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CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES 2025/26 SEASON PROGRAMMING

**Klaus Mäkelä and Riccardo Muti Lead Chicago Symphony Orchestra Programs
in Chicago and on U.S. Tours**

**Mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato Makes Three Appearances
as 2025/26 CSO Artist-in-Residence**

Exploration of American Music Caps the Season in June 2026

CHICAGO — The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association (CSOA) announces 2025/26 Season programming for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) and several of the Symphony Center Presents (SCP) series. Marking its 135th concert season in 2025/26, the CSO unites with an array of internationally renowned musicians for performances in Chicago and on tour in the United States.

Zell Music Director Designate Klaus Mäkelä returns in October for the first of four Chicago residencies during the 2025/26 Season, followed by performances in December, February and March. In addition to his concerts in Chicago, Mäkelä leads a U.S. tour where he will make his first appearance with the CSO at Carnegie Hall and is also scheduled to make his Ravinia Festival debut in summer 2026, leading the CSO in two programs. Mäkelä's CSO season program highlights include Berlioz's *Harold in Italy* and *Symphonie fantastique*, Sibelius' *Lemminkäinen*, Strauss' *Ein Heldenleben* and Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, as well as Beethoven's Symphony No. 7, complemented by newer works inspired by Beethoven's music.

Riccardo Muti, the Orchestra's Music Director Emeritus for Life, conducts four programs in two Chicago residencies, and leads the CSO on a January 2026 tour to Arizona and California. Muti's fall 2025 program highlights include Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler*, Dvořák's *New World* Symphony and Brahms' Symphony No. 4. In his spring 2026 residency, he leads an Italian opera program with the Chicago Symphony Chorus and distinguished soloists, as well as a

program including Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 3 (*Polish*) and music from the film scores for *The Godfather* and *The Leopard* by Italian composer Nino Rota, who was one of Muti's early mentors and teachers.

The CSOA welcomes internationally renowned and multi-Grammy winning mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato as its 2025/26 CSO Artist-in-Residence, with the first CSO solo appearance occurring during the opening weekend of the season at the Symphony Ball gala concert conducted by Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider on September 20. The CSO's opening subscription program in September also features Szeps-Znaider as conductor and violin soloist along with one of the CSO's newest members, Principal Viola Teng Li, in Mozart's Sinfonia concertante.

DiDonato's other appearances as CSO Artist-in-Residence include the Midwest premiere of *Emily – No Prisoner Be* on the Symphony Center Presents (SCP) Chamber Music series on February 10, 2026. The program highlights poems by Emily Dickinson, presenting the revolutionary poet to audiences through a new, imaginative song cycle by Pulitzer Prize winning-composer Kevin Puts. The performance features DiDonato, accompanied by the genre-defying, Grammy and Emmy Award-winning string trio Time for Three. DiDonato, one of the most groundbreaking singers of our time and a fierce advocate for the arts, returns in May 2026 for a solo appearance with the CSO and conductor Edward Gardner, for a program featuring Peter Lieberon's *Neruda Songs* set to the poetry of Pablo Neruda. Each of DiDonato's residencies will focus on transformative musical experiences, fostering strong connections with the Chicago community through impactful education and engagement activities.

CSO first performances of works by contemporary composers in the 2025/26 Season include music by John Adams, Anna Clyne, Unsuk Chin, Jessie Montgomery, Thea Musgrave, Camille Pépin, Carlos Simon, Gabriella Smith, Joel Thompson, Erkki-Sven Tüür and Jörg Widmann. In December, the CSO-commissioned world premiere of *Song of the Reappeared* by award-winning composer and former CSO Solti Conducting Apprentice Matthew Aucoin features Grammy Award-winning soprano Julia Bullock as soloist in her CSO subscription debut. The new work takes inspiration from the work of visionary Chilean poet Raúl Zurita.

In June 2026, the CSO gives the Midwest premiere of Wynton Marsalis' *Liberty* (Symphony No. 5), combining musical forces with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and conductor Marin Alsop. Marsalis' new work is co-commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, and the Philadelphia Orchestra is the lead commissioner. It is part of a program that opens a monthlong journey through American music ahead of the country's 250th birthday in 2026. The Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis also performs a Symphony Center Presents Jazz series concert on June 2. Two additional CSO programs during the month feature American symphonic masterworks such as Copland's *Lincoln Portrait*, Bernstein's Symphony No. 2 (*The Age of Anxiety*) and Duke Ellington's *Harlem*. Complementing these programs are a recital by pianist Conrad Tao highlighting works by George Gershwin and jazz greats Art Tatum and Billy Strayhorn, among others, and a CSO at the Movies presentation of *Star Wars: A New Hope* with its iconic, Oscar-winning score by composer John Williams.

