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CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ASSOCIATION SHARES ARTISTIC HIGHLIGHTS AND REPORTS OPERATING RESULTS OF ITS 129TH SEASON

CHICAGO—The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association (CSOA) released the operating results of fiscal year 2020 (July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020) at its Annual Meeting on November 10, 2020. Helen Zell, Chair of the Board of Trustees, and CSOA President Jeff Alexander conducted the meeting online and shared artistic highlights from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s 129th season and reported the organization’s financial results.

The 2019/20 season included artistic and education highlights, deeper engagement into communities in the Chicago area and beyond, as well as anticipated, record-setting ticket revenue for presentations at Symphony Center. However, the CSOA, like major performing arts presenters across the country and around the world, faced unexpected challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic once restrictions were placed on public concert activities in 2020. In total, 110 CSOA-presented paid, ticketed events were canceled leading to overall declines in earned ticket revenue for the 2019/20 season.

Although the CSOA was not eligible for Payroll Protection Program (PPP) relief through the Federal Government’s CARES Act due to the size of the organization, contributed revenue from supporters remained strong. Gifts from more than 13,000 individuals—many pledged in response to the CSOA’s Music Ahead campaign created to specifically address the financial impacts of the pandemic—along with philanthropic support from foundations, government agencies and corporate partners resulted in contributions totaling $25.7 million.

The CSOA’s total revenues from ticket sales, operations and contributions were $62.9 million. Operating expenses, which were originally forecast for the year to be $77.9 million, were reduced to $67.4 million through a series of company-wide cost reductions implemented in the final quarter of the fiscal year. The overall result was an operating deficit of $4.4 million. (All figures in this document are rounded to the nearest tenth. More details of CSOA financial highlights from the 2020 Annual Report are available here.)

In addition to the presentation of financial results, the meeting included the election of four new CSOA Trustees, who were elected to three-year terms, the re-election of Helen Zell as Board Chair and the election of Mary Louise Gorno as Vice Chair, Chair-Elect.
“For nearly 130 years, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra has been sustained by dedicated supporters with a passion for music and a belief in its power to inspire and transform lives,” said CSOA Board Chair Helen Zell. “I am deeply grateful for the incredible commitment demonstrated by our supporters in this extraordinary time and look forward to all the ways we will continue to connect with audiences.”

“During this crisis, the artistry of the musicians of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra has brought comfort and meaning to many people in Chicago and around the world,” noted Riccardo Muti, Zell Music Director. “We must remain positive and prepare for the time when we can share music with the public once again through live performances.”

“With a spirit of cooperation across the organization, we have faced the unanticipated challenges of the pandemic and strengthened support for the cultural treasure that is the Chicago Symphony Orchestra,” added CSOA President Jeff Alexander. “The essential work of the Board of Trustees, Members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus and CSOA administration has created solutions to retain financial stability during this unprecedented period.”

“The musicians of the Orchestra remain committed to working with the Board and administration of the CSOA and its leadership,” said James Smelser, Chair of the Members’ Committee of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. “We have been deeply moved by the generosity which has made it possible for us to continue sharing music during these uncertain times and we are looking forward to returning to regular concert performances for our loyal patrons.”

The 2019/20 season, which marked the 10th season for Riccardo Muti as the CSO’s 10th music director, included public programs of the CSO in Chicago at Symphony Center and community sites, domestic tour performances in New York and Florida, as well as an eight-city European tour in January 2020. The Orchestra’s CSO Resound label also released a critically acclaimed recording of Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 13 (Babi Yar) with Muti leading the CSO and Men of the Chicago Symphony Chorus and bass Alexey Tikhomirov. In addition to the 133 paid, ticketed events, the CSOA presented 172 free events supported by the Negaunee Music Institute at the CSO including the CSO’s annual Concert for Chicago at Lane Tech College Prep High School, CSO open rehearsals with Zell Music Director Riccardo Muti for invited student, senior and community groups; All-Access chamber music concerts; partnership events with Chicago Public Schools; and programs for at-risk and incarcerated youth, as well as Civic Orchestra of Chicago performances and chamber music performances by CSO and Civic musicians.

