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Press Contact:
[Hannah Sundwall](#)
[312-294-3083](#)

OCTOBER PROGRAMMING AT SYMPHONY CENTER AND IN THE COMMUNITY

CHICAGO — October is a month of diverse programs presented by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association (CSOA), highlighted by two weeks of concerts led by Zell Music Director Designate Klaus Mäkelä. He leads the Orchestra in Mahler's Ninth Symphony (October 1-4). Additionally, Mäkelä and the Orchestra present Stravinsky's *Petrushka* and, in collaboration with the Chicago Symphony Chorus, Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*, featuring baritone Thomas Hampson (October 8-9). On October 10, Mäkelä conducts his first Symphony Ball with repeat performances of the Stravinsky and Walton.

The month also includes performances by violinist Anne Akiko Meyers in Márquez's *Fandango* led by Giancarlo Guerrero (October 15-17) and Jian Wang in Dvořák's Cello Concerto with Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider (October 22-25). Szeps-Znaider and Wang also open the CSO at Wheaton series with a performance at Edman Memorial Chapel on October 23.

In October, the Symphony Center Presents (SCP) Chamber Music series opens with an appearance by this season's CSO Artist-in-Residence, Jean-Yves Thibaudet, and his longtime trio partners, violinist Lisa Batiashvili and cellist Gautier Capuçon (October 18). The SCP Jazz series presents Freedom Riders with special guests Kurt Elling & Lizz Wright for a program that offers vital inspiration through music that unites audiences with the energy and spirit of shared humanity (October 2). The Jazz series continues on October 16 with the Branford Marsalis Quartet and Dianne Reeves in a program celebrating John Coltrane.

The Civic Orchestra of Chicago officially opens its 108th season on October 26 at Symphony Center. The program, led by Principal Conductor Ken-David Masur, features Beethoven's mighty *Eroica* Symphony alongside Ives' *Variations on America*,

Hernández's *Parallax (or 33,000 Stolen Sunsets)* and Sibelius' *Finlandia*. The program will also be presented at South Shore Cultural Center on October 25.

A Notes for Peace concert, which uses therapeutic benefits of music to support families who have lost loved ones to gun violence, will take place on October 17 at Epiphany Center for the Arts.

Tickets and more information are available at [cso.org](https://www.cso.org).

[Explore](#) a chronological list of October 2026 concert programs.

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Mäkelä Conducts Mahler 9 ([October 1-4](#))

Mahler's last completed work, the Ninth Symphony, opens with a sighing farewell, but that's just the start. The composer takes you on a journey through the depths of the human spirit, exploring all its beauty, bitterness and transcendence. Zell Music Director Designate Klaus Mäkelä galvanizes audiences with his Mahler interpretations, offering performances that are "exquisitely, sensitively and lovingly made" (*Chicago Tribune*).

Mäkelä, *Petrushka* & *Belshazzar's Feast* ([October 8-9](#))

Step into the opulent Babylon of *Belshazzar's Feast*, Walton's dramatic cantata depicting a king's blasphemous revelry and divine reckoning. Captivated by the sheer theatricality of the biblical tale, Walton fills the score with lavish orchestral color and hints of jazz. The great baritone Thomas Hampson joins the CSO, augmented by a double chorus, two brass bands and an organ. Stravinsky paints a scene of orchestral color in his dazzling tale of puppets springing to life amid a fantastical Russian carnival, and the CSO brass step forward to offer two joyous works by Venetian master Giovanni Gabrieli.

Symphony Ball with Klaus Mäkelä ([October 10](#))

Celebrate the 2026/27 Season in grand fashion as Zell Music Director Designate Klaus Mäkelä leads a musical journey to the opulent Babylon of Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*. The great baritone Thomas Hampson joins the CSO for this dramatic cantata, which Walton fills with lavish orchestral colors, mighty choruses and hints of jazz. The musical celebration begins with Stravinsky's dazzling tale of puppets springing to life amid a fantastical Russian carnival. Don't miss the chance to walk the red carpet and toast the launch of an exciting new season.

Enhance your concert experience with a [Symphony Ball gala package](#), including a private preconcert reception for patrons and sponsors in the Forte event space and

postconcert dinner and celebration at the Four Seasons Hotel Chicago. For more information, please [email Symphony Ball](#) or call [312-294-3185](#).

