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**CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ASSOCIATION
ANNOUNCES 2026/27 SEASON PROGRAMMING**

Zell Music Director Designate Klaus Mäkelä Leads Five Weeks of Chicago Symphony Orchestra Programs, Including Symphony Ball in Chicago and a 2027 European Tour

Music Director Emeritus for Life Riccardo Muti Returns to Chicago for Three Weeks of Programs with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra including Rossini's Stabat mater with the Chicago Symphony Chorus

Jean-Yves Thibaudet Makes Three Appearances as 2026/27 CSO Artist-in-Residence

Featured Concerts with the CSO Include Appearances by Yo-Yo Ma, Andrew Bird and Lang Lang who Performs all Five Beethoven Piano Concertos

CHICAGO — The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association (CSOA) announces 2026/27 Season programming for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) and Symphony Center Presents (SCP) series. Marking its 136th concert season, the CSO unites with an array of internationally renowned musicians for performances in Chicago and on tour.

Zell Music Director Designate Klaus Mäkelä leads five weeks of subscription concerts in Chicago and takes the Orchestra on an eight-city, 12-concert European tour in January 2027, visiting prestigious venues including the Musikverein in Vienna, the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg and the Philharmonie de Paris.

Music Director Emeritus for Life Riccardo Muti returns for three weeks across two Chicago residencies in December 2026 and April 2027, continuing a partnership built over his 13 seasons as the Orchestra's 10th music director.

"The 2026/27 season is a landmark chapter for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, featuring expanded weeks with Zell Music Director Designate Klaus Mäkelä and a continued partnership with Music Director Emeritus for Life Riccardo Muti," said Jeff Alexander, President of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association. "From Klaus's five-weeks of concerts in Chicago plus a three-week tour of Europe with the CSO, to the wide variety of repertoire spanning four centuries, and a robust presentation series, the season's programming showcases an

extraordinary breadth of artistry. We are also excited to be welcoming Jean-Yves Thibaudet as our artist in residence. We invite all of Chicago to experience the transformative power of the CSO.”

Pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet brings his distinctive blend of virtuosity and vision to his new role as the 2026/27 CSO Artist-in-Residence, offering performances that showcase his remarkable range and expressive artistry. Outside the concert hall, Thibaudet will engage with audiences through community and educational events, offering meaningful opportunities to hear from and interact with the artist.

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s new season begins in September 2026 with former CSO Artist-in-Residence Hilary Hahn, who joins conductor Petr Popelka and the Orchestra as soloist in Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto. This opening program sets a Romantic tone for the year, pairing Hahn’s virtuosity with Dvořák’s Fifth Symphony.

From cherished masterworks to new music, the CSO Classical season expands the repertoire with a world premiere and CSO commission by former Mead Composer-in-Residence Mason Bates, U.S. premieres by Magnus Lindberg and Esa-Pekka Salonen and 14 pieces new to the subscription series.

The Orchestra explores Beethoven’s enduring impact throughout the season with performances of his iconic overtures, Symphonies Nos. 4 and 5 and Symphony No. 9, which features the monumental “Ode to Joy” finale. Under the direction of Chorus Director Donald Palumbo, the Chicago Symphony Chorus takes center stage in this season finale, which also includes the composer’s poignant *Elegy*.

During this season-long celebration of Beethoven’s enduring impact, the CSO welcomes world-renowned pianist Lang Lang for a three-concert residency performing all five piano concertos under the baton of Paavo Järvi (March 24, 26 & 27, 2027). Earlier that month, violinist Isabelle Faust joins guest conductor Maxim Emelyanychev and the CSO for Beethoven’s Violin Concerto from March 11-14. Beyond these orchestral programs, Beethoven’s remarkable legacy is further highlighted through dedicated piano recital and chamber music concerts.

In addition to Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, the Chicago Symphony Chorus is featured in several choral masterworks throughout the 2026/27 Season. These include Walton’s dramatic cantata *Belshazzar’s Feast*, Brahms’ *A German Requiem*, the quintessential holiday tradition of Handel’s *Messiah*, and Rossini’s *Stabat mater* and selections from *William Tell*. The Chorus also joins the Orchestra for the first CSO performances of Pierre Boulez’s iridescent cantata *Le soleil des eaux*.