Other 2025/26 Season highlights include two April CSO concerts with renowned pianist Evgeny Kissin performing three piano concertos by Rimsky-Korsakov, Scriabin and Prokofiev in one

program; an all-Stravinsky program with a semi-staged presentation of *The Soldier's Tale* in a special collaboration with Chicago's Goodman Theatre, and the return in April 2026 of composer Joe Hisaishi — known for his film scores for the popular films by Hayao Miyazaki — after four sold-out concerts in 2024. Hisaishi is featured as conductor and pianist with the CSO in a program of his symphonic and film music. The CSO for Kids series of family and school concerts also features acclaimed American singer-songwriter Natalie Merchant in performances of *Mother Goose & the Cabinet of Wonder* in May 2026.

[Explore](#) a chronological listing of CSOA-presented programs included in the 2025/26 Season.

Klaus Mäkelä, Zell Music Director Designate — CSO Residencies and Tour

Klaus Mäkelä, who launches his tenure as the CSO's 11th music director beginning in the 2027/28 Season, leads his first program of the new season in October, highlighting the music of French composer Hector Berlioz. He conducts the composer's semi-autobiographical *Symphonie fantastique* and the richly evocative tone poem *Harold in Italy*, with French viola virtuoso Antoine Tamestit as soloist (October 16-18). In December, Mäkelä leads a program featuring Beethoven's Seventh Symphony and Schumann's Piano Concerto with Yunchan Lim as soloist. Lim, the youngest ever winner of the Van Cliburn Competition, makes his CSO subscription debut in this appearance following a thrilling 2023 CSO debut at Ravinia. Mäkelä and the CSO also perform two contemporary works inspired by Beethoven on this program, including the first CSO performances of Unsuk Chin's *subito con forza*, her 2020 tribute to Beethoven written to commemorate the composer's 250th birthday, and *Con brio*, a concert overture by Jörg Widmann (December 18-20).

Mäkelä returns in February 2026 with a program featuring musical portraits of two heroic figures: *Ein Heldenleben (A Hero's Life)*, Richard Strauss' tone poem, and Sibelius' *Lemminkäinen*, which evokes the adventures of a hero in Finnish mythology (February 19-21, 2026).

Following his February residency in Chicago, Mäkelä leads his first tour with the CSO with four stops planned in the U.S. The tour opens in Ann Arbor, Michigan, with a concert presented by the University Musical Society (February 23, 2026), followed by a concert in New York presented by Carnegie Hall (February 25, 2026). It continues with a concert presented by Washington Performing Arts (February 27, 2026) and concludes with a concert presented by the Celebrity Series of Boston (March 1, 2026). Mäkelä and the Orchestra follow the tour with two concerts in Chicago featuring Milhaud's *Le Bœuf sur le toit*, Gershwin's *An American in Paris* and Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* (March 5-6, 2026).

Riccardo Muti, Music Director Emeritus for Life — CSO Residencies and Tour

Riccardo Muti, the CSO's Music Director Emeritus for Life, returns to Chicago for two residencies in the 2025/26 Season, leading two programs in the fall and two in March 2026, continuing his celebrated artistic partnership with the Orchestra, built over his 13 seasons as its 10th music director (2010-2023).

In October, Muti conducts Dvořák's *New World* Symphony, with its melodies capturing the folk songs and spirituals the composer heard during his visit to the United States, as well as Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler*, which evokes the life and spirit of the great German Renaissance artist (October 30-November 1). For his second program, Muti conducts Brahms' Symphony No. 4 and Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* with guitar soloist Pablo Sáinz-Villegas, whose "sheen of tone" and the "nobility of his rhythms" were praised by the *Chicago Tribune* in a prior CSO appearance (November 6-8).

Muti leads the CSO on a seven-city U.S. tour in Arizona and California January 15-24, 2026. The tour opens with a concert in Mesa, Arizona, presented by the Mesa Arts Center (January 15, 2026), where the Orchestra first performed during its 2023 North American tour. It also includes return appearances at UC Berkeley, presented by Cal Performances (January 17, 2026); in Palm Desert, presented by Palm Springs Friends of the Philharmonic (January 21, 2026); Santa Barbara, presented by Community Arts Music Association (January 23, 2026); and in Costa Mesa, California, presented by the Philharmonic Society of Orange County (January 24, 2026). The tour also includes CSO debut appearances at UC Davis, presented by the Mondavi Arts Center (January 18, 2026), and at California State University, Northridge, presented by the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (January 22, 2026).

In March, Muti, considered one of the world's foremost interpreters of Italian opera, leads a program of Italian opera highlights. Opera overtures, choruses and familiar arias feature the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus along with acclaimed soprano Lidia Fridman in her CSO debut and renowned tenor Francesco Meli, who returns following critically acclaimed CSO appearances with Muti in Verdi's *Aida* and *Un ballo in maschera*.

Fridman and Meli are featured in the CSO's first performances of Act IV from Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*, and Meli is the soloist in the iconic aria "Amor ti vieta" from Giordano's *Fedora* — also receiving its first CSO performances. The aria "Ebben?...Ne andrò lontana" from Catalani's *La Wally* sees Fridman as soloist in the CSO's first subscription performances of the work. Muti also leads the CSO's first performances of the Sinfonia from Verdi's opera *La battaglia di Legnano*, with the balance of the program highlighting additional selections by Verdi and Puccini, including the "Va, pensiero" chorus from Verdi's *Nabucco* (March 19-21, 2026).

