

220 SOUTH – DECEMBER 2024



A newsletter of the League of the CSOA

Merle Jacob, Editor

A WELCOME FROM YOUR PRESIDENT



Dear League Members,

I hope that each one of you had a wonderful holiday season. As we embark upon another new year, I want to remind you all, the members of the League of the CSOA, that you have so many opportunities to serve our beloved CSOA.

We have our Adventures in Music (AIM) concerts, our Community/Senior & Veterans Open Rehearsals (SVEP), the Crain-Maling Foundation CSO Young Artists Competition, the Endowed Concert for our wonderful Chicago Symphony Chorus, our March All-Member meeting (where a surprise awaits you!), and our annual Musicians' Luncheon, all comping up in the next few months.

Please review the schedule of events at the end of this newsletter, mark your calendars, and take part in many of these exciting volunteer opportunities and events.

Please remember that the CSOA and the League needs you!

I look forward to being with you at many future League events this season. Until then, stay well and enjoy all that 2025 has to offer.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sharon Mitchell".

Sharon Mitchell

President, League of the CSOA

LEAGUE EVENTS & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

ADVENTURES IN MUSIC:

GASPS, SMILES, CHEERS, and HUGS AT THE AIM CONCERTS

Do you want to participate in a League activity that is *pure joy*? Consider joining us for the CSO's children's concerts, affectionately known by the League as our "Adventures in Music" (AIM) program.

We serve as greeters and ambassadors to the students, pre-school through high school, who come to Symphony Center with their classes, teachers, and chaperones. Audible gasps of wonder can be heard from the youngest to the most "seasoned" visitors as our guests take in the beauty of the lobby, our red carpet, and Orchestra Hall! As we escort each school group, with our CSO ushers, who lead them to their seats, we see smiles all around. The chimes ring, the concert begins, and the cheers that break out at times resemble those at the Super Bowl.



A group of students look out from the lower balcony of Orchestra Hall.

We as League volunteers enjoy each concert as well! At the very end, we accompany student groups to their busses all while receiving heart-warming comments – "I LOVED IT!" and "THAT WAS SO COOL!". When asked if they would like to join us again, we always hear a resounding "YES" accompanied by a delightful hug! On October 17, we welcomed 34 schools (1,836 students) to the morning performance and 24 schools (2,029 students) to the afternoon

performance. On October 18, we hosted 31 schools (1,972 students) and then 26 schools (1,694 students).

The fun continued at our Saturday Family Matinee concerts. On October 19, League volunteers had the chance to join in on all the fun as we assisted children and their families in a series of Orchestra EXPLORER activities in the Rotunda, which concluded with a children's concert in Orchestra Hall. That afternoon, we hosted a total of 1,128 delighted kids and their equally appreciative family members!

To quote Katy Clusen, Associate Director of CSO for Kids, "Thank you for everything each volunteer has done for this first round of school and family concerts. The season is off to a great start!"

Don't you want to be a part of it??

Editor's Note: I was at both AIM Concerts and as I greeted the children, many of the youngest ones gave me hugs as they were so excited to be at the concert and were delighted to be welcomed. I went home smiling!

