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CIVIC ORCHESTRA OF CHICAGO ANNOUNCES PROGRAM DETAILS FOR 2026/27 SEASON PERFORMANCES

CHICAGO — The Civic Orchestra of Chicago, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's prestigious ensemble for early-career musicians, announces program details for its 108th season in 2026/27. As the Civic Orchestra continues to expand its presence beyond Orchestra Hall, the season pairs pay-what-you-wish concerts at Symphony Center with a growing series of free performances in neighborhoods and community venues throughout Chicago and the suburbs. The Civic Orchestra's series of free concerts in neighborhood venues has more than doubled since the pandemic, reflecting the ensemble's mission to make world-class music broadly accessible while training the next generation of musicians.

Tickets for Civic Orchestra concerts at Symphony Center are pay what you wish, starting at \$5. Tickets to Civic Orchestra concerts in neighborhood venues are free, but advance reservations are required. Most ticket reservations open two weeks prior to the performance date. More information is available at cso.org.

Ken-David Masur returns for his eighth season as Civic Orchestra Principal Conductor. Masur holds The Robert Kohl and Clark Pellett Principal Conductor Chair. He leads compelling programs at Symphony Center and in the community, continuing a partnership that has been central to the ensemble's artistic growth and increasing visibility across the Chicago area. This season, Masur's programs include the season-opening concerts featuring Sibelius' *Finlandia* and Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony; a program pairing Debussy, Missy Mazzoli and Stravinsky's *The Firebird*, and the Bach Marathon Finale Concert at Fourth Presbyterian Church.

Several conductors make their Civic Orchestra podium debuts this season, bringing perspectives shaped by work with orchestras in Europe, Asia, Australia and across North America. Among them are Michael Sanderling, chief conductor of the Luzerner Sinfonieorchester since 2021, who leads Shostakovich's Eleventh Symphony at

Symphony Center and Lincoln-Way East High School, and Hans Graf, whose long international career includes current posts as music director of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra and principal guest conductor of the Aalborg Symphony Orchestra, as well as the title of music director emeritus of the Houston Symphony. Graf conducts a program pairing Mozart's Symphony No. 40 with Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6 (*Pathétique*).

The Civic Orchestra also welcomes José Luis Gómez, music director of the Tucson Symphony Orchestra, for a program that includes performances at Symphony Center and Vernon Hills High School, and Tianyi Lu for Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloe* at Symphony Center and Kenwood Academy High School. Lu, a first-prize winner at both the Sir Georg Solti International Conductors' Competition and the International Conducting Competition Guido Cantelli, previously served as conductor-in-residence of the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra, principal conductor of the St. Woolos Sinfonia and assistant conductor of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

Additional Civic Orchestra podium debuts include CSO Assistant Conductor Robert Kahn, who leads the Crain-Maling Foundation CSO Young Artists Competition finals, and Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser, who has previously conducted CSO school and family programming and serves as music director of the National Youth Orchestra of Canada for the 2026 and 2027 seasons.

Throughout the season, the Orchestra explores an array of mainstay canonical works alongside intriguing pieces by living composers. Complementing Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony, Shostakovich's monumental Eleventh Symphony, Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique*, the complete *Firebird* ballet by Stravinsky, a suite from Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloe*, Richard Strauss' pyrotechnic *Don Juan* and Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra, are brilliant contemporary works by J.E. Hernández, Missy Mazzoli, Gabriela Lena Frank, Salina Fisher and Gabriela Ortiz.

The expanded community series brings Civic Orchestra performances to venues including South Shore Cultural Center, Lincoln-Way East High School, Wentz Concert Hall at North Central College, Vernon Hills High School, Kenwood Academy High School and, for the first time, Benito Juárez Community Academy. Several programs deepen the ensemble's connections with young musicians and local schools, including side-by-side performances with the Vernon Hills High School band program and the Kenwood Academy High School Orchestra. These presentations place Civic Orchestra musicians in close collaboration with students while inviting audiences across the city and suburbs to experience the breadth and energy of the Orchestra's season.

The 2026/27 Season also includes special events that feature the Civic Orchestra and Civic Fellows and demonstrate the Orchestra's commitment to nurturing young

musicians and community engagement. The Crain-Maling Foundation CSO Young Artists Competition finals feature Illinois' most talented youth artists competing for an opportunity to appear as soloist with members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in the following season. The Young Composers Initiative culminates with a concert of world premieres by high school composers from across the Chicago region. The Civic Fellows also continue their wide-ranging work in collaboration with local partners, including programs that celebrate contemporary music, community storytelling and social impact.