The unprecedented, 15-week interruption in public concerts and activities from mid-March through June resulted in a remarkable pivot to the release of a wide variety of digital offerings including those shared on “CSO From Home,” a new digital content hub created in response to the pandemic. Highlights included, the new CSO radio series—From the CSO’s Archives: Maestro’s Choice, curated by Riccardo Muti and presented in partnership with WFMT, and personal video messages and performances from musicians of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra shared on the CSO’s social media channels with some generating millions of views. The CSOA also presented Facebook premieres for the 2014 concert video of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 with Riccardo Muti leading the CSO and Chorus and distinguished soloists, as well as the 2013 performance of Verdi’s Requiem. Additional digital content, including a virtual concert to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago on March 29, 2020, and music education resources for teachers and parents created by the Negaunee Music Institute at the CSO, was also released throughout the rest of the season.
Overall audience engagement on CSO digital channels increased this year, particularly for Facebook video campaigns, which generated more than 14.4 million views. Followers on CSO social media channels also experienced growth including on Instagram with an increase of 33% to more than 131,000, on Facebook with an increase of 8% to 235,000, and on Twitter with an increase of 3% to 81,000. YouTube subscribers also increased by 35% to 112,000. In addition, more than 1.3 million users logged sessions on the CSO’s website, cso.org, and the CSO’s online magazine, CSO Sounds & Stories, attracted more than 587,000 page views. Audio listening sessions of CSO Resound recordings and broadcasts topped more than 2.8 million last year representing a 54% increase from the previous year.

**Ticket Sales and Operating Revenue for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2020**

- Ticket sales totaled $12.5 million, representing a decline of $6 million from the 2018/19 season for CSOA-presented events. The decline was a result of concert cancellations related to COVID-19 government-mandated restrictions. In total, 110 paid CSOA-presented events were canceled between March 12 and June 27, 2020.

- More than 187,000 tickets were sold for 133 ticketed events*.

  *reflects CSOA presentations from September to March 11, 2020 prior to interruption of public programs.

- In addition to ticket revenue, other revenue of $9.1 million included tour fees, merchandise sales, facility rentals, royalties, recording fees and miscellaneous activities.

- Total operating revenue was $21.6 million.

**Contributed Revenues for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2020**

- Total support totaled $41.4 million.

- General operating support was $25.7 million, an increase of 2% over fiscal year 2019.

- At the close of the 2019/20 season, the CSOA had engaged with 13,376 donors—an 8% increase from fiscal year 2019. This included 4,946 first time donors who contributed to the CSOA for the first time.

  The $25.7 million in general operating support included $5.4 million in gifts to Music Ahead, a matching challenge campaign created in spring 2020 to address the financial impacts of the pandemic and with generous leadership support from an anonymous donor, the Julian Family Foundation, Helen Zell, The Negaunee Foundation and Rosemarie and Dean L. Buntrock. From April through June 2020, the challenge matched all donations, dollar for dollar, including the value of tickets to canceled concerts that were converted into charitable contributions.

**Financial Information for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2020**

- Total revenues (ticket, other and operating support revenue) were $62.9 million.

- Total operating expenses totaled $67.4 million, resulting in an operating deficit of $4.4 million.

**Endowment**

- The value of endowment investments at year-end was $301 million.
Total Assets

- Total assets at year-end were $475.4 million, and net assets were $216.9 million.

Artistic Highlights for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2020

During the 129th Annual Meeting, CSOA President Jeff Alexander shared artistic highlights from the 2019/20 season which included more than 300 public concerts and events as well as significantly expanded audio and video content keeping audiences connected to performances by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Chorus, Civic Orchestra of Chicago and renowned guest artists once live concert activity was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Alexander also recognized the important work of the CSOA’s African American Network, Latino Alliance, Overture Council, League of the CSOA and Women’s Board and commended the Trustees’ decision to formalize the organization’s commitment to making advancements in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Under the artistic leadership of Zell Music Director Riccardo Muti, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra presented concerts that celebrated the legacy of composer Ludwig van Beethoven, championed the voices of contemporary composers and featured the unique artistry of renowned guest artists and Orchestra Members as soloists in memorable performances.

