

HOUSTON \neq SYMPHONY

2024-25

IMPACT REPORT



HOUSTON SYMPHONY

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The 2024-25 Impact Report is produced by the Houston Symphony’s Development department with content by Lauren Buchanan, Development Communications Manager.

MORE THAN MUSIC

From concert halls to classrooms, parks to hospitals—the Houston Symphony reaches across the city to bring extraordinary experiences to all Houstonians.

During the 2024–25 Season, the Symphony engaged nearly

322,343

people through concerts, robust education programs, and our community engagement initiatives, with nearly

129,796

experiencing the Symphony through free and low-cost concerts



140,000

first-time concert attendees for Symphony performances at Jones Hall

3,014

patients, caregivers, and staff served through our Music and Wellness initiatives at senior centers, Methodist Hospital, MD Anderson, and Texas Children's Hospital

802

events with local hospitals, schools, senior centers, and other community venues

50%

of Houstonians served through these initiatives are economically disadvantaged



138,727

served through Symphony Education and Community Engagement initiatives

700

dementia patients served through our Dementia Center Performance Series



15

Free Community Concerts including:

- Fiesta Sinfónica, presented by Chevron
- Concerts at Houston Methodist Hospital
- Concerts at Miller Outdoor Theatre
- Concerts at Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion
- Theater District Open House



DEAR FRIENDS OF THE HOUSTON SYMPHONY

The 2024-25 Season has been a truly remarkable journey—one that not only celebrated the incredible artistry of our musicians but also marked the start of a new chapter for the Houston Symphony. I am honored to share some of the highlights of this season with you in this Impact Report and express my deep appreciation for your unwavering support of the Houston Symphony.

The 2024-25 Season has been a milestone season for the Symphony, as it marked the first season performing in the new and fully renovated acoustics of Jones Hall. Audiences have been able to experience the sonic splendor of the Houston Symphony like never before, in performances ranging from Dvorak's *New World* Symphony on Opening Night to special appearances by superstar guest artists like Cynthia Erivo and Killer Mike. This season demonstrated not only the world-class talent of our musicians but also the deep connection we have with our community. The Symphony's Education and Community Engagement initiatives flourished this year. We served nearly **45,000** Houston-area students through our Harry and Cora Sue Mach Student Concert Series, expanded the *In Harmony* program to two new communities, and continued several successful education and community programs which you'll get a chance to learn more about in this report.

As I reflect on my arrival to the Houston Symphony in February, I am filled with gratitude for the warm welcome I have received from all of you. It has been a privilege to get to know the extraordinary patrons and donors who make up this wonderful Symphony family—those who support our mission, help us grow, and ensure that we can continue to thrive as a cultural leader in Houston and beyond. Your commitment to the Symphony's success is inspiring, and I look forward to advancing the Symphony's vision in the years to come.

None of this would be possible without you. Your generous contributions—whether through your donations or your attendance at a Symphony concert—continue to play a vital role in helping us fulfill our mission to inspire and engage people in Houston and beyond through the power of music.

As we look forward to the season ahead, we are excited to continue our work together, creating more opportunities to transform lives through music.

With gratitude,

Gary Ginstling
Executive Director/CEO
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Anastasia Iglesias
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Teresa Wang+

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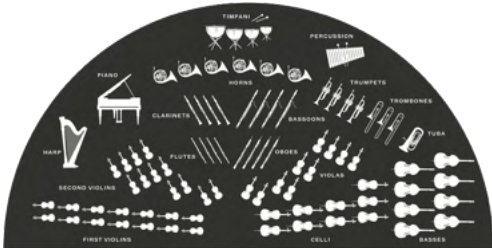
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2024–25 SEASON

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Janet F. Clark	Barbara McCelvey	Fredric Weber
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Juraj Valčuha leading the Houston Symphony.

2024-25 SEASON

ARTISTIC HIGHLIGHTS

133 CONCERTS

39 HOUSTON
SYMPHONY DEBUTS

2 WORLD
PREMIERES

29,914 LIVE FROM JONES HALL
LIVESTREAM VIEWS



Juraj Valčuha leads the orchestra.

CLASSICAL SEASON

MUSIC DIRECTOR FUND

The Music Director Fund provides support for Juraj Valčuha's artistic vision for the Symphony such as multi-weekend festivals and opera projects; hiring and retaining top-level orchestra musicians; and invitations to guest soloists and conductors of the highest caliber.

The Fund supported several artistic endeavors in the 2024–25 Classical Season, including:

- 3 mini-festivals—the *Bohemian Rhapsody* Festival, *Vienna Calling* Festival, and the *Fairytales* Festival
- An immersive production of *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*, with singers **Gábor Bretz** (baritone) and **Ekaterina Gubanova** (mezzo-soprano) and lighting design by **Matthew Webb**.
 - The appointment of 5 new Symphony musicians



Top: Opening Night Concert. Bottom left: Diane Roederer and Imani Guillory chat during the champagne reception before the Opening Night Concert. Bottom right: Guests enjoy the Opening Night Gala at the Corinthian.

OPENING NIGHT CONCERT AND GALA

The Classical Season kicked off on October 4, 2024, at Jones Hall with Valčuha leading the orchestra and the **Houston Symphony Chorus**, alongside Czech baritone **Svatopluk Sem** and the **Houston Chamber Choir**, in an enchanting performance of Martinů's *Czech Rhapsody*. The program also featured a performance of Dvořák's *New World* Symphony—a timeless masterpiece inspired by the diverse musical influences of America.

Following the performance, more than 300 guests were transported to the **Corinthian Houston** for a spectacular gala and seated dinner, chaired by **Mary Lynn & Steve Marks**, which raised **more than \$550,000** to support the Symphony's Education and Community Engagement initiatives and artistic programming.


ConocoPhillips
 Concert Sponsor &
 Lead Corporate Gala
 Underwriter



HAMBURG STEINWAY PIANO ACQUISITION & DEBUT

In September 2024, the Symphony acquired a new Steinway piano from Hamburg, Germany with a little help from world-renown pianist—and friend of the Symphony—Yefim Bronfman. Bronfman traveled to the Steinway Hamburg factory with former Symphony Executive Director/CEO John Mangum; John & Lindy Rydman of Spec’s Wines, Spirits and Finer Foods; and Steinway representative Amanda Watson to test drive pianos before making a final selection. This new addition to the Symphony’s fleet of instruments allows guest artists a choice between performing on a New York or Hamburg Steinway—a standard practice in most major orchestras.

The Hamburg Steinway’s debut performance was on November 29, 2024, when Bronfman performed Beethoven’s *Emperor* Concerto as part of the *Vienna Calling* Festival.



Yefim Bronfman debuts the new Hamburg Steinway piano during the *Vienna Calling* Festival.

FESTIVAL WEEKENDS

The 2024–25 Season featured three mini-festival weekends curated by Juraj Valčuha, allowing audiences to delve into different composers, eras, and cultural influences on music. The first of the season, the *Bohemian Rhapsody* Festival highlighted lively works by Czech composers like Antonín Dvořák, Bohuslav Martinů, and Vítězslava Kaprálová. The *Vienna Calling* Festival paid tribute to the composers of Vienna and the major contributions they made to classical music. Finally, the *Fairytales* Festival transported audiences to mystical worlds and faraway lands with several fairytale-inspired pieces like Prokofiev’s *Cinderella*, Zemlinsky’s *The Mermaid*, and the world premiere of Karim Al-Zand’s *Al-Jazari’s Ingenious Clocks*.