The 2026/27 Symphony Center Presents season features a premier lineup of global icons and diverse musical traditions. The Piano and Chamber Music series showcase legendary artists including Mitsuko Uchida, Yuja Wang and Evgeny Kissin. Highlights include the North American debut of pianist Lukas Sternath and a star-studded trio featuring Kissin, Maxim Vengerov and Gautier Capuçon. 2026/27 CSO Artist-in-Residence Jean-Yves Thibaudet also appears in a trio with violinist Lisa Batiashvili and Capuçon.

The season further expands with specialized and global programming, featuring the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Brass, the magnetic theatricality of Mexican icon Lila Downs and the high-energy taiko of Kodo. Pop-jazz ensemble Pink Martini returns, and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra makes its annual appearances during Wynton Marsalis' final season as its artistic director.

[Explore](#) a chronological listing of CSOA-presented programs included in the 2026/27 Season.

[Access](#) the complete 2026/27 Season media kit, including press photos.

Klaus Mäkelä, Zell Music Director Designate — CSO Residencies and European Tour

In the 2026/27 Season, Zell Music Director Designate **Klaus Mäkelä** leads five weeks of subscription concerts with repertoire ranging from Gabrieli to Boulez. He conducts the annual Symphony Ball concert for the first time and also embarks on a European tour as he prepares to begin his tenure as the CSO's 11th music director in the 2027/28 Season.

Mäkelä launches his three-week fall residency with the CSO from September 24 to 26 with Sibelius' Seventh and Shostakovich's Fourth symphonies — the latter a work that reveals a Soviet-era composer in all his brilliant audacity. From October 1 to 4, he conducts Mahler's Ninth Symphony, an exploration of the human spirit that follows previous Mahler interpretations described by the *Chicago Tribune* as "exquisitely, sensitively and lovingly made." The residency continues October 8 and 9 as baritone **Thomas Hampson** joins the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus for Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*, in a program that also features Stravinsky's *Petrushka* and two works by Giovanni Gabrieli.

Mäkelä conducts the celebratory Symphony Ball concert on October 10 which includes Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* and Stravinsky's *Petrushka*. Patrons may enhance their experience with a gala package including a private preconcert reception and postconcert dinner and celebration at the Four Seasons Hotel Chicago.

Returning in the spring from May 13 to 16, 2027, Mäkelä highlights two works by Finnish composer Magnus Lindberg: the U.S. premiere of a new CSO co-commission and the First Violin Concerto featuring **Lisa Batiashvili**. The program concludes with Sibelius' First Symphony. From June 17 to 20, 2027, Mäkelä leads the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus and distinguished soloists in Beethoven's monumental Ninth Symphony paired with the composer's *Elegy*.

Beyond Chicago, Mäkelä embarks on his first European tour with the CSO as Zell Music Director Designate, performing in Cologne, Dortmund, Essen, Hamburg and Baden-Baden, Germany; Vienna; Luxembourg, and Paris (January 7-22, 2027).

Riccardo Muti, Music Director Emeritus for Life — CSO Residencies

Riccardo Muti, the CSO's Music Director Emeritus for Life, returns to Chicago for three weeks across two residencies in the 2026/27 Season. These performances continue a partnership built over his 13 seasons as the Orchestra's 10th music director.

His first CSO residency begins with a program that runs from December 3 to 5 and includes Dvořák's Eighth Symphony, a tribute to the landscapes and folk dances of Bohemia. The program also includes Bartók's *Two Pictures* and Richard Strauss' Oboe Concerto, featuring CSO Principal Oboe **William Welter**. Muti continues the residency from December 10 to 12 with a festive Viennese-inspired program featuring waltzes and polkas by Johann Strauss Jr. and family. Pianist **Yefim Bronfman** joins Muti and the Orchestra for Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 24, following an overture by Cherubini.