PHILHARMONIA FANTASTIQUE

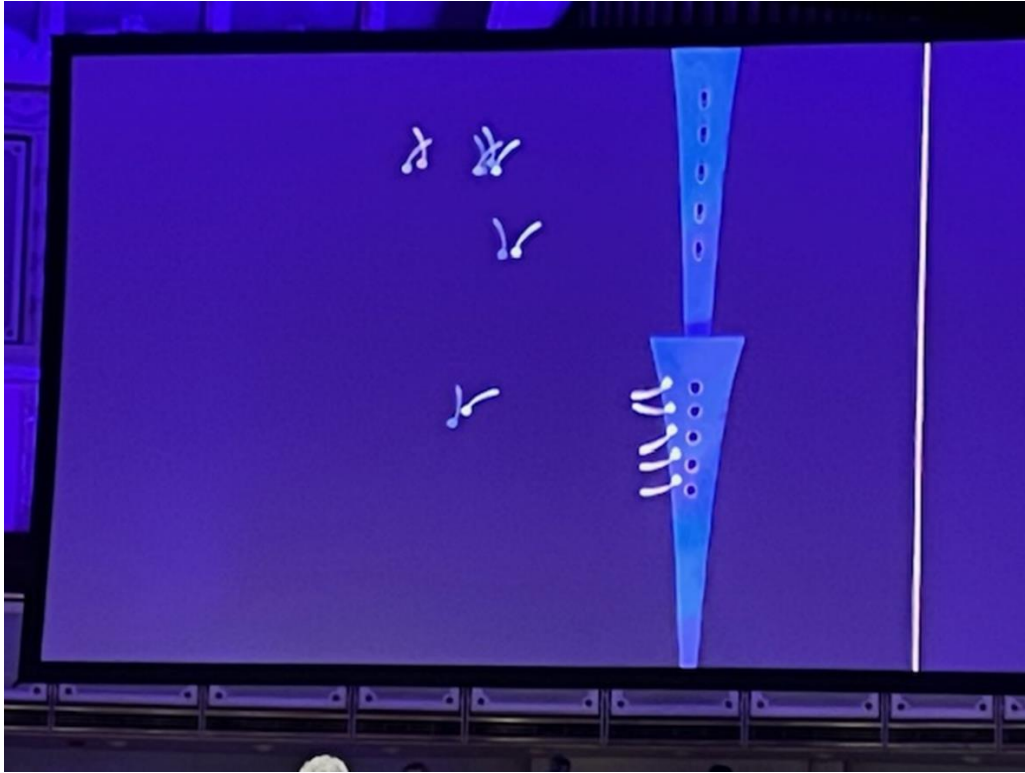
Kevin Gupana, Associate Director of Education and Community Engagement and Giving, introduced a new fundraising and volunteer opportunity to the League: *PHILHARMONIA FANTASTIQUE*, an animated film meant to introduce classical music and the symphony orchestra to young children. The film premiered on October 17 and had subsequent showings on October 18 and 19. The music for the film was composed by former Mead Composer-in-Residence Mason Bates.



A packed house of children, parents, and volunteers watch *Philharmonia Fantastique*.

Philharmonia Fantastique is a 25-minute concerto for orchestra & animated film that followed a magical Sprite on a musical journey through the different sections of the orchestra of the orchestra. By the film's end, the families of the orchestra overcame their differences to demonstrate "unity from diversity" in a spectacular finale.

The League exceeded its fundraising challenge and brought in \$25,100! The League's contribution helped offset the cost of concert production, educational materials for teachers, as well as provided free tickets and transportation for CPS students. The children (and the adults!) thoroughly enjoyed the show, so thank you to all the League members who helped us reach our goal!



Examples of the whimsical animation featured in *Philharmonia Fantastique*.



Following the Family Concerts performances, League members helped with various activities on all levels of the Rotunda. “Mini Maestros” allowed individual children to conduct a group of musicians who were playing selections from the film. An art project included a large mural of orchestral instruments that played a part in the film; children colored sprites and placed them on the mural.

Who had more fun: the kids, their families, or we League helpers?



Children participate in post-concert activities in the Rotunda.



FALL IN LOVE WITH MUSIC

The League's annual *Fall In Love With Music* event was held on Friday, October 25th in the elegant Grainger Ballroom at Symphony Center. We began with cocktails and hors d'oeuvres as League members and guests mingled. Following that, we had performances by John Sharp (principal cello) and Teng Li (principal viola) who performed solos and duos. John Deverman (Director of Orchestra Personnel) interviewed our musicians, providing an opportunity to get to know them on a more personal level. What a treat! Dinner was served and we all enjoyed the company of our fellow music lovers.



A captivated room listens as John Sharp (cello) and Teng Li (viola) perform a duet.

