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CHICAGO SYMPHONY SHARES ARTISTIC HIGHLIGHTS AND OPERATING RESULTS OF ITS 135TH SEASON

CHICAGO — Chicago Symphony released the operating results of fiscal year 2026 (July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026) at its Annual Meeting on October 26, 2026, at 4:00 p.m. Board of Trustees Chair Mary Louise Gorno and President Jeff Alexander conducted the meeting at Chicago Symphony Center with supporters from across the organization in attendance. Gorno and Alexander shared artistic highlights from the 135th season, and Treasurer Renée Metcalf reported financial results. Vice President for Development Dale Hedding announced the confirmation of new officers and trustees. Additional reports were shared by Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) Members' Committee Chair William Buchman, and Chair of the Chicago Symphony Governing Members Merrill Blau, who conducted the annual induction of new Governing Members.

The Annual Meeting commemorated the 2025/26 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 Percussion Cynthia Yeh.

The 2025/26 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 officially begins in the 2027/28 Season, led four weeks of subscription concerts in Chicago, including an all-Berlioz program, sold-out performances of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, and Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, alongside his first U.S. tour with the Orchestra to four cities including a performance at New York City's Carnegie Hall. Muti conducted four distinct programs in Chicago, celebrating his 600th concert with the CSO on March 20 during an Italian opera program with the Chicago Symphony Chorus, and led the Orchestra on a seven-city West Coast tour across Arizona and California. Other artistic milestones included CSO Artist-in-Residence Joyce DiDonato's performances at Symphony Ball and the Midwest premiere of Kevin Puts' *Emily – No Prisoner Be*, a June 2026 presentation of *America 250: A Musical Journey* celebrating the nation's semiquincentennial, and the world premiere of Matthew Aucoin's *Song of the Reappeared*, a CSO-commissioned work, featuring soprano Julia Bullock.

Chicago Symphony continued its deep commitment to community engagement and accessibility throughout the Chicago area during the 2025/26 Season by providing 500 free events, ranging from open rehearsals and school mentor visits to Civic Orchestra workshops.

Chicago Symphony presented more than 200 paid concerts in a variety of venues across the Chicago area ranging in size from 250 to 2,500 seats — with 294,000 tickets sold, the highest

number since the 2018/19 Season — surpassing \$23.9 million in ticket revenue, the highest on record.

Chicago Symphony welcomed 60,000 unique ticket-buyer households, including 30,000 first-time ticket-buyer households. Across all programming, the organization reached 66,000 unique households (including paid tickets, complimentary tickets and free concerts).

For the 2026 fiscal year, Chicago Symphony secured \$33.1 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, including \$23.4 million to the annual operating fund, was \$45.4 million, while investment returns and Board-approved 5% distribution from the Endowment Fund and Other Investments fund transfers provided an additional \$22 million. Results from operations included total revenues of \$78.5 million and expenses of \$79 million, leading to a net operating deficit of approximately \$460,000, a significant improvement from prior years.

Chicago Symphony financial highlights can be found on page 8 of the 2025/26 Annual Report.

Ticket Sales and Operating Revenue for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2026

- Total operating revenue was \$33.1 million.
- Ticket sales totaled \$23.9 million.
- In addition to ticket revenue, other operating revenue totaled \$9.2 million including performance fees, handling fees, Symphony Store retail sales, facility lease and rental income and media and royalties.

Contributed Revenues for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2026

- Total operating support was \$45.4 million. This included direct operational support and annual fund contributions of \$23.4 million, along with \$22 million from investment returns and Board-approved distributions from the Endowment and Other Investments 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 of Chicago Symphony. Contributions support four main priorities: achieving financial sustainability, sustaining musical excellence, expanding education and community engagement and strengthening Chicago's cultural fabric.
- The *SEMPRE* ALWAYS campaign for Chicago Symphony continued to advance, with gifts and commitments now totaling more than \$228.7 million.

Final Revenue and Operating Expense Information for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2026

- Total revenues (earned revenue and operating support) were \$78.5 million.
- Total operating expenses reached \$79 million, resulting in a net operating deficit of approximately \$460,000.

Endowment

- Chicago Symphony's endowment and investment assets grew to approximately \$563 million to further improve the organization's financial foundation and balance sheet.

