

220 SOUTH – JUNE 2024



A newsletter of the League of the CSOA

Merle Jacob, Editor

A WELCOME FROM YOUR PRESIDENT



League President, Sharon Mitchell, with William Buchman, Assistant Principal Bassoon, at the Annual Musicians' Luncheon

The League of the CSOA has been involved with so many exciting activities and events this season. The highlight of our March all-member meeting was the imaginary European tour we took with the CSO, featuring Heidi Lukas (CSOA director of operations), Todd Rosenberg (CSOA photographer), and Susan Synnestvedt (CSO violinist). In April, we celebrated the artistry and hard work of the Chicago Symphony Chorus at our annual Endowed Concert Reception. In May, we enjoyed a wonderful afternoon with many of our CSO musicians at our annual Musicians' Luncheon. To close out the season in June, we again

celebrated our Civic musicians with a pizza party after their last concert, and later that month, we hosted our very first cocktail party reception for our beloved CSO musicians.

This season, we also welcomed thousands of school children through our AIM (Adventures in Music) concerts and enjoyed hosting seniors and veterans at our SVEP (Seniors and Veterans Engagement Program) rehearsals.

More recently, we officially received a portrait of our Music Director Emeritus for Life, Maestro Riccardo Muti, from the long-time patron and artist, Dr. Leo Miserendino. We were delighted to have Jeff Alexander, Dale Hedding and Al Andreychuk as our honored guests.

I am personally very excited about our new Executive Committee for next year and want to again thank Patty Weber and her Nominating Committee for outstanding work.

For our membership, things will quiet down a bit for the summer. However, that is not the case for most of our EC members, who are already very busy behind the scenes planning for our new season beginning in September.

Until then, I hope you will enjoy your summer and join your other League members for all the exciting events and volunteer opportunities beginning in September.

I want to again take this opportunity to thank you for your giving and commitment to both the League and our beloved CSO.

Sharon Mitchell

LEAGUE ALL-MEMBER WINTER MEETING

The All-Member Winter meeting on March 21, 2024, started with a casual lunch of pizza, and then President Sharon Mitchell opened the meeting, which was held in person and by Zoom.

President Sharon Mitchell's remarks:

"I want to welcome all of you to a very exciting program. We will have the opportunity to jump inside the skin of three individuals who were instrumental in the very successful CSO European tour in January.

Speaking of commitment, I would like our League past presidents to please stand so that we will have the opportunity to again say thank you for your service.

Before I invite the Executive Committee, referred to by me, as the Dream Team, to give their reports, I want to thank two very important and committed League members.

Sharon Quigley, who for the second year has orchestrated our CSO musician greeting project. Last year, holiday greetings were sent to every CSO musician, and this February, Valentine cards were delivered. Each message was sent by a League member, accompanied with an honor donation to our Tribute Fund, which supports our Civic Fellow.

When you donate to our Tribute Fund, the note of acknowledgement is so eloquently written is by Renita Esayian. For health reasons, both Sharon and Renita are not able to join us in-person but remain very dedicated members, committing uncountable amounts of time and care to the League. From us all, Sharon and Renita, an enormous thank you, coming from the bottom of our hearts!

Then the various vice-presidents gave their reports:

After the reports, League members Mimi Duginger, Merle Jacob and Kathy Nordmeyer discussed their involvement with the Theodore Thomas Society. They talked about their involvement with the CSO and how they decided to leave a legacy to the CSOA through the Theodore Thomas Society. Over a dozen League members are currently TTS members. They also announced a legacy challenge from Penny and John van Horn who will donate \$50,000 to the CSOA if 15 League members join the TTS with a planned gift. They also proudly announced that the late League member Micki Miller's estate distributed over \$300,000 to the CSOA through her TTS bequest.





