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CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ASSOCIATION SHARES ARTISTIC HIGHLIGHTS AND OPERATING RESULTS OF ITS 134TH SEASON

CHICAGO — The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association (CSOA) released the operating results of fiscal year 2025 (July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025) at its Annual Meeting on October 29, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. Mary Louise Gorno, chair of the Board of Trustees, and CSOA President Jeff Alexander conducted the meeting at Symphony Center with CSOA supporters in attendance. Gorno and Alexander shared artistic highlights from the 134th season, and CSOA Treasurer Renée Metcalf reported the organization's financial results. Chair of the CSOA Nominating and Governance Committee Scott Swanson announced the confirmation of new trustees and CSOA officers. Additional reports were shared by William Buchman, chair of the Orchestra Members' Committee the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO), and Chair of the CSOA Governing Members Merrill Blau, who also conducted the annual induction of new Governing Members.

The Annual Meeting commemorated the 2024/25 Season and included reports in recognition and celebration of the significant artistic and institutional achievements of the season, followed by a musical performance by CSO Principal Trumpet Esteban Batallán, who holds the Adolph Herseth Principal Trumpet Chair, endowed by an anonymous benefactor.

The 2024/25 Season was highlighted by landmark performances with Zell Music Director Designate Klaus Mäkelä and Music Director Emeritus for Life Riccardo Muti. Mäkelä, whose tenure as the CSO's 11th music director begins in the 2027/28 Season, returned for a two-week spring residency that featured Mahler's Third Symphony and a program with Dvořák's Seventh Symphony and Brahms' Second Piano Concerto, featuring 2024/25 CSO Artist-in-Residence Daniil Trifonov. Muti conducted four distinct programs in Chicago, including a program featuring the world premiere of the CSO-commissioned *Megalopolis Suite* by former Mead Composer-in-Residence Osvaldo Golijov, and capped the season with four capacity performances of Verdi's Requiem Mass. This followed a critically acclaimed U.S. tour in January 2025 led by Muti, which included performances in Miami, West Palm Beach, Orlando and Naples, Florida, at New York's Carnegie Hall and the McKnight Center for the Performing Arts in Stillwater, Oklahoma. Other

artistic milestones included a 2025 European tour with Jaap van Zweden on the podium where the CSO was the only North American ensemble invited to perform at the Mahler Festival in Amsterdam, followed by concerts in Hamburg, Dresden, Prague, and Wrocław, Poland, and a collaboration with The Joffrey Ballet that featured two newly commissioned ballets. CSOA season programming was preceded by the CSO's annual six-week residency at the Ravinia Festival in summer 2024.

During the 2024/25 Season, the CSOA offered 386 free programs, continuing its commitment to community events. A highlight was the CSO's participation in Open House Chicago on October 20, 2024, when 5,900 visitors explored Symphony Center for free. The day offered musical performances and opportunities to step onto the conductor's podium on Armour Stage at Orchestra Hall and to connect with representatives from the CSOA's numerous volunteer and affinity groups throughout Symphony Center.

The CSOA sold 283,000 tickets across 202 paid concerts presented in a variety of venues across the Chicago area ranging in size from 250 to 2,500 seats, generating more than \$22 million in ticket sales.

The CSOA welcomed 57,000 unique ticket-buyer households, including 28,000 first-time ticket buyers. An additional 5,000 ticket-holder households attended CSOA free events or received complimentary tickets. The CSOA's student ticket program saw 18,000 student tickets sold to concerts across the season. The annual holiday presentation of Merry, Merry Chicago! reached a new record for ticket sales revenue of \$1.26 million.

Donor support experienced further growth with 16,924 individual gifts contributed by 12,346 donors, 5,436 of those being first-time donors. The total contributions from individual donors, corporations and family foundations represented \$21.4 million in direct operational support. The Women's Board of the CSOA presented the annual Symphony Ball featuring a sold-out CSO concert conducted by Andrés Orozco-Estrada with international piano superstar Lang Lang that raised \$1.45 million through contributions and ticket sales.

For the 2025 fiscal year, the CSOA secured \$32 million in earned operating revenue from ticket sales, performance fees — including those for CSO tours and the annual Ravinia residency — as well as retail sales and facility rental fees. Total contributed support was \$47.1 million, including direct operating support the annual 5% draw from the endowment fund and board-approved transfers from other non-restricted investment funds. The CSOA's results from operations included total revenues of \$79 million and expenses of \$80.4 million, leading to an operating deficit of \$1.4 million.