A special thanks to the League members and friends who attended, especially our event sponsors:

Pam Andrews

Mary & Michael Goodkind

Margo & Mike Oberman

Judith & Merrill Blau

Marguerite Guido

Larry Simpson

Nora & Peter Bouchard

Cheryl Istvan

Patty & David Weber

Vera Capp

Merle Jacob

Janice Young

Mimi Duginger

Claretta Meier

Helen Zell

Allisa Gam

Sarah Good & Mark
Mosely



Left to right: Sarah Good, Sharon Mitchell, John Sharp, Teng Li, Allisa Gam (cochair), John Deverman, and Patty Weber (cochair).

EXCITING FIRST SALON OF THE SEASON

The first League Salon of the 2024/25 Season was held on November 15, 2024, at the historic and beautiful John Hancock Building. The event was attended by 74 League members, guests, and prospective members. We were honored to have three distinguished CSOA guests joining us for the evening: Jeff Alexander (CSOA President), Bobbie Rafferty (Director of Development, Individual Giving & Affiliated Donor Groups), and Vanessa Moss (VP of Orchestra and Building Operations).

The event offered a delicious array of hearty hors d'oeuvres and drinks followed by a special program. Three renowned guests and friends gave an exceptional presentation on the history of the CSO and its great maestros and musicians who have shaped the Chicago Symphony Orchestra as a world-class orchestra. We were honored to have Esteban Batallán, Principal Trumpet of the CSO, John Hagstrom, Second Trumpet of the CSO who holds the Bleck Family Chair, and Dr. Phyliss Bleck, former member of the Civic Orchestra and the CSO and current Vice Chair of the Annual Fund on the CSO Governing Members Executive Committee. Dr. Bleck is a retired thoracic surgeon. They also brought a number of historic trumpets which they played to demonstrate the differences between them and explained how they are used in the Orchestra.

Thank you to Bobbie Huskey and Liz Branch who served as co-chairs and hosts for this event.



From left to right: Jeff Alexander, Sharon Mitchell, Dr. Phyliss Bleck, Esteban Batallán, John Hagstrom



From left to right: Esteban Batallán, Dr. Phyllis Bleck, John Hagstrom



From left to right: Bobbie Huskey, Joan Dattel, and Sarah Good.



From left to right: Ansuk Jeong, Merle Jacob, John Hagstrom (trumpet), Margo Oberman, Joan Dattel, Bobbie Huskey, Dr. Phyllis Bleck, Sarah Good, Sharon Mitchell, Esteban Batallán (trumpet), Rosalind Jackson, and Juan Solana.

BACH MARATHON GOODIE BAGS

Supporting the musicians of the Civic Orchestra is a cornerstone of the League's volunteer efforts. Each year the League gives members of the Civic Orchestra goodie bags filled with items to help them get through their long all-day Bach Marathon performances. This year, the red League bags were filled with CSO winter knit hats, hand warmers, hand sanitizer, hand lotion, chocolate bars, chocolate cookie wafers, trail mix, and popcorn. Bobbie Huskey, Joan Dattel, Merle Jacob, Sue Bridge, Sharon Mitchell, Liz Branch, and Mary Beth Dietrick spent a morning packing the bags. Sharon Mitchell, Ansuk Jeong, and Merle Jacob distributed the bags at rehearsals at the Fourth Presbyterian Church on Sunday, November 17 to give out the bags to the surprised and delighted musicians.



League volunteers help put together goodie bags.

On Monday (the day-of), the musicians went to senior centers, schools, and shelters around the city to play Bach's marvelous music to people who may never have heard it. The day ended at a packed Fourth Presbyterian Church where they played Bach's Brandenburg Concertos to a very appreciative audience. Members of the Civic Orchestra who did not participate in the Bach Marathon were given their goodie bags at the rehearsal for the Civic's presentation of Mahler's Symphony No. 5. Numerous musicians sent emails thanking the League for our thoughtfulness and support.



Principal Conductor Ken-David Masur leads the Civic in their rehearsal of Bach's Brandenburg Concertos.





League members at the Fourth Presbyterian Church for the Bach Marathon.

ONCE UPON A TIME...



Well, to be exact...the exact time was the morning of Monday, December 9, 2024! What happened then was quite the sight to see!

Into Buntrock Hall marched 680 of the most adorable preschool and kindergarten students, many adorned in their holiday best, eyes wide open and wriggling in anticipation and excitement. Arriving next on stage was a uniquely talented trio composed of a pig, a cow, and a horse.

