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## **PAOLO DARA ANNOUNCED AS THE NEWEST MEMBER OF THE CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

CHICAGO – The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association (CSOA) announces the appointment of Paolo Dara to the viola section of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO). Dara won the final audition for the position in October 2025 and officially joins the Orchestra on January 5, 2026. He is the fourth CSO musician appointed by [Zell Music Director Designate Klaus Mäkelä](#).

Dara, a native of Grand Rapids, Michigan, previously served as a violinist in the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, principal viola of the Grand Rapids Symphony, and principal second Violin of the Akron Symphony.

Beyond his orchestral career, Dara is an avid chamber and solo musician, having been featured as a soloist with orchestras, including the Grand Rapids Symphony and the Lansing Symphony. He began playing the viola at age 14 while attending the Meadowmount School of Music. Dara has gone on to appear at leading festivals including the Krzyzowa Music Festival, IMS Prussia Cove, the Perlman Music Program Chamber Music Workshop, the Accademia Chigiana, the Montreal International String Quartet Academy and the Gstaad Menuhin Academy. His collaborators have included such distinguished artists as Joseph Silverstein, Jaime Laredo, Sharon Robinson and Roger Tapping. Dara is also co-director of the Plymouth Chamber Players in Grand Rapids, Michigan, alongside his wife, violinist Karisa Chiu, and musicologist Calvin Van Zytveld. Together, they bring chamber music to West Michigan and support the next generation of young musicians.

Dara completed his undergraduate studies at the Cleveland Institute of Music with Jaime Laredo and Jan Sloman, where he received the Anna Y. Tringas Award. He later earned his master's degree at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University under Kathleen Winkler. In 2022, Dara returned to the Cleveland Institute of Music to pursue a graduate diploma with Stephen Rose, graduating with the honor of the Sidney D. and Nina Josephs Chamber Music Prize. His other influential mentors include Gerhard Schulz, Joseph Silverstein, Donald Weilerstein and Gregory Maytan.

The CSO's music director position is endowed in perpetuity by a generous gift from the Zell Family Foundation.

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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 10th music director from 2010 until 2023, became Music Director Emeritus for Life at the beginning of the 2023/24 Season. Joyce DiDonato is the CSO Artist-in-Residence for the 2025/26 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](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/chicago-symphony-chorus), founded by Margaret Hillis in 1957, is the country's largest professional chorus. Donald Palumbo is the Director of the Chicago Symphony Chorus. Founded by second music director Frederick Stock during the 1919/20 Season, the [Civic Orchestra of Chicago](https://www.cso.org/civic-orchestra-of-chicago) is a training ensemble for emerging professionals with Ken-David Masur serving as its principal conductor. [Symphony Center Presents](https://www.cso.org/symphony-center-presents) 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-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.