Muti returns from April 8 to 10, 2027, to lead Rossini's *Stabat mater*, a work combining operatic intensity with devotional choral music. The performance features the Chicago Symphony Chorus and a distinguished quartet of soloists: soprano **Eleonora Buratto**, mezzo-soprano **Elizabeth DeShong**, tenor **Giovanni Sala** and bass-baritone **Maharram Huseynov**. The program begins with music from Rossini's *William Tell*, including the famous overture and the CSO's first performances of ballet music from the opera.

Jean-Yves Thibaudet — CSO Artist-in-Residence

Jean-Yves Thibaudet serves as the CSO Artist-in-Residence for the 2026/27 Season. A frequent guest and audience favorite at Symphony Center since his debut on the Orchestra Hall stage in 1987, Thibaudet brings his celebrated elegance and technical brilliance to three distinct programs throughout the season.

Thibaudet first appears on the Symphony Center Presents Chamber Music series, joining his longtime collaborators, violinist **Lisa Batiashvili** and cellist **Gautier Capuçon**. The trio explores the youthful exuberance of early works by Shostakovich and Debussy, contrasted with the darkly Romantic intensity of Dvořák's Piano Trio in F Minor (October 18).

In February, Thibaudet joins the Orchestra for Khachaturian's Piano Concerto, a work that blends Armenian folk influences with Russian Romanticism. *The Guardian* describes the concerto as a "giant, Technicolor work" and a perfect match for Thibaudet's "flamboyant yet precise playing style." The program, led by **Fabien Gabel**, also includes Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina* Prelude and Zemlinsky's lush orchestral fantasy *The Mermaid* (February 11-13, 2027).

Additionally, Thibaudet teams up with pianist, singer and American songbook expert **Michael Feinstein** for *Two Pianos: Who Could Ask for Anything More?*, an extraordinary evening that celebrates George Gershwin and his musical universe. In duos, solos and selections with the CSO, Thibaudet and Feinstein offer Gershwin rarities and favorites. The performance is part of a fundraising event presented in partnership by the CSOA and the League of the CSOA (May

24, 2027). Proceeds benefit the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's artistic, educational and community engagement programs in Chicago and across the globe.

Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) Classical Concerts

The 2026/27 Season of CSO Classical concerts connects Chicago audiences with some of today's most acclaimed international soloists, distinguished conductors and a wide range of orchestral music. Highlights include a world premiere, two U.S. premieres, numerous CSO first performances and a special emphasis on music of Ludwig van Beethoven, whose enduring impact is felt by audiences and musicians alike.

World Premiere

- **Mason Bates – *The Escapist Symphony*:** A new CSO-commissioned symphony from former CSO Mead Composer-in-Residence Mason Bates (February 25-27, 2027).

U.S. Premieres

- **Magnus Lindberg – *New Work*:** A CSO co-commission from the celebrated Finnish composer (May 13-16, 2027).
- **Esa-Pekka Salonen – *Tiu*:** The distinguished composer conducts the U.S. premiere of a revised version of his 2023 work (May 27-28, 2027).

CSO First Performances

The season introduces several contemporary and historical works to the CSO's repertoire:

- **Contemporary Voices:** Notable firsts include Arturo Márquez's *Fandango*, Michael Abels' *More Seasons*, Julia Wolfe's *Liberty Bell*, Magnus Lindberg's Violin Concerto No. 1, Pierre Boulez's *Le soleil des eaux* and Philip Glass' *The Light*.
- **Tan Dun and the CSO:** The composer makes his CSO podium debut conducting the Orchestra's first performances of three of his works: *Passacaglia: Secret of Wind and Birds*; *Water Concerto*, featuring percussionist **Yuri Yamashita** in a CSO debut, and *Concerto for Orchestra* from *Marco Polo*.
- **Rediscovered Classics & New Editions:** The Orchestra performs Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel's Overture in C Major and Arvo Pärt's *Summa* for the first time. Additionally, the season features movements from Rossini's *William Tell* ballet music, two of which are performed by the CSO for the first time.
- **First Subscription Performances:** Several works receive their first CSO subscription concert performances, including Bach's Keyboard Concerto No. 3 in D Major, Roberto Sierra's *Fandangos* and Carl Nielsen's Overture to *Maskarade*.