Along came...you guessed it... a fluffy red hen with a whole lot of grain to gather and a craving to bake what she hoped would be the best bread she had ever made. And thus began the latest production of the CSO's **Once Upon a Symphony: The Tale of the Little Red Hen**. As Li'l Red clucked and frolicked throughout her entranced audience, the children joined in the clucking

and dancing and singing. Joining in to all were our League volunteers who helped chaperone the children and their teachers to and from the hall, sharing the delighted exclamations of the little ones.

Upon entering our beautiful lobby, some little guests asked if they were going to the movies. Others were so tickled that we had rolled out a red carpet for them! As they left and we asked if they had enjoyed the production, they exclaimed “YES!” and promised to come again and again and again.

And it’s no wonder. The cast included three magnificent members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra who fully embraced their roles and charmed us all. Playing her violin and the role of the somewhat supercilious pig was **Susan Synnestvedt**. Violist **Baird Dodge** (who is usually seen as our principal second violin) assumed the role of the reluctant but hungry cow, and the athletic but remote horse-in-training was performed by new bass player **Ian Hallas**. Directing all the action and keeping the audience fully engaged was actor **Tess Galbiati**.

As we all left Buntrock that morning, we also took home a timely reminder of how important it is for the community to come together to get important jobs done. Sung to the first half of the *Simple Gifts* melody, the refrain of the song we all learned that morning and sang together, went with us:

When there’s work to be done

Too much for you,

Call on friends.

They’ll know what to do.

If we all work together,

Then the help we provide

Gets the job done right

And feels good inside.

Come join us when the next **Once Upon a Symphony** program is announced. It WILL make you feel good inside!



Left: Our own bass player, Ian Hallas, as the Horse. Right: Actor Tess Gabiati as the Red Hen



Left: CSO violinist, Susan Synnstedt as the Pig. Right: CSO violinist/violist, Baird Dodge, as the Cow

CSO MUSICIANS' HOLIDAY PROJECT 2024



This year's holiday cards were designed by the CSO design team and members of the League of volunteered to write out a holiday greeting to our honored musicians of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. The holiday greeting was personally addressed to each musician and stated our appreciation for their artistry and thanked them for their continued dedication to the CSO. The Members of the League of the CSOA who volunteered to write out the Holiday Cards are as follows:

Betsy Berry, Mary Beth Dietrick, Allisa Gam, Merle Jacob, and Margo Oberman.

The following Members of the League of the CSOA took part in, supported, and contributed to the CSOA League Tribute Fund in honor of every CSO musician:

Susan Bridge, Carol Brosk, John Burrell, Angela D'Aversa, Becky Lynn Davenport, Mary Beth Dietrick, Sonya Doumanian, Mimi Duginger, Renita Esayian, Allisa Gam, Fred Garzon, Gail Gold, Sarah Good, Mary Goodkind, Bobbie Huskey, Merle Jacob, Claretta Meier, Sharon Mitchell, Carol Nykiel, Kathy Nordmeyer, Margo Oberman, Hilda Richards, Juan Solano, William Ward, Patty Weber, Lois Wolff, Barbara Wright-Pryor, and Janice Young.

"I was honored to chair this project. The CSO Musicians' Holiday Project is important because without these outstanding musicians, there would not be a Chicago Symphony Orchestra to provide the exceptional classical music and entertainment that we love and support."

Sharon Quigley
Chair, League Holiday Card Project

SOMEONE YOU SHOULD KNOW: KARI NOVILLA, HAPIST



Classical harpist, jazz harpist, outstanding baker, avid hiker, and gym enthusiast—these are the many and varied activities of the League’s Civic Orchestra Fellow—Kari Novilla who is in her first year with the Civic Orchestra and loving it! Kari grew up in Morristown, a small town in eastern Tennessee. Her father, who is originally from the Philippines, is a veterinarian pathologist with the US Department of Agriculture. He is now based in Kentucky. Her mother, who is of Norwegian descent, is a real estate appraiser, manager for a publishing company in Nashville, and now an occupational therapy assistant in Dandridge, Tennessee.