Muti's second program in March pairs Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 3 (*Polish*) with music from two of Nino Rota's most acclaimed film scores for *The Leopard* and *The Godfather*. The Suite from *The Godfather* was compiled by Muti and receives its first CSO subscription performances (Symphony Center, March 26, 28-29, 2026; Edman Memorial Chapel — Wheaton, March 27, 2026).

Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) Classical Concerts

The 2025/26 Season connects Chicago audiences with some of today's most acclaimed international soloists and distinguished conductors across a wide variety of CSO programs that culminate with three programs in June 2026 offering an opportunity to discover music of American composers.

Newcomers on the Podium

Four acclaimed conductors make CSO podium debuts in the 2025/26 Season. With graduate degrees in musicology, jazz studies and piano performance, Daniela Candillari, Principal Conductor of Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, taps a wide variety of musical interests to build her orchestral repertoire. Candillari makes her CSO debut with a program featuring works by Carlos Simon and Thea Musgrave, as well as Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings* and Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* with soprano Giulia Semenzato in her CSO debut and mezzo-soprano Jennifer Johnson Cano. Musgrave's *Piccolo Play* receives its first CSO performances on the program and features CSO Flute and Piccolo Jennifer Gunn as soloist (October 3-4).

British conductor Stefan Asbury makes his CSO subscription concert debut in an all-Stravinsky program that includes the Orchestra's first performances of the composer's *Septet* and *Fanfare for a New Theatre*. The program also features the Octet for winds and brass and a semi-staged version of *The Soldier's Tale*, directed by Artistic Associate Steve Scott and produced in association with the Goodman Theatre (October 23-25).

Violinist Pekka Kuusisto, who made waves and garnered critical praise in 2022 for his CSO solo debut in Bryce Dessner's violin concerto, makes his CSO podium debut in the spring. Currently Artistic Director of the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor of the Gothenburg Symphony, Kuusisto offers a program inspired in part by Haydn's Symphony No. 64, known by the nickname *Tempora mutantur* (The times change). He leads it along with Anna Clyne's *Sound and Fury*, Grieg's *Holberg Suite* and Kreisler's Violin Concerto in C Major, in which he is also the featured soloist (May 21-23, 2026).

Joshua Weilerstein, Chief Conductor of Denmark's Aalborg Symphony Orchestra and Music Director of Orchestre National de Lille, makes his CSO subscription concert debut in June. He leads a program featuring former CSO Mead Composer-in-Residence Jessie Montgomery's *Banner*, which offers reflection on the meaning of the *Star-Spangled Banner* in the 21st century, along with Copland's *Lincoln Portrait* and works by Ives and Ellington. Also on the program is *The Rock* (a reference to Plymouth Rock) by Czech composer Bohuslav Martinů, who became an American citizen in 1952 (June 18-21, 2026).

CSO Visiting Conductors and Guest Artists

Following acclaimed CSO podium appearances in 2023 and 2024, conductor and violinist Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider, Music Director of the Orchestre National de Lyon, returns to open the new season — first, in a program where he appears as soloist with the CSO's recently appointed Principal Viola Teng Li in Mozart's brilliant *Sinfonia concertante* and conducts Elgar's *Second Symphony* (September 18-19). In a glittering concert as part of the annual Symphony Ball fundraising gala, Szeps-Znaider leads the CSO in selections by Richard Strauss and Georges Bizet that highlight CSO Artist-in-Residence Joyce DiDonato as soloist, along with favorite opera overtures and Mendelssohn's sparkling music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (September 20). Later in the season he conducts Brahms' *Piano Concerto No. 1*, with Martin Helmchen as soloist, and musical portraits of Vienna by Richard Strauss and Ravel (May 28-31, 2026).

Conductor Mikko Franck, Music Director of the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, leads a program of works by French composers. Pianist Alice Sara Ott is featured as soloist in

Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand and his Piano Concerto in G, both written in 1929-30. The program also includes the first CSO performance of contemporary composer Camille Pépin's shimmering *Les Eaux célestes* (celestial waters) and a suite from Bizet's *Carmen* (September 25-28).

Music Director of the Vienna State Opera since 2020, Philippe Jordan returns to lead the CSO in Dvořák's Violin Concerto with Augustin Hadelich, who *The New York Times* hails for his "dazzling technique and gorgeous tone," as soloist. Kodály's *Dances of Galánta* and Brahms' Symphony No. 2 complete the program (Symphony Center, October 9 & 11; Edman Memorial Chapel — Wheaton, October 10).

CSO Concertmaster Robert Chen is ensemble leader as well as soloist in Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, with its musical portraits of nature, including trickling streams and icy landscapes. Also on the program are an early Mozart Divertimento and Mahler's arrangement for string orchestra of Beethoven's String Quartet in F Minor, Op. 95 (*Serioso*) (November 13-15).