Newcomers to the Podium

Three acclaimed conductors make their CSO debuts during the 2026/27 Season, exploring works featuring period instruments, contemporary composition and choral mastery.

A leading authority on the music of J.S. Bach, **Masaaki Suzuki** is the founder and Music Director of Bach Collegium Japan and serves as the Principal Guest Conductor of Yale Schola Cantorum. Suzuki leads the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus in Handel's *Messiah*, an oratorio he has performed and recorded to international acclaim. The program features guest soloists **Sherezade Panthaki** (soprano), **Hugh Cutting** (countertenor), **Andrew Haji** (tenor) and **Paul Max Tipton** (bass-baritone), with Panthaki, Cutting and Tipton marking CSO debut appearances in these performances (December 17-19).

Currently the Principal Conductor of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Chief Conductor of the period-instrument ensemble *Il Pomo d'Oro*, **Maxim Emelyanychev** is recognized for his versatile approach to both Baroque and symphonic repertoire. For his CSO debut, he leads a program centered on the Mendelssohn family, featuring an overture by Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel — marking its first CSO performance — and Felix Mendelssohn's *Reformation* Symphony. Soloist **Isabelle Faust** joins Emelyanychev and the Orchestra for Beethoven's Violin Concerto (March 11-14, 2027).

Academy Award-winning composer and conductor **Tan Dun**, who currently serves as dean of the Bard College Conservatory of Music, leads the CSO in a program of his own works. Tan Dun's compositions often bridge Eastern and Western musical traditions through the use of organic materials and multimedia elements. The program includes *Water* Concerto with soloist **Yuri Yamashita**, which utilizes water as a percussion instrument; Concerto for Orchestra from *Marco Polo*, and Passacaglia: *Secret of Wind and Birds*, which incorporates digital bird calls played by the audience and orchestra on mobile devices (May 20-22, 2027).

CSO Visiting Conductors and Guest Artists

In the 2026/27 Season, the CSO presents a diverse array of international soloists and guest conductors. The subscription series opens with former CSO Artist-in-Residence **Hilary Hahn** performing Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in a program led by **Petr Popelka** (September 17-19).

Violinist **Anne Akiko Meyers** is soloist in the first CSO performances of Arturo Márquez's *Fandango*, written for and premiered by Meyers, with conductor **Giancarlo Guerrero** (October 15-17). Cellist **Jian Wang** returns for Dvořák's Cello Concerto in a program led by **Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider** (October 22-25).

Soprano **Louise Alder** makes her CSO debut in Brahms' *A German Requiem* alongside the Chicago Symphony Chorus and baritone **Konstantin Krimmel**, conducted by **Szeps-Znaider** (October 29-31). In November, pianist **Mao Fujita** makes his CSO debut as soloist in Richard Strauss' *Burlesque* under the baton of **Marek Janowski** (November 5-8). **Vadim Gluzman** performs Prokofiev's Second Violin Concerto in a program led by **Jaap van Zweden** (November 19-21).

Pianist **Beatrice Rana** performs Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto (February 4-7, 2027), and violinist **Randall Goosby** performs Mozart's Third Violin Concerto (February 19-21, 2027).

Conductor **Manfred Honeck** leads the world premiere of a CSO commission: Mason Bates' *The Escapist Symphony* (February 25-27, 2027).

Pianist **Orion Weiss** performs two Bach concertos, including the first CSO subscription performance of the Keyboard Concerto No. 3 in D Major, led by **Harry Bicket** (March 4-6, 2027). Cellist **Alisa Weilerstein** performs Prokofiev's Symphony-Concerto with conductor **James Gaffigan** (March 18-20, 2027), and **Augustin Hadelich** returns for Korngold's Violin Concerto led by **Philippe Jordan** (April 2-3, 2027).