Upper right: Bronfman compares pianos in the Steinway Hamburg factory. *Lower right:* John & Lindy Rydman with Bronfman.

Special thanks to John & Lindy Rydman and Spec’s Wine, Spirits & Finer Foods/Spec’s Charitable Foundation for generously funding the purchase of our Hamburg Steinway.





Patrons enjoy a Chamber Music Series performance by Houston Symphony musicians.

CHAMBER MUSIC SERIES

This season, the Symphony launched an intimate concert experience featuring our musicians in small ensembles. Held on the recently expanded Janice H. Barrow Piano Tier at Jones Hall, these casual performances offered audiences a closer look at the composers and themes explored in the season's mini festivals, while also showcasing the artistry of our world-class musicians. The series included Bohemian Rhapsodies, Passport to Vienna, Fairy Tale Fantasy, and Springtime in Europe: Rossini+More.

31

Houston Symphony musicians featured in our Chamber Music Series



NEW MUSIC

On September 27, the Houston Symphony celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month with its annual Fiesta Sinfónica concert, presented by Chevron, featuring the world premiere of a new **Guitar Concerto** by renowned Mexican composer **Arturo Márquez**. Led by Associate Conductor **Gonzalo Farias**, the performance marked a milestone as acclaimed guitarist **Pablo Sáinz-Villegas** gave a stunning debut of the co-commissioned work. Márquez attended the performance to witness his new piece come to life, making the evening especially memorable.

The Symphony kicked off the *Fairytales* Festival with the world premiere of *Al-Jazari's Ingenious Clocks*, a newly commissioned work, by Houston-based composer **Karim Al-Zand**. Drawing inspiration from myths, folk music, and his own Middle Eastern heritage, Al-Zand's composition honors the 12th-century polymath Ismail Al-Jazari, often called the "father of robotics" for his groundbreaking mechanical inventions. Al-Jazari's visionary legacy came to life through Al-Zand's

Al-Jazari's Ingenious Clocks was made possible, in part, due to a generous grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The Symphony is grateful for the NEA's longstanding support and its commitment to advancing the arts in America.

NATIONAL for the **ENDOWMENT** **ARTS**
arts.gov

Top left: Mexican composer Arturo Márquez (middle) takes a bow with guitarist Pablo Sáinz-Villegas (right) and Associate Conductor Gonzalo Farias (left) after the premiere of his new concerto. *Bottom left:* Sáinz-Villegas performs the world premiere of Márquez's Guitar Concerto at the Fiesta Sinfónica concert.



"It's nice to be able to write a piece where I'm not just writing a flute part, I'm writing something for Matthew Roitstein (Associate Principal Flute) to play. Or I'm not just writing a cello solo, I'm writing something for Brinton [Averil Smith] to play (Principal Cello)... It's always good to be inspired by the particular characteristics of the players that you're writing for, as opposed to something a little bit more generic."

—**Karim Al-Zand**



HOUSTON SYMPHONY CHORUS

Under the guidance of Interim Director **Julia C. Hall**, the talented volunteer singers of the Houston Symphony Chorus made seven appearances during the 2024–25 Season. Highlights included Martinů's *Czech Rhapsody*, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Handel's *Messiah*, and *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban™* In Concert, showcasing their versatility across both classical choral-orchestral masterworks and pop favorites.

163 Chorus members

7 Concert appearances

165 Hours in rehearsal

81 Hours performing in concerts

Above: The Chorus performing at Handel's *Messiah*. Right: Chorus performing during Andrés Conducts Strauss + Brahms's Violin Concerto.



Above: Christoph Eschenbach with the orchestra.

ESCHENBACH & BRUCKNER BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

In January, the Symphony welcomed back **Christoph Eschenbach** for a special concert celebrating the 200th anniversary of the birth of Austrian composer, Anton Bruckner, as well as the 85th birthday of the beloved maestro. As one of the world's greatest living Bruckner interpreters today, Eschenbach decided to commemorate the composer's life, legacy, and timeless music with a global tour, conducting all eight of Bruckner's symphonies with renowned orchestras from around the world. The Houston Symphony—where he served as music director for more than a decade—was fortunate enough to be the only American orchestra included on Eschenbach's tour, performing Bruckner's Symphony No. 4 (*Romantic*).



GUEST ARTISTS & SYMPHONY SOLOISTS

This season, more than **20** guest conductors and soloists appeared in the Classical Season, with **11** in their Houston Symphony debuts. Additionally, **11** Symphony musicians also took center stage as soloists, showcasing their exceptional talent and artistry.

Far left: Mezzo-soprano Ekaterina Gubanova performs *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*. *Bottom left:* Guest conductor Dalia Stasevska and guest violinist Leila Josefowicz. *Top middle:* Violinist Francesca Dego perform Brahms's Violin Concerto with the Symphony. *Middle:* Symphony musicians perform at the Bach, Mozart, and Brahms program. *Bottom middle:* Pianist Bruce Liu performs Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 1.



Left: Symphony musicians Brinton Averil Smith (cello) and Joan DerHovsepian (viola) soak up applause following their performance of *Don Quixote*. *Above:* Concertmaster Yoonshin Song leads Symphony musicians through the Bach, Mozart, and Brahms program.





Far left: Mandy Gonzalez performs musical hits at Showstoppers! Celebrating Iconic Women of Broadway. Left: Pink Martini celebrated their 30th Anniversary. Bottom left: Broadway star Betsy Wolfe performs at Very Merry Pops. Below: Principal POPS Conductor Steven Reineke.



BANK OF AMERICA POPS SERIES

The 2024–25 Bank of America POPS Series, led by Principal POPS Conductor Steven Reineke in his eighth season with the Symphony, delivered a season packed with crowd-pleasing performances that brought energy, nostalgia, and star power to Jones Hall.

Out of
46,685
POPS tickets sold, nearly
20%
were first-time attendees



Middle right: Byron Stripling (right), Carmen Bradford (middle), and Leo Manzari (left) perform in It Don't Mean a Thing: Swingin' Uptown Classics with Byron Stripling. Bottom right: Vocalists Valisia LeKae and Ryan Shaw at Ain't No Mountain High Enough: The Music of Motown. Far right: Cirque de la Symphonie performers return for Cirque Rocks!





PNC FAMILY SERIES

The Houston Symphony welcomed young audiences for the 2024–25 PNC Family Series, a lively set of concerts designed for kids ages two to nine. These fun, interactive performances invite children to dance, move, and connect with music in an engaging, kid-friendly environment. Each concert is enhanced with free lobby activities, including the ever-popular Instrument Petting Zoo, and audiences are encouraged to dress up to match the concert themes. This season’s lineup featured Clap Your Hands, Say Yeah! The Great American Music Adventure; Holly Jolly Holiday; Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Missing Maestro; and Cirque for Kids, with shows held on select Saturday mornings at 10 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.

The Symphony also made significant strides in making our PNC Family Series performances more accessible for those in the neurodivergent community by piloting sensory-inclusive elements at concerts. These elements include flexible seating, sensory calming areas, sensory-friendly lobby activities, and a pre-concert social narrative to help individuals and their families navigate the concert experience. The Symphony plans to incorporate these sensory-inclusive elements into our full PNC Family Series next season and continue refining them with feedback from experts and community members.