From left to right: Heidi Lukas, Todd Rosenberg, Susan Synnestevedt, and Eileen Conaghan

With the League business completed, Eileen Conaghan chaired a delightful inside look at the 2024 CSO European tour with Heidi Lukas, director of operations; Todd Rosenberg, CSO photographer, and Susan Synnestevedt, CSO first violinist. Heidi explained how tour planning starts two to three years before a tour. She discussed the logistics of getting tons of equipment and over 100 musicians and personnel to 10 countries and 14 concerts. Todd Rosenberg showed many of his photos of the musicians and their families sightseeing, giving lessons to students and playing concerts. There were also many photos of the halls and concert goers. He and Heidi talked about how all the concerts were sold out. Susan talked about how the musicians adapt to the various halls and how they compare to Orchestra Hall. All three commented on how concert goers thought that we in Chicago were so lucky to be able to see the CSO all year.



President Mitchell then said: “I want to thank our guests for such an exciting presentation. The strategy, planning and on the spot problem solving are all mind boggling! On behalf of the League of the CSOA, I thank you for your commitment to the beloved CSO and for sharing your stories with us. We are honored.”

With the end of the presentation, President Sharon Mitchell concluded the meeting and hoped to see everyone on June 19 for the annual meeting.



League members enjoying lunch at the Winter All-Member Meeting



SUSAN SYNNESTVEDT: CSO MUSICIAN & LEAGUE AMBASSADOR



Susan Synnestvedt, a member of the first violin section, joined the CSO in 1986 shortly after graduating from the Curtis Institute of Music. She began her violin studies when she was four years old after her mother heard about the Suzuki Method. Her mother, a classical pianist, recognized that her children had musical talent and started Susan and her brother with lessons. She credits her first teacher, Jeanne Rupert, for giving her a solid musical foundation and violin technique that prepared her for her career. In her senior year at Curtis, she realized she wanted a career in an orchestra rather than as a soloist. She auditioned for a position with the Philadelphia Orchestra but came in second. After that experience, Susan took coaching in orchestral repertoire with an esteemed member of the Philadelphia Orchestra. As Susan said, “David Arben helped me to learn to play the audition pieces properly so I was prepared when I auditioned for the CSO and was thrilled when Maestro Solti hired me.”

When asked what memorable moments with the CSO stand out, Susan said, “I remember everything I did with Maestro Solti because it was the first time I was playing these pieces.”

“I also really enjoyed seeing Maestro Muti again when he came to conduct the CSO in 2007, before he became music director. I had played a concert with him as a substitute with the Philadelphia Orchestra while I was a student at Curtis, and, of course, went to his concerts with that great orchestra. It was exciting to work with him after 25 years and become close to him as a colleague. I have also learned so much from him. I had never done the Verdi operas, so it was an adventure, an honor and a revelation to dig deeply into these pieces with a master of them.”

Susan admits she adores Maestro Muti because he brought a singing style of playing to this very Germanic-oriented orchestra. “Maestro Muti brings out the emotional side of the music. He is also very efficient in rehearsal and does not waste our time. He also tells wonderful stories.”

When asked about Zell Music Director Designate Klaus Mäkelä, Susan said that she was impressed with him when he first conducted the CSO in 2022 because of his poise, his technique and his

passion for music. “He knows what he wants, and he very efficiently and patiently gets his views across to us. He is a genius, and I look forward to working with him.”

As our interview closed, Susan said, “I try to play as if someone in the audience is hearing this piece for the first time and I want them to feel it. I also think this is the greatest job in the world. And we musicians could not do our job without all the help we get from our fabulous volunteers in the League!”

And I can say to Susan, we are all thrilled for all she does for the orchestra and for us. Thank you, Susan.

MEMORIAL TRIBUTES

SUSIE STEIN



Our League is feeling the deep loss of a truly irreplaceable member, Susie Stein. Beautiful inside and out, a woman with the elegance of a rainbow and the force of a lightning bolt, she sustained an unequalled dedication to our League and to cultural and arts institutions across Chicagoland. She was a dear friend to us all and a stranger to none. Her sparkling smile and her delightful sense of humor warmed the hearts of all who met her.

