

Denver Philharmonic Orchestra

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-25







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Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

From the first downbeat to the final ovation, **you made this season magical.**

Whether you dressed up for Fright Night, followed along as we welcomed and evaluated three remarkable conductor finalists, celebrated the legacy of Antonia Brico, or joined us in applauding [Scott O'Neil](#) as our new music director—you were there. You showed up. You brought energy, curiosity, and heart to every moment.

Because of you, this season was so much more than concerts. It was a celebration of community. Together, we welcomed service dogs in training to our audience, introduced haptic vests for patrons who are deaf or hard of hearing, and shared powerful, diverse works that stretched across cultures, continents, and time. We honored 77 years of music-making while looking boldly toward the future.

And none of it would be possible without you.

As we turn the page to a new season, I hope you'll stay with us—by picking up a [season ticket](#) to enjoy the full experience all year long, grabbing tickets to concerts that speak to you, making a [donation](#) to support our mission, or simply telling a friend about what we're doing here at DPO. We believe classical music is for everyone, and we mean it. We never turn anyone away at the door.

That's what makes this orchestra different. That's what makes you essential. Thank you for making this season unforgettable. Here's to the next!

With gratitude,

Roger Haak

DPO Executive Director





Community Impact

In 2024-25, we sold and distributed **7,021** tickets across the season, a 17.7% increase over the prior year and a 73% increase over two seasons. Behind that number is a deeper story about who those tickets reached and why:

We welcomed families experiencing an orchestra for the first time, seniors who found a matinee that fit their schedule, kids who attended free - as they always do at DPO - veterans, healthcare workers, first responders, and students who came at a reduced price, and hundreds of community members who set their own price through Pay What You Can. All because DPO won't ever let cost determine who gets to experience live classical music.

Ticket Pricing – Removing Barriers to Classical Music

Financial accessibility is central to our mission. Even at full price, our tickets remain among the most affordable, with our highest-priced ticket just \$30. But we believe access goes beyond keeping prices low. Throughout the 2024-25 season, we expanded opportunities for our community to experience live orchestral music through a wide range of free and discounted ticket programs.

We provided 747 free tickets to youth ages 18 and under, along with discounted tickets for 794 seniors, 176 students and teachers, 115 military service members, 91 healthcare workers, and 9 first responders. An additional 528 tickets were distributed through our Pay What You Can program, and 1,149 tickets were provided completely free of charge.

The impact of this commitment is reflected in our overall ticket distribution. Of the 2,295 Adult/General Admission tickets distributed during the season, only 27% were purchased at full price. The remaining 73% were made available through complimentary tickets, discounted pricing programs, community partnerships, outreach initiatives, and access-focused promotions. This is not a departure from our revenue strategy. It **is** the strategy.

We exist to make classical music accessible, and these numbers demonstrate a commitment that extends beyond words into meaningful action.

Pay What You Can Pricing

In September 2024, we launched our **Pay What You Can** initiative for Classical Music Appreciation Month. For the first week of September, patrons could choose their own ticket price for any concert in the season, starting from as little as one dollar. Anyone who couldn't pay at all was invited to simply send an email. No questions asked.

As Executive Director Roger Haak explained in a video announcing the initiative,

"Price should never be a barrier to enjoying the arts. The arts are for everyone. Life is expensive enough, so come and enjoy a concert this season."

The program generated 164 Pay What You Can tickets through the September window, and we continue to offer Pay What You Can pricing at every performance.

Digital Outreach

We extended our reach beyond traditional marketing channels during the 2024-25 season, posting complimentary ticket offers on the [Denver subreddit](#) and connecting with new audiences through social media platforms like [Bluesky](#). These efforts brought 236 first-time concertgoers through the doors on Reddit-sourced tickets alone, including 165 at **Happily Ever After** and 71 at **RETROspective**.

One of those ticket recipients captured the impact in a post-concert survey:

"I got free tickets from Reddit and it was so cool to go for the first time. I also liked that for the Valentine's theme there were so many activities and an invitation to dress up fun!"

Braille Programs

Every concert this season featured Braille programs available to any patron who needed them, regardless of whether a request was made in advance. This practice reflects DPO's broader commitment to accessibility: not waiting to be asked but building inclusion into the default experience.

More Than Music

We believe classical music is more than just a performance—it's an opportunity to connect, engage, and create lasting memories. That's why we're proud to present **More Than Music**, an innovative program that transforms the concert-going experience into a multifaceted celebration of community, culture, and creativity.

More Than Music goes beyond the stage, offering a range of interactive and thematic activities uniquely tied to each concert's theme. From pre-concert chats and hands-on demonstrations to cultural showcases and live tastings, every event is designed to immerse you in a deeper, more vibrant experience. We also partner with local nonprofits and community organizations to bridge the gap between music, culture, and the broader community.

Whether it was making friendship bracelets and viewing the History Colorado Antonia Brico exhibit at **RETROspective**, decorating pumpkins and wearing costumes at **Fright Night**, inspiring a custom poem at **Happily Ever After**, or creating an upcycled art mural at **Reflect, Renew, Reimagine**, More Than Music creates an immersive atmosphere where every concert is not just heard but experienced.

Through creativity, community, and collaboration, we invite you to explore the art of music in exciting new ways and become part of a vibrant cultural celebration that unites Denver's diverse voices and talents.





2024-25 Season Overview

The 2024-25 season opened with a question embedded in its very first concert title: *What does it mean to **Reflect, Renew, and Reimagine**?* Over the course of five concert cycles, a classical open mic night, and a spring gala fundraiser, we answered that question with music, community, and a depth of programming that belied the size of the organization behind it.

Inspired by the familiar refrain of "reduce, reuse, recycle," the season's opening concert title carried a dual meaning: a nod to sustainability and forward thinking, and a framework for the season itself.

Reflect on the orchestra's history and legacy. **Renew** the commitment to accessibility, inclusivity, and artistic excellence through a Music Director transition. **Reimagine** what a community-minded regional orchestra can be. That thread ran through every concert that followed.

Across the season, our audiences heard works by 20 composers spanning four centuries. We performed under the batons of five guest and finalist conductors, a Music Director Laureate, a guest conductor, a workshop faculty member, and fourteen international student conductors. No two concerts looked or sounded the same, and that was the point.