Music has always been a big part of her life as her father is an amateur pianist, her sister is a violinist, and her mother is an organist for their church. At the age of four, she began to take violin lessons, but she was seven when she saw her first harp at Dollywood where a man from Ireland was making one. In her hometown, she heard that a man at her local music store was starting to teach classical harp and it was a dream opportunity come true. Kari took lessons on the violin and harp, but at fourteen she decided to focus strictly on the harp. “I had to choose between the harp and the violin, and I would rather tune 47 strings constantly than have to deal with the intonation of the violin all the time,” Kari emphasized. As Kari was home schooled by her mother, she was able to travel with her family for her father’s job, and it gave her the opportunity to play with various orchestras. At 14, she was the substitute harpist for the Johnson City Tennessee Orchestra where she played Holst’s *The Planets* which features a large part for the harp. “Since there were practically four harpists living the area of East Tennessee, I had many opportunities to step outside of my comfort zone to perform solo, orchestral, and church gigs from a young age. I also heard Celtic, blue grass, jazz, and of course, classical music which gave me a broad background and interest in various types of music,” Kari pointed out.

Kari studied at the University of Indiana Jacobs School of Music at Bloomington for her bachelors and then at the Royal Academy of Music in London for her masters degree. “I knew I wanted to go to a big city, and the Academy’s program was very well-rounded in that it aimed to prepare us for anything with classes in classical, orchestral, modern, and jazz harp along with a class you hardly ever see for harp — harp sight-reading. I studied there for three years doing a performance degree while writing my dissertation on *The Impact and Authority of Dorothy*

Ashby.” Kari has also been experimenting with jazz groups, but she admits it is very difficult to improvise on the harp.



After graduating in London, Kari had been doing free-lance work, but was drawn to audition for the Civic Orchestra because it would be a huge opportunity to work with great conductors and amazing colleagues. “I came to Chicago in 2014 for Lyon and Healy’s 150th anniversary and fell in love with the city. So, after my audition this past spring, I got an email saying I was an associate member of the Civic, but then another email came a few weeks later offering me a position as a regular member of the Civic. At first, I thought it was a mistake or spam message, but after reading it again, I realized I was chosen for the only harp position, and I cried. I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity.”

When she is not playing with the Civic, she is subbing with several orchestras in America and Europe while also doing jazz gigs. When she has some free time, Kari goes to the gym to weight train. She also uses her free time to bake her Southern classics and try out new French Patisserie recipes. In Tennessee, she loves to hike the mountains around her family home. Before she ran off for a rehearsal, Kari wanted the League members to know that she is so very grateful for their sponsorship of her and all the League does for the Civic. The League should be very proud to be sponsoring this multitasking and delightful musician.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The League has numerous events coming up in 2025 that you should mark your calendar to either volunteer for or attend.

The Crain-Maling Young Artists Competition will be held on **January 18** and we will need volunteers to help these budding young musicians navigate their way around Symphony Center.

On **March 15**, the League will host its annual **Endowed Concert Reception** for the Chicago Symphony Chorus following that evening's performance of Haydn's *Mass in Time of War*. Be sure to attend this wonderful concert and show our appreciation for our Chorus. The reception is open to all League members. Formal invitations will be sent out soon.

On **March 17**, the Negaunee Music Institute (NMI) will be presenting a special fund-raising event, **Impact**, with a concert, dinner, and post-concert reception. In early January, information about this special event will be sent out so mark your calendars to attend or donate to support the outstanding work the NMI does for the young people of Chicagoland. See below for more details.

On **April 1**, the League will again host its annual **Musicians' Luncheon** to show our love and support for our fantastic Orchestra. Information will be going out in early February, so again mark your calendars to attend this wonderful event. We need all of you there. If you are interested in volunteering to help plan this event, contact Merle Jacob at mljacob@sbcglobal.net

EDUCATIONAL FUND RAISING: IMPACT

The Negaunee Music Institute (NMI) is having a fundraiser called **Impact** on March 17th, 2025, to support its educational and engagement programs. It will showcase the outreach that NMI has in the greater Chicagoland community. The goal is \$130,000 and each Auxiliary Board of the CSOA has been asked to contribute. **The League has pledged \$5,000.** Invitations will be mailed out on January 8th, 2025, with additional ways to support this incredible event. The Co-Chairs are Paul Watford and Margo Oberman. **Please mark your calendars for March 17th** and hope to see you there.