Susie died peacefully at the age of 94, on Sunday, March 10, 2024. She had been a devoted member of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Women's Association and the League of the CSOA since 1982. Listing her areas of involvement is impossible, for Susie was engaged in and present for everything. She is survived by her loving daughter Elizabeth and son Robert. Elizabeth (Liz) has been a committed member of our League since 1994 and served as president during the 2013/14 and 2014/15 seasons, following in her mother's dedicated footsteps.

Susie was always proud of being a graduate of the University of Chicago Laboratory School. She then continued with a bachelor's degree from Northwestern University, remaining a staunch member of the Alumnae Board. She embodied a philanthropic spirit, sustaining her fervent support of the arts as an active member of the Fortnightly Club of Chicago, The Guild of the Chicago History Museum, the Arts Club and the University of Chicago Alumnae Board.

Her services were private.

LUISE BALDIN

Luise Baldin was a member of the League, formerly the Women's Association, since 2001. She was a member of the Indiana Crew, driving from Schererville, often twice a week, to work in the 6th floor CSOA office over the years.

As many of you know, her passion was teaching, and she worked for over 40 years as a second grade teacher. She was married to Tony Baldin and had four children — Antoinette, Kirk, Peggy and Joel. She also introduced the League to her sister, Claretta Meier, who has been a very active member since 2011.

Luise served on the Executive Committee as secretary for a number of years and also served as vice president of areas. Her graciousness and commitment to the organization will be remembered by all of us who knew and worked with her. I



remember how she always welcomed me as a new member and made me feel part of things. She served on numerous committees and worked on many events. Luise always had a Friday afternoon CSO subscription for years.

Luise was involved in many activities and groups besides the CSO League — Tri Kappa Sorority, NW Indiana Community Associates of the Art Institute, Women’s Associates of the Northwest Indiana Symphony, PEO Sisterhood, University of St. Francis Alumni Board and the John Purdue Club. Her involvement and energy benefited so many.

Luise’s passion and commitment to music and the League is greatly appreciated by all of us, and we are so thankful for her friendship and kindness.

LEAGUE SPONSORED EVENTS

NEW MEMBERS FOR 2023/24 YEAR

Bill Baar
Lizbeth Branch
Mary Lee Gosz
Lynda Soucie
Rosalind Jackson

Juan Solana
Phyllis Dougherty
Betsy Berry
Peter Bouchard
Sarah Forbes Orwig

Linda Zimmie
John Zimmie
Ben Ruff
Mary Ann Harting

Our newcomers have been involved in many activities and committees this year. The winner of two Symphony tickets to any concert was Lydia Soucie. All members are eligible to be part of this raffle if dues have been paid by October 31! Rosalind Jackson graciously took on a co-chair role for the Musicians’ Luncheon this spring, and she and her husband, Juan Solana, are also involved with other organizations supporting the CSO. Liz Branch helped with the Musicians’ Luncheon and provided gift cards donated by The Gage. Many of the new members have helped with AIM concerts throughout the year.

We are so happy they have joined the League!! Welcome to you all.

ENDOWED CONCERT RECEPTION

Since 1985, through the generous support of its members, the League has endowed a CSO performance featuring choral music. The event was held on April 13 this year, and the League sponsored a reception following the concert honoring the Chicago Symphony Chorus. Family, friends and League members joined the group for light bites and drinks. Fun was had by all.

President Sharon Mitchell made the following remarks: “On behalf of the League of the CSOA, I would like to congratulate the Chicago Symphony Chorus for their impressive and absolutely moving performance this evening. The Chorus was founded in 1957, 67 years ago. It is truly an honor for the League to celebrate and pay tribute to you each year.



League President, Sharon Mitchell, with Associate Chorus Director, Cheryl Frazes Hill

I would like to thank Eugene Rogers for his leadership with the Chorus for these performances, which are nothing short of extraordinary and inspiring, and to thank Associate Chorus Director Cheryl Frazes Hill for all her exceptional work.

Also, I would like to acknowledge the League's Endowed Concert Reception Chair – Eileen Conaghan.