In mid-April, **Jakub Hrůša** — *Musical America's* 2026 Conductor of the Year — leads Shostakovich's monumental Symphony No. 7 (*Leningrad*), a powerful testament to resistance and the human spirit (April 15-18, 2027). **Dame Jane Glover** then leads a program featuring Concertmaster **Robert Chen** in Richard Strauss' Violin Concerto (April 22-24, 2027).

Manfred Honeck returns to conduct mezzo-soprano **Marianne Crebassa** in selections from Mahler's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (May 6-8, 2027). **Esa-Pekka Salonen** leads the U.S. premiere of his work *Tiu* in a program featuring pianist **Yunchan Lim** in Liszt's Second Piano Concerto (May 27-28, 2027). In June, piano duo **Lucas and Arthur Jussen** perform Poulenc's *Double Concerto* under **Kazuki Yamada** (June 3-6, 2027), followed by **Benjamin Grosvenor** performing Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto, led by **Sir Mark Elder** (June 10-12, 2027).

Programs with the Chicago Symphony Chorus

The Chicago Symphony Chorus brings its powerful and versatile sound to several programs throughout the 2026/27 Season. Chorus Director **Donald Palumbo** prepares the chorus for these performances, which offer audiences the opportunity to hear monumental choral masterpieces ranging from the dramatic world of opera and sacred music to festive holiday selections.

Zell Music Director Designate **Klaus Mäkelä** joins the Chicago Symphony Chorus for two large-scale works that frame the season with power and scope. To open the season, the Chorus performs in Walton's dramatic cantata *Belshazzar's Feast*, a work of massive scale requiring double chorus and brass bands. They are joined by celebrated baritone **Thomas Hampson** (October 8-10).

In late October, conductor **Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider** leads the Chorus and Orchestra in Brahms' *A German Requiem*. Often called his "human requiem," the score emphasizes consolation and reflection, featuring soprano **Louise Alder** and baritone **Konstantin Krimmel** (October 29-31).

The Chorus joins the Orchestra in December for a quintessential holiday tradition: Handel's *Messiah*, led by guest conductor **Masaaki Suzuki**. This performance of the full oratorio features a stellar cast of soloists including soprano **Sherezade Panthaki**, countertenor **Hugh Cutting**, tenor **Andrew Haji** and bass-baritone **Paul Max Tipton** (December 17-19).

In the spring, the Chorus performs during **Riccardo Muti's** residency for Rossini's *Stabat mater*, a work that blends operatic intensity with sacred eloquence. The vocal quartet features soprano

Eleonora Buratto, mezzo-soprano **Elizabeth DeShong**, tenor **Giovanni Sala** and bass-baritone **Maharram Huseynov**. The program also includes the first CSO performances of the Pas de trois et choeur tyrolien and Pas de soldats from Rossini's *William Tell* (April 8-10, 2027).

Finally, the Chorus anchors the season finale performances of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, joining the Orchestra for the triumphant "Ode to Joy." Under the baton of **Klaus Mäkelä**, the performance features soprano **Chen Reiss**, mezzo-soprano **Sasha Cooke**, tenor **Siyabonga Maqungo** and bass-baritone **Gerald Finley**. The program is paired with the composer's *Elegy* and the first CSO performances of Pierre Boulez's iridescent cantata *Le soleil des eaux* (June 17-20, 2027).

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827): The Eternal Original

More than 200 years after it was written, Beethoven's music still invites musicians and audiences alike to marvel at its brilliance, power and depth.

The 2026/27 Season programming recognizes and celebrates the composer's enduring impact through the CSO's performances of his iconic overtures, Symphonies Nos. 4 and 5 and the monumental Ninth Symphony with the Chicago Symphony Chorus in June 2027 with Zell Music Director Designate **Klaus Mäkelä**. Internationally acclaimed pianist **Lang Lang** headlines three special CSO concerts showcasing Beethoven's five piano concertos with **Paavo Järvi** conducting (March 24, 26 & 27, 2027), and **Isabelle Faust** joins the CSO and guest conductor **Maxim Emelyanychev** for Beethoven's Violin Concerto (March 11-14, 2027).