This benefit event helps the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association strengthen Chicago's cultural fabric and reach countless new audiences each year.

Guerrero Leads Fandangos & Enigma Variations ([October 15-17](#))

Few contemporary violin concertos have made a splash with audiences like Arturo Márquez's *Fandango*, which won a 2024 Latin Grammy. Composed for Anne Akiko Meyers, this riotously colorful work is a salute to the Spanish dance form and its New World offshoots. Framing the program are Roberto Sierra's contemporary meditation on two 18th-century fandangos and Elgar's musical portraits of family and close friends — some tender, others gently mocking.

Sleeping Beauty & Dvořák Cello Concerto ([October 22-25](#))

The crown jewel of cello repertoire, Dvořák's heroic and soulful Cello Concerto marks the return of Jian Wang, a soloist with a lustrous sound and compelling interpretive ideas. Selections from Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty* transport you to the Golden Age of ballet, painted in a thousand wondrous sounds. Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider opens the program with music from his native Denmark, in Nielsen's quicksilver *Maskarade* Overture.

The [October 23](#) performance takes place at Wheaton College's Edman Memorial Chapel (401 E. Franklin St., Wheaton).

Brahms Requiem ([October 29-31](#))

Brahms once called *A German Requiem* his "human requiem" — and it fits. The gently powerful score emphasizes consolation for the living rather than fiery judgment, and offers us a chance to reflect on love, sorrow and the passing of time. Mozart's *Linz* Symphony has a contemplative strain of its own, before a joyous finale that is to be played "as fast as possible."

CSO Chamber Music

CSO Chamber Music at the University of Chicago ([October 20](#))

Savor a musical feast by Chicago Symphony Orchestra musicians! Inspired by the theme of "gastromusicology," this program explores the intersection of food and music. Whet your appetite with Martinů's kitchen utensil-inspired ballet suite *La revue de Cuisine*, and indulge in other musical food for thought by Brahms, Beethoven and Schoenfield.

This concert takes place in Mandel Hall at University of Chicago (1131 E 57th St., Chicago).

Symphony Center Presents Chamber Music

Thibaudet, Batiashvili & Capuçon ([October 18](#))

In their early piano trios, the teenage Shostakovich and Debussy showed the world their youthful exuberance. By the time Dvořák wrote his Trio in F Minor, he was in the prime of his career and favoring a dramatic, darkly Romantic style. CSO Artist-in-Residence Jean-Yves Thibaudet explores these rich juxtapositions while joined by his longtime trio partners, Georgian-German violinist Lisa Batiashvili and cellist Gautier Capuçon.

Symphony Center Presents Jazz

Freedom Riders with special guests Kurt Elling & Lizz Wright ([October 2](#))

In the 1960s, Freedom Rider activists challenged racial segregation in the Southern United States. With reverence for their courage and struggle, this groundbreaking international jazz collective features a new generation of artists and composers who continue in the tradition of providing a soundtrack to the global civil rights movement. Joined by esteemed vocalists Kurt Elling and Lizz Wright, the Freedom Riders band offers vital inspiration through music that unites audiences with the energy and spirit of shared humanity.

Branford Marsalis & Dianne Reeves Celebrate John Coltrane ([October 16](#))

Jazz would not sound the same today without John Coltrane. Known for dissolving the boundaries of jazz, he could “pull listeners right out of their chairs” (Jazz Review). The Branford Marsalis Quartet and Dianne Reeves — artists with the stature and fire to meet the moment — celebrate Coltrane’s centennial with a one-of-a-kind program that highlights their own improvisational brilliance and selections from their upcoming album revisiting Coltrane’s seminal 1963 collaboration with Johnny Hartman.

Civic Orchestra of Chicago

Notes for Peace ([October 17](#))

Join families from Purpose Over Pain for a concert of new original songs honoring loved ones lost to gun violence, composed and performed in collaboration with Civic Fellows, guest teaching artists from the Irene Taylor Trust and professional vocalists. This program takes place at Epiphany Center for the Arts (201 S. Ashland Ave., Chicago).