Finally, thank you to all the donors of the Endowed Fund, who have given this year, and in the past, so that these concerts, such as the one this evening, can be supported now and into the future.”

Many thanks to Brent Taghap and Lisa McDaniel for all their hard work on this. Your donations to the League make this event possible and show our appreciation to the Chorus for their fabulous work.

ANNUAL MUSICIANS' LUNCHEON

What a fun and fantastic Musicians' Luncheon was held this year on May 2, 2024!

Robert Kassinger (bass) was honored for his 30 years of service along those who have served one year with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. The one-year musicians are Mark Almond (principal horn), Ian Hallas (bass), Alexander Horton (assistant principal bass), Danny Yehun Jin (assistant principal second violin), Andrew Sommer (bass) and Justin Vibbard (principal librarian). We had a wonderful turnout of musicians and League members to enjoy this wonderful event.

For the very first time, the League hosted a reception prior to the CSO Musicians' Luncheon, which gave everyone an opportunity to mingle over drinks and hors d'oeuvres prior to luncheon.





We are so grateful to those who provided generous donations to cover the cost for the musicians to attend the CSO Musicians' Luncheon and the door prizes which affirms the League's dedication to support and recognize the service of the CSO musicians.

And finally, sincere thanks go to the chair of the Events and Musicians' Engagement Committee and all the members of CSO Musicians' Luncheon Committee who, through their contributions, due diligence, and commitment over a four-month planning period, made this a successful event for all to attend and remember!

The following League members organized this year's CSO Musicians' Luncheon.

Bobbie Huskey – Chair of the Events and Musicians' Engagement Committee

Fred Garzon – Co-Chair

Rosalind Jackson – Co-Chair

Janice Young – Invitations/Mailing Subcommittee

Eileen Conaghan – Gift Cards/Door Prizes Subcommittee

Kathy Nordmeyer – Host/Hostess Coordination/Orientation Subcommittee

Claretta Meier – Host/Hostess Coordination/Orientation Subcommittee

Merle Jacob – Catering, Linen and Flower Subcommittee

Liz Branch – Registration/Check-in Subcommittee

Mary Soleiman – Registration/Check-in Subcommittee

Linda Eisenhower – Seating Subcommittee

Marcia Lewis – Seating Subcommittee

Brent Taghap – CSOA Staff, Donor Engagement Manager

Lisa McDaniel – CSOA Staff, Director of Donor Engagement

Todd Rosenberg – Photographer



CIVIC ORCHESTRA FINALE AND RECEPTION



On Monday, June 3, the Civic Orchestra performed its last concert of the year. They performed alongside members of the Ryan Opera Center of Lyric Opera of Chicago. It was a fantastic evening of instrumental and opera music. Symphony Center was filled with patrons who appreciated and cheered on these talented young people. Following the concert, the League of the CSOA hosted a wonderful reception with pizza and drinks for the performers and guests. It was a great way to mix and mingle with all these talented young musicians, and a fabulous evening was had by all.



League President, Sharon Mitchell, poses with Civic musicians



League members pose for a photo at the Civic reception



\$840,000 RAISED AT CORPORATE NIGHT

This year's 33rd Corporate Night fundraiser, Shaken, Not Stirred, really shook things up and raised more than \$840,00 for the CSOA. Success was due to three things: 1) a fantastic James Bond themed concert that brought guests to their feet for the superb playing of our incomparable CSO, 2) a new reception-style format throughout four floors of Symphony Center's Rotunda that sold out two weeks before the event, and most importantly 3) the exceptional work by the Levy team and CSO artistic, development and marketing staff members.

Co-chaired by the League's Liz Branch and Jessica Erickson, and with the invaluable input of committee members Judy Allen, Merle Jacob and Elizabeth Shelly, a beautiful and fun evening was put together. The role of the co-chairs and committee included curating the look of the evening by selecting linen and table décor that was infused with the James Bond theme. In addition, the co-chairs and committee members worked with the CSO's food and beverage partner, Levy, to select a dinner menu for the corporate guests and a hearty reception menu for the Rotunda party. Committee members loved the two tasting days when they met with Levy's chef and tasted a variety of offering of food and wine. All the members had a hard time deciding which of the wonderful offerings to pick. Feedback from guests had them raving about the assortment offered, and food was plentiful.