CSOA financial highlights can be found on page 7 of the 2024/25 Annual Report.

Ticket Sales and Operating Revenue for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2025

- Ticket sales totaled \$22 million.
- In addition to ticket revenue, other operating revenue totaled \$9.9 million including performance fees, Symphony Store retail sales, facility lease and rental income and media and royalties.
- Total operating revenue was \$31.9 million.

Contributed Revenues for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2025

- Total operating support, net of fundraising event expense, was \$47.1 million. This included direct operational support of \$21.4 million, along with the organization's annual 5% endowment draw and board-approved draws from other investment funds.
- The *SEMPRE* ALWAYS campaign is a major fundraising initiative that launched in 2020 with a leadership gift and challenge from the Zell Family Foundation with an original campaign goal to secure \$175 million in support for the CSOA. Contributions support four main priorities: achieving financial sustainability, sustaining musical excellence, expanded education and community engagement, and strengthening Chicago's cultural fabric.
- In 2025, the *SEMPRE* ALWAYS campaign for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra reached \$220.3 million. The new total was anchored by a \$50 million gift from the Zell Family Foundation along with several other major campaign gifts received last year.

Final Revenue and Operating Expense Information for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2025

- Total revenues (earned revenue and operating support) were \$79 million.
- Total operating expenses reached \$80.4 million, resulting in operating deficit of \$1.4 million.

Endowment

- The CSOA's endowment and other investments grew from \$453.5 million in fiscal year 2024 to \$510.6 million in fiscal year 2025 to further improve the organization's financial foundation and balance sheet.

Total Assets

- Total assets at year-end were \$647 million. Net assets increased \$72 million as of June 30, 2025, to \$492 million.

CSOA Trustees, Governing Members and Officers Elected

- Seven new trustees were elected to three-year terms: Robert B. Ford, CEO of Abbott; Janice L. Honigberg, former CEO and founder of Sun Belle Inc.; Jason M. Laurie, founding partner, managing director and chief investment officer of Altair Advisers; Frank B. Modruson, former CIO of Accenture; Andrew Pritzker, partner at TAWANI Enterprises; Kate Protector Drehkoff, senior vice president of strategy at Allstate, and Christopher D. Tower, former partner at BDO USA.
- 14 trustees were re-elected to additional three-year terms, and 22 new Governing Members were installed. Special acknowledgement was given to 35 individuals who have served on the CSOA Board of Trustees for 30 years or more.
- The following individuals were elected as officers of the CSOA Board of Trustees: Mary Louise Gorno, Chair; Chester A. Gougis, Steven Shebik and Helen Zell, Vice Chairs, and Renée Metcalf, Treasurer. The following CSOA staff were elected as officers of the CSOA Board of Trustees: Jeff Alexander, President; Stacie M. Frank, Assistant Treasurer; Kristine Stassen, Secretary of the Board, and Dale Hedding, Vice President for Development.

A moment of silence was observed for Life Trustee Louis C. Sudler Jr., who passed away in April, and musicians who passed away since the last annual meeting: Eric Wicks, violinist from 1968 to 2006; Joane Bennett, assistant principal flute from 1958 to 1968; Walfrid Kujala, flute and piccolo from 1954 to 2001; Donald Moline, cellist from 1967 to 2006, and Fox Fehling, violinist from 1979 to 2022.

CSOA Programming Highlights – 2024/25 Season

The 2024/25 Season was marked by landmark performances with Zell Music Director Designate Klaus Mäkelä and Music Director Emeritus for Life Riccardo Muti.

Mäkelä, whose tenure as Zell Music Director officially begins in the 2027/28 Season, returned for a two-week spring residency. This residency included performances of Mahler's Third Symphony with Women of the Chicago Symphony Chorus and Uniting Voices Chicago, as well as a program featuring Dvořák's Seventh Symphony and Brahms' Second Piano Concerto with 2024/25 CSO Artist-in-Residence Daniil Trifonov as soloist.

Muti conducted four distinct programs in Chicago throughout the season. His November 2024 program featured the world premiere of the CSO-commissioned *Megalopolis Suite* by former

Mead Composer-in-Residence Osvaldo Golijov. In January 2025, Muti led the CSO on a critically acclaimed U.S. tour, which included a performance at New York's Carnegie Hall and concerts in Florida and Oklahoma. Muti capped the CSO season with four capacity performances of Verdi's Requiem Mass featuring distinguished soloists and the Chicago Symphony Chorus, prepared by Donald Palumbo, who was announced as the next Chorus Director for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2025.