Reflect, Renew, Reimagine

The season premiere was a two-part event unlike anything in our history. On Friday evening, we performed at Central Presbyterian Church, our typical evening concert venue. On Saturday, supported by a grant from Denver Arts & Venues through the ARPA Cultural Partner Activation Program, we brought a free outdoor concert to the Denver Performing Arts Complex on World Peace Day.

The program featured works exclusively by underrepresented composers: Silvestre Revueltas's *Sensemayá*, a ritualistic tone poem rooted in Mexican folk traditions; Heitor Villa-Lobos's *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 4*, blending Baroque structure with Brazilian melody; two works by Colorado-born composer Mary D. Watkins, *Soul of Remembrance* and *The Initiation*, drawing on African American history and themes of spiritual transformation; and Omar Thomas's *Of Our New Day Begun*, a tribute to the victims of the Charleston church shooting that fuses classical music with jazz, gospel, and African American musical traditions.

When weather forced changes to the outdoor concert plan, the community showed up anyway, and the intimate alternate setting drew praise from attendees.

One concertgoer wrote,

"The venue, despite being makeshift, was beautiful. Being so close to the orchestra was fantastic!"

A reclaimed-materials art mural in the lobby extended the sustainability theme, and food trucks, activities, and community engagement surrounded the outdoor performance, making the weekend a celebration well beyond the music itself.

Values in Action

Every composer on this program represented a voice historically marginalized in classical music. A Mexican composer, a Brazilian composer, a Black woman composer born in Colorado, and a contemporary Black composer addressing racial violence. Paired with a free outdoor concert on World Peace Day, this was DPO's mission made audible: redefining how the community experiences and engages with classical music.

Program

REFLECT, RENEW, REIMAGINE



September 20, 2024, Central Presbyterian Church

September 21, 2024, Denver Performing Arts Complex Sculpture Park

Scott O'Neil, Guest Conductor

Silvestre Revueltas: *Sensemaya*

Heitor Villa-Lobos: *Bachianas Brasileiras No.4*

Mary D. Watkins: *Soul of Remembrance*

Mary D. Watkins: *The Initiation*

Omar Thomas: *Of Our New Day Begun*

RECOGNIZING UNDERREPRESENTED COMPOSERS ON WORLD PEACE DAY

Dancing in September! Join us for a sensational season premiere showcasing the rich tapestry of cultural diversity in music. The title "Reflect, Renew, Reimagine" is not just a nod to sustainability and progress, but also an invitation to celebrate a more inclusive and sustainable world.

This event is a special two concert celebration of music's unique ability to foster harmony and understanding. First, on Friday, September 20th, we'll host a paid indoor concert with the traditional concert atmosphere. Then, on Saturday, September 21st (World Peace Day), we invite you to join us at the Denver Performing Arts Complex Sculpture Park for a FREE outdoor concert!

At both events, we'll honor composers who are often overlooked in traditional music history. It's an opportunity to recognize and appreciate voices that have been marginalized, while also looking forward to a more inclusive future.



Fright Night

Fright Night introduced DPO audiences to two firsts: Rachel Waddell on the podium and Mapleton Arts Center as a performance venue. Both made an impression.

The program leaned fully into the Halloween spirit with Mozart's *Don Giovanni* Overture, Humperdinck's *Hexenritt (Witch's Ride)* from *Hänsel und Gretel*, Saint-Saëns's *Danse macabre*, and the towering *Symphonie fantastique* by Berlioz. Audiences came in costume, kids trick-or-treated in the lobby, and a costume contest added to the festive atmosphere.

Rachel Waddell, Director of Orchestras at Colorado State University and co-founder of Conductors for Change (a 501(c)(3) reimagining the future of American orchestras), brought energy and warmth to the podium. A 2025 GRAMMY Music Educator Award quarterfinalist, Waddell embodies the kind of forward-thinking artistic leadership that DPO values.

One audience member described the evening as,

"SO beyond enjoyable that I was wiping away the tears streaming down my cheeks
as I absorbed the collective overwhelming talent."

The Saturday matinee at Mapleton Arts Center gave audiences in Adams County their first opportunity to experience DPO in their own neighborhood, and the response was enthusiastic.

Values in Action

Classical music is often described as serious, formal, and reserved. Fright Night was the opposite of all three, and that was the point. Families in costume, kids collecting candy, and a packed house laughing and gasping their way through an evening of orchestral music about ghosts, witches, and the supernatural. This is what it looks like when an orchestra believes classical music is meant for all.

Program

FRIGHT NIGHT



October 25, 2024, Central Presbyterian Church

October 26, 2024, Mapleton Arts Center

Rachel Waddell, Guest Conductor

Mozart: *Overture to Don Giovanni*

Humperdinck: *Hexenritt (Witch's Ride)*

Saint-Saens: *Danse macabre*

Berlioz: *Symphonie fantastique*

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD (COMPOSERS)

Get ready for a spine-chilling evening of music, which will be a ghoulishly good time filled with spooky tunes and Halloween-themed delights. As the moon rises and the shadows deepen, we'll bring you a hair-raising performance featuring eerie compositions that will send shivers down your spine. This concert promises to be a frightful feast for the senses.

Come dressed in your most terrifying attire and prepare for a night of trick-or-treating, Halloween-themed activities, and all things spooky. Mark your calendars and join us for a night of thrills, chills, and music that will awaken the spirits of the night. See you there... if you dare!



Holiday Cheer

Both performances of **Holiday Cheer!** sold out.

The program was a celebration of togetherness across traditions. Andrés Felipe Jaime, the Colombian-born Director of Orchestras at the University of Northern Colorado, brought infectious energy and personal warmth to the podium, opening with Johann Strauss II's *Thunder and Lightning Polka* and Strauss I's *Radetzky March* before moving through Brahms's *Hungarian Dance No. 5* and selections from Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*. The second half featured Leroy Anderson's *A Christmas Festival* and *Sleigh Ride*, Calvin Custer's arrangement of "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas," the *Chanukah Festival Overture*, and a personal touch from Maestro Jaime: *El Año Viejo*, a traditional Colombian New Year song arranged by Juan Jacobo Restrepo. The evening closed with James M. Stephenson's *A Holly and Jolly Sing-Along!*, with printed lyrics in the program so the entire audience could join in.