The Civic Orchestra's annual Bach Marathon returns on December 14, inviting communities across Chicago to celebrate the music of J.S. Bach. The day-long event features performances across the city and culminates in a finale concert at Fourth Presbyterian Church (126 E. Chestnut St., Chicago), where Civic musicians perform four of Bach's iconic *Brandenburg* Concertos, and Ken-David Masur leads the conclusion of the program with Bach's Fourth Orchestral Suite.

Explore the Civic Orchestra of Chicago 2026/27 performance schedule and program listings.

Civic Orchestra of Chicago at Symphony Center

Finlandia & Beethoven Eroica (October 26)

Principal Conductor Ken-David Masur opens the Civic Orchestra's season with 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.

Shostakovich 11 (November 16)

Once described as "a film score without a film," Shostakovich's Eleventh Symphony transports you to the Russian Revolution of 1905. The composer sets the scene outside the Winter Palace on a frigid January day and goes on to depict the massacre of protesters by the czar's troops. Revolutionary songs are threaded through its four movements, and the defiant finale, with its tolling bells and restless drums, signals a warning to the future. The program, led by Michael Sanderling, will also be performed at Lincoln-Way East High School (201 Colorado Ave., Frankfort) on Sunday, November 15.

Mozart 40 & Tchaikovsky Pathétique (January 11, 2027)

Mozart's 40th Symphony speaks in his most confessional voice. Composed during a period of financial insecurity and alienation, the work has a turbulent heart but also moments of reflection in its exquisite slow movement. Another intensely personal late symphony, Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* premiered just days before the composer's sudden death. The program, led by Hans Graf, features one of music's most impassioned farewells, but it contains tender moments, too, including a lyrical waltz that is unmistakably Tchaikovsky.

Debussy, Mazzoli & The Firebird (March 1, 2027)

Principal Conductor Ken-David Masur leads the Civic Orchestra in the ultimate Russian fairy-tale ballet, Stravinsky's *The Firebird*, which pulses with iridescent colors and fantastical effects as it tells the story of a magical bird, an evil sorcerer and an intrepid prince. Debussy evokes a Breton legend about an underwater cathedral that emerges at sunrise, echoing with the sound of ancient bells. And Missy Mazzoli reimagines the Orpheus myth in an entrancing work that dates from her tenure as the CSO's Mead Composer-in-Residence. The score delivers "just the kind of fresh, imaginative sound world that we have come to expect of Mazzoli" (*Chicago Sun-Times*). The program will also be performed at Wentz Concert Hall at North Central College (171 E. Chicago Ave., Naperville) on Sunday, February 28, 2027.

Don Juan & Nielsen 2 (April 5, 2027)

At age 24, Strauss was audacious and determined to conquer, making Don Juan the perfect musical subject. Immerse yourself in the unbridled energy and rich colors of his breakthrough score. In *Escaramuza*, Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Gabriela Lena Frank draws thrilling inspiration from a spiritual warrior dance of Peru's native people. The program, led by José Luis Gómez, concludes with Nielsen's Second Symphony, a vivid portrait of four ancient personality types — choleric (fiery), phlegmatic (calm), melancholic and sanguine — rendered with warmth and earthy wit. The program will also be performed at Vernon Hills High School (145 Lakeview Pkwy., Vernon Hills) on Sunday, April 4, 2027.

Ravel Daphnis and Chloe (May 3, 2027)

Ravel's Suite No. 2 from his ballet *Daphnis and Chloe* shimmers and swirls as it presents an ancient Greek tale of danger and desire. In *Tupaia*, New Zealand composer Salina Fisher depicts the great Polynesian navigator who aided 18th-century British explorers on their first voyage to the Pacific. The program, led by Tianyi Lu, opens with a symphonic gem by Croatian composer Dora Pejačević, a deeply ruminative work she composed while working as a volunteer nurse during the First World War. A version of this program will also be performed by the Civic Orchestra at Kenwood Academy (5015 S. Blackstone Ave., Chicago), as well as a side-by-side performance with the Kenwood Academy High School Orchestra, on Sunday, May 2, 2027.