For additional involvement opportunities, please contact **Kevin Gupana** (GupanaK@cso.org) or **John Heffernan** (HeffernanJ@cso.org).



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: YOUNG ARTISTS COMPETITION

The annual Crain-Maling Foundation CSO Young Artists Competition is fast approaching! In 2025, the competition will have 37 applicants who will be competing on **January 18th**. This year's featured instrument is the piano. For the whole day (8 AM to 5 PM), we will organize volunteers to greet and escort the young pianists around Symphony Center. Only a few finalists will perform on **March 22nd** and we will need volunteers on that day as well. If you are interested in working with these talented young artists and to serve as a CSO ambassador on either date, please contact **Ansuk Jeong** (granble@gmail.com or 312-925-5270). Those who have completed the League's interest survey recently will be getting Ansuk's email.

If you would like to volunteer at Community Open Rehearsals/SVEP, please contact
Margo Oberman at honye@obermail.net.

If you would like to volunteer for Adventures in Music (AIM) concerts, please
contact

Kathy Nordmeyer at nordmeyerk@gmail.com.

If you have any questions, please contact Brent Taghap at taghap@cso.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS

League Events – 2024/25 Season – Updated as of January 7, 2025

January 18	Young Artists Competition (Time TBA Orchestra Hall)
February 3	AIM: Once Upon A Symphony (10 AM & 11:45 AM Buntrock Hall)
February 19	Community Open Rehearsal/SVEP (10 AM Orchestra Hall)
March 7	AIM: School Concert (10:15 AM & 12 PM Orchestra Hall)
March 8	AIM: Family Concerts (11 AM & 12:45 PM Orchestra Hall)
March 15	Endowed Concert Reception (9:30 PM Grainger Ballroom)
March 17	IMPACT (NMI Showcase) (Time TBA Orchestra Hall)
March 19	League Spring All-Member Meeting (11 AM Grainger Ballroom)
March 22	Young Artists Competition Final (time not set) Orchestra Hall
April 1	Musicians' Luncheon (12 PM Club 8 & Grainger Ballroom)
April 5	AIM: Once Upon A Symphony (10 AM & 11:45 AM Buntrock Hall)
May 2	AIM: School Concert (10:15 AM & 12 PM Orchestra Hall)
May 3	AIM: Family Concerts (11 AM & 12:45 PM Orchestra Hall)
May 10	AIM: Once Upon A Symphony (10 AM & 11:45 AM Buntrock Hall)
June 2	Civic Postconcert Reception (9 PM Grainger Ballroom)
June 3	Corporate Night (Time TBD Symphony Center)
June 11	League Annual All-Member Meeting (11 AM Grainger Ballroom)

WEB LINKS FOR LEAGUE MEMBERS

League CSO page: <https://cso.org/support/get-involved/the-league/>

League Symphony Store: <https://symphonystore.com/collections/league-of-the-csoa-apparel>

League Tribune Fund: <https://order.cso.org/donate/q/12>

League Membership Dues: <https://order.cso.org/donate/q/8>

League Annual Fund: <https://order.cso.org/donate/q/7>

League Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/theleagueofthecsoa>

2024/25 LEAGUE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President: Sharon Mitchell

Vice President of Events: Eileen Conaghan

Vice President of Finance: Mary Beth Dietrick

Vice President of Fundraising: Sarah Good

Vice President of Membership: Janice Young

Vice President of Administration: Allisa Gam

Vice President of Education: Kathy Nordmeyer

Vice President of Areas: Bobbie Huskey

Strategic Planning/Technology: Ted Tabe

Secretary: Liz Branch

Members-at-Large: Ansuk Jeong, Juan Solana



League

Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association