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2026 CHICAGO YOUTH IN MUSIC FESTIVAL SUPPORTS LOCAL STUDENTS THROUGH MENTORSHIP AND COLLABORATION

CHICAGO – The Negaunee Music Institute (NMI) at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra announces the 2026 Chicago Youth in Music Festival (CYMF), a monthlong celebration of music education and collaborative performances taking place throughout April.

The 2026 CYMF features rehearsals, masterclasses and performances that connect students from Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and three Chicago community youth orchestras with musicians from the Civic Orchestra of Chicago and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO).

The NMI hosts CPS Convenings for high school band and string orchestra students on April 6 and 10, respectively. Over the two days, more than 200 students will join Civic Orchestra members for side-by-side rehearsals on stage in Orchestra Hall at Symphony Center. Members of the CSO will also join the side-by-side ensemble on stage for the final rehearsal of each convening. Since January, as part of the NMI's CSO Connect high school partnership program, the participating students have received more than 300 visits from Civic Mentors, a designated cohort of Civic Orchestra musicians, to rehearse repertoire; the program culminates in the CYMF convenings.

Erica Neidlinger, associate professor and conductor of the Wind Symphony at DePaul University, conducts the April 6 program. Participating schools include King College Prep, Lincoln Park High School, Lindblom Math & Science Academy, Mather High School and Northside College Prep.

Kenny Lee, assistant professor and director of Orchestral Studies at the University of Iowa, conducts the April 10 program. Participating schools include Amundsen High School, Kenwood Academy, Lincoln Park High School, Mather High School and Northside College Prep.

On Saturday, April 11, 100 students from community youth orchestras — [Chicago Metamorphosis Orchestra Project](#), [The People's Music School](#) and the Lake County and Westside programs of [Sistema Ravinia](#) — come together in Orchestra Hall for a final day of side-by-side rehearsals and activities with Civic Orchestra musicians.

All three convenings are private and will be closed to a public audience.

To further engage Chicago's most advanced young musicians, CSO musicians will lead four masterclasses in April for students from the [Merit School of Music](#), [Music Institute of Chicago](#), [Chicago Musical Pathways Initiative](#) and [The People's Music School](#). Each program will nominate one student per class to perform. Symphony Center and partner sites across the city will host the masterclasses.

Inaugurated in 2009, the Chicago Youth in Music Festival is an annual celebration that supports and inspires young orchestral musicians.

Find more information about the 2026 festival at cso.org/cymf.

The Chicago Youth in Music Festival is generously sponsored by Megan and Steve Shebik and by Michael and Linda Simon.

Allstate is a Youth Education Program sponsor.

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Chicago Symphony Orchestra: 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. 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 Negaunee Music Institute. The [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](#) 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.