Total Assets

- Record total corporation assets at year-end reached \$677.9 million, underscoring the enduring institutional strength and financial foundation of Chicago Symphony. Consistent with its strategic plan, the organization further strengthened its balance sheet on both the asset and liability sides by repaying \$12.3 million of long-term debt and reducing other liabilities. Net assets increased \$53.4 million, reaching approximately \$545.4 million as of June 30, 2026, positioning the organization for continued long-term vitality and impact.

Chicago Symphony Trustees, Governing Members and Officers Elected

- Seven new trustees were elected to three-year terms: David A. Gordon, partner at Sidley Austin LLP; Aengus Hallinan, executive vice president and chief risk officer for Northern Trust; Andrew M. Jessen, managing director and head of M&A for William Blair; Paul H. McDonough, chief financial officer for CNO Financial Group; Gerald T. Nowak, managing director and chief administrative and legal officer for Thoma Bravo; Dr. Mohan Rao, chairman and CEO of Epsilon Economics LLC and Epsilon Life Sciences LLC; and Alexander Ripley, managing principal of Lakeview Capital Holdings.
- 17 trustees were re-elected to additional three-year terms, and 26 new Governing Members were installed. Special acknowledgement was given to 29 individuals who have served on the Chicago Symphony Board of Trustees for 30 years or more.
- The following individuals were elected as officers of the Chicago Symphony Board of Trustees: Mary Louise Gorno, Chair; Chester A. Gougis, Steven Shebik and Helen Zell, Vice Chairs, and Gifford R. Zimmerman, Treasurer. The following Chicago Symphony staff were elected as officers of the Chicago Symphony 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 former Concertmaster Samuel Magad, who served in the first violin section from 1958 until 2007, including 35 years as concertmaster — a position he held longer than any other player in CSO history. The organization also joined the music world in mourning the loss of conductor, pianist, and composer Michael Tilson Thomas, who enjoyed a remarkable partnership with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus for more than 50 years, from his 1970 debut at Ravinia to his final Orchestra Hall performances in late 2023.

Chicago Symphony Programming Highlights – 2025/26 Season

The 2025/26 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, appeared for four weeks of CSO concerts. Highlights included an all-Berlioz program with violist Antoine Tamestit, sold-out performances of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony and Schumann's Piano Concerto featuring Yunchan Lim, and Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. Mäkelä also led his first tour with the

CSO to four U.S. cities, including a performance at New York City's Carnegie Hall, and made his Ravinia Festival debut with the Orchestra in August.

Muti conducted four distinct programs in Chicago throughout the season, including his 600th CSO concert on March 20 during an Italian opera program with the Chicago Symphony Chorus. He also led the CSO on a seven-city West Coast tour in January across Arizona and California and concluded his subscription concert appearances for the season with a program featuring Tchaikovsky's *Polish* Symphony and film scores by composer Nino Rota, who was one of Muti's early mentors and teachers.

Mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato served as CSO Artist-in-Residence, opening the season at Symphony Ball, presenting the Midwest premiere of Kevin Puts' *Emily – No Prisoner Be* with Time For Three, and performing Peter Lieberson's *Neruda Songs* with the CSO. Her residency featured extensive community engagement, including masterclasses, school visits, and collaborative song-creation with Purpose Over Pain families as part of Notes for Peace, a program of the Chicago Symphony Negaunee Music Institute.

Special programming included America 250: A Musical Journey in June 2026, marking the nation's semiquincentennial with performances by the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis, Conrad Tao, Chris Thile, the Apostolic Church of God Sanctuary Choir and film music concerts honoring John Williams and Steven Spielberg. The season also featured the world premiere of Matthew Aucoin's *Song of the Reappeared*, a CSO-commissioned work featuring soprano Julia Bullock in her subscription concert debut, as well as the Orchestra's first performances of works by contemporary composers John Adams, Unsuk Chin, Anna Clyne, Jessie Montgomery, Carlos Simon and Jörg Widmann, an appearance by Japanese composer/conductor Joe Hisaishi and the annual Merry, Merry Chicago series.

The CSO Fellowship Program continued to provide mentorship and training for early-career musicians. Cellist Olivia Jakyoung Huh won an audition for the CSO cello section during her fellowship, officially joining the Orchestra on October 27, 2025, as the third musician hired by Zell Music Director Designate Klaus Mäkelä.

Symphony Center Presents welcomed renowned artists across its series, including piano recitals by Yunchan Lim, Kirill Gerstein and Evgeny Kissin; jazz performances by Herbie Hancock, Christian McBride and Lizz Wright; and special presentations featuring Yuja Wang, Hilary Hahn, and Yo-Yo Ma, who performed both a sold-out recital in Orchestra Hall and at a free summer concert in Millennium Park with Angélique Kidjo.

