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## **THREE LONGTIME MEMBERS OF THE CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA TO RETIRE AT CONCLUSION OF 2022/23 SEASON IN JUNE**

### **CSO Cello Gary Stucka, Assistant Principal Viola Li-Kuo Chang, and Principal Librarian Peter Conover to Retire Following Multi-Decade CSO Careers**

CHICAGO — Three longtime members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) — Cello Gary Stucka, Assistant Principal Viola Li-Kuo Chang and Principal Librarian Peter Conover — will retire at the conclusion of the 2022/23 Season, each after marking multiple decades of service. They will receive the CSO's Theodore Thomas Medallion for distinguished service at a date to be announced. Stucka, who joined the cello section in 1986, will retire after 37 years and Conover, who joined the Orchestra as a librarian in 1998 and was named principal librarian in 1999, will retire after 25 years. After a successful audition in early 1988, Li-Kuo Chang began his tenure as a member of the viola section at the beginning of the 1988-89 season. Two weeks later, he won the audition for assistant principal viola, the position he has held for 35 years.

#### **Gary Stucka, Cello**

In 1986, Gary Stucka was appointed to the position of section cello of the CSO by Music Director Sir Georg Solti. Prior to joining the CSO, Stucka was a member of the cello section in the Cleveland Orchestra for five years, as well as serving as principal cello of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra from 1977 to 1981 and performing as assistant principal cello of the Grant Park Orchestra for several seasons.

Stucka began playing cello at the age of eight and received his first lessons at the Park View School in Morton Grove, Illinois. He subsequently studied with Harry Sturm and CSO Assistant Principal Cello Leonard Chausow. He joined the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, the prestigious training ensemble of emerging professional musicians affiliated with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, where he received the Louis Sudler Foundation for the Musical Arts Award. He continued his studies as a scholarship student of Karl Fruh at Roosevelt University's Chicago Musical College (now the Chicago College of Performing Arts), where he received bachelor's and master's degrees.

An avid chamber musician, Stucka has been a member of the Pressenda Trio since 1989 and has performed regularly with the Chicago Symphony String Quartet. In addition to many guest soloist appearances with numerous orchestras in the United States and Canada, he has served on the faculties of Northwestern University and the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University.

Stucka noted, "It has been an honor to represent Chicago with the finest musicians in the world and to travel to corners of the world I never thought I'd be lucky enough to see: Europe, Australia, Russia, and Asia."

In retirement, Stucka is looking forward to pursuing his audiophile interests, including historic gramophones and classic recordings, as well as traveling and enjoying time attending concerts with family and friends.

### **Li-Kuo Chang, Assistant Principal Viola**

Li-Kuo Chang began his tenure as a member of the viola section at the beginning of the 1988-89 season. Two weeks later, he won the audition for assistant principal viola, appointed by Music Director Sir Georg Solti. Chang also served as acting principal viola from 2017-2022, after being appointed to the role by Music Director Riccardo Muti.

Chang began his musical career on piano under the guidance of his mother, a pianist and graduate of the Royal Academy of Music in London and professor at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. After hearing a performance of the legendary violinist David Oistrakh, Chang switched his studies to violin and, at the age of 11, made his solo debut at the Shanghai Spring Music Festival. Chang became a violist when he formed his own string quartet as a student at the high school of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. In 1978, he became the first violist to win the Chinese Young Artist Competition in Shanghai and came to the U.S. with full scholarships offered by the Juilliard School, New England Conservatory and Eastman School. He pursued his formal viola studies with Francis Tursi at Eastman, with Milton Thomas and Donald McInnes at the Music Academy of the West as a young artist fellow, and privately with Paul Doktor and William Magers.

Following his appointment to the CSO, Chang performed as a soloist with the Orchestra on several occasions, most recently with Pinchas Zukerman in Bach's Sixth *Brandenburg* Concerto. As a chamber musician, Chang has collaborated with many renowned artists such as Daniel Barenboim, Yo-Yo Ma, Pinchas Zukerman, Christoph Eschenbach, Nicolaj Szeps-Znaider, Julia Fischer, Alisa Weilerstein and Kirill Gerstein, and in concerts at the Lucerne, Jerusalem and Ravinia festivals as well as at Symphony Center in Chicago, the Staatsoper Berlin and concert halls in Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong and China. By invitation of Music Director Daniel Barenboim, Chang was the guest principal viola for the Staatsoper Berlin and Staatskapelle Berlin from 2000 to 2007 on several of their European and Asian tours, one of which included performances Wagner's complete *Der Ring des Nibelungen* in Japan.

