle service is available for Friday matinees. Visit cso.org/parking for more parking and transit options.

Patron Information

Contact Patron Services for personalized assistance online at cso.org/contact or by calling 312-294-3000, Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

All artists and programs are subject to change.

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association acknowledges support from the Illinois Arts Council.

Newsradio 105.9 WBBM is a Media Partner for the Till Eulenspiegel & Bullock Sings Aucoin concerts. The performance on December 4 is sponsored by Sheppard Mullin.

Support for Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association programming for children and families is provided by BMO, ComEd, John Hart & Carol Prins, Kinder Morgan, PNC Bank, Megan & Steve Shebik, Linda & Michael Simon and the Walter and Caroline Sueske Charitable Trust.

The appearance of Ginanadrea Noseda is made possible by the Juli Plant Grainger Fund for Artistic Excellence. The Noseda Conducts Debussy & Prokofiev 4 concerts are generously sponsored by United Airlines.

Home Alone in Concert is part of the CSO at the Movies series, which is generously sponsored by Megan and Steve Shebik.

The 2025/26 Civic Orchestra season is generously sponsored by Lori Julian for the Julian Family Foundation, which also provides major funding for the Civic Fellowship program.

The Civic Orchestra of Chicago acknowledges support from the Illinois Arts Council.

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Brass concert is generously sponsored by the Schmidt Family Fund.

The Klaus Mäkelä & Yunchan Lim concerts are generously sponsored by Zell Family Foundation.

The appearance of the Chicago Symphony Chorus for Merry, Merry Chicago! has been made possible by a generous gift from The Grainger Foundation.

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Chicago Symphony Orchestra: cso.org

Founded by Theodore Thomas in 1891, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra is consistently hailed as one of the world's great orchestras. In April 2024, Klaus Mäkelä was named the Orchestra's 11th music director, and he will begin an initial five-year tenure as Zell Music Director with the 2027/28 Season. Riccardo Muti, the Orchestra's 10th music director from 2010 until 2023, became Music Director Emeritus for Life at the beginning of the 2023/24 Season. Joyce DiDonato is the CSO Artist-in-Residence for the 2025/26 Season.

The CSO commands a vast repertoire, from baroque through contemporary music. Its renowned musicians perform more than 150 concerts annually, in Orchestra Hall at Symphony Center in downtown Chicago and each summer at the Ravinia Festival in suburban Highland Park. The ensemble regularly tours domestically, and since 1892, has made 65 international tours, performing in 30 countries on five continents.

Patrons around the globe enjoy weekly radio broadcasts of CSO concerts and recordings via the WFMT Radio Network and online at **cso.org/radio**. Launched in 2007, **CSO Resound** is the ensemble's Grammy Award-winning independent record label, featuring live performances with world-class conductors and guest artists. Since 1916, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus have amassed an extensive discography that has earned 65 Grammy awards from the Recording Academy.

The CSO is part of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association (CSOA), which also includes the Chicago Symphony Chorus, Civic Orchestra of Chicago, Symphony Center Presents and Negaunee Music Institute. The **Chicago Symphony Chorus**, founded by Margaret Hillis in 1957, is the country's largest professional chorus. Donald Palumbo is the Director of the Chicago Symphony Chorus. Founded by second music director Frederick Stock during the 1919/20 Season, the **Civic Orchestra of Chicago** is a training ensemble for emerging professionals with Ken-David Masur serving as its principal conductor. **Symphony Center Presents** features guest artists and ensembles across an expansive array of genres, including classical, jazz, world and contemporary. The **Negaunee Music Institute** offers community and educational programs that annually engage more than 200,000 people of diverse ages and backgrounds throughout the Chicagoland area.

Through the Institute and numerous other activities — including annual free community concerts in Chicago neighborhoods — the CSO is committed to using the power of music to strengthen bonds with its longtime patrons and create connections with new audiences.

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association is supported by thousands of patrons, volunteers and institutional and individual donors. The Negaunee Foundation provides generous support in perpetuity for the work of the Negaunee Music Institute.