Finlandia & Beethoven Eroica ([October 26](#))

Principal Conductor Ken-David Masur opens the Civic Orchestra’s season in a program featuring Beethoven’s mighty *Eroica* Symphony, which brims with anthems of hope and

triumph over oppression. Sibelius channeled Finnish pride in *Finlandia*, which became a rallying cry during his country's drive for independence. America's democratic, pluralistic ideals are refracted in Charles Ives' variations on "My Country 'Tis of Thee," while J.E. Hernández's work explores the nuances of the modern-day immigration story. The program will also be performed at South Shore Cultural Center (7059 S. South Shore Dr., Chicago) on Sunday, [October 25](#).

Special Event at Symphony Center

Open House Chicago ([October 17](#))

The city's annual celebration of its architectural heritage comes to Symphony Center as part of Open House Chicago, presented by the Chicago Architecture Center. From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on October 17, visitors can explore Orchestra Hall, designed by pioneering architect Daniel Burnham, and other spaces throughout the historic 1904 building on Michigan Avenue — including the 1997 Symphony Center enhancements and addition created by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.

Participate in a blood drive at Symphony Center during Open House Chicago featuring Abbott's mixed reality experience with original music performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

You are invited to explore the home of one of the world's great orchestras, then give blood in a setting like no other — featuring Abbott's innovative mixed reality donation experience, set to an original score recorded by CSO musicians. Donors who give blood on October 17 will receive a voucher for a complimentary pair of tickets to an upcoming concert, available only to participants at the event. Together, we're creating harmony through giving.

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](https://www.cso.org/parking) for more parking and transit options.

Patron Information

Contact Patron Services for personalized assistance online at [cso.org/contact](https://www.cso.org/contact) or by calling [312-294-3000](tel:312-294-3000), Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

All artists and programs are subject to change.

The Mäkelä Conducts Mahler 9, Mäkelä, Petrushka & Belshazzar's Feast and Brahms Requiem concerts are generously sponsored by Zell Family Foundation.

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

Northern Trust is the presenting sponsor of Symphony Ball.

The appearances of Anne Akiko Meyers and Jian Wang are made possible by the Grainger Fund for Excellence.

The appearance of Giancarlo Guerrero is made possible by the Juli Plant Grainger Fund for Artistic Excellence.

Support for the CSO at Wheaton series is provided by Megan and Steve Shebik.

Newsradio 105.9 WBBM is a Media Partner for the Brahms Requiem concerts.

Chicago Jazz, *DownBeat* Magazine and WDCB 90.9FM Jazz are Media Partners for the Freedom Riders with special guests Kurt Elling & Lizz Wright and Branford Marsalis & Dianne Reeves Celebrate John Coltrane concerts.

The 2026/27 Civic Orchestra season is generously sponsored by Lori Julian for the Julian Family Foundation, which also provides major funding for the Civic Fellowship program.

Major support for the Civic Orchestra of Chicago is also provided by John and Leslie Burns; Robert and Joanne Crown Income Charitable Fund; Nancy Dehmlow; Leslie Fund, Inc.; the Maval Foundation; Judy and Scott McCue; Barbara and Barre Seid Foundation; and Paul and Lisa Wiggin.

Support for the 2026/27 Notes for Peace program is provided by Megan and Steve Shebik, Theodore and Elisabeth Wachs and Lisa and Paul Wiggin.

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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. Jean-Yves Thibaudet is the CSO artist-in-residence for the 2026/27 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](https://www.cso.org/radio). Launched in 2007, [CSO Resound](https://www.cso.org/resound) is the ensemble's Grammy Award-winning 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](https://www.chicagosymphonychorus.org), founded by Margaret Hillis in 1957, is the country's largest professional chorus, and Donald Palumbo currently serves as director. Founded by second music director Frederick Stock during the 1919/20 Season, the [Civic Orchestra of Chicago](https://www.civicorchestraofchicago.org) trains the next generation of musicians with Ken-David Masur as its principal conductor. [Symphony Center Presents](https://www.symphonycenterpresents.org) features guest artists and ensembles across an expansive array of genres, including classical, jazz, global and contemporary. The [Negaunee Music Institute](https://www.negaunee.org) 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 CSO's music director position is endowed in perpetuity by a generous gift from the Zell Family Foundation. The Negaunee Foundation provides generous support in perpetuity for the work of the Negaunee Music Institute.