Music Director of the Pittsburgh Symphony and frequent CSO podium guest Manfred Honeck leads the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus in a program anchored by Mozart's final composition, his Requiem, interspersed with Gregorian chant. Jeanine De Bique (soprano), Avery Amereau (mezzo-soprano), Ben Bliss (tenor), and Stephano Park (bass) are soloists, with Amereau and Park making their CSO debuts and De Bique making her CSO subscription concert debut. Beethoven's *Coriolan* Overture and Haydn's Symphony No. 93 in D Major round out the program (November 20-23).

Chief Conductor of the Vienna Symphony Petr Popelka returns to Symphony Center to lead a concert featuring Brahms' Symphony No. 3 and Richard Strauss' rollicking tone poem *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks*. These works surround the world premiere of the CSO-commissioned orchestral song cycle *Song of the Reappeared* by composer and former CSO Solti Conducting Apprentice Matthew Aucoin with celebrated soprano Julia Bullock in her CSO subscription concert debut. The new work's three movements take inspiration from the Spanish-language texts of contemporary Chilean poet Raúl Zurita's book *INRI*, which offers a fierce elegy for the thousands of people who were "disappeared" by Chile's dictatorial government throughout the last decades of the twentieth century (December 4-7).

Gianandrea Noseda, Music Director of the National Symphony Orchestra, takes the CSO podium to conduct three 20th century masterworks. Opening with Debussy's *Prelude to The Afternoon of a Faun*, the program continues with Britten's Violin Concerto, a response to the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s. World-renowned violinist James Ehnes, whom *The Guardian* has called "a flawless technician and a serious, ever-perceptive musician," is soloist. Closing the program is Prokofiev's landmark Symphony No. 4, which draws musical inspiration from his concurrently composed ballet music for *The Prodigal Son* (December 11-13).

Renowned conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen leads two distinct CSO programs in a multi-week residency that opens with a program featuring the music of Beethoven and Bruckner. Salonen and the CSO join renowned pianist and the CSO's 2024/25 Artist-in-Residence Daniil Trifonov for a performance of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 2. Bruckner's Symphony No. 4 (*Romantic*) is brought to life by the Finnish conductor, whose reading of this symphony has garnered consistent critical acclaim (January 29-February 1, 2026). The next week, Salonen

conjures two striking musical visions of the ocean: the endless drama of its waves in Debussy's *La mer*, and the rugged California coastline in Gabriella Smith's showpiece for cello, *Lost Coast*, receiving its first CSO performances with the soloist and Chicago native for whom it was written, Gabriel Cabezas. Debussy's symphonic triptych, *Images*, rounds out the program (February 5-7, 2026).

Having won her first competition at age six, teen violinist Himari has continued her prodigious rise and makes a CSO subscription debut in Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1 with Jaap van Zweden conducting. The program also features the CSO's first performances of Joel Thompson's most ambitious orchestral work to date, *To See the Sky*, that outlines what the composer calls "an emotional, non-linear journey towards healing." Mozart's Symphony No. 41 (*Jupiter*) adds to the skyward theme of the program (Symphony Center, February 12, 14-15, 2026; Edman Memorial Chapel — Wheaton, February 13, 2026).

Czech conductor Jakub Hrůša leads the CSO across two weeks of concerts in the spring, first in a wide-ranging program that includes highlights from Smetana's opera *The Bartered Bride*. Leif Ove Andsnes, "one of the most gifted musicians of his generation" (*The Wall Street Journal*), joins Hrůša and the CSO for Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3, and Schumann's Symphony No. 2 (*Spring*) is an early harbinger of the season (March 12-14, 2026). Hrůša's second program focuses on composers' musings on life's existential questions as portrayed by Janáček in his overture to the opera *From the House of the Dead*, Rachmaninov in *The Isle of the Dead* and Wagner's Prelude and Liebestod from *Tristan and Isolde*. Acclaimed for her leading roles in opera productions around the world including 2024's Covent Garden production of Janáček's *Jenůfa*, American soprano Corinne Winters makes her CSO debut in Strauss' *Four Last Songs* to complete the program (April 9-12, 2026).

Conductor Paavo Järvi and accordionist Ksenija Sidorova have performed Estonian composer Erkki-Sven Tüür's 2007 accordion concerto, *Prophecy*, to acclaim in international concert halls. They bring it to Chicago for the Orchestra's first performances of the work featuring Sidorova in her CSO debut. Tüür describes his piece as "flowing, whirling and glittering," and Sidorova describes it as "technically [. . .] one of most challenging pieces that exists in an accordionist's repertoire." The captivating work is a companion to Brahms' Variations on a Theme by Haydn and Sibelius' Symphony No. 2 (April 2-4, 2026).

Preeminent Russian pianist Evgeny Kissin — familiar to Symphony Center audiences for his compelling and frequently sold-out recital programs — steps into the spotlight for not one but three piano concertos. For the first time since 2015, Kissin joins the CSO as soloist to perform Rimsky-Korsakov's Piano Concerto in C-sharp Minor, Scriabin's Piano Concerto in F-sharp Minor and Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 1 in an all-Russian program conducted by Andrey Boreyko, a frequent guest conductor of major orchestras around the world (April 16 & 18, 2026).