Thank you to all who attended the evenings event and contributed to its great success.



The seated dinner for corporate guests in Grainger Ballroom



League members enjoy Drinks and Bites in the rotunda before the concert



A shot of some of the bites on offer for the preconcert event





From left to right: Jeff Alexander, Liz Branch and Jessica Erickson (League cochairs), and Mary Lou Gorno



League members pose with guest soloist Capathia Jenkins

LEAGUE HOSTS FIRST CSO MUSICIANS' RECEPTION

The League's Events and Musicians Engagement Committee held its first reception for the CSO musicians on June 14. This was a great opportunity for 29 League members to express their appreciation to the musicians in attendance for a joyous season. President Sharon Mitchell thanked the committee and CSO musician Susan Synnstedt for serving as the musicians' representative on the committee. The reception was held in the Green Room, which many League members had not been to, and refreshments were provided.



COMING IN THE FALL: *PHILHARMONIA FANTASTIQUE*

The League has a fabulous opportunity to sponsor a series of concerts featuring Mason Bates' *Philharmonia Fantastique: The Making of the Orchestra*. Our fundraising goal is \$25,000, which will help cover the costs of production and transportation for students.

If you have questions or would like to join us in sponsoring this series of concerts, please contact Associate Director of Giving, Education and Engagement Programs, Kevin Gupana at gupanak@csso.org or 312-294-3156.

More information can be found on the flyer on the next page.

[Check out the trailer here!](#)

CSO FOR KIDS PHILHARMONIA FANTASTIQUE

The League of the CSOA Sponsorship Consortium

SCHOOL CONCERTS

October 17 & 18 | 10:15 & 12:00

FAMILY MATINEES

October 19 | 11:00 & 12:45

This October, the Negaunee Music Institute at the CSO is once again presenting *Philharmonia Fantastique: The Making of the Orchestra*, created by former CSO Mead Composer-in-Residence Mason Bates and an Oscar-winning creative team. Co-commissioned by the CSO and previously performed in Orchestra Hall in May 2022, this animated film with live music follows a magical sprite as it takes audiences inside musical instruments and shows how they work together as an orchestra. The 2024/25 CSO for Kids series includes six concerts of *Philharmonia Fantastique*: four for K-8 school groups and two for families.

We invite you to help us reach our \$25,000 fundraising goal by joining the League of the CSOA's sponsorship consortium of these concerts.

“

Philharmonia Fantastique is the biggest step forward since *Fantasia* itself.”

JOHN WILLIAMS

League volunteers are deeply committed to supporting the educational and community engagement programming of the CSO, from welcoming students to CSO for Kids concerts to assisting with the annual Crain-Maling Foundation CSO Young Artists Competition. We are grateful to League members for being passionate ambassadors for classical music, the CSO and its Negaunee Music Institute.

Philharmonia Fantastique is an exciting and educational production that also requires extraordinary investment. The CSOA is raising funds toward an ambitious goal of \$25,000. Gifts made in support of these concerts help to provide students and families with an unforgettable musical experience.

If you have questions or would like to join the League of the CSOA sponsorship consortium for this series of concerts, please contact Associate Director of Giving, Education and Engagement Programs, Kevin Gupana at gupanak@csso.org or 312-294-3156.

Philharmonia Fantastique was commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra through the Helen Zell Commissioning Program.

LEAGUE VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

SENIOR AND VETERAN ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM (SVEP)

The last Negaunee and League Senior and Veteran Engagement Program of the 2023/24 Season was on Thursday, June 5, 2024. The program was Stéphane Denève, conductor, with Jean-Yves Thibaudet, piano, doing Ravel's *Boléro* and Saint-Saëns' Piano Concerto No. 5 Op. 103 (*Egyptian*).

