

**Women's Association of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra  
Docent Program**

**Basic Information**

- The Women's Association of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in cooperation with the CSO Education Department sponsors the Docent Program.
- Docents come from a variety of ethnic, educational and economic backgrounds, as do the children they serve.
- Students in the city have varied musical experiences and cultural heritages; therefore, docents must find a common ground on which to build to make the presentation more meaningful. This could mean introducing the presentation with music from the children's culture. Teaching methods vary with the sophistication of the student body. Each docent tailors his/her presentation to the class involved.
- Traditional and contemporary classical music are represented in the Education Concert programs.
- To reinforce the docent lecture and further familiarize the students with the music to be played at the concert the CSO Education Department provides CD's containing excerpts of most of the concert repertoire to docents and teachers.
- During the 2000-01 season Docents saw over 6,000 students in 103 schools prior to Concert attendance. Follow-up visits were made to half of those schools. Schools served include urban, suburban, public, private and groups of home-schooled children.
- There are two types of concerts for which docents prepare presentations:
  - Youth Concerts:** For students in grades 4 through 8, these 45-55 minute concerts typically focus on a theme such as Melody, Harmony, Rhythm, or Musical Style. Narration from the stage is employed to more fully engage the children in the concert experience.
  - Very Special Promenades (VSP)** - For students in grades K through 3, with special provisions for students with disabilities, these concerts serve primarily as an introduction to music, and are usually presented in conjunction with a dance, theater or mime company. Interpreters and wireless headsets are available for hearing impaired children. Narration through telephone receivers is available to visually impaired students.
- The quality of the training each docent receives is the key to the program's success. The high caliber of instruction and the education it provides attracts highly qualified individuals.
- Docents are supplied with teaching manuals, instrument and composer posters, oversized staff paper, rhythm instruments for classroom use, portable keyboards, CDs with excerpts of

the concert repertoire, CD boomboxes, lectures, handouts and the use of The Women's Association Music Resource Library. Docents supply their own poster board and miscellaneous teaching supplies.

- Outstanding musicologists and music educators from universities and colleges in the Chicago area provide lectures for docent training prior to school visits.
- A prospective docent must complete a year of training which includes attendance at all Youth Concert Lectures and Docent Demonstrations, observation of at least two classroom presentations by experienced docents, creation of a lesson plan, and performance of a sample presentation for a committee consisting of the Docent Chair, the Docent Training Chair, a CSO Education Department staff member and selected docents.
- Criteria used to select docents:
  - Love of music
  - Teaching and/or musical background
  - Ability to teach about, rouse interest in and develop appreciation for the symphony orchestra and its repertoire in order to make the concert experience more beneficial for the students.
- Docents are not required to be members of The Women's Association. Indeed many of our docents are men.