An experienced and dedicated educator for more than 30 years, Chang was recently appointed professor of viola at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music. Previously, he has served as a viola coach for the Civic Orchestra of Chicago and has been on the artist faculty at several

music institutes, including the Chicago College of Performing Arts, Bienen School of Music at Northwestern University, Peabody Institute and the Affinis Summer Festival in Japan. He was also invited by Riccardo Muti to participate in the 2019 Italian Opera Academy and lead masterclasses for the Muti's Cherubini Youth Orchestra. Many of Chang's students have won auditions, including principal positions, with some of the world's most prominent orchestras.

"As I bid farewell to my beloved Chicago Symphony Orchestra, I feel like I am the richest person in the world," said Chang. "I have so many memories of the glorious music making to treasure for the rest of my life! How lucky I have been to always work with the best conductors of our time and the most inspiring colleagues one can ask for."

Continuing to reflect on specific performances and his time in the ensemble, Chang added, "I still get chills thinking about Solti's *Pictures at the Exhibition* by Mussorgsky at his farewell Japan tour, and smile from my heart thinking of Barenboim's divine Mozart piano concertos. I also remember being incredibly moved by Haitink's noble and memorable Mahler and Bruckner interpretations on the Orchestra's first concert tour in China and was deeply touched and shaken by Muti's monumental Verdi Requiem. It has been such a joy and I am so proud to be part of this enviable tradition. If someone asks me: how to define the Chicago Symphony's tradition, my answer would be: total devotion to the highest standard of the music making. Thank you, CSO!"

While he is retiring from his position in the CSO, Chang will continue teaching at Indiana University's Jacobs Schools of Music and giving master classes and seminars in music schools and summer festivals in Asia, as well as continuing his affiliation with the Riccardo Muti Italian Opera Academy's expansion in China and beyond. In addition, he looks forward to spending time with his wife Maggie and son Daniel.

### **Peter Conover, Principal Librarian**

Peter Conover's CSO career began in 1998, when he first joined the Orchestra as librarian and was named principal librarian a year later. Conover began his musical career as a double bassist, studying with Henry G. Scott of the Philadelphia Orchestra at the Philadelphia College of Performing Arts, where he graduated in 1984 with degrees in both music and music education.

Conover became involved in orchestra libraries in 1981, when he became the librarian for the Delaware Valley Philharmonic. After meeting Philadelphia Orchestra Principal Librarian Clinton Nieweg, Conover began working in the Philadelphia Orchestra library in 1984, first as an apprentice and then as a part-time assistant. Since then, he has served as librarian for the Phoenix Symphony and the Houston Symphony, as well as for the American Institute of Musical Studies (AIMS) Orchestra, Santa Fe Opera, and Grand Teton Music Festival.

Throughout his tenure with the CSO, Conover has also played guitar with the orchestra, particularly 33 performances throughout the world of Mahler Symphony No. 7, and on many film concerts.

In addition to his work at the CSO, Conover has been actively involved with the Major Orchestra Librarians' Association (MOLA), where he has served on the Publications Committee and as the

editor of the MOLA quarterly newsletter, *Marcato*.

“While not an onstage musician, it has been my great pleasure to bask from backstage in the adoration the CSO receives in Chicago and around the world. In addition, it has been my honor to work closely with some of the greatest musicians in the world.”

In retirement, Conover and his wife Kristi plan to relocate to Italy where they look forward to traveling throughout Europe, as well as pursuing his interests in classic cars and music.

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

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

From baroque through contemporary music, the CSO commands a vast repertoire. Its renowned musicians annually perform more than 150 concerts, most at Symphony Center in Chicago and, each summer, at the suburban Ravinia Festival. They regularly tour nationally and internationally. Since 1892, the CSO has made 63 international tours, performing in 29 countries on five continents.

People around the globe listen to weekly radio broadcasts of CSO concerts and recordings on the WFMT radio network and online at [cso.org/radio](http://cso.org/radio). Recordings by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus have earned 64 Grammy Awards from the Recording Academy. Two Grammys were awarded in 2011 for Muti’s recording with the CSO and Chorus of Verdi’s *Messa da Requiem* (Muti’s first of twelve releases with the CSO to date). Find details on these and many other CSO recordings at [cso.org/resound](http://cso.org/resound).

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

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

The CSO is supported by thousands of patrons, volunteers and institutional and individual donors. The CSO’s music director position is endowed in perpetuity by a generous gift from the Zell Family Foundation. The Negaunee Foundation provides generous support in perpetuity for the work of the Negaunee Music Institute.