The feedback was overwhelming. One attendee noted,

It was great to see a diverse orchestra and crowd. It was so wonderful to be included in a community gathering at an affordable price. We left with full hearts."

And a parent wrote:

"I loved that there were people there from all ages and stages of life. It felt like a true community event and not something really 'stuffy.' Even my 16- and 14-year-olds loved it!"

Values in Action

A Colombian conductor leading a program that spanned Austrian waltzes, Russian ballet, American holiday standards, Jewish festival music, and a Colombian New Year song, with the entire audience singing along at the end. Holiday Cheer! was not just a Holiday concert. It was a celebration of community, and it sold out both nights because people could feel the difference.

Program

HOLIDAY CHEER



*December 13, 2024, Central Presbyterian Church
December 14, 2024, Mapleton Arts Center*

Andrés Felipe Jaime, Guest Conductor

Tchaikovsky: The Nutcracker Suite

Handel: Hallelujah Chorus from The Messiah

Norris: Christmas Pops Sing-Along I

HERE COMES SANTA CLAUSE

'Tis the season to spread joy and harmony through the magic of music! Join us for our annual festive concert series, where the spirit of the holidays comes alive in every note.

Gather your loved ones and immerse yourself in the warmth and wonder of the holiday season. Whether you're celebrating Christmas, Hanukkah, or simply the joy of togetherness, there's something for everyone to enjoy at Holiday Cheer!



Happily Ever After

Happily Ever After was the most ambitious concert of the season and one of the most meaningful in DPO's recent history.

The weekend began Saturday evening with the 5th Annual International Conducting Workshop and Competition, presented in collaboration with the [International Conducting Institute](#). Fourteen conductors from around the globe led the orchestra through Beethoven's *Fidelio* Overture, the Colorado premiere of Nancy Ives's *Immortal Beloved* violin concerto featuring soloist Denise Dillenbeck, and Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7*. Each movement was conducted by a different workshop participant, with Music Director Laureate Lawrence Golan conducting the symphony's final movement. A free pre-concert string ensemble performance added three more works to the evening: Holst's *St. Paul's Suite*, Telemann's *Viola Concerto* featuring DPO's own Annie Zagorski, and Tchaikovsky's *Serenade for Strings*.

The centerpiece of the weekend was the Colorado premiere of *Immortal Beloved*, a violin concerto by composer and cellist Nancy Ives. Born from a collaboration between Ives and violinist Denise Dillenbeck, the three-movement work traces the stories of nine women proposed as the recipient of Beethoven's famous unsent love letter, found hidden among his belongings after his death in 1827. Through musical ciphers, Beethoven quotations, and passages where the orchestra whispers the text of the letter itself, Ives gives voice to women whose stories have been overshadowed by history. The concerto is dedicated "to the women who inspired Beethoven and continue to inspire us today with their resilience in the face of society's constraints."

DPO participated in the commissioning consortium for this work, and the Colorado premiere followed the world premiere by Northwest Sinfonietta just three weeks earlier.

Audience response reflected the depth of the experience. One concertgoer shared,

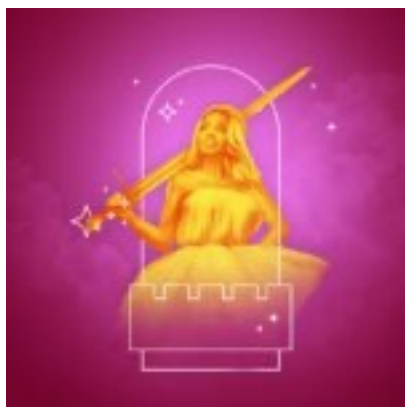
"I loved the explicit shoutout re. DPO being a welcome place for people of all gender identities, sexual orientations, disabilities, races, and ethnicities. That feels really good, especially now."

Values in Action

A Colorado premiere of a new work by a living woman composer, centering on the erased stories of women in Beethoven's orbit. A weekend where fourteen conductors from around the world shared the podium. A free pre-concert performance featuring DPO's own principal violist as soloist. Lawrence Golan's return as Music Director Laureate. All of it on Valentine's Day weekend, framed as a celebration of love, courage, and the belief that the stories we tell through music matter.

Program

HAPPILY EVER AFTER



February 15, 2025, Central Presbyterian Church

February 16, 2025, Mapleton Arts Center

Lawrence Golan, Conductor

Donald Schleicher, Guest Conductor

Holst: *St. Paul's Suite*

Telemann: *Viola Concerto*

Tchaikovsky: *Serenade for Strings*

Beethoven: *Fidelio Overture*

Ives: *Immortal Beloved*

Beethoven: *Symphony No. 7 in A Major*

BEETHOVEN'S IMMORTAL BELOVED

Love is in the air! Celebrate Valentine's Day weekend with our enchanting concert, **Happily Ever After**: a magical musical journey that will sweep you off your feet! In conjunction with our [5th International Conducting Competition](#) and Workshop, conductors from around the globe will take the stage to lead the DPO.

It's a real speed dating situation as the orchestra and conductors embark on a thrilling musical courtship together. Skills, talent, and chemistry will be put to the test; each movement of the program helmed by a different conductor, culminating in an eclectic mix of musical styles and interpretations.

The concert's centerpiece will be the Colorado premiere of [Nancy Ives'](#) brand new violin concerto, *Immortal Beloved*, featuring soloist Denise Dillenbeck. To this day, no one knows for sure the name of Beethoven's eternal muse and true love, the recipient of his famous *Immortal Beloved* letter. This concerto offers a portrait of the phenomenal women who surface as possibilities, told through Ives' "many-splendored... melodic and compelling" style (*Oregon ArtsWatch*), and is an egalitarian tool carrying their voices into the present with timeless relevance.



RETROspective

RETROspective was a homecoming, a debut, and a finale all at once.

Scott O'Neil's first official concert as Music Director was designed as a journey through the orchestra's own history. Each work on the program was paired with a conductor era: Sibelius's *Karelia Suite* for the Antonia Brico Era, the orchestra's founding chapter under one of the first internationally recognized female conductors. Gershwin's *An American in Paris* for the Adam Flatt Era, a period of artistic growth and dynamic leadership. And Prokofiev's *Symphony No. 5* for the Lawrence Golan Era, a work described by the composer as "a symphony of the greatness of the human spirit," fitting for the conductor who led the orchestra through eleven years of transformation.