SYMPHONY SPECIALS

The 2024–25 Season offered a vibrant lineup of Symphony Specials that celebrated the power of music in a variety of different genres including holiday classics in the Nexus Health Systems Holiday Series, dynamic performances from Grammy Award-winning artists like Killer Mike, a one-night-only performance with Yo-Yo Ma, a tribute to the 'Queen of Tejano' Selena Quintanilla, and several live-to-film concerts featuring fan favorite movies.

*Right: Yo-Yo Ma with the Houston Symphony. Middle left: Vocalist Isabel Marie Sanchez performs with the Symphony. Middle center: Jonathan Cohen plays harpsichord and leads the orchestra through *Messiah*. Middle right: Acclaimed conductor Michael Tilson Thomas led the Symphony through Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Bottom: Killer Mike and the Mighty Midnight Revival with the Houston Symphony.*

NEXUS
HEALTH SYSTEMS
Holiday Series



CYNTHIA ERIVO WITH THE HOUSTON SYMPHONY

On April 8 and 9, Tony, Emmy, and Grammy Award-winning artist Cynthia Erivo joined forces with the Symphony to captivate Houston audiences. Fresh off her Academy Award nomination for her role as Elphaba in *Wicked*, Erivo delivered powerhouse performances, accompanied by the full Houston Symphony, that combined Broadway, soul, and jazz in a standout moment during a season filled with musical excellence.

Top, lower right: Cynthia Erivo performs with the Houston Symphony. Bottom right: Erivo signs autographs for fans outside of Jones Hall.

 **eogresources**
Concert Sponsor





Top: Acapella group Rajaton performs The Music of ABBA with the Symphony at the Hobby Center. Bottom: Audience members enjoy an afterparty in the lobby of the Hobby Center.

SUMMER SOUNDS SERIES

Last summer, the Symphony headed back to The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts for the Summer Sounds Series, presented by Stella Artois. The series included concerts for the whole family like **The Music of Abba** with vocal phenomenon **Rajaton**, a tribute to the **Rolling Stones** featuring hits like “I Can’t Get No Satisfaction” and “Paint it Black” with guest vocalist **Mick Adams** and guest conductor **Brent Havens**, and John Williams’s Grammy Award-winning score to **Jurassic Park** live to film.



LIVE FROM JONES HALL LIVESTREAMS

In the 2024–25 Season, we produced **26** livestreams of Classical and Bank of America POPS concerts and received **29,914** views from music-lovers in **44** states and **18** countries including the United States, Canada, Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom.



United States • United Kingdom • Japan • Taiwan • Indonesia
 Peru • Mexico • Poland • Germany • Croatia • Chile • The Netherlands
 Spain • Canada • Ireland • Puerto Rico • Australia • China

Special thanks to The Houston Symphony Livestream and Recording Consortuim:
 Barbara J. Burger, The Elkins Foundation, Ms. Leslie Nossaman, Alana R. Spiwak
 & Sam L. Stolbun, Nancy & Walter Bratic, Terry Ann Brown, John & Dorothy
 McDonald, the Albert & Ethel Herzstein Foundation, and Dr. Robert Chanon

MEET OUR NEW MUSICIANS

Our extraordinary musicians are the beating heart of the Houston Symphony. Their artistry, dedication, and passion bring every performance to life, on stage and in the community. During the 2024–25 Season, we welcomed **five new musicians**, adding some talented fresh faces to our rich musical legacy. Get to know our newest additions and discover some fun facts about the remarkable musicians who make up our orchestra.

ALEXANDROS SAKARELLOS

Violin • Athens, Greece

Alexandros Sakarellos has performed as a soloist, chamber, and orchestral musician across five continents and 25 countries. A native of Greece and graduate of the Manhattan School of Music, he has appeared with major ensembles including the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and Verbier Festival Chamber Orchestra, collaborating with artists such as Martha Argerich and Leonidas Kavakos. Before joining the Houston Symphony, he was a member of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and the San Francisco Opera.



PAUL AGUILAR

Viola • Greenville, South Carolina

Venezuelan-American violist Paul Aguilar is a member of the Symphony's viola section and maintains an active solo and chamber performance schedule, performing more than 40 recitals annually across North America and Europe. A top prizewinner in major international chamber music competitions including the Banff International String Quartet Competition and the Bordeaux International String Quartet Competition, he has appeared at festivals like Ravinia, La Jolla SummerFest, and the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, and more. His chamber music collaborators include renowned artists like James Ehnes and Augustin Hadelich.

Which piece or concert did you most enjoy performing this season?

Given my background in chamber music, I haven't had the chance to perform much of the orchestral repertoire before. It was such a treat to work on amazing orchestral masterpieces that the Houston Symphony programmed this past season. There were so many standout experiences, but the season-closing Mahler 3 week with Maestro Juraj Valčuha—and in particular our performance of the final movement—was extremely meaningful to me.

What's a unique/special memory you had during your first Houston Symphony season?

My colleagues in the symphony have been so kind and welcoming and I've already made what I feel are lifelong friends. I feel so fortunate to be part of this wonderful organization!



JIMMY CUNNINGHAM

Viola • Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

James (Jimmy) Cunningham holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan, an Artist Diploma from the McDuffie Center for Strings, and was recently a student of James Dunham at Rice University. A former Tanglewood Music Center and Aspen Music Festival orchestral fellow, he has performed with the Pittsburgh Symphony, Aspen Opera Orchestra, and Aspen Chamber Symphony, and in numerous chamber ensembles with artists including Cho-Liang Lin, Amy Schwartz Moretti, and others.

Which piece or concert did you most enjoy performing this season?

One concert from this past season which will stay with me very fondly was our Viva Italia: Opera Beyond Words program with Maestro Valčuha! Including both household and lesser-known Italian opera hits, the second half of the program took a lovely emotional turn, with three beautiful intermezzos where we got to pour our hearts out on stage for a moment, before galloping off with the overture to *William Tell*.

What's a unique/special memory you had during your first Houston Symphony season?

Last December as I was washing my hands before a show, I turned around and realized I was face-to-face with Yo-Yo Ma—we were about to play the Dvořák Cello Concerto. Immediately, he was raving about our orchestra, and specifically how great it is to be a violist and to play music as an inner voice. We often play a supporting role, enriching the overall texture; and it is so satisfying to get to do that every week with the Houston Symphony!



AVERY WEEKS

Double Bass • Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Originally from Oklahoma City, Avery Weeks joined the Houston Symphony in 2024 and has previously performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Utah Symphony. He trained at Northwestern University and the University of Southern California, and has been a fellow at Aspen Music Festival, The Music Academy of the West, and Spoleto Festival USA.



NICK PLATOFF

Principal Trombone • New Haven, Connecticut

Nick Platoff came to the Houston Symphony after having previously served as Associate Principal Trombone of the San Francisco Symphony. A versatile musician, conductor, producer, composer, and educator, he has collaborated with artists like Jacob Collier, Yo-Yo Ma, and Metallica, and released his debut album, *Limousine of Creative Potential*, in November 2022. Platoff also serves as a faculty member at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music.

Which piece or concert did you most enjoy performing this season?