Riccardo Muti, the CSO’s 10th music director, opened his 10th season with programs highlighting music of composers whose work he has explored with the Orchestra throughout his tenure such as Schubert, Brahms, Prokofiev, Scriabin and Verdi. Muti’s opening residency of the season also served to launch the exploration of the individuality and lasting power of the music of Beethoven in honor of the 250th anniversary of the composer’s birth. Muti’s Beethoven performances with the CSO included the First, Second, Third and Fifth symphonies, as well as Beethoven’s iconic Violin Concerto with Leonidas Kavakos as soloist.

The Beethoven 250 Celebration extended to other 2019/20 season concerts, both on the CSO series, with Sir Andrew Davis conducting Paul Lewis in Beethoven’s First and Fourth piano concertos, and the Symphony Center Presents series which featured Beethoven’s Piano Sonatas in performance by Kirill Gerstein and Rudolf Buchbinder; the composer’s Violin Sonatas performed by Christian Tetzlaff with pianist Lars Vogt and Anne-Sophie Mutter with pianist Lambert Orkis; and finally, in early March, a program of three Beethoven Piano Trios with pianist Emanuel Ax, violinist Leonidas Kavakos, and cellist Yo-Yo Ma.

Another focal point of Muti’s 10th season were two world premieres of two CSO commissions including the November 2019 premiere of Bernard Rands’ DREAM for Orchestra and the February 2020 premiere of Nicolas Bacri’s Ophelia’s Tears, which marked Muti’s 13th world premiere since becoming music director and featured CSO Bass Clarinet and Clarinet J. Lawrie Bloom as soloist. Other premieres included the U.S. premiere of Avner Dorman’s Percussion Concerto Eternal Rhythm featuring CSO Principal Percussion Cynthia Yeh as soloist and the Orchestra’s first performances of James Lee Ill’s Sukkot Through Orion’s Nebula and Two Scenes from Samuel Barber’s Antony and Cleopatra, Jennifer Higdon’s blue cathedral, as well as the subscription series debut performance of John Adams’ The Chairman Dances.
Other highlights of Muti’s fall 2019 residencies included a return to Lane Tech College Prep High School for a free community concert and memorable performances of Brahms’ *Double* Concerto featuring Associate Concertmaster Stephanie Jeong and Assistant Principal Cello Kenneth Olsen as soloists. The beginning of the season also included Muti’s appointment of David Cooper as principal horn and Esteban Batallán as principal trumpet. Batallán holds the Adolph Herseth Principal Chair, endowed by an anonymous benefactor in honor of the CSO’s highly regarded, former first trumpet.

In February 2020, in a continuation of his exploration of Italian masterworks and opera, Muti also led three critically-hailed concert performances of Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana* with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus and distinguished international soloists including Mezzo-soprano Anita Rachvelishvili in the role of Santuzza.

The Orchestra and Muti also made domestic and international tour appearances including two November 2019 concerts at Carnegie Hall, first in a program featuring Berlioz’s *Death of Cleopatra* with mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato as well as Bizet’s *Roma* and Respighi’s *Pines of Rome*, and second with an all-Prokofiev program with his Symphony No. 3 and Suite from *Romeo and Juliet*.

In January 2020, the Orchestra and Muti embarked on their eighth European tour together. The 10-concert tour was performed in eight cities in six countries, and also marked the CSO’s 34th tour to Europe. The tour programs highlighted works performed by Muti and the CSO during his 10 years as music director including Prokofiev’s Symphony No. 3—a work that was performed during Muti’s first international tour with the CSO in 2007—and his Suite from *Romeo and Juliet*—which was released in 2014 on a CSO Resound recording—which were part of several programs. In addition, Dvořák’s *New World* Symphony, Hindemith’s *Mathis der Maler*, and Wagner’s Overture to *The Flying Dutchman*, all performed during recent seasons, displayed the Orchestra’s talents for international audiences. A highlight of the tour were three sold-out concerts at the Musikverein in Vienna, including two performances of Verdi’s Requiem. The January 13 concert was part of the start of a season-long celebration of the Musikverein’s 150th anniversary. In addition to performances in Vienna, the tour included concerts in Cologne, Paris, Luxembourg, Naples, Florence, and Milan, and the tour concluded with a CSO debut appearance in Lugano, Switzerland.