Audiences were encouraged to dress in attire from their favorite decades, and the concert carried the playful subtitle "Denver Phil's Eras Tour." But beneath the fun was a deeper message: DPO knows where it comes from, honors the people who built it, and is ready for what comes next.

The concert earned the highest orchestra performance rating of the season at 4.93 out of 5.

One concertgoer reflected,

"From the music, lobby nonprofits, the ED's remarks, the conductor, and of course the musicians, it felt like there was hope and connection."

Values in Action

A season that began with Reflect, Renew, Reimagine ended with a concert that did exactly that. RETROspective honored the orchestra's 77-year history while introducing the leader of its next chapter. It was a reminder that DPO's story is not just about music. It is about the people, the community, and the shared belief that the best is still ahead.

Program

RETROSPECTIVE



May 2 & 3, 2025

Scott O'Neil, Conductor

Barber: *Overture to School for Scandal*

Brahms: *Hungarian Dance No. 6*

Lutosławski: *Little Suite*

Gershwin: *An American in Paris*

Prokofiev: *Symphony No. 5*

DENVER PHIL'S ERAS TOUR

Step into a time machine and embark on a musical journey through the decades! Each work featured in **RETROspective** pays homage to a prominent composer from each era of the Denver Philharmonic Orchestra's illustrious 77-year history. From the timeless melodies of Barber during the era of our founder, [Antonia Brico](#), to the revolutionary sounds of modern composers: experience the evolution of an ensemble firsthand.

Put on your dancing shoes and dust off your bell-bottoms, because RETROspective is all about embracing the spirit of the past. Whether you're a fan of the swinging sixties, the disco fever of the seventies, or the neon lights of the eighties, come dressed in your favorite decade attire and join us for a season finale of nostalgia and fun!



Philharmonia

A Classical Music Jam Session + Birthday Bash

PHILHARMANIA – where classical music meets open mic excitement! On **Thursday, May 15, 2025** we convened for an electrifying evening at [Diebolt Brewing Company](#) in Denver’s Sunnyside neighborhood.

This year, we turned up the party for DPO’s birthday! Our first-ever concert was on May 18, 1948, and we marked the occasion the best way we know how: with music, friends, and a night of joyful noise.

Philharmonia invited performers of all skill levels to take the stage and share their love for classical music – and mistakes were welcome, of course!

Participants brought their instruments, courage, and passion for music! We found a spot for everyone to perform and join in the musical camaraderie, whether with sheet music or improvised on the spot. Bach, Duke Ellington, or Taylor Swift—the stage was open to all participants! It worked like a real open mic night where participants show up and go up!

Plus, every performer who dazzled the crowd received a drink ticket to keep the celebration going!

Admission was free and open to the public!

It was an unforgettable Philharmonia experience, where classical music and community collided in perfect harmony.





An Evolving Orchestra

The 2024-25 season was a year of meaningful transformation for us, marked by both exciting new beginning and thoughtful planning for the future. As we expanded our performance footprint with the addition of the Mapleton Arts Center as the home for our matinee concerts, we also embarked on one of the most significant leadership transitions in our history: the search for our sixth Music Director. Together, these milestones reflect our ongoing commitment to growth, accessibility, and artistic excellence, ensuring that we continue to serve our community while charting an inspiring path forward.



Mapleton Arts Center

We were thrilled to announce an exciting addition to the 2024-25 season: a brand new venue for our matinee concerts!

While our beloved Antonia Brico stage at Central Presbyterian Church continued to host all evening performances, we were delighted to welcome the Mapleton Arts Center (MAC) as the official home for all matinee concerts.

The MAC boasts a stunning performance space with exceptional acoustics, offering a truly state-of-the-art concert experience. This expansion allows us to cater to a wider audience, making the joy of orchestral music even more accessible.

WHY IS THE MAC GREAT?

Convenience: Enjoy a relaxed afternoon filled with beautiful music at the conveniently located MAC (7480 N. Broadway).

Sleek Setting: Experience the power and detail of orchestral music in a modern, cutting-edge venue.

Flexibility: Matinee concerts offer a perfect opportunity for those with busy evening schedules to enjoy the DPO.

Want to see more? Feel free to explore the MAC and its offerings [here](#).

We loved sharing the magic of music with you in both our established and new performance spaces!



Music Director Search

After eleven years as Music Director, Dr. Lawrence Golan made the decision to step down from the podium. His tenure was transformative. Under his leadership, we toured internationally to China and Germany, launched the International Conducting Workshop featuring distinguished guest conductors from across the country, and grew into an organization whose artistic ambition consistently exceeded what anyone might expect from an orchestra of our size.

The search for our sixth Music Director was an undertaking that reflected our values at every step. More than 20 conductors applied, a remarkable response for a community-minded regional orchestra, and a dramatic increase from the four applicants who had applied when Dr. Golan was hired in 2013. The growth in interest spoke to how much the organization had evolved.

We approached the search with the same care and intentionality we bring to everything we do. Every member of the board participated in the interview process, and a dedicated Music Director Search Committee guided the effort.

Two rounds of interviews narrowed the field to three finalists, each of whom was invited to lead the orchestra in a full concert cycle during the season. This approach allowed audiences, musicians, and leadership alike to experience each conductor's artistic voice firsthand, turning a behind-the-scenes process into a shared community experience.

Meet the Finalists



Andrés Felipe Jaime brings a unique flair and passionate musicianship that has thrilled audiences around the globe. He has extensive experience directing and conducting professional orchestras, youth ensembles, and community orchestras across genres from classical to rock, tango, and Latin American music. His previous roles include Assistant Music Director at the Bogota Philharmonic Orchestra and Music Director and Conductor of the Orquesta Sinfónica de Antioquia.



Scott O'Neil recently completed a nine-year tenure as Resident Conductor with the Colorado Symphony in Denver. He has performed with elite soloists like Itzhak Perlman and Joshua Bell and collaborated with musical leaders such as Sarah McLachlan and Rufus Wainwright. Scott's innovative series, Inside the Score, combined art, entertainment, and enlightenment, engaging audiences in explorations of various music and ideas. He continues to guest conduct and lead the Rosetta Music Society in Denver, constantly seeking to draw wider audiences to live performances.