Today's most revered interpreters take center stage in Symphony Center Presents (SCP) programs such as pianist **Bruce Liu** performing the *Waldstein* and *Moonlight* sonatas (November 1) and all-Beethoven piano recitals from **Leif Ove Andsnes**, performing the final three piano sonatas (March 21, 2027), and **Evgeny Kissin** performing the *Diabelli* Variations (April 25, 2027), as well as a performance of the composer's landmark Violin Sonata No. 9 (*Kreutzer*) arranged by **Nemanja Radulović**, who makes an SCP Chamber Music series debut with his ensemble **Double Sens** (November 22).

Visit cso.org/Beethoven to find all the 2026/27 Season concerts at Symphony Center that feature music by Beethoven.

Symphony Center Presents Chamber Music

The series provides listeners with the opportunity to hear smaller ensembles in the intimate atmosphere of Orchestra Hall. The direct connection to the performers offers a fresh perspective on the diverse range of sounds and combinations of individual instruments and voices.

The series kicks off with an appearance by 2026/27 CSO Artist-in-Residence **Jean-Yves Thibaudet** and his longtime trio partners, violinist **Lisa Batiashvili** and cellist **Gautier Capuçon** (October 18). Making their Symphony Center debuts, violinist **Nemanja Radulović**

leads his chamber orchestra, **Double Sens**, in a program featuring works by Bach and Beethoven. The program includes Radulović's own orchestral arrangement of Beethoven's *Kreutzer* Sonata — noted for the breakneck speed of its finale — Bach's Violin Concerto in D Minor and a new arrangement of the D Minor Chaconne (November 22).

Three of today's most celebrated musicians — piano legend **Evgeny Kissin**, violin icon **Maxim Vengerov** and cello virtuoso **Gautier Capuçon** — reunite to explore how Beethoven revolutionized the piano trio with newfound passion and expressivity. From the fiery spirit of the Op. 1, No. 3 trio to the ominous second movement of the *Ghost* Trio and the towering, aristocratic *Archduke* Trio, this performance showcases some of the most significant landmarks of Beethoven's chamber music output (May 18, 2027).

Symphony Center Presents Piano

The Symphony Center Presents Piano series continues to draw audiences with a roster of world-class artists, featuring eight recitals in the 2026/27 Season.

Bruce Liu, who rose to international prominence after winning the 2021 International Chopin Competition, returns to Chicago with a program showcasing his technical refinement (November 1). **Lukas Sternath**, a former member of the Vienna Boys Choir, makes his highly anticipated North American debut with a program featuring Schubert's *Wanderer* Fantasy and works by Liszt (December 6).

Longtime Chicago favorite **Mitsuko Uchida** presents her first Symphony Center solo recital since 2018 (January 31, 2027), performing Schubert's visionary Sonata in A Major alongside works by Haydn, Schoenberg and Mozart. **Leif Ove Andsnes** offers a deep exploration of Beethoven's final years, performing his final three piano sonatas in a single afternoon (March 21, 2027).

The series also features **Yuja Wang** (April 11, 2027), known for her versatile and bold programming, and **Evgeny Kissin** (April 25, 2027), who presents Beethoven's *Diabelli* Variations alongside two of the composer's early sonatas. The season further includes returning masters **Rudolf Buchbinder** (January 10, 2027) and **Piotr Anderszewski** (May 9, 2027).

Featured Concerts and Events

Throughout the 2026/27 Season, featured concerts and events connect audiences with a wide range of musical genres and world-renowned artists.

Internationally renowned cellist **Yo-Yo Ma** returns to Symphony Center to perform one of the first concertos he ever recorded, Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto. The program is led by conductor **Carlos Miguel Prieto**, another frequent guest in Chicago, and includes Rachmaninov's plush and glittering Symphonic Dances and Ginastera's Four Dances from *Estancia* (November 11).