As co-chairs, Mary Plauché and Margo Oberman gathered a list of various senior and veteran sites throughout the Chicagoland community, and Jackson Brown, our Negaunee Music Institute representative, invited these organizations to come to the SVEP programs. On average, 35-40 sites attend the Open Rehearsals, at times filling Orchestra Hall with up to 1,000 music lovers. This Open Rehearsal, we had between 650-700 people. Our League members volunteer to meet, greet, tag walkers and help our guests feel comfortable at Symphony Center. We do this in collaboration with the CSOA Usher Corps, who are an invaluable part of our team. We look forward to bringing the SVEP audience to more Open Rehearsals in the 2024/25 Season and look forward to more League volunteers helping our visitors.

LEAGUE DOCENTS FOR SVEP CONCERTS

Since 2010, League members are regularly asked to volunteer their time to usher at the Community Open Rehearsals for the Seniors and Veterans Engagement Program (SVEP). There is another group that volunteers prior to those events. They are Docents, supported by the League and the Negaunee Music Institute. These dedicated individuals do research on the music, composers and conductor of the concert. They then create a script and slide show to present at gatherings of seniors and veterans at senior centers and retirement homes. These presentations are intended to enrich those in attendance while preparing them for a more informed and enjoyable experience at Symphony Center. Different docents have different responsibilities, but most simply present the final product. We are always looking for more presenters. If you are interested in making a difference in the lives of seniors and veterans through this program, please contact SherryRichards@comcast.net.

CRAIN-MALING FOUNDATION CSO YOUNG ARTISTS COMPETITION

The competition is a wonderful event and brings great opportunities to League members to volunteer and show our support for budding musicians. Each year, the competition rotation features different instruments – strings, piano, and in the third year, all other instruments. The applicants are high school students up to their junior year. The winner performs with the CSO the following year as part of the CSO School and Family concerts.



From left to right: Robbie Ellis, Chloe Nam, Jaden Teague-Núñez, Elyse Schlesinger, and conductor Kyle Dickson on stage at Orchestra Hall

For the competition, we need volunteers for the check-in, practice rooms, timer and even an elevator person. While this may not sound very exciting, the volunteers help the very serious and nervous young people find their way to the practice rooms and then to the competition. After their audition, they are mostly relaxed and smiling and are very grateful for our smiling faces and best wishes. Volunteers are also able to listen to the wonderful music. The Negaunee Music Institute and the League of the CSOA work together to have a smooth competition.

This year's winner was Jaden Teague-Núñez, steelpan, with Elyse Schlesinger, horn, and Chloe Nam, flute, as runners up.

In 2025, the competition will feature the piano auditions, and depending on how many contestants sign up it will be one or two days in the preliminary round. The four finalists will perform with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, and the winner will be announced. League volunteers are needed for all these days, so please consider signing up for next year's competition.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

9/25 Fall All-Member Meeting

OCTOBER

10/25 Fall in Love with Music

*As more events are confirmed for the 2024/25 Season, League administration will communicate updates to the League calendar to League members via email.

WEB LINKS FOR LEAGUE MEMBERS

League CSO page: <https://cso.org/support/get-involved/the-league/>

League Symphony Store: <https://symphonystore.com/collections/league-of-the-csoa-apparel>

League Tribune Fund: <https://order.cso.org/donate/q/12>

League Membership Dues: <https://order.cso.org/donate/q/8>

League Annual Fund: <https://order.cso.org/donate/q/7>

League Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/theleagueofthecsoa>

2023/24 LEAGUE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President: Sharon Mitchell

Vice President of Events: Eileen Conaghan

Vice President of Finance: Mary Beth Dietrick

Vice President of Fundraising: Sarah Good

Vice President of Membership: Janice Young

Vice President of Administration: Tracy Stanciel

Vice President of Education: Sue Bridge

Vice President of Outreach: Margo Oberman

Strategic Planning/Technology: Ted Tabe

Secretary: Kathy Nordmeyer

Members-at-Large: Merle Jacob, Allisa Gam



League

Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association