CSO Artist-in-Residence Daniil Trifonov's other Chicago residencies included appearances on the Symphony Center Presents Piano series and the Symphony Center Presents Chamber Music series with violinist Leonidas Kavakos. Trifonov also led two master classes with college-level pianists and the finalists of the Crain-Maling Foundation CSO Young Artists Competition.

The CSO realized its third collaboration with The Joffrey Ballet and The Mary B. Galvin Artistic Director Ashley Wheater, MBE, which included the premiere of two newly commissioned ballets. Choreographer Amy Hall Garner set her new ballet, *Second Nature*, to Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson's Sinfonietta No. 1, and choreographer Nicolas Blanc set his new ballet, *Les Bœufoons*, to Darius Milhaud's boisterous work *Le Bœuf sur le toit*. The program, conducted by Harry Bicket, also featured Haydn's Symphony No. 45 (*Farewell*) and the CSO's first performances of Symphony No. 1 by Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges.

A 2025 European tour featured the CSO's performances as the only North American ensemble invited to participate in the 2025 Mahler Festival, hosted by Amsterdam's Concertgebouw for only the third time since 1920. The CSO was hailed by audiences and critics for its concerts featuring Mahler's Sixth and Seventh Symphonies conducted by Jaap van Zweden at the festival before continuing on to Hamburg and Dresden and making debut appearances in Prague and Wrocław.

Daniel Bernard Roumain and Jimmy López served as CSO Mead Composer-Curators in the 2024/25 Season, sharing programs that highlighted their distinctive styles and curatorial perspectives.

The CSO Fellowship Program, established in the 2022/23 Season, aims to give early career string musicians significant experience rehearsing and performing with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Fellows train and perform with the CSO for a minimum of 20 weeks, receiving mentorship from CSO musicians. The program achieved a key success this season when former CSO Fellow Gabriela Lara won an audition for a permanent position to join the First Violin section in January, making her the first CSO musician hired by Zell Music Director Designate Klaus Mäkelä. Violinist Jesús Linárez (The Michael and Kathleen Elliott Fellow) and bassist Olivia Reyes continued their fellowships in the 2024/25 Season, performing with the CSO both at Orchestra Hall and on tour.

Symphony Center Presents (SCP) programs throughout the 2024/25 Season welcomed a wide array of world-class artists and ensembles. The SCP Chamber Music series featured the return of viol player Jordi Savall with his early music ensembles; violinist Julia Fischer with pianist Jan

Lisiecki, and a trio comprising violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter, pianist Yefim Bronfman, and cellist Pablo Ferrández. The SCP Piano series brought legendary artists like Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Daniil Trifonov, Emanuel Ax, Evgeny Kissin, and Víkingur Ólafsson back to Orchestra Hall, alongside notable debuts by Alexandre Kantorow and Mao Fujita. The SCP Jazz series included performances by the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis, Cécile McLorin Salvant, the Bill Charlap Trio, Hiromi, the Brandee Younger Trio, Eliane Elias, and the Chicago Jazz Orchestra in a tribute to Oscar Peterson. Other highlights included Grammy Award-winning vocalist Lila Downs returning for a Día de los Muertos program, as well as performances by the Sphinx Virtuosi, Kodo, the Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain and Pink Martini.

Programs of the Negaunee Music Institute (NMI) engaged many communities, with 275 Chicago-area schools participating in programs that reached 25,000 students, teachers, and families. Two-thirds of student attendance came from Chicago Public Schools, who received free bus transportation through a donor-supported program. The Institute collaborated with 90 school and community partners to deliver education and community engagement programs across the year. The Civic Orchestra of Chicago benefited from the mentorship of 30 CSO musicians who served as coaches, and 22 Civic musicians made more than 250 visits to eight Chicago Public Schools high school instrumental music programs.

The CSOA's varied affiliate groups expanded their reach, with the African American Network and Latino Alliance membership reaching 1,500 and 1,000, respectively, last season. These groups, along with the CSO Student Ambassadors, CSO for Kids Ambassadors, Overture Council and Western Suburbs Ambassadors, joined other donor and volunteer groups in building strong support and advocacy for the CSOA and its programs and activities.

Additional artistic programming, education and community engagement highlights and information about the CSOA's digital engagement initiatives and volunteer programs are available by accessing the [CSOA 2024/25 Annual Report](#).

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Chicago Symphony Orchestra: [cso.org](https://www.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.