Grammy-nominated violinist, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist **Andrew Bird** makes his CSO debut celebrating the 20-year anniversary of his acclaimed record *The Mysterious Production of Eggs*. Balancing jazz, folk and pop melodies in an unforgettable display of unique virtuosity, the concert features a full album performance with orchestral arrangements, capped off with a suite of fan-favorite tunes from his near 30-year career (November 13-14).

Celebrated for its precision and power, the **Chicago Symphony Orchestra Brass** presents its annual December concert. CSO trombonist **Michael Mulcahy** conducts the ensemble in a showcase of arrangements and original works specifically tailored to the section's unique sound (December 15).

Pink Martini returns to Symphony Center on Valentine's weekend with a freewheeling blend of classic pop, big band, and Latin music. Featuring vocalist **Storm Large**, the 12-member ensemble performs a multilingual set list that spans French, Cuban and Brazilian styles. Bandleader **Thomas Lauderdale** describes the experience as an "around-the-world musical adventure" inspired by the global sophistication of the early 1960s (February 12, 2027).

The legendary Japanese taiko drumming ensemble **Kodo** also returns as part of its global tour. The group's new program, *Luminance*, combines traditional percussion with modern choreography and physical precision. The performance pays homage to the works of composer Maki Ishii while introducing new compositions inspired by the ensemble's international travels (February 28, 2027).

More than 25 years after his dramatic career breakthrough with the CSO at Ravinia, **Lang Lang** is one of classical music's most celebrated ambassadors. In a thrilling trio of programs, the superstar pianist traverses all five of Beethoven's groundbreaking piano concertos. Joining **Paavo Järvi** and the CSO, Lang Lang opens the week with the First Piano Concerto — the daring twists of which pushed the limits of Classical convention — and the searching and sublime Fourth Piano Concerto (March 24, 2027). He continues the week with two additional programs, performing the Second and Third Beethoven Piano Concertos on March 26, and concluding the cycle with the majestic Fifth Piano Concerto on Saturday, March 27.

A magnetic force in Mexican music, **Lila Downs** brings her "Cambias mi mundo" program to Symphony Center. Her dusky, soulful voice shines in richly layered songs about yearning, identity, justice and folklore. Born in Oaxaca and raised between Mexico and Minnesota, Downs deftly weaves genres ranging from ranchera, cumbia and son to jazz, soul and American pop in a performance described as "irresistibly theatrical" (April 4, 2027).

The **Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis** makes its annual appearance in a two-concert residency in April 2027, marking Marsalis' final season as music director.

CSO at the Movies

The CSO at the Movies series celebrates the magic of watching legendary films on the big screen in Orchestra Hall as the CSO performs the scores.

Concertgoers can experience ***How to Train Your Dragon 2***, as Hiccup and Toothless discover a secret ice cave and find themselves in an epic battle to save the future of man and dragons. This spectacular sequel is presented in HD with composer John Powell's thrilling score performed by the CSO and conducted by Nicholas Buc (November 27-29).

As part of the CSO at the Movies series and holiday programming, the holiday classic ***Elf*** is presented on the big screen, led by Justin Freer. Members of the CSO perform the festive score by John Debney, offering a spirited experience for audiences of all ages (December 11-13).

In January, the series presents ***West Side Story***, the iconic 1961 film and winner of 10 Academy Awards. Conductor David Newman leads the Orchestra playing Leonard Bernstein's electrifying score while the original, remastered film is shown in glorious high definition with the vocals and dialogue intact (January 29-30, 2027).

The series concludes with ***Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back***. Audiences enter the Star Wars universe as Darth Vader pursues Luke Skywalker, featuring John Williams' Grammy-winning score performed by the CSO and conducted by Sarah Hicks (June 25-27, 2027).

Holiday Programming at Symphony Center

Symphony Center presents a variety of programs designed to bring friends and family together through festive musical traditions. At the heart of these holiday offerings is ***Merry, Merry Chicago!***, featuring Broadway star **Mandy Gonzalez** and members of the CSO. Conductor **Thomas Wilkins** leads this annual celebration across seven performances (December 18-23).