With energy, imagination, and a passion for people, American conductor **Rachel Waddell** is an unabashed advocate for the 21st-century orchestra. Rachel serves as the Director of Orchestras at Colorado State University and has received national and international acclaim for her work. She was a quarterfinalist for the 2025 Music Educator Award through the GRAMMYs and has conducted orchestras around the world, including the Orchestre Métropolitain and the Rochester Philharmonic. Rachel's leadership and dedication to community engagement make her a transformative figure in the orchestral world.

Welcoming Scott O'Neil, DPO's Sixth Music Director

On January 24, 2025, we announced the appointment of Scott O'Neil as our sixth Music Director, joining a lineage that stretches back to our trailblazing founder, Dr. Antonia Brico. He follows Julius Glaihengauz, Dr. Horst Buchholz, Adam Flatt, and Dr. Lawrence Golan in a legacy that spans more than seven decades of musical leadership.

O'Neil first stepped onto the DPO podium as our new Music Director at the season premiere, **Reflect, Renew, Reimagine**, where he led a program of works by underrepresented composers including Silvestre Revueltas, Heitor Villa-Lobos, Mary D. Watkins, and Omar Thomas. The impression he left on the orchestra and the audience was immediate. By season's end, when he returned to conduct the finale concert **RETROspective**, the fit was unmistakable.

Upon being appointed, O'Neil said,

"I am honored to be the newest artistic steward of this magnificent organization. I look forward to facing the opposing challenges of innovating while preserving our traditions, growing while maintaining our foundation, and finding new ways to entertain, enlighten, and enrich our audience family while staying true to the heart of what you love most."

O'Neil brings a deep and distinctive background to the role. His nine-year tenure as Resident Conductor of the Colorado Symphony saw him collaborate with some of the classical world's most celebrated soloists, including Itzhak Perlman, Joshua Bell, and Lang Lang, as well as artists from across genres like Steve Vai, Ben Folds, Sarah McLachlan, and The Lumineers. He created the "Inside the Score" concert series at the Colorado Symphony, an innovative format blending storytelling, music, and education. As a regular host of "Behind the Baton" on CPR Classical, he brought the hidden stories of classical music to radio audiences across Colorado.

Also an accomplished arranger and orchestrator, O'Neil has created works for the Colorado Symphony and for artists including Pat Metheny, Ingrid Michaelson, Eileen Ivers, and Béla Fleck. He delivered a TED Talk on music, and continues to lead the Rosetta Music Society in Denver, where he develops innovative programming aimed at drawing wider audiences to live performances.

What drew DPO to O'Neil was not just his resume but his alignment with the organization's values. In a search process built on transparency, inclusivity, and respect for every candidate, O'Neil stood out for his ability to connect with audiences, his commitment to innovative and accessible programming, and his vision for what a community-minded orchestra can be.



Who Are We?

Musician Spotlight

STEVE BULOTA, TIMPANI

For more than three decades, timpanist Steve Bulota has been a steady and expressive force in Denver Philharmonic Orchestra. His musical journey began early, when his grandmother introduced him to piano and music theory—an experience he recalls fondly. By sixth grade he had taken up drum lessons, and in high school, at the encouragement of his band director, he discovered the instrument that would become his musical home: the timpani.

Steve first performed under Dr. Antonia Brico and officially joined the DPO in May 1990, stepping in for a timpanist on paternity leave. As he puts it, *“Been here ever since.”* The orchestra quickly became the perfect fit—an ensemble that offered both artistic challenge and the joy of performing 5–6 concert cycles each season. For Steve, playing with the DPO is simply *“an opportunity to do what I love to do.”*



Though he no longer performs regularly outside the DPO, Steve’s musical resume includes the Aurora Symphony, Lakewood Symphony, Denver Concert Band, Colorado Wind Ensemble, and the Brico Symphony. His absolute pitch—*“which really comes in handy when tuning timpani”*—has long been one of his quiet superpowers on stage.

Professionally, Steve works in tech support. Outside of both music and work, he keeps busy with photography, coin and stamp collecting, tinkering with his 1969 AMX, and cheering on the Mets, Giants, and Notre Dame. He is also deeply connected to his heritage: bilingual with dual U.S.–Lithuanian citizenship, he is active in the Colorado Lithuanian community and serves as director of Denver’s Lithuanian folk dance group.

Reflecting on recent seasons, Steve especially enjoyed revisiting *Symphonie Fantastique*, Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony, and performing *Scheherazade* once again—works that highlight the timpani’s dramatic and expressive power.

Steve’s life is rich with community, culture, and creativity. After 30+ years with the DPO, he remains a cornerstone of the ensemble—steady, dedicated, and always ready to bring the heartbeat of the orchestra to life.

Musicians

The 2024-25 season asked more of DPO musicians than perhaps any season in recent memory. Five concert cycles. Ten performances – almost double from the previous season. Five different primary conductors. Fourteen international workshop conductors. A new rehearsal and performance venue to learn. And through it all, the question every musician in the orchestra was quietly carrying: *Who will lead us next, and will this still feel like home?*

It did, and audiences noticed. Our performance ratings through the season averaged 4.81 out of 5.

That consistency was not a given. It was earned, concert after concert, by musicians who showed up, adapted, and delivered regardless of what was happening around them.

As a primarily volunteer orchestra, our musicians are engineers, educators, parents, retirees, and students who give their evenings and weekends because they believe in what we stand for. They rehearse in a new facility, haul equipment from a storage unit to stage, and perform for audiences that include toddlers in costumes and service dogs in training. And they do it all at a level of musicianship that consistently surprises people who walk in expecting something less.



The following musicians performed in one or more concerts during the 2024-25 concert season.