Bartók Concerto for Orchestra (June 7, 2027)

Carlos Miguel Prieto leads a program of three bravura showpieces. Composed in 1944 when Bartók was a Hungarian refugee living in the United States, his enthralling Concerto for Orchestra gives every section of the orchestra its star solo turn. Another product of wartime America, Barber's Second Essay carries listeners on a restless, exuberant journey. Inspired by Mexico's Huastec people and their folklore, Gabriela Ortiz's *Téenek* is an uplifting ode to a future without borders. This program will also be performed at Benito Juárez Community Academy (1450 W. Cermak Rd., Chicago) on Sunday, June 6, 2027.

Special Events at Symphony Center

Civic Orchestra Brass & Percussion (February 8, 2027)

Led by guest conductor and Chicago Symphony Orchestra trombone Michael Mulcahy, musicians from the Civic Orchestra of Chicago perform a special concert of works that showcase the virtuosity and range of brass and percussion instruments.

IMPACT (March 12, 2027)

Showcasing Education & Community Programs of the CSO

Be inspired by the musicians who are learning, growing and serving Chicago through the programs produced by the Negaunee Music Institute at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Enjoy a showcase of extraordinary performances by the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, musicians from the CSO, Percussion Scholarship Program students and more. Transform lives by supporting these vital education and community engagement activities. Ticket reservations open January 12.

Civic Orchestra of Chicago in the Community

Finlandia & Beethoven Eroica at South Shore Cultural Center (October 25)

Principal Conductor Ken-David Masur leads the Civic Orchestra in a free community concert at South Shore Cultural Center (7059 S. South Shore Dr., Chicago). The program will also be performed at Symphony Center on Monday, October 26.

Shostakovich 11 at Lincoln-Way East High School (November 15)

Led by Michael Sanderling, the Civic Orchestra performs Shostakovich's Eleventh Symphony at Lincoln-Way East High School (201 Colorado Ave., Frankfort). The program will also be performed at Symphony Center on Monday, November 16.

Bach Marathon Finale (December 14)

Celebrate the season in true Baroque splendor as Civic musicians perform four of Bach's sumptuous *Brandenburg* concertos in Fourth Presbyterian Church's stunning

sanctuary. Packed with variety and verve, the concertos range from the intricate sonic tapestries of the Third and Fourth to the daring keyboard pyrotechnics of the Fifth and the dark string colors of the Sixth. Ken-David Masur leads the conclusion of the program with the elegant and majestic dances of Bach's Fourth Orchestral Suite. The concert is presented at Fourth Presbyterian Church (126 E. Chestnut St., Chicago).

Debussy, Mazzoli & The Firebird at Wentz Concert Hall (February 28, 2027)

At Wentz Concert Hall at North Central College (171 E. Chicago Ave., Naperville), the Civic Orchestra presents a community concert featuring Stravinsky's *The Firebird* led by Principal Conductor Ken-David Masur. The program will also be performed at Symphony Center on Monday, March 1, 2027.

Don Juan & Nielsen 2 at Vernon Hills High School (April 4, 2027)

Led by José Luis Gómez, the Civic Orchestra performs a community concert at Vernon Hills High School (145 Lakeview Pkwy., Vernon Hills) in a collaborative performance with musicians of the Vernon Hills High School band program. The program, without musicians of the Vernon Hills High School band, will also be performed at Symphony Center on Monday, April 5, 2027.

Ravel Daphnis and Chloe at Kenwood Academy (May 2, 2027)

Tianyi Lu conducts the Civic Orchestra in a community concert at Kenwood Academy High School (5015 S. Blackstone Ave., Chicago), including a side-by-side performance with the Kenwood Academy High School Orchestra. The program, without the Kenwood Academy High School Orchestra, will also be performed at Symphony Center on Monday, May 3, 2027.

Bartók Concerto for Orchestra at Benito Juárez Community Academy (June 6, 2027)

Carlos Miguel Prieto leads the Civic Orchestra in a community concert at Benito Juárez Community Academy (1450 W. Cermak Rd., Chicago). The program will also be performed at Symphony Center on Monday, June 7, 2027.

Civic Fellows

Through an array of experiences designed to build and diversify creative and professional skills, the Civic Fellowship program empowers participants to realize their full potential as artistically excellent, civically engaged, collaborative and entrepreneurial musicians.

The program's curriculum has four major pillars: artistic planning, music education, social justice and project management. Civic Fellows serve as facilitators in projects like [Notes for Peace](#), explore music by living composers, perform concerts at Symphony

Center as well as in schools and communities across the city, mentor young musicians through the [CSO-Connect program](#), design and implement independent projects and more. Additionally, Fellows participate in enrichment activities including regular meetings as a cohort and professional development seminars with guest lecturers. Fellow reflections on past events and information about upcoming events can be found at cso.org/aboutcivic.