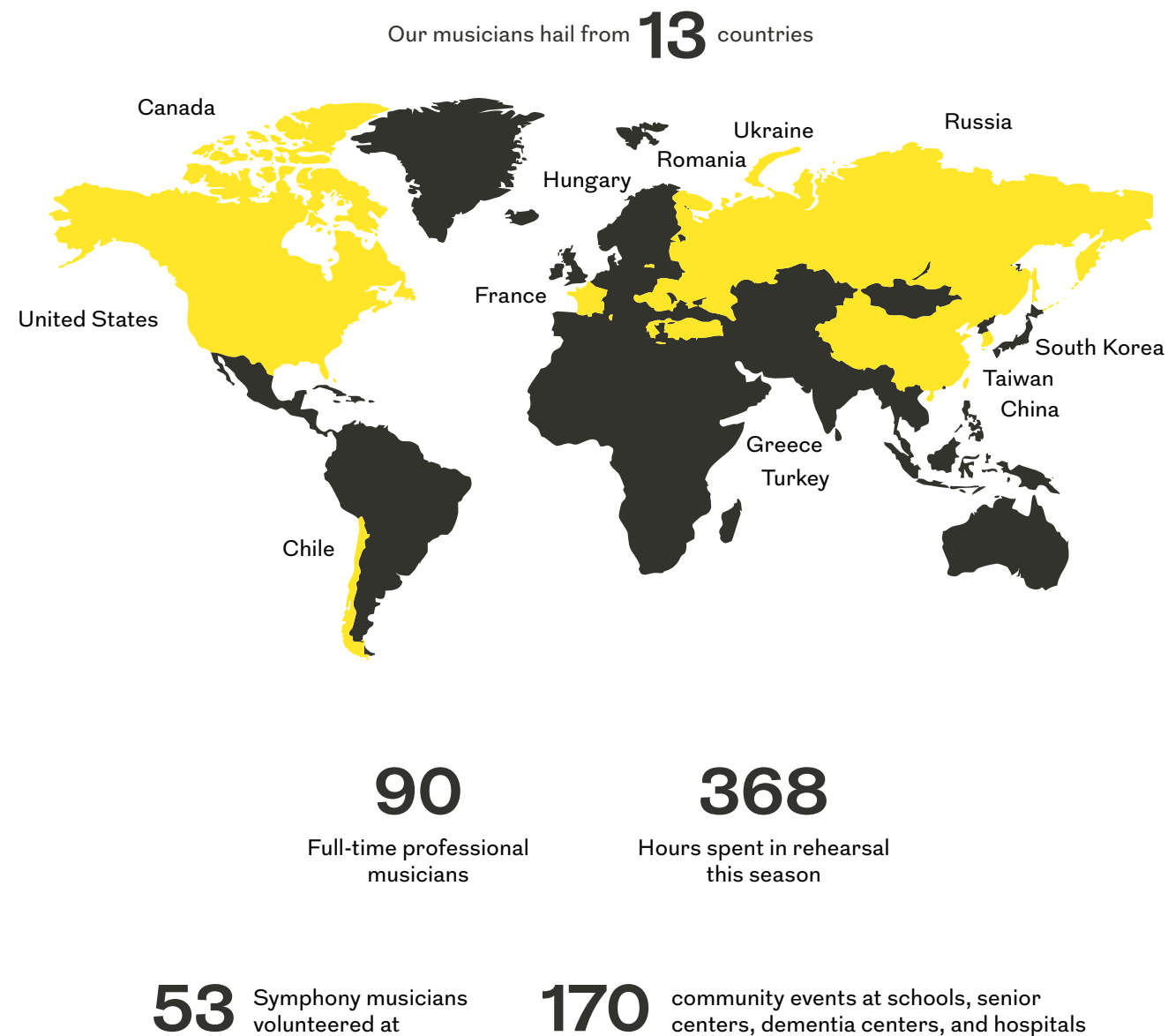
I refuse to choose just one! Janáček's Sinfonietta, Holiday Brass, Byron Stripling, Beethoven 9, Cynthia Erivo, Schumann 2, Mahler 3. I delight in playing a wide range of repertoire here. I love working at an "all-you-can-eat" musical buffet.

What's a unique/special memory you had during your first Houston Symphony season?

Literally needing ear plugs to protect my hearing from the amazingly loud, cheering crowd for Cynthia Erivo.



BY THE NUMBERS:
SYMPHONY MUSICIANS



OH, THE PLACES WE GO!
SYMPHONY MUSICIANS IN THE COMMUNITY

From public parks to classrooms to hospitals, our Symphony musicians reach beyond the stage to educate, heal, and engage with Houstonians across the city through the power of music.

35 Free full-orchestra community concerts including Student Concerts

449 Local partner organizations including hospitals, senior centers, dementia centers, schools and more



- Free Community Concerts
- Dementia Center Performance Series
- Chamber Coaching, Classroom Visits, & In-School Performances
- Hospital Bedside Visits
- In Harmony
- Senior Center Visits



2024-25 SEASON

EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

138,727 HOUSTONIANS SERVED THROUGH
FREE & LOW-COST PROGRAMS

62 SYMPHONY MUSICIANS AND COMMUNITY-
EMBEDDED MUSICIANS (CEMS) PARTICIPATED IN

802 COMMUNITY
EVENTS

21 STUDENT
CONCERTS

14 FREE COMMUNITY
CONCERTS



IN HARMONY

In the 2024–25 Season, the Symphony expanded its *In Harmony* program beyond DeLUXE K!ds in the Fifth Ward to serve young people in the Gulfton and Second Ward communities. In partnership with the American Festival for the Arts (AFA) and other local organizations, the *In Harmony* program offers free, culturally relevant music education tailored to each community's unique needs. In Gulfton, we piloted the Houston reVision *In Harmony* Music Series, a music literacy program in collaboration with Houston reVision that focuses on rhythm, composition, and creativity. In the Second Ward, we joined forces with Segundo Barrio Children's Chorus (SBCC)—Houston's first and only bilingual children's choir—to create *En Armonía con Segundo Barrio*, which provides high-quality violin instruction to SBCC students. The program welcomed 43 students to classes this season. Meanwhile, the DeLUXE K!ds *In Harmony* program in the Fifth Ward continued to thrive in its third year, engaging 25 students through violin lessons led by CEMs, AFA teaching artists, and Symphony musicians. Across all locations, *In Harmony* empowered nearly 100 young people through music education and community connection.





“Music has the power to transform lives, and we’ve seen that firsthand through the *In Harmony* program. Watching this program grow beyond Fifth Ward and into new communities has been incredibly rewarding. Every child, regardless of their background, deserves the opportunity to experience the joy of music. I’m so honored to be a part of this program and support the incredible work of our CEMs, CEM Teaching Artists, and community partners.”

—Dr. Sippi Khurana, *In Harmony* Program Guarantor



Program Guarantor:
Dr. Sippi &
Mr. Ajay Khurana



Associate Conductor Gonzalo Farias leads a Student Concert.

HARRY & CORA SUE MACH STUDENT CONCERT SERIES

The Student Concert Series, curated and led by Associate Conductor Gonzalo Farias, provided low-cost full-orchestra concerts for nearly **42,000** upper elementary and middle school students at Jones Hall and other venues. Designed to introduce young students to orchestral music and encourage those already in their school's orchestra or band programs to continue playing, the series was further enhanced this season by in-school musician visits, including chamber ensemble performances and pre & post-concert classroom visits. Guided by Lead CEM Lindsey Baggett and supported by Symphony musicians, these classrooms visits help students connect emotionally with music through interactive lessons, performances, and meaningful discussions.