FIRST VIOLIN

Katherine Thayer, Concertmaster
AK Barnett-Hart, Assc. Concertmaster
Melanie Akau
Patsy Aronstein
Ciarra Denman
Anthony Elias
Gwen Gravagno
Matt Grove
Beth Letendre
Emmy Reid
Erica Secor
Karen Skaar
Liz Wall
Vince Wong

SECOND VIOLIN

Gwen Gravagno, Acting Principal
Carrie Breeder
Katrina Choate
Bryant Denmark
Ellen Elias
Christie Goode
Annie Laury
Callista Medland
Alyssa Oland
Roger Powell
Erica Secor
Anne Silvas

VIOLA

Annie Zagorski, Principal
Nick Hobson
Kaylin Jarriel
Samantha Lichtin
David Phan
Beth Remming
Nicolas Rosales

CELLO

Cherrie Swisher, Acting Principal
Kierra Aiello
Richard Jones
Dana Shin
Dan Tobin

DOUBLE BASS

Lucy Bauer, Principal
Michael Brown
Allison Combs
Jeff Moschak
Mayer Neel

FLUTE

Whitney Kelley, Principal
Catherine Rocca Lanzano
Kassandra Lopez

OBOE

Lisa Read, Principal
Emily Cidrolin
Loren Meaux
Michael Sax
Sarah Short

ENGLISH HORN

Loren Meaux

CLARINET

Kwami Barnett, Principal
Jessica Clark
Jesse Gilday
Emilie Helms
Elsbeth Williams

BASSOON

Ken Greenwald, Principal
Yuki Hu
Sara Laupp
Adam Lusk
Doug Moran

SAXOPHONE

Kwami Barnett (alto)
Nathan Drabek (tenor)
Benjamin Wiebe (baritone)

HORN

Zach Maupin, Principal
Jeanine Branting
Kim George
Kelli Hirsh
Eddie Savolson

TRUMPET

Evan King, Principal
Toshi Chun
Mike Gill
John Jungerberg
Tyler McIntosh
John Pirillo
Jonathan Weedman

TROMBONE

Darien Freeman, Principal
Raymond Arango
Daniel Morris (bass)
Corey Nance
Jared Slaff
Bill Skulley

TUBA

Darren DeLaup, Principal
Michael Horsford

GUITAR

Nicholas Kaiser

HARP

Molly Morgan, Acting Principal
Rebecca Moritzky
Annie Zagorski

PERCUSSION

Jack Arman, Acting Principal
Colin Constance
Justin Doute
Rhys Harmon
Scott Headley
Brandon Paine
Reed Puleo
Matt Sousa
Alex Yang

PIANO

Ani Powell, Principal
Jessica Teal

TIMPANI

Steve Bulota, Principal

CONDUCTOR LAUREATE

Dr. Lawrence Golan

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Scott O'Neil
Donald Schleicher
Rachel Waddell

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Phoenix Delgado
Heeseong Lee
Brenden McCauley
Nathan Sawyer
Samuel Sherman
Richard Sousa-Castro
Nelson Valente
Alexander Wilkerson
Cara Xu-Tóth
Oliver Yan
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IT TECHNICIAN

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Donors & Sponsors

INDIVIDUAL DONORS

We sincerely thank the following individuals who donated \$100 or more during the 2024-25 fiscal year.

Melanie Akau
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Jennifer Van Vleet
John Vaughey
Donald Walls
Shannon Zander
Laura Zeller

BUSINESSNES & ORGANIZATIONS

We're grateful to the businesses and organizations who donated \$100 or more during the 2024-25 fiscal year.

Big O Tire
Colorado Ballet
Colorado Rockies
Colorado Symphony
Denver Center for the Performing Arts
Denver Foundation
Denver Zoo
Frame de Art
Friends of Chamber Music
Green Door Fitness
Murphy Mueller Family Fund
Nothing Bundt Cakes
Presbyterian Foundation
Sam's No. 3
Señor Bear
SGH Restaurant Group – Denver
Stantec Consulting
Taspen's Organics
The Crypt



THANK YOU FOR YOUR **DONATION**

*Our mission is to reimagine the
classical music experience for
our entire community.*



Fundraising

During the 2024-25 fiscal year, we intentionally targeted new ways to fundraise. Across Colorado Gives Day, the Back to the Orchestra gala, and everyday giving throughout the year, donors gave \$78,904.70, contributing to \$141,810.72 in total contributed income for the year, landing at 91.5% of the \$155,000 contributed income budget once government grant funding is included.

Individual contributions came in well under budget, at \$45,139.74 against a \$65,000 goal. Corporate support more than made up ground elsewhere, landing at \$24,471.96 against a \$10,000 goal, driven largely by a single \$20,000 gift from The Getz Foundation in March, the largest gift the organization received all year. Government grant funding also outperformed goals, coming in at \$62,222.02 against an expected \$55,000.

Colorado Gives Day 2024 brought in \$17,608.85 from 115 gifts, with strong early giving ahead of the day itself. Back to the Orchestra, our first-ever spring gala, added ticket revenue and a dedicated giving campaign on top of that, with a silent auction that turned out to be a bigger piece of the picture than initially tracked. Together, these two events represent a meaningful share of the organization's non-grant fundraising.

Colorado Gives Day

Between the start of early giving on November 1 and the close of the giving window on December 10, supporters gave \$17,608.85 across 115 gifts from 111 donors, including a \$406.55 boost from the Colorado Gives Day Incentive Fund.

Early giving messaging paid off. Fifty-eight gifts totaling \$10,369.20, nearly 59% of the campaign total, came in before Colorado Gives Day itself even arrived. Then, on December 10, the community showed up again: 54 gifts totaling \$7,089.65 landed in a single 24-hour window, capping the campaign with its strongest day by far.

The gifts themselves told a story of a community giving at every level. Amounts ranged from \$5 to \$5,000, with a median gift of \$50 and an average of \$153. Eight gifts of \$500 or more, including one \$5,000 contribution made through a donor-advised fund, brought in \$9,000 on their own, essentially half the campaign. The other half came from 63 gifts under \$100, a reminder that Colorado Gives Day draws support as wide as it is deep.

Campaign messaging leaned into what these gifts make possible: open captioning and ASL interpretation at main series concerts, the return of the instrument petting zoo at More Than Music, outreach into Adams County and Thornton, and groundwork for a Music Director search and a future DPO endowment. Every dollar, boosted by the statewide Incentive Fund, went toward keeping live orchestral music accessible and growing across the Denver area.

Back to the Orchestra

On March 29, 2025, we hosted our first-ever spring gala, Back to the Orchestra, transforming the Tivoli Turnhalle into a time-traveling tribute to the Enchantment Under the Sea Dance from Back to the Future. Guests arrived in their best 1955, 1985, or even 1885 attire, danced to live music, and bid on a silent auction stocked with donations from dozens of local businesses and community members.