The winner of the 2016 Sir Georg Solti Conducting Award, Karina Canellakis has developed close relationships with several of the world's leading orchestras, including the CSO. In May, she makes a welcome return to Symphony Center with Illinois native Conrad Tao as soloist in Bartok's Piano Concerto No. 3, and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5 (April 30-May 3, 2026).

In her third season appearance at Symphony Center, CSO Artist-in-Residence Joyce DiDonato sings *Neruda Songs*, a poignant orchestral song cycle set to the poetry of Pablo Neruda by Peter Lieberson. The composer dedicated it to his wife, mezzo-soprano Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, who gave its premiere the year before she died. Also on the program, conducted by Principal Conductor of the London Philharmonic Edward Gardner, are two major 20th-century works by Samuel Barber and William Walton (May 7-9, 2026).

Juraj Valčuha, Music Director of the Houston Symphony, whose CSO podium appearances in 2017 and 2024 garnered critical acclaim, returns to lead a program of all French works, including Ravel's *Mother Goose Suite* and Saint-Saëns' *Symphony No. 3 (Organ)*. It also features the Chicago Symphony Chorus and coloratura soprano Erin Morley in Poulenc's *Gloria* (May 14-16, 2026).

Principal Guest Conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra and Chief Conductor of the Ravinia Festival Marin Alsop opens a monthlong journey through American music with a program including the CSO's first performances of two CSO co-commissions — *The Rock You Stand On*, a new work by John Adams, and Wynton Marsalis' *Liberty* (Symphony No. 5) featuring the combined musical forces of the CSO and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. Completing the program is Copland's *Suite from Appalachian Spring* (June 4-6, 2026).

Conductor James Gaffigan, a frequent CSO podium guest and General Music Director of Komische Oper Berlin, leads a program with two works from American musical theater — Gershwin's Overture to *Girl Crazy* and Kurt Weill's *Symphonic Nocturne* from *Lady in the Dark* — and Leonard Bernstein's *Symphony No. 2 (The Age of Anxiety)* featuring pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet. The Apostolic Church of God Sanctuary Choir also joins Gaffigan and the CSO to perform selected spirituals (June 11-13, 2026).

Programs with the Chicago Symphony Chorus

The Chicago Symphony Chorus adds depth to several Chicago Symphony Orchestra programs each season, offering Chicago audiences the opportunity to hear stirring performances of choral masterpieces from the worlds of opera and sacred music, as well as in holiday and film selections.

In November, the Chicago Symphony Chorus joins the CSO, renowned guest conductor Manfred Honeck and a distinguished group of soloists for Mozart's *Requiem*. This presentation of the landmark work is enhanced with the addition of Gregorian chant between each movement. The concert also brings together orchestral masterpieces by two of Mozart's significant contemporaries, Beethoven and Haydn: the *Coriolan Overture* and one of Haydn's great London symphonies, *Symphony No. 93 in D Major* (November 20-23).

The Chicago Symphony Chorus performs holiday favorites with members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra during the annual presentation of *Merry, Merry Chicago!* with conductor John Morris Russell (December 19-23).

As part of the CSO at the Movies series, the Chicago Symphony Chorus joins the CSO for A Live Presentation of *2001: A Space Odyssey* conducted by André de Ridder (January 9-10, 2026).

In his March CSO residency, Riccardo Muti leads the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus in an Italian opera program. Renowned tenor Francesco Meli and soprano Lidia Fridman, in her CSO debut, join the program to perform Act IV from Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* and thrilling arias from Giordano's *Fedora* and Catalani's *La Wally*. The Chorus is featured in dramatic choruses from Verdi's *Nabucco* and *Macbeth* (March 19-21, 2026).

In May, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus are featured in a performance of Poulenc's *Gloria*, the composer's kaleidoscopic setting of the text of the Gloria section of the Catholic mass, with soprano Erin Morley as soloist on this all-French program conducted by Juraj Valčuha (May 14-16, 2026).

Symphony Center Presents Chamber Music

This series offers listeners the opportunity to hear smaller ensembles in the appealing concert atmosphere of Orchestra Hall. The connection to the artists on stage introduces a fresh perspective on the wide variety of sounds and combinations of individual instruments and voices.

The series opens in October with an opportunity to hear masterful violinist Christian Tetzlaff perform all the solo sonatas and partitas by J.S. Bach in one concert, a magnificent feat of artistry and a musical feast for the listener. Tetzlaff's playing of these works has been called "virtuosity of the highest order" by *The New York Times*. During the 60-minute intermission, an onstage guest presenter will offer insights about these treasured Bach works (October 5).