42,000 Students from **340** schools representing **30** area districts

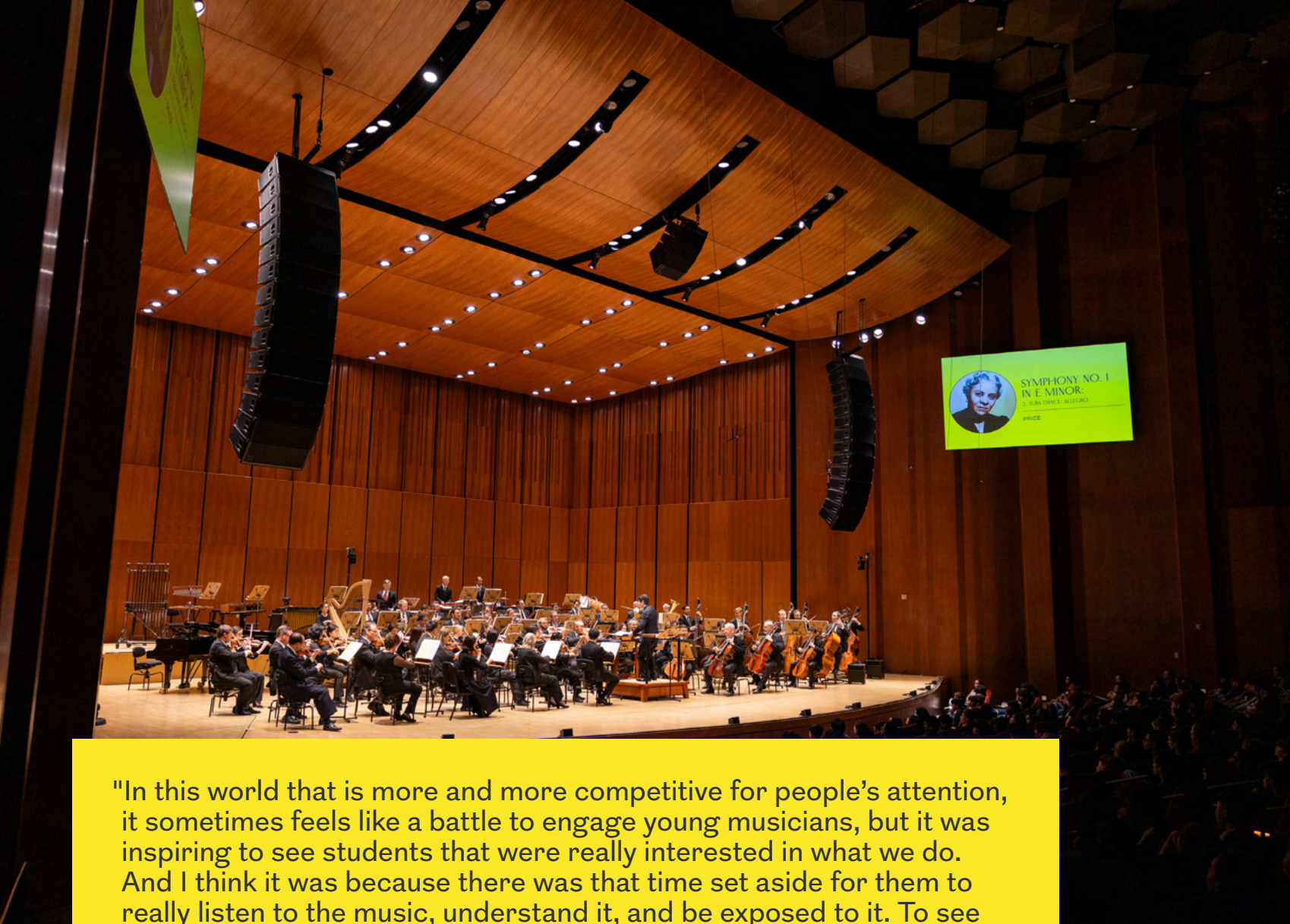
21 Performances

32 In-school classroom visits
from Symphony musicians

4 Student Concert venues—Jones Hall, Houston Christian University, CFISD
Visual and Performing Arts Center, and Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion

"Our experiences with [the CEM] brought it more on a personal level.
It showed the students that, yes, these are amazing musicians, but
they're also great human beings and they just love doing what they do."

—Erwin Vreugdenihl, Stovall Middle School Assistant Band Director



"In this world that is more and more competitive for people's attention, it sometimes feels like a battle to engage young musicians, but it was inspiring to see students that were really interested in what we do. And I think it was because there was that time set aside for them to really listen to the music, understand it, and be exposed to it. To see their eyes light up talking about music kind of restores your faith in the next generation."

—Nick Platoff, Principal Trombone



Nick Platoff (trombone) plays for students at Schneider Middle School during a pre-concert visit.



Top right: Middle school students enjoy a Student Concert. Bottom left: Symphony musician Isaac Schultz (Associate Principal Bassoon) plays alongside band students at Stovall Middle School at a pre-concert visit. Bottom right: Symphony musician Nick Platoff chats with middle school students before a Student Concert.



Middle School Concerts
Presenting Sponsor



The George & Mary Josephine
Hamman Foundation



Ruth & Ted Bauer
Family Foundation

Cora Sue &
Harry Mach

MUSIC & WELLNESS

Each season, Symphony musicians and CEMs share music with individuals facing memory loss, illness, and isolation—bringing comfort and connection through live performance.



The Symphony performing at Houston Methodist Hospital with Houston Symphony Music Director Juraj Valčuha.

HOSPITAL PARTNERSHIPS

Through our partnerships with **MD Anderson Cancer Center** and **Texas Children’s Hospital**, Symphony musicians and CEMs offered bi-weekly bedside visits to pediatric patients and their families. We also again teamed up with **Houston Methodist Hospital’s Center for Performing Arts Medicine** for two full-orchestra lobby concerts at the hospital—a holiday concert in December, and a special performance led by Music Director Juraj Valčuha in February featuring selections from the Viva Italia! Opera Beyond Words program. The concerts reached **more than 800** patients, caregivers, and medical staff both in the lobby and across eight Houston Methodist campuses via a livestream broadcast.


the **MASTERCARE DRIVER** company
Music & Wellness Presenting Sponsor


HOUSTON **Methodist**
LEADING MEDICINE
Official Health Care Provider

DEMENTIA CENTER PERFORMANCE SERIES

This season, our **Dementia Center Performance Series** continued to thrive with monthly visits at CarePartners and Amazing Place Dementia Day Centers where our CEMs and Symphony musicians create meaningful connections with patients and spark memories and joy through ensemble performances and interactive activities. **Christian Harvey** (bass), our Community-Embedded Fellow (CEF) from Rice University’s Shepherd School of Music, led the work at CarePartners, while orchestra musicians—including **Keoni Bolding**, **Rian Craypo**, and **Adam Trussell**—led the efforts at Amazing Place.



Top: CEF Christian Harvey, and CEM Teaching Artists Lucinda Chiu and Alexis Mitrushi perform for patients at CarePartners Dementia Day Center. Bottom left: Principal Bassoonist Rian Craypo (left) during a visit to Amazing Place dementia center with lead CEM Lindsey Baggett (middle) and CEM Teaching Artist Rainel Joubert (right). Bottom right: Symphony violist Keoni Bolding performs for patients at Amazing Place Dementia Center.