Altogether, the evening raised \$25,983.94 across three streams: \$8,179 in ticket sales, \$8,091.94 in cash donations, and \$9,713 in silent auction items. The auction turned out to be more than just a fun addition to the evening. It accounted for 97% of all in-kind giving DPO received the entire fiscal year, drawing support from more than a dozen local businesses, from Big O Tires to the Denver Zoo to neighborhood favorites like The Shaggy Sheep.

Giving didn't stop when the night ended. Beyond the auction, 18 cash gifts arrived in the week and a half after the event, including the two largest cash donations of the whole campaign, from Martha Diebolt and Jana Mussemann-Moore, both given nearly a week after the last note had played.

Music Director Laureate Lawrence Golan and Executive Director Roger Haak both made personal appeals to the DPO community ahead of the gala, framing the evening as an investment in the orchestra's next 75 years. True to that spirit, the campaign skewed toward everyday generosity as much as headline gifts: a median cash gift of \$70, alongside dozens of donated items both large and small.

For a first-time event with no prior year to benchmark against, Back to the Orchestra proved the concept.



Financials

The 2024-25 fiscal year was a transition period for us. We brought in \$226,525.33 against \$301,744.70 in expenses, closing the year with a \$77,521.99 operating deficit. During this transition, the Board and Executive Director were highly focused on our conductor search, off-site storage, season programming during a music director search, etc. Some costs related to the transition are one incurrence while others are new full-time costs. This transition also had unfavorable revenue impacts through ticket sales and season subscriptions. Despite a challenging financial year, the deficit was absorbed by existing cash reserves and every commitment to musicians, vendors, and partners was met on time.

The two major one-time cost incurrences were our accounting services and temporary grant-writing contract services. Our accountants unexpectedly charged a significantly higher cost when compared year-over-year, and this cost was not communicated and therefore not budgeted. While Board volunteers and the Executive Director were highly focused on transition activity, we engaged contract services to progress grant-writing efforts to ensure we submitted critical grants on time and at a high quality.

Our new major recurring cost increases post-transition include a second venue for matinee performances and off-site storage of equipment, a critical two-fold strategic decision. First, our legacy venue increased rent at about 13% CAGR which led us to seek out a second location at market rate. Additionally, a new location provided an opportunity for a second revenue path per concert cycle through a matinee performance. We believe the matinee venue will ultimately lead to a net-positive revenue stream, but it will take time to grow.

Like costs, revenue was impacted by transition. We saw season subscriptions decrease this year. This is likely due to not having a full-time conductor and our patrons being in a wait-and-see period before committing to subscribing to a full season. Single concert ticket sales were also down, suggesting they, too, follow the wait-and-see theme. Our new concert format included a matinee which we forecasted to do be more successful in year one. Marketing efforts for matinee performances did not yield the success we had anticipated. Consistency is key for growing this part of our organization, and we're committed to providing matinee performances for our community. Individual contributions underperformed budget, and we believe this is due in part to music director uncertainty and due in part to the economic macro environment where inflation was at decade-long highs.

In response to the deficit, the Board acted to better monitor financial health and oversight by expanding the finance committee to include four members with financial expertise. For fiscal year 2025-26, we put monthly cash flow forecasting and KPI tracking into place. We're now better prepared to get ahead of certain costs and revenue shortfalls, or overperformance as a result.

This was a significant transition year for the organization and the financials reflect this. As a result, the Board took concrete steps to focus on controlling costs and honed efforts for increased revenues.

Profits and Losses

	Actual	Budget	Over (Under)
Income			
CONTRIBUTED INCOME			
4010 Individual Contributions	45,139.74	65,000.00	(19,860.26)
4020 Corporate Contributions	24,471.96	10,000.00	14,471.96
4030 Foundation Grants	-	5,000.00	(5,000.00)
4040 Government Grants	62,222.02	55,000.00	7,222.02
4050 Other Contributed Income/Events	-	20,000.00	(20,000.00)
4060 In Kind Contributions	9,977.00	-	9,977.00
Total CONTRIBUTED INCOME	141,810.72	155,000.00	(13,189.28)
EARNED INCOME			
4110 Concert Tickets	45,691.20	66,000.00	(20,308.80)
4115 Season Tickets	5,837.90	20,000.00	(14,162.10)
4120 Retail Sales	1,345.60	3,000.00	(1,654.40)
4125 Alcohol Sales	6,344.40	5,000.00	1,344.40
4130 Parking Voucher Reimbursements	(20.00)	-	(20.00)
4140 Other Earned Income	25,515.51	15,000.00	10,515.51
Total EARNED INCOME	84,714.61	109,000.00	(24,285.39)
Total Income	226,525.33	264,000.00	(37,474.67)
Cost of Goods Sold			
50000 Cost of Goods Sold	2,302.62	3,000.00	(697.38)
Total Cost of Goods Sold	2,302.62	3,000.00	(697.38)
Gross Profit	224,222.71	261,000.00	(36,777.29)

	Actual	Budget	Over (Under)
Expenses			
OPERATING EXPENSES			
5000 Salaries and wages	52,394.26	54,000.00	(1,605.74)
5000.01 Payroll Taxes	4,719.13	4,560.00	159.13
Total 5000 Salaries and Payroll Taxes	57,113.39	58,560.00	(1,446.61)
5001 Accounting	10,165.66	75.00	10,090.66
5002 Bank Fees/Processing Fees	1,339.05	4,200.00	(2,860.95)
5003 Contract Services	27,728.30	10,000.00	17,728.30
5004 Dues/Memberships/Prof Develop	3,242.66	1,925.00	1,317.66
5005 Gifts	175.84	1,000.00	(824.16)
5006 Insurance/Licenses/Business Reg	1,957.89	3,800.00	(1,842.11)
5007 Marketing	11,560.37	15,000.00	(3,439.63)
5008 Operating Supplies	1,856.34	1,500.00	356.34
5009 Travel/Meetings (Exec Dir)	123.13	500.00	(376.87)
5010 Fundraising Expenses	16,411.31	10,000.00	6,411.31
Total OPERATING EXPENSES	131,673.94	106,560.00	25,113.94
OTHER EXPENSES			
7060 In Kind Expense	11,177.00	18,000.00	(6,823.00)
7070 Depreciation	7,219.74	1,788.00	5,431.74
Total OTHER EXPENSES	18,396.74	19,788.00	(1,391.26)