CSO Artist-in-Residence Joyce DiDonato makes her second Chicago appearance of the season, collaborating with the genre-defying string trio Time for Three (Ranaan Meyer, bass and vocals; Nick Kendall, violin and vocals; and Charles Yang, violin and vocals) on their acclaimed musical and visual project *Emily – No Prisoner Be*. Inspired by the work of American poet Emily Dickinson, the captivating new piece includes 24 musical settings of the poet's often provocative and soul-searching verses brought to life in new songs by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Kevin Puts with direction and lighting design by Marie Lambert-Le Bihan. Puts is well known for his opera *The Hours*, premiered to much acclaim in a 2022 Metropolitan Opera production which featured DiDonato as the writer Virginia Woolf. Puts' music has been hailed as "sincere and persuasive ... and soaringly lyrical" (*The New York Times*) (February 10, 2026).

March brings the Zukerman Trio — violinist Pinchas Zukerman, cellist Amanda Forsyth and pianist Michael Stephen Brown — to Symphony Center for a program featuring Dvořák's Piano Trio, Op. 90 (*Dumky*), with its six movements inspired by Czech folk melodies of alternating character; Mendelssohn's Piano Trio No. 1, and *Pale Yellow*, a movement from esteemed American composer Jennifer Higdon's Piano Trio (March 7, 2026).

The SCP Chamber Music series culminates with the charismatic artistry and captivating stage presence of internationally acclaimed pianist Yuja Wang leading the Mahler Chamber Orchestra from the piano in a program including Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 2 and Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 2. The program also features a performance of Prokofiev's Symphony No. 1 (*Classical*) (April 29, 2026).

Symphony Center Presents Piano

Chicago audiences are consistently drawn to the talent and artistry of the exceptional pianists who are invited to the Symphony Center Presents Piano series, which features three series debuts in the 2025/26 Season.

After a thrilling CSO debut at Ravinia in 2023, Yunchan Lim makes his SCP Piano series debut to open the new season on October 19. The prize-winning young virtuoso presents a program of Variations (Op. 27) by Webern and Bach's complete *Goldberg Variations*, BWV 988. Lim also returns in December to make his CSO subscription concert debut in Schumann's Piano Concerto with Zell Music Director Designate Klaus Mäkelä conducting.

The Times of London called the playing of Beatrice Rana "supremely intelligent" with "a transcendent lightness of touch." The highly sought-after Italian pianist brings these qualities to her program that include Debussy's Etudes, Book II; a suite from Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*; Prokofiev's Sonata No. 6, and selections from Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* (November 2).

A serious pianist and composer with a following of nearly 1.5 million on YouTube, where he is known as "Cateen," Hayato Sumino made his CSO debut at Ravinia in 2024 to wide acclaim. He makes his SCP Piano series debut in November with a wide-ranging program that highlights his unique talents as interpretive classical artist, innovative composer and amazing improvisational talent, performing works by Chopin, Bach and Ravel, as well as some of his own (November 16).

Extraordinary pianist Kirill Gerstein returns to Symphony Center for a program of Liszt and Brahms, demonstrating why *The Observer* praised him saying, "This is the kind of serious, intelligent and virtuosic music-making that keeps classical music alive." Gerstein's program includes Liszt's *Après une lecture du Dante* from the composer's *Années de pèlerinage, Deuxième année, Italie* and Brahms' Sonata No. 3 in F Minor (January 25, 2026).

February brings back Canadian virtuoso Marc-André Hamelin. Celebrated for his astonishing technique and profound musicality, Hamelin explores the music of two restless visionaries: Ives, whose *Concord* Sonata salutes Transcendentalist thinkers from Emerson to Thoreau, and Scriabin, represented by his turbulent and soul-searching Third Piano Sonata. Schumann's *Fantasiestücke*, Op. 12, completes the program (February 22, 2026).

Renowned British pianist Benjamin Grosvenor makes a welcome return to the series with a program that includes Schubert's *Wanderer* Fantasy and Beethoven's *Moonlight* Sonata in addition to works by Schumann and Scriabin (March 8, 2026).

An SCP Piano series highlight, iconic pianist Evgeny Kissin brings a program featuring Chopin mazurkas, Schumann's *Kreisleriana*, Op. 16, and Beethoven's Sonata No. 7 in D Major, Op. 10, No. 3, along with the rarely played and supremely difficult Sonata No. 2, Op. 13, written in 1912 by Russian composer Nikolai Myaskovsky (May 17, 2026).

Capping the series in June is a program that highlights the varied influences and styles across American keyboard music. Acclaimed pianist Conrad Tao, who hails from Urbana, Illinois,

performs music of Gershwin, as well as jazz greats Art Tatum and Billy Strayhorn, contrasting it with selections from European contemporaries Schoenberg, Debussy and Rachmaninov in his SCP Piano series debut. Tao offers onstage program notes to introduce many of the pieces and bring audiences closer to music of this era of cross-pollination and exploration in the early part of the 20th century (June 7, 2026).

Featured Concerts and Events

These featured concerts and events connect audiences with a wide variety of music genres and artists throughout the 2025/26 Season.