"Every week I’m playing on stage in a tuxedo while never interacting with the audience. And while I do adore this part of my job, I also love the performances where formalities are stripped away. I really enjoy interacting with the listeners in a way that I don’t usually get to at Jones Hall."
—Keoni Bolding, Viola



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Since 2016, the Symphony has partnered with the Prelude Music Foundation to support early childhood development through weekly Music Together® classes at 15 early childhood centers in under-resourced Houston communities. These interactive sessions use songs, movement, and live music—performed by CEMs—to foster cognitive, social, and emotional growth during the most critical years of brain development for children. The classroom visits culminated in two joyful “My First Orchestra Concert” performances involving these CEMs at Miller Outdoor Theatre, where **more than 3,000** children, teachers, and families celebrated the music they had learned throughout the school year.

Above: Symphony CEMs David Connor and Lindsey Baggett performing for children during a Music Together classroom visit.

Studies show that structured arts activities can boost cognitive abilities in children by 17%.

Source: Texas Cultural Trust



COMMUNITY CONCERTS

During the 2024–25 Season, the Symphony served **nearly 64,500** through free and low-cost Community Concerts across the city, making live music accessible to all. Highlights included our Summer Symphony Nights Series at Miller Outdoor Theatre, performances at the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion and the annual Fiesta Sinfonica concert, presented by Chevron, celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month.

64,324
Served through
free Community
Concerts

5
Free concerts at
Cynthia Woods
Mitchell Pavilion

6
Free concerts at
Miller Outdoor Theatre

7
Houston Symphony
debuts

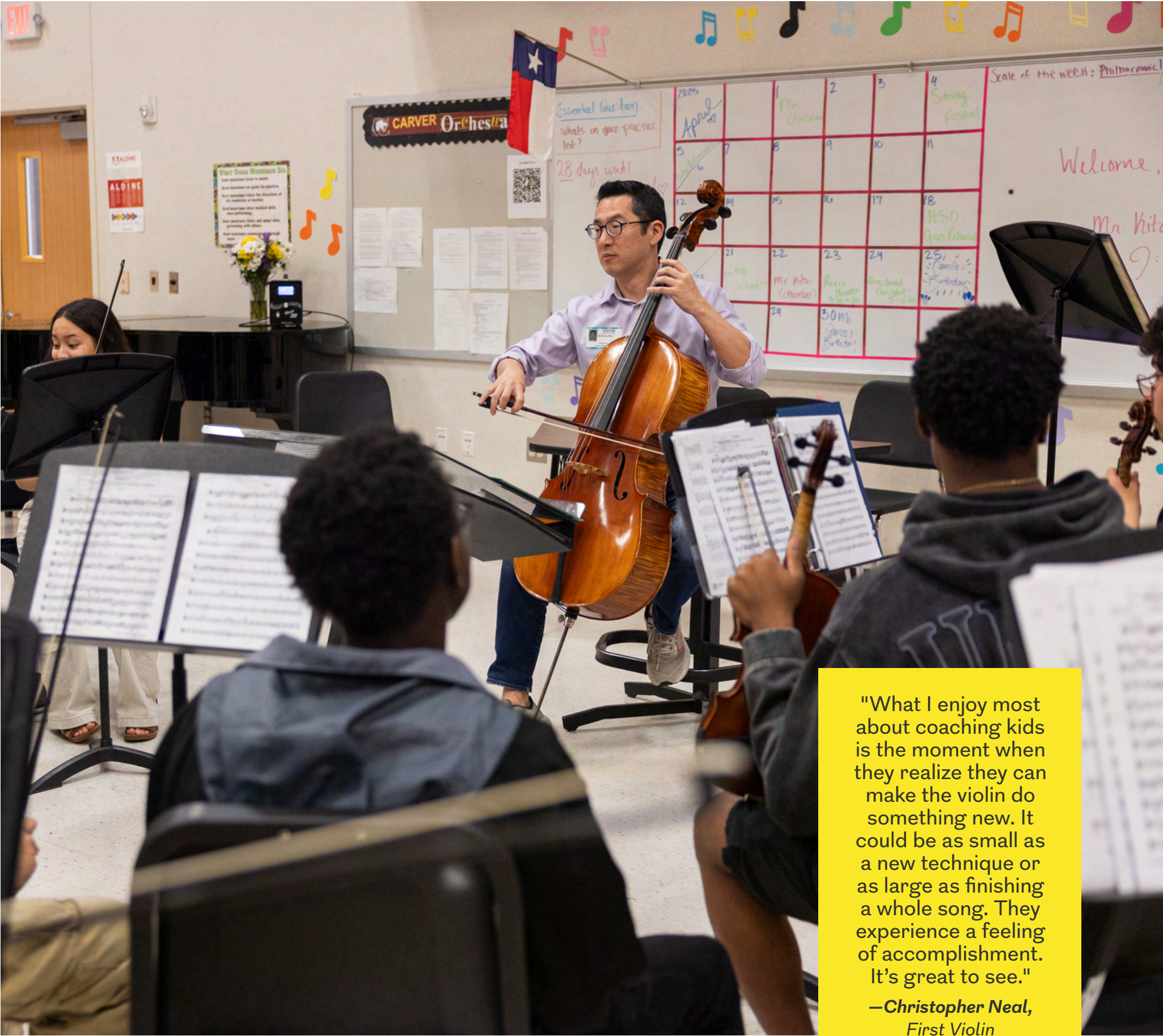


SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

CHAMBER COACHINGS

As part of our commitment to arts education, Symphony musicians provided chamber music coaching sessions for students in local high schools and community youth ensembles. During the 2024–25 Season, musicians led **84** chamber coaching sessions, providing access to specialized music instruction and supporting orchestra and band programs in the Greater Houston area.

Right: Symphony musician Anthony Kitai (cello) instructs orchestra students at Carver High School. Below: Orchestra students at Carver High School. Bottom: Symphony bassoonist Elise Wagner coaches students at Aldine High School.



"What I enjoy most about coaching kids is the moment when they realize they can make the violin do something new. It could be as small as a new technique or as large as finishing a whole song. They experience a feeling of accomplishment. It's great to see."

—Christopher Neal,
First Violin



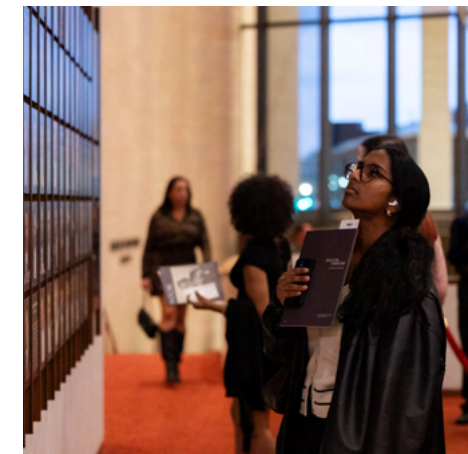
"They absolutely loved every aspect of this! For many students, this was their first Symphony experience. Opportunities like this are eye-opening for our students, and they all were buzzing about the performance and pre-concert lecture. They are coming into rehearsals invigorated and are practicing more."

—Francis Cameron Tesoro, Orchestra Director, Klein ISD



HIGH SCHOOL NIGHTS

The High School Nights program, presented by Oxy, enabled **nearly 2,000 band and orchestra students** to attend four Classical concerts at Jones Hall. This initiative offers participating schools deeply discounted tickets, supplemental educational materials, and enriching opportunities such as chamber music coaching sessions led by Symphony musicians and invitations to orchestra rehearsals.