Civic Fellows Chamber Music at Epiphany Center for the Arts (January 24, 2027)

With artistic leadership from violist, conductor and Peabody Award-winning producer and broadcaster Nadia Sirota, the Civic Fellows present a concert of music by living composers. This program takes place at Epiphany Center for the Arts (201 S. Ashland Ave., Chicago).

Civic Fellows & Alarm Will Sound at Epiphany Center for the Arts (March 26, 2027)

In partnership with Grammy Award-winning ensemble Alarm Will Sound, the Civic Fellows present a concert inspired by the ensemble's *New Acoustica* project. Following a call for collaboration, Fellows select and work with five local artists to arrange their electronic music for acoustic ensembles, connecting two sound worlds rich in creative innovation and musical expression. This program takes place at Epiphany Center for the Arts (201 S. Ashland Ave., Chicago).

Civic Fellows & Chicago Refugee Coalition (May 19, 2027)

Join the Civic Fellows and participants from the Chicago Refugee Coalition in a special concert that shares and celebrates cultural identities. New this season, this performance features Core Members of the Chicago Cultural Alliance — first-voice, community driven centers of cultural heritage in Chicago — in an event that weaves together community and individual journeys through music and storytelling. This program takes place in Buntrock Hall at Symphony Center.

Notes for Peace

Launched in March 2018 in partnership with Purpose Over Pain, the Notes for Peace program uses the healing benefits of music to support families who have lost loved ones to gun violence. More than 100 professionally recorded songs of tribute, alongside family photos and song lyrics, can be found on notesforpeace.org.

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).

Notes for Peace Reunion (May 22, 2027)

In collaboration with Purpose Over Pain, the Negaunee Music Institute presents a reunion concert celebrating nine years of the Notes for Peace program. Launched in 2018, Notes for Peace empowers Chicago families who have lost loved ones to gun violence to compose, record and perform original songs of tribute. Join musicians from the Civic Orchestra of Chicago and the families of Purpose Over Pain, together with guest artists from the U.K.-based organization Irene Taylor Trust and Chicago-area vocalists, for an inspiring afternoon that demonstrates the healing power of music.

Young Composers Initiative

With leadership from former CSO Mead Composer-in-Residence Jessie Montgomery, the Young Composers Initiative engages youth from across the Chicago region and empowers them to create new pieces of chamber music.

Young Composers Initiative Finale Concert (June 11, 2027)

In this season's culminating event, musicians of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago perform world premieres by the composers selected to participate in the program.

Crain-Maling Foundation CSO Young Artists Competition

Founded in 1919, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Youth Auditions have featured extraordinary young soloists from across Illinois. Now known as the [Crain-Maling Foundation CSO Young Artists Competition](#), this concerto competition identifies one outstanding young performer to be featured in a CSO School and Family Concert the following season. This year's competition is open to woodwinds, brass, harp and percussion. Finalists are selected to perform in the final round in Orchestra Hall, accompanied by the Civic Orchestra of Chicago and conducted by CSO Assistant Conductor Robert Kahn, in the final, public round on Saturday, January 16, 2027, at 2:00 p.m. This event is free and open to the public; tickets can be reserved two weeks prior to the event.

Ticket Details

Individual tickets for Civic Orchestra concerts at Symphony Center and the Bach Marathon Finale are pay what you wish, starting at \$5. Tickets to Civic Orchestra concerts in community venues are free, but advance reservations are required; most ticket reservations open two weeks prior to the performance date.

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.

Artists, programs and prices are subject to change.

For more information about the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, visit cso.org/aboutcivic.

Supporters

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.

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The Civic Fellows & Chicago Refugee Coalition concert is generously sponsored by Theodore and Elisabeth Wachs.

The Young Composers Initiative is generously supported by Margo and Mike Oberman.

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The Principal Conductor chair is endowed by a generous gift from Robert Kohl and Clark Pellett.

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Chicago Symphony Orchestra: 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. Launched in 2007, [CSO 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](#), 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](#) trains the next generation of musicians with Ken-David Masur as its principal conductor. [Symphony Center Presents](#) features guest artists and ensembles across an expansive array of genres, including classical, jazz, global and contemporary. The [Negaunee Music Institute](#) 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.