	Actual	Budget	Over (Under)
PROGRAM EXPENSES			
6001 Concert Production	15,338.06	1,000.00	14,338.06
6002 Concert Program	297.00	1,000.00	(703.00)
6004 Equiment Rental/Maintenance	900.00	2,000.00	(1,100.00)
6005 Instruments/Small Equipment	-	300.00	(300.00)
6006 More Than Music	1,939.63	2,000.00	(60.37)
6007 Non-musician program personnel	2,600.00	2,100.00	500.00
6008 Musician Fees	76,461.52	90,000.00	(13,538.48)
6009 Musician Travel/Lodging	2,270.05	5,000.00	(2,729.95)
6011 Printing/Copying/Supplies	3,022.48	1,750.00	1,272.48
6012 Rent	34,065.50	34,200.00	(134.50)
6013 Sheet Music.	11,069.02	8,000.00	3,069.02
6014 Program Marketing	3,182.15	5,000.00	(1,817.85)
6020 Special Events	-	2,000.00	(2,000.00)
6021 Other Program Expense	248.61	3,000.00	(2,751.39)
6022 Musician Cartage	280.00	-	280.00
Total PROGRAM EXPENSES	151,674.02	157,350.00	(5,675.98)
Total Expenses	301,744.70	283,698.00	18,046.70
Net Operating Income	(77,521.99)	(22,698.00)	(54,823.99)
Net Income	(77,521.99)	(22,698.00)	(54,823.99)



All About DPO

Our Mission

To continually redefine the way our community engages with classical music.

Our Vision

We seek to bridge centuries and cultures across continents through live classical music that inspires and engages the large and diverse audiences in our greater Denver community.

Our Values

We are approachable. We believe classical music is meant for all — come as your authentic selves. We price our tickets so your whole family and friend group can be included. Whether it's the music you hear or the people you enjoy it with, together we are better.

We connect the generations. Music stirs the soul, whether you are 5, 25, or 95. We believe in connecting frivolity with the classical, and education to entertainment. Let our music transport you every time you hear it.

We seek to engage. Our performances and partnerships are designed to foster community, inspire diverse perspectives and create extraordinary experiences. We believe life is meant to be shared — enjoy it.

EDIA Statement

The DPO Board is committed to addressing inequities faced by marginalized communities within the art form of orchestral music. We recognize that for too long, certain communities have been excluded, and we actively seek to change that by fostering an inclusive, accessible, and equitable environment. This commitment reflects our intention to address the systemic inequities that have historically shaped the arts and to ensure that people of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities have access to the opportunities and experiences within the DPO.

We acknowledge the historical and ongoing underrepresentation of non-white, non-European composers, performers, and cultural contributions in classical music. The DPO is dedicated to amplifying underrepresented voices, integrating diverse musical traditions, and expanding the representation of marginalized communities in our programming. Furthermore, we are committed to ensuring accessibility for all individuals, recognizing that accessibility is integral to inclusion.

MISSION

To continue the important work of the EDIA and Community Outreach Committee, which serves as a space for respectful dialogue on issues of equity, race, diversity, and accessibility, and to implement initiatives that further our commitment to these values across all aspects of the organization.

GOALS

1. To create a more diverse board and orchestra,
2. To increase outreach to and build relationships with diverse communities,
3. To establish measurable goals for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility,
4. To actively involve the Music Director in the process,
5. To gather and evaluate data on race, equity, and accessibility among the DPO board and orchestra,
6. To integrate EDIA principles into the DPO's mission and practices,
7. To ensure that DPO events, performances, and communications are accessible to individuals of all abilities,
8. For the EDIA and Community Outreach Committee to communicate frequently and transparently about EDIA issues with the DPO board, volunteers, and musicians.

Our History

[Dr. Antonia Brico](#), the first woman to conduct the New York Philharmonic Orchestra ([in 1938](#)), founded our organization in 1948 as the Denver Businessmen's Orchestra. Antonia settled in Denver after conducting professional orchestras across Europe and the U.S. She debuted our orchestra to a packed auditorium explaining the need for a classical music venue to showcase the talents of local, classically trained musicians "with no place to play." Twenty years later, we'd be known as the Brico Symphony, and Antonia would remain at the helm of the orchestra until her retirement in the mid-1980s.



After nearly 40 years under Antonia's baton, the orchestra chose Russian-American conductor, Julius Glaihengauz, as its second music director. A graduate of the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow, Julius led the newly renamed Centennial Philharmonic for 11 seasons.

In 1999, Professor of Music at the University of Denver Dr. Horst Buchholz, took the baton. Our most recent name change came in 2004, and we became the Denver Philharmonic Orchestra. Horst served as music director and conductor through 2009, after which he was appointed the orchestra's first Conductor Laureate.

[Adam Flatt](#) came on board as music director in June 2010. Adam's dynamic and inspiring leadership over the next three years continued Horst's legacy and further increased the artistic quality of the orchestra.

We selected award-winning conductor [Lawrence Golan](#) as our conductor and music director in 2013. Lawrence, a professor and music director at the University of Denver's Lamont School of Music, led DPO on international tours to China and Germany and established the International Conducting Workshop, featuring distinguished guest conductors from across the country.

This era marked a period of significant institutional revitalization. Working in close partnership with Board President [Jon Olafson](#) (2012–2021), volunteer Executive Director [Valerie Clausen](#) (2012–2023), and Board leader and marketing strategist [Matt Meier](#) (2014–2021), DPO strengthened its governance structure, professionalized operations, and clarified its brand identity. Their leadership helped guide the orchestra from modest performances at KPOF Hall to consistently sold-out concerts at Central Presbyterian Church, expanding audience engagement and stabilizing the organization for long-term sustainability. Their contributions continue to shape the infrastructure and community presence of DPO today.

Fresh off that search, we ushered in a bold new chapter on January 24, 2025, when acclaimed conductor [Scott O'Neil](#) was named the sixth Music Director of the Denver Philharmonic Orchestra. A nine-year Resident Conductor of the Colorado Symphony, Scott captivated

Denver audiences with his innovative *Inside the Score* series and his engaging storytelling work on CPR Classical's *Behind the Baton*.

As we prepare for our future under Maestro O'Neil's leadership, his visionary programming—combining deep storytelling, bold emotion, and cross-genre innovation—promises to redefine how our community experiences classical music. Our legacy continues to evolve, powered by innovation, excellence, and the promise of the future.





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