Community access to Chicago Symphony programs remained strong, with 14,000 student tickets sold to CSO concerts across the season and 10,000 pay-what-you-wish tickets sold for Civic Orchestra of Chicago and CSO Chamber Music concerts.

Programs of the Chicago Symphony Negaunee Music Institute engaged hundreds of Chicago-area schools and community partners. Educational concerts included the CSO for Kids series attended by over 25,000 students and teachers, the Once Upon a Symphony series for toddlers, the launch of the free global video series Cabinet of Wonder with Natalie Merchant and Chicago Children's Theatre, as well as live concerts with Merchant for Mother Goose & the Cabinet of Wonder in May 2026 and the 30th anniversary of the Percussion Scholarship Program. The Civic Orchestra of

Chicago, led by Principal Conductor Ken-David Masur, performed eight mainstage concerts and seven community concerts, while the Notes for Peace initiative celebrated its eighth season supporting families impacted by gun violence.

Chicago Symphony's varied affiliate groups — including the African American Network, Latino Alliance, Overture Council, League, Women's Board, Governing Members, Theodore Thomas Society as well as Student, Family and Western Suburb Ambassadors — continue to build strong advocacy and community support for the organization's ongoing musical and educational activities.

Additional artistic programming, education and community engagement highlights and information about Chicago Symphony's digital engagement initiatives and volunteer programs are available by accessing the 2025/26 Annual Report at chicagosymphony.org/annualreport.

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Chicago Symphony: chicagosymphony.org

[Chicago Symphony](https://chicagosymphony.org) is a beacon of musical excellence and inspiration, both in Chicago and around the world. The organization stewards three acclaimed classical music ensembles, including the renowned Chicago Symphony Orchestra; presents a dynamic performance series with guest artists, and comprises an embedded music education institute. At Chicago Symphony, the legendary sound of the CSO meets the future of music, inviting everyone to experience and connect with the transformative power of live performance.

The iconic [Chicago Symphony Orchestra](https://chicagosymphony.org) is the core ensemble, recognized worldwide for its artistic force and command of a deep, evolving repertoire. The CSO has been at the forefront of classical music since its founding in 1891, with a long history of introducing new compositions to the United States and the world. The CSO's vitality continues to inspire music lovers with nearly 150 concerts annually, weekly syndicated radio broadcasts and a catalog of celebrated recordings.

[Klaus Mäkelä](https://chicagosymphony.org), a leader of classical music's next generation, begins his tenure as Zell Music Director in the 2027/28 Season, ushering in a new chapter for the CSO. His appointment as the 11th music director deepens Mäkelä's creative partnership with the musicians that began when he first conducted the Orchestra in 2022. Mäkelä succeeds [Riccardo Muti](https://chicagosymphony.org), who held the position from 2010 to 2023 and now serves as the CSO's music director emeritus for life.

Chicago Symphony's other ensembles include the [Chicago Symphony Chorus](https://chicagosymphony.org), the nation's largest professional chorus known for its extraordinary quality, and the [Civic Orchestra of Chicago](https://chicagosymphony.org), a prestigious ensemble for early-career musicians that prepares its members for multifaceted and meaningful careers in orchestral music and beyond. [Chicago Symphony Presents](https://chicagosymphony.org) features world-renowned guest artists in jazz, global, and chamber music and offers one of the country's most distinguished piano recital series.

[Chicago Symphony Center](https://chicagosymphony.org) is our primary venue and home to the historic Orchestra Hall, where the CSO has performed for over a century. Located adjacent to Millennium Park, the Center is the musical heart of the Chicago Cultural Mile. The CSO's summer home is the Ravinia Festival on the North Shore, where the Orchestra performs a popular series of outdoor concerts each year.

As a cultural leader, we provide exceptional musical experiences and education for audiences of all ages and backgrounds. The [Chicago Symphony Negaunee Music Institute](https://chicagosymphony.org) produces concerts for schools and families, organizes free and low-cost public programming at venues throughout Chicago, and offers world-class musical training to tomorrow's musicians. The Institute also spearheads social impact initiatives that highlight the unique ability of music to foster empathy and healing.

Whether you are a classical music aficionado, looking to discover new artists or seeking connection with your community, Chicago Symphony is where you belong.