The CSO’s Florida tour in February 2020 included a debut appearance for Muti and the Orchestra together at Sarasota’s Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, as well as returns to the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County and two concerts at Hayes Hall in Naples presented by Artis—Naples. In addition to the CSO’s performances on all three tours, members of the Orchestra performed in schools, community centers and hospitals with the support of the Negaunee Music Institute. In the greater Chicago area, the 2019/20 season also marked the fourth consecutive year for the CSO concert series at Edman Memorial Chapel at Wheaton College.

As tours engaged audiences around the country and the world with the musical resources of the CSO, ongoing engagement with Latino and African American audiences in the community continued with several programming highlights including a fifth anniversary celebration for the CSO’s Latino Alliance featuring a screening of the classic Mexican film *Redes*, with its original film score by Revueltas. Additionally, the African American Network began its season with a special community rehearsal with students and faculty of the Chicago West Community Music Center conducted by Riccardo Muti. This was followed by five events at Symphony Center, including its fourth annual celebration of National Black History Month with a standing room only world-premiere of a live film score by composer Renée Baker in Buntrock Hall.
An array of contemporary musical voices were also featured in the CSO’s MusicNOW series, curated by Missy Mazzoli, as part of her second season as Mead Composer-in-Residence. MusicNOW series highlights included two world premieres of MusicNOW commissions, presented in October: *Code Switch* by composer Wang Lu and a new chamber arrangement of *Community Acoustics* by LJ White. A second concert in December celebrated Michael Gordon and featured the music of composers he has influenced over his 30-year career, including David T. Little, Emma O’Halloran, Gemma Peacocke and Brendon Randall-Myers.

Symphony Center Presents (SCP) season programming highlights included the Chicago debuts of the Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal, conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin with Joyce DiDonato as soloist, and the NFM Wroclaw Philharmonic with music director Giancarlo Guerrero and pianist Piotr Anderszewski. Jordi Savall also made his long-awaited Symphony Center debut performing baroque music from the Iberian Peninsula. SCP also presented final tours for the Chieftains, who have regularly performed at Orchestra Hall since the mid-1980s, and conductor Kent Nagano in his final tour as music director of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra. On the Jazz series, Chick Corea performed in a program with bassist Christian McBride and drummer Brian Blade and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis returned for a two-concert residency. Special concerts included the exciting reunion for Béla Fleck, Zakir Hussain and Edgar Meyer, Symphony Center’s annual Chinese New Year celebration in January and a sold-out return for Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán in February.

On March 1, 2020, the Civic Orchestra of Chicago presented its Civic Centennial Celebration Benefit Concert led by its Principal Conductor Ken-David Masur with special guest Yo-Yo Ma performing Dvořák’s Cello Concerto. Later that month on March 29, the Civic Orchestra was part of the pivot to new digital programs, presenting an online performance to commemorate 100 years of Civic Orchestra of Chicago. The live video premiere included a composite video performance of an excerpt of Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 5 featuring 62 Civic musicians, and the world premieres of six miniatures inspired by Tchaikovsky’s Fifth Symphony and written by composers Nathalie Joachim, LJ White, Ted Moore, Josh Fink, Liza Sobel, Peter Shin and Martha Tiesenga. Civic Orchestra musicians also contributed to spring 2020 workshops for the Notes for Peace songwriting project, which serves families who have lost loved ones to gun violence and is facilitated by the Negaunee Music Institute at the CSO.