High School
Programming

2,000

High school
students

4

High School
Nights

187

Student
passes sold

STUDENT PASSES & TICKETS

The Symphony offers student ticket programs designed to make live orchestral music accessible and affordable for local high school and college students. The Student Pass provides unlimited access to most Classical and Bank of America POPS concerts throughout the season for a one-time fee of \$75. Student Rush tickets are also available for \$20 each for all Classical and Bank of America POPS performances. These ticket programs reflect our commitment to making live music accessible to all by removing financial barriers to attendance.

COMMUNITY ACCESS PROGRAMS

During the 2024-25 Season, the Symphony introduced the All-Access Community Pass, offering free tickets to all Lone Star, WIC, SNAP, and EBT cardholders for any Classical, Bank of America POPS, or PNC Family Series concert. Passholders request their pass online and receive it within 72 hours, along with a list of eligible performances.

The Symphony also continued its Community Ticket Program, partnering with local nonprofits to provide free concert access to community members, ensuring that music remains accessible to all.

603 Free tickets distributed



Community Access Programs Sponsor

SALUTE TO EDUCATORS

On April 6, 2025, the Symphony held its annual Spec's Charitable Foundation Salute to Educators Concert, celebrating the vital role that music educators play in shaping young musicians. At the concert, **Grace Lewis**, the Director of Orchestras at G.W. Carver Magnet High School in Aldine ISD, was honored with the Spec's Charitable Foundation Award for Excellence in Music Education. Lewis was selected from a distinguished group of semifinalists recognized for their exceptional dedication to music education within their schools and communities.

The Salute to Educators Concert is made possible by the Houston Symphony's Principal Corporate Guarantor, Spec's Wines, Spirits & Finer Foods/Spec's Charitable Foundation. We thank them for their commitment to music education and the Houston Symphony.



Above: Award for Excellence semifinalists (left to right) Jesse D. Espinosa, Jordan Stewart, and Marcus Wilmore. Top right: Grace Lewis receiving the Excellence in Music Education from Spec's President/Owner John Rydman (right) and Symphony Executive Director/CEO Gary Ginstling (left). Bottom right: Grace Lewis with some of her students.





Above: Guests on the Jones Hall stage at the Wine Dinner and Collector's Auction.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The 2024–25 Season featured a dazzling lineup of special events including the Opening Night Concert and Gala, the Houston Symphony Ball, and the Wine Dinner and Collector's Auction. Collectively, these events raised **more than \$2.3 million** in support of the Houston Symphony's Education and Community Engagement initiatives and artistic programming.

\$2.34 Million raised **1,085** Special Event attendees **6%** of the Symphony budget is directly supported by Special Events



Above: Associate Principal Horn Rob Johnson & Ariella Perlman with Joan & Robert Duff at the Opening Night Gala. Right: Paul & Rita Morico dance at the Symphony Ball.



Top left: Symphony Board President Barbara J. Burger (left), Executive Director/CEO Gary Ginstling (center), and Board Chair Janet F. Clark (right) at the Symphony Ball. Bottom left: Margaret Alkek Williams and Juraj Valčuha at the Opening Night Gala. Top right: Aerin & Quentin Smith at the Wine Dinner & Collectors Auction. Bottom right: Sippi and Ajay Khurana at the Wine Dinner & Collectors Auction.



League members at the President's Luncheon.

HOUSTON SYMPHONY LEAGUE

The Houston Symphony League (HSL) had a banner season volunteering at concerts and education and community engagement events, and supporting the Symphony through fundraising events and outreach. Under the leadership of President **Heide Rockecharlie**, HSL events, including the Conversation with an Icon Luncheon featuring Saks Fifth Avenue's Vice President and General Manager **Heidi Turney**; the President's Luncheon where **Susan Osterberg** was honored with the **Volunteer of the Year Award**; and the inaugural Casino Night raised nearly \$293,000 to support the Houston Symphony.



Left: HSL President Heidi Rockecharlie with incoming President Leslie Nossaman. Middle: HSL member Donna Mello (left) and 2025 Volunteer of the Year Susan Osterberg (right). Right: HSL member David Peavy volunteers with children at the Instrument Petting Zoo following a PNC Family Concert.

420

HSL members

6,102

Hours volunteered at Student Concerts, PNC Family Concerts, and other Symphony events

2

Musician sponsorships

\$292,792

Raised by HSL members





COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC IMPACT

Each season, the Symphony reaches thousands with free and low-cost programs in schools, hospitals, neighborhoods, and community spaces—bringing music to people from all walks of life. The Symphony employs the **largest number of full-time artists** in Houston with **90** Symphony musicians, as well as hundreds of local creative arts employees such as substitute musicians, contract musicians, and stagehands.

Here's a look at how the **Houston Symphony** impacted the local community in the **2024–25 Season**:

534 Creative arts professionals employed by the Symphony

322,343 Symphony patrons

\$41.09 Average spent by patron in addition to concert ticket

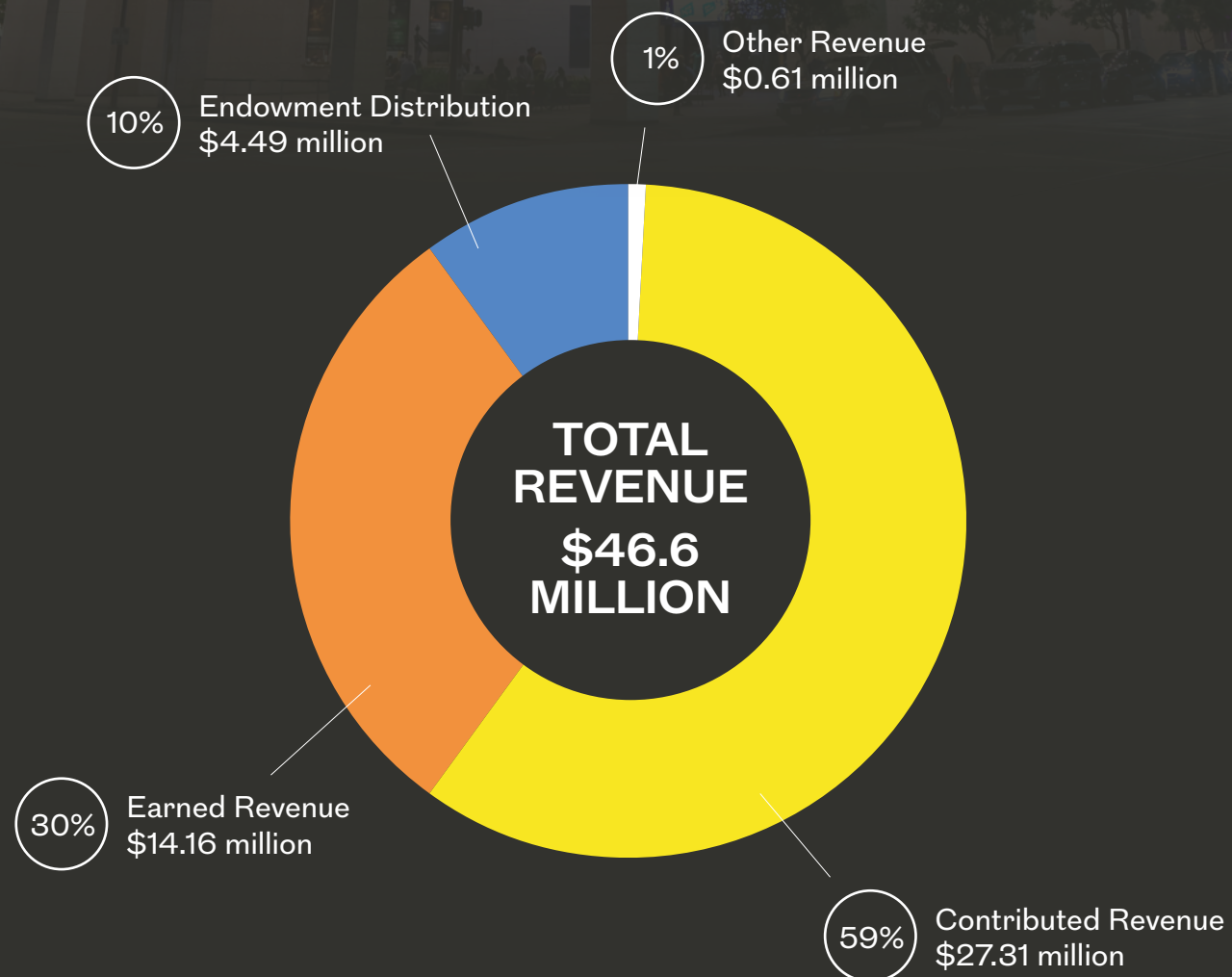
\$13.2 Million in additional expenditures by Symphony patrons annually benefit the Houston economy

