

**For Immediate Release:**  
December 4, 2024

**Press Contacts:**  
[Eileen Chambers](#)  
312-294-3092

## **GABRIELA LARA BECOMES NEWEST MEMBER OF THE CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA IN JANUARY**

### **Venezuelan Violinist and Former CSO Fellow is Appointed to First Violin Section by Zell Music Director Designate Klaus Mäkelä**

CHICAGO – The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association (CSOA) announces the appointment of Venezuelan violinist Gabriela Lara to the first violin section of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO), effective January 27, 2025. Lara was a rotating concertmaster of the CSO's [Civic Orchestra of Chicago](#) from October 2022 to December 2023 and was the inaugural [CSO Fellow](#), holding that position and performing with the CSO first in the 2022/23 Season. She continued in the program during the 2023/24 Season as the Michael and Kathleen Elliott Fellow before her appointment to the second violin section of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra where she is currently a member. Lara participated in the section violin audition process beginning with preliminary auditions in Spring 2024, winning the final audition in October 2024, and is the first CSO musician appointed by [Zell Music Director Designate Klaus Mäkelä](#).

The [CSO Fellowship](#) program was introduced in the 2022/23 Season and is the latest initiative that assists early-career musicians from all backgrounds that have a demonstrated commitment to equity and inclusion as they seek a career in classical-music performance. The CSO Fellowship program's objective is to help musicians become better equipped to win auditions with top U.S. orchestras, including the CSO.

Originally from Barquisimeto, Venezuela, Lara began her violin studies at age eight and later became a member of the Latin American Violin Academy, where she was a student of José Francisco del Castillo and Francisco Diaz. She was also a member of El Sistema in Venezuela and as part of that ensemble had the opportunity to make a 2014 Europe Tour with the Teresa Carreño Symphony Orchestra. She also performed with

Gustavo Dudamel and the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra as part of a 2016 European tour that included a concert at the Berliner Philharmonie and performed with Sir Simon Rattle as part of a tour that included concerts at the Salzburg Festival. Since moving to the United States in 2017, Lara has been recognized as the second-place winner in the 2021 Sphinx Solo Competition and the winner of the 2021 Frank Preuss International Violin Competition. She was also the recipient of a 2022 Project Inclusion Fellowship from the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra. In 2022, Lara received a Bachelor of Music degree in Violin Performance from the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University, where she was a student of Almita Vamos and went on to receive a master's degree in Suzuki Pedagogy from Roosevelt University in 2024. In the 2022/23 and 2023/24 seasons, Lara was a member of the [Civic Orchestra of Chicago](#), serving as one of Civic's rotating concertmasters. As a CSO Fellow, Lara performed regularly with the CSO, including more than 20 weeks of concerts each season in Chicago and on tour in North America and Europe with [Riccardo Muti](#), the CSO's Music Director Emeritus for Life.

The CSO Fellowship program was developed with support from Riccardo Muti during his tenure as Zell Music Director, the CSO Members' Committee and Chicago Federation of Musicians. Up to three CSO fellowships are awarded annually to early-career string players. CSO Fellows have access to extensive rehearsal and performance opportunities with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and guest conductors, as well as mentorship and private lessons with CSO musicians. They also receive an annual stipend as they continue their training and audition preparation for opportunities with professional orchestras during the program. CSO Fellows may be invited to extend their fellowship for up to two additional years. For the 2024/25 Season, bassist Olivia Reyes continues as a CSO Fellow and violinist Jesús Linárez is the Michael and Kathleen Elliott Fellow.

The application period for CSO Fellowships in the 2025/26 Season opens December 4 with more information available at [cso.org/fellowship](https://www.cso.org/fellowship).

# # #

**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](http://cso.org/radio). Launched in 2007, [CSO 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](#), 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](#) is a training ensemble for emerging professionals with Ken-David Masur serving as its principal conductor. [Symphony Center Presents](#) features guest artists and ensembles across an expansive array of genres, including classical, jazz, world 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 Negaunee Foundation provides generous support in perpetuity for the work of the Negaunee Music Institute.