From April to June 2020, expanded audio and video content allowed CSO musicians and audiences to stay connected when it was no longer possible to be together in the concert hall. Within days of the first canceled concerts in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, videos of CSO musicians performing at home and sharing personal messages of encouragement appeared on the CSO’s social media channels. Through the end of the season, CSO and Chorus musicians, Riccardo Muti and CSOA staff curated videos, radio broadcasts, playlists, articles and virtual events for audiences to experience from their own homes during an unanticipated and challenging time.

**CSOA Trustees, Governing Members and Officers Elected**

- Four new CSOA Trustees were elected to three-year terms: Roderick Branch, Partner, Latham & Watkins, LLP; Britt M. Miller, Managing Partner, Mayer Brown LLP; Craig R. Williams, Retired CEO, New Control Holdings; and Gifford R. Zimmerman, Managing Director, Nuveen.

- Two new CSOA Life Trustees were also elected: Bruce E. Clinton, Retired Chairman and CEO of The Clinton Companies, and Richard C. Godfrey, Partner, Kirkland & Ellis LLP.
Eleven Trustees were re-elected to additional 3-year terms, and 30 new Governing Members were installed. Special acknowledgement was given to 33 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: Helen Zell, Chair; Mary Louise Gorno, Vice Chair, Chair-Elect; Steven Shebik and Liisa Thomas, Vice Chairs; and Renée Metcalf, Treasurer. The following CSOA staff were elected as officers of the CSOA Board of Trustees: Jeff Alexander, President; Stacie Frank, Assistant Treasurer; Renay Slifka, Secretary of the Board; and Dale Hedding, Vice President for Development.

CSO Members Richard Graef, Assistant Principal Flute appointed by Music Director Jean Martinon in 1968, Violist John Bartholomew, First Violinist Paul Phillips, Bass Clarinet/Clarinet J. Lawrie Bloom appointed by Sir Georg Solti in 1980 and Bassist Michael Hovnanian appointed by Sir Georg Solti in 1989 were honored for their service upon their retirements from the Orchestra.

A moment of silence was observed for those Trustees and Orchestra Members who passed away since the last Annual Meeting: Trustees Christopher L. Culp, Ph.D. and Rita Simó and musicians Christopher Leuba, Principal Horn form 1960-1962 and Raymond Niwa, a member of the violin section from 1951-1997. Also observed was the passing of long-time CSOA benefactor Judson Green.

To access the CSOA’s 2020 Annual Report, click here.

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**Chicago Symphony Orchestra:** [cso.org](http://cso.org) and [csosoundsandstories.org](http://csosoundsandstories.org)

Founded by Theodore Thomas in 1891, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra is consistently hailed as one of the greatest orchestras in the world. Since 2010, the pre-eminent conductor Riccardo Muti has served as its 10th music director. Missy Mazzoli is Mead Composer-in-Residence.

From baroque through contemporary music, the CSO commands a vast repertoire. Its renowned musicians annually perform more than 150 concerts, most at Symphony Center in Chicago and, each summer, at the suburban Ravinia Festival. They regularly tour nationally and internationally. Since 1892, the CSO has made 62 international tours, performing in 29 countries on five continents.

People around the globe listen to weekly radio broadcasts of CSO concerts and recordings on the WFMT radio network and online at [cso.org/radio](http://cso.org/radio). Recordings by the CSO have earned 62 Grammy Awards, including two in 2011 for Muti’s recording with the CSO and Chorus of Verdi's *Messa da Requiem* (Muti’s first of eight releases with the CSO to date). Find details on these and many other CSO recordings at [cso.org/resound](http://cso.org/resound).

The CSO is part of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association, which also includes the Chicago Symphony Chorus (Duain Wolfe, Director and Conductor) and the Civic Orchestra of Chicago (Ken-David Masur, Principal Conductor), a training ensemble for emerging professionals. Through its prestigious Symphony Center Presents series, the CSOA presents guest artists and ensembles from a variety of genres—classical, jazz, world, and contemporary.

The Negaunee Music Institute at the CSO offers community and education programs that annually engage more than 200,000 people of diverse ages and backgrounds. Through the Institute and other activities, including a free annual concert led by Muti, the CSO is committed to using the power of music to create connections and build community.

The CSO 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.