Joyce DiDonato, the CSO's new Artist-in-Residence for the 2025/26 Season, joins Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider and the CSO for a celebratory concert with opera selections and Mendelssohn's enchanting *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Patrons can enhance their concert experience with a Symphony Ball gala package, including a private preconcert reception and postconcert dinner and dancing at the Four Seasons Hotel Chicago (September 20).

TwoSet Violin, the Australian classical music violin duo known worldwide for their ability to make classical music relevant and approachable for new audiences through their humor and online personalities, brings its newest show to Symphony Center (October 14).

MacArthur Fellow and Grammy Award-winning mandolinist, singer, songwriter, and composer Chris Thile, hailed as "an all-round musician" (*The Guardian*), brings his genre-spanning artistry to Symphony Center. This wide-ranging program features selections from his acclaimed solo recordings of Bach's Sonatas and Partitas — including the upcoming second volume out this fall — alongside his signature blend of classical, folk and improvisational brilliance (October 24).

Celebrated around the world for its gleaming sound and razor-sharp precision, the CSO brass section offers a virtuosic showcase of traditional favorites and symphonic masterworks led by CSO trombone, conductor and arranger Michael Mulcahy (December 16).

Mexico's leading orchestra, the Sinfónica de Minería, makes its Symphony Center debut with Carlos Miguel Prieto conducting works by Revueltas, Haydn and D'Rivera. Pacho Flores makes his Symphony Center debut as trumpet soloist in Paquito D'Rivera's Concerto Venezolano and Haydn's Trumpet Concerto (January 18, 2026).

Tango After Dark showcases the sultry music of the master of Argentine tango Astor Piazzolla, with international tango superstars Germán Cornejo and Gisela Galeassi and their talented troupe of award-winning dancers. The evening is filled with stylish dancing, glamorous costumes and tango in its purest form, performed by internationally renowned vocalists and instrumentalists (February 28, 2026).

Dubbed "the John Williams of Japan" by *Pitchfork*, Joe Hisaishi is one of the most celebrated composers of our time. He is especially known for his acclaimed symphonic works, as well as film scores, including those for *Spirited Away*, *Princess Mononoke*, *Ponyo* and *My Neighbor Totoro*. Hisaishi returns to conduct the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in his symphonic works and iconic film scores (April 23-26, 2026).

Having embraced Chicago and its musical life during her three years as the CSO Artist-in-Residence, Hilary Hahn returns to Symphony Center to share a program of her latest musical passions. As *The New York Times* observes, Hahn's performances offer "the golden-age richness and astonishing technique that have long made her a standout in a crowded field" (May 24, 2026).

CSO at the Movies

This popular series celebrates the magic of watching films on the big screen at Orchestra Hall as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra performs the scores live.

The opening film on the series is *How to Train Your Dragon* from 2010, with John Powell's score and colorful orchestration, which was recognized with an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Film Score — and the film itself was nominated for Best Animated Feature. Conductor Conner Gray Covington makes his CSO podium debut in these performances (November 28-30).

The perennial holiday season film *Home Alone*, with its classic comedy scenes and heartfelt moments, is a Chicago favorite. The iconic score by John Williams was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Original Film Score, and the signature tune, "Somewhere in My Memory," was also nominated for Best Original Song (December 12-14).

After almost 60 years, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, director Stanley Kubrick's groundbreaking and still forward-looking film, serves as a catalyst to connect viewers to classical music. Its rich sound world includes the opening section of Richard Strauss' *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Johann Strauss' waltz *The Beautiful Blue Danube*, and *Atmosphères* by György Ligeti. The evocative selections are rendered in spectacular fashion by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus conducted by André de Ridder (January 9-10, 2026).

Star Wars: A New Hope in Concert is back by popular demand. The original 1977 *Star Wars* movie has become a favorite for many generations, and is the film that introduced Princess Leia, Luke Skywalker and Han Solo to the world, and movie fans to the Oscar-winning score by John Williams. Conductor Sarah Hicks leads these performances, which offer an epic conclusion to a monthlong journey through the landscape of American music (June 25-27, 2026).

Holiday Programming at Symphony Center

Symphony Center offers an array of musical offerings that bring friends and family together for festive traditions. Celebrating the music of the season is at the heart of Merry, Merry Chicago!, with the Chicago Symphony Chorus joining members of the CSO led by conductor John Morris Russell for this annual presentation at Symphony Center. This season, a seventh festive performance has been added by popular demand (December 19-23). Other favorites include the Vienna Boys Choir singing carols and other songs of the season (November 29) and A Chanticleer Christmas featuring the close harmonies, innovative arrangements and programming that are a hallmark of the acclaimed vocal ensemble (December 9). As part of the CSO at the Movies series, the beloved holiday movie *Home Alone* returns, accompanied by members of the CSO playing the effervescent score by John Williams (December 12-14).

CSO for Kids

Across the season, the CSO enriches the lives of children and families by introducing them to the magic of music with innovative and fun programs designed to delight all ages. CSO for Kids programming is produced by the Negaunee Music Institute (NMI) at the CSO, which advances education, training and community engagement programs for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association.