The arts and culture industry generates **\$69.7** billion for the Texas economy

Source: Cultural Trust and National Endowment for the Arts

2024-25 FINANCIAL REPORT

We ended the 2024-25 Season with **\$46.6 million** in total revenue, which is an **\$8.1 million** increase over last year's total. The Symphony continues to thrive thanks to the support of our patrons and donors who contributed **59%** of our total operating revenue by making impactful gifts to our Annual Fund and Endowment.



ENDOWMENT & LEGACY SOCIETY

Growing the Endowment continues to be a priority for the Symphony, keeping with our strategic goal to transition to an endowment-enabled business model and ensure the long-term sustainability of our organization. In FY25, we made significant strides in achieving this goal by receiving **over \$1 million** in new commitments to the Endowment.

\$1.46 MILLION

New estate gifts & commitments
from the Legacy Society

184

Legacy Society
households

CONTRIBUTED REVENUE

\$27.31 MILLION

FY25 Total Contributed Revenue
(up 24% from 2023-24)

5,346

Total number of donors

1,342

First-time donors

EARNED REVENUE

14,079

First-time ticket buyers

158,418

Tickets sold

\$3.52 MILLION \$13.02 MILLION

Subscription revenue total

Total ticket revenue
(up **16%** from 2023-24)

THANKS TO OUR DONORS

ANNUAL SUPPORT

The Houston Symphony gratefully acknowledges those who support our artistic, educational, and community engagement programs through their generosity to our Annual Fund and Special Events.

As of July 29, 2025

\$100,000+

Margaret Alkek Williams
Gary and Marian Beauchamp/
The Beauchamp Foundation
Barbara J. Burger
Jane & Robert* Cizik
Janet F. Clark
Gardenia Foundation
Joan & Bob Duff
Elaine Finger/Marvy Finger
Family Foundation
Drs. M.S. & Marie-Luise Kalsi
Dr. Sippi & Mr. Ajay Khurana**
Max Levit*
Harry* & Cora Sue Mach
Beth Madison
Meredith & Ben Marshall
Barbara & Pat McCelvey

Dr. Eric McLaughlin &
Mr. Eliodoro Castillo
Bobbie Nau
Leslie Nossaman
John & Lindy Rydman /
Spec's Wines, Spirits &
Finer Foods
Mike Stude

\$50,000+

Mr. Robert Boblitt Jr.
James* & Dale Brannon
Mary Kathryn Campion &
Stephen Liston
Drs. Dennis & Susan Carlyle
Anne & Albert Chao
Virginia A. Clark
Aggie L. Foster &
Steve Simon
Elia & Michael Gabbanelli
Stephen & Mariglyn Glenn
Gary L. Hollingsworth &
Kenneth J. Hyde
Mr. & Mrs. Bashar Kalai
Cindy E. Levit
Mr. & Mrs. J. Stephen Marks

Dr. Miguel & Mrs. Valerie
Miro-Quesada
John L. Nau III
Shirley & David Toomim
Family Foundation / Steve
& Ellen Robinson
Kathy & Ed Segner
Margaret & Joel Shannon
Robin Angly & Miles Smith
Alana R. Spiwak &
Sam L. Stolbun
Terry Thomas
Mr. & Mrs. Jesse B. Tutor
Hallie A. Vanderhider
Stephen & Kristine Wallace
Robert G. Weiner &
Toni Blankmann

\$25,000+

Ann & Jonathan Ayre
Dr. Saúl & Ursula Balagura
Donna & Ken Barrow
Dr. Gudrun H. Becker
Nancy & Walter Bratic
Terry Ann Brown
Connie Dyer
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas L.
Elsenbrook
Ms. Carolyn Faulk
Mr. & Mrs. Jeffrey B.
Firestone
Mrs. Mary Foster &
Mr. Don DeSimone
Mr. & Mrs. Russell M. Frankel
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Joan & Marvin Kaplan
Foundation/The Kaplan,
Brooks, & Bruch Families
Dr. Charles Johnson &
Tammie Johnson
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Lil & Matthew Kades
Cheryl Boblitt & Bill King
Carey Kirkpatrick
Mr. & Mrs. David B. Krieger
Paul Leach & Susan Winokur
Joella & Steven P. Mach
Alison & Ara Malkhassian**
Mrs. Carolyn &
Dr. Michael Mann

Barry & Rosalyn
Margolis Family
Mr. & Mrs. Rodney H.
Margolis
Michelle & Jack Matzer
John & Dorothy McDonald
Muffy & Mike* McLanahan
Jim & Terri McLaughlin
Katie & Bob Orr /
Oliver Wyman
Mr. David Peavy &
Dr. Stephen McCauley
Gloria & Joe Pryzant
Revati Puranik
Laurie A. Rachford
Ed & Janet Rinehart
Mr. Glen A. Rosenbaum*
Susan D. Sarofim

Toni A. Oplt & Ed Schneider
Donna Scott &
Mitch Glassman
Ann Klinar & Bill Stanley
Mr. Jay Steinfeld &
Mrs. Barbara Winthrop
Dr. John R. Stroehlein &
Miwa Sakashita
Mr. & Mrs. Frank Tsuru
Mr. & Mrs. Fredric A. Weber
Steven & Nancy Williams
Jeanie Kilroy Wilson &
Wallace S. Wilson
Ellen A. Yarrell
Elena & John Young
Anonymous

\$15,000+

In memory of Ira T. Anderson
Jr. by Frances Anderson &
Jennifer Ande
Dr. Angela R. Apollo
Barbara & David Balderston
Anne Morgan Barrett
In Memory of Sybil F. Roos –
Ginger Bertrاند, Cathey
Cook & Betsy Garlinger
Mr. Gordon J. Brodfuehrer
Kathryn & Eric D.
Brueggeman
Mr. Bill Bullock
Mr. Robert Bunch &
Ms. Lilia Khakimova
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