The holiday season begins with the return of the **Vienna Boys Choir** performing a program of traditional carols and seasonal songs (November 28) and continues with ***A Chanticleer Christmas***, featuring the close harmonies, innovative arrangements and programming that are a hallmark of the acclaimed vocal ensemble (December 8).

Members of the CSO also bring John Debney's festive score in ***Elf*** to life as part of the CSO at the Movies series. These performances of the holiday classic offer a spirited experience for audiences of all ages (December 11-13).

CSO for Kids

Across the season, the CSO enriches the lives of children and families through innovative programs produced by the Negaunee Music Institute (NMI). These performances are designed to introduce young listeners to the magic of music and storytelling while advancing the CSO's commitment to education and community engagement.

The ***Once Upon a Symphony*** series, presented in collaboration with Chicago Children's Theatre, introduces children ages 3 to 5 to the world of classical music. This season features storytelling programs ***Stone Soup***, a fable about how sharing fosters joy (December 5, 2026-February 13, 2027), and ***The Elves and the Shoemaker***, which explores the impact of kindness and generosity (March 20-April 24, 2027).

School-age children can explore the sights and sounds of the orchestra through **School and Family Matinees**, special themed programs further igniting young imaginations throughout the year. **Symphonic Superheroes** highlights the unique, “super” qualities of a symphony orchestra conducted by **Alastair Willis** (November 21). Conductor **Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser** leads the CSO and **The Second City** in Benjamin Britten’s iconic score, **The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra**, providing the ultimate introduction to symphonic instruments (March 6, 2027). Finally, **Tania Miller** leads **Einstein’s Imagination**, a thought-provoking program that explores how the principles of physics and the imaginative world of Albert Einstein determine a musical performance (May 15, 2027).

Patron Information

Subscriptions are now on sale for the 2026/27 Season of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Symphony Center Presents. Curated and Create Your Own subscription packages of three or more concerts are available. Patrons can now select their own seats when ordering a Create Your Own subscription online.

Subscribers save up to 30 percent on standard ticket prices, plus an additional 15 percent on all concert tickets ordered throughout the season. Additional benefits include priority access to select concerts, the best available seats at the best prices, flexible ticket exchange privileges, access to reduced parking rates and special offers at the Symphony Store.

Subscriptions may be purchased online, by phone, by mail, or in person at the Symphony Center Box Office. Convenient payment plan options are available for credit card purchases. Individual concert tickets for the 2026/27 Season go on sale to the public in August.

Patron Services representatives are available to assist via web chat at [cso.org](https://www.cso.org), by phone at [312-294-3000](tel:312-294-3000) (Monday–Saturday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.), or by email at patronservices@cso.org. Groups of 10 or more may call [312-294-3040](tel:312-294-3040).

Symphony Center, home of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, is located at 220 S. Michigan Ave. in Chicago.

To learn more about the musicians of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, performers, affiliate and visiting artists, visit [cso.org/about/performers](https://www.cso.org/about/performers).

All artists, programs and dates are subject to change.

The Zell Music Director Designate position is endowed in perpetuity by a generous gift from the Zell Family Foundation.

The Negaunee Music Institute is endowed in perpetuity by a generous gift from The Negaunee Foundation.

Bank of America is the Maestro Residency Presenter.

The Artist-in-Residence at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra is made possible through a generous gift from James and Brenda Grusecki.

Generous support for CSO concerts, guest artists and guest conductors has been provided by the Juli Plant Grainger Fund for Artistic Excellence and the Grainger Fund for Excellence.

Major concert support is generously provided by the Randy L. and Melvin † R. Berlin Family Fund for the Canon and Margot and Josef Lakonishok.

Generous support for the Chicago Symphony Chorus has been provided by The Grainger Foundation.

Generous support for the CSO at the Movies series has been provided by Megan and Steve Shebik.

Support for the CSO at Wheaton series is provided by Megan and Steve Shebik.

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association acknowledges support from the Illinois Arts Council.

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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 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 education and community 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.