The Once Upon a Symphony series was created to introduce young listeners ages 3 to 5 to the sights and sounds of storytelling featuring musicians from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, presented in collaboration with Chicago Children's Theatre.

The classic Hans Christian Andersen story of *The Ugly Duckling* is the first of two productions this season. After enduring hardship, a lonely duckling blossoms into a stunning swan, realizing true beauty comes from within in this musical tale of self-discovery, acceptance and inner strength (December 6; January 10 & 31, 2026).

The Bremen Town Musicians is the story of four farm animals, no longer needed at home, who set off for Bremen to become musicians. Along the way, they team up to outsmart some thieves and discover newfound courage (March 7; April 11 & 18, 2026).

Youth Concerts and School and Family Matinees are great opportunities for school-age children to continue to explore the sounds and musical colors of the CSO. Special guests, singers and songwriters provide a variety of programs.

Thomas Wilkins conducts the first youth concerts of the season in a program that explores the importance of creating a community of belonging. Featuring the winner of the 2025 Crain-Maling Foundation CSO Young Artists Competition, this concert takes inspiration from the word "symphony," which means "sounding together" (November 12-13, school performances only).

Five-time Grammy-nominated children's songwriter Justin Roberts joins conductor Andrew Grams and the CSO for school and family concerts that invite discovery of the musical instruments in an orchestra (November 14-15).

School and family concerts continue in the spring with conductor Mei-Ann Chen and members of the CSO embarking on a musical exploration of air, fire and water — the elements that create balance on planet Earth (March 20-21, 2026).

Acclaimed American singer-songwriter Natalie Merchant joins members of the CSO, Chicago Children's Theatre and special guests for a joyful sing-along with Mother Goose. This captivating school and family concert features Merchant's adaptations of traditional nursery rhymes in a program entitled *Mother Goose & the Cabinet of Wonder* with conductor James Bagwell. Developed over several years by Merchant in collaboration with Chicago Children's Theatre and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, *Cabinet of Wonder* is an innovative multi-media piece intended to introduce young children to music, poetry, and the dramatic arts (May 8-9, 2026).

In anticipation of the live concerts, Chicago Children's Theatre and the CSO will launch a

content-rich, interactive Mother Goose & the Cabinet of Wonder website with more than a dozen *Cabinet of Wonder* music videos, plus free curricular resources for teachers and parents. Through partnerships with local pre-K, Kindergarten and Head Start schools, Chicago-area children will engage with this innovative new early learning program throughout the 2025/26 Season, so they're ready to sing along with "Miss Natalie" at Symphony Center next May.

Patron Information

Subscriptions are now on sale for the 2025/26 Season of Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Symphony Center Presents. Curated and Create Your Own subscription packages of three or more concerts are available.

Subscribers initially save up to 30 percent on standard ticket prices and save 15 percent on additional tickets ordered throughout the season. Additional subscriber rewards include the opportunity to order tickets for priority access concerts, the best seats at the best prices, flexible ticket exchange privileges, access to reduced parking rates and offers at the Symphony Store.

Subscriptions may be ordered online, by phone, by mail or in person at the Symphony Center Box Office. Convenient payment plan options are available for purchases made by credit card. Individual concert tickets for the 2025/26 Season go on sale to the public in August.

Patron Services representatives are available to assist by web chat at [cso.org](https://www.cso.org), by calling [312-294-3000](tel:312-294-3000) (Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.) or by emailing patronservices@cso.org. Groups of 10 or more may call [312-294-3040](tel:312-294-3040). Symphony Center, home of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, is located at 220 S. Michigan Ave. in Chicago.

To learn more about the musicians of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, performers, affiliate and visiting artists, visit [cso.org/about/performers](https://www.cso.org/about/performers).

All artists and programs and dates are subject to change.

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† *Deceased*

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Chicago Symphony Orchestra: [cso.org](https://www.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 distinguished 10th music director from 2010 until 2023, became Music Director Emeritus for Life at the beginning of the 2023/24 Season. Daniil Trifonov is the CSO Artist-in-Residence for the 2024/25 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 nationally, and since 1892, has made 64 international tours, performing in 29 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](https://www.cso.org/radio). Launched in 2007, [CSO Resound](https://www.cso.org/resound) is the ensemble's Grammy Award-winning independent 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 the Negaunee Music Institute. The [Chicago Symphony Chorus](https://www.cso.org/chorus), founded by Margaret Hillis in 1957, is the country's largest professional chorus. Founded by second music director Frederick Stock during the 1919/20 Season, the [Civic Orchestra of Chicago](https://www.cso.org/civic) is a training ensemble for emerging professionals with Ken-David Masur serving as its principal conductor. [Symphony Center Presents](https://www.cso.org/center) features guest artists and ensembles across an expansive array of genres, including classical, jazz, world and contemporary. The [Negaunee Music Institute](https://www.cso.org/negaunee) 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 Negaunee Foundation provides generous support in perpetuity for the work of the Negaunee Music Institute.