



INDIANAPOLIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

AN *EXCITING* FUTURE

2024–2025 SEASON REVIEW

THANK YOU

FROM JAMES M. JOHNSON

Dear Friend of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra,

Because of your generosity, the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra continues to thrive as a cultural anchor for our city and a source of inspiration for people of all ages. This report reflects the difference you—and thousands of other donors, foundations, and corporate sponsors—make possible each year.

In 2024–25, your support allowed the ISO to present more than 120 performances at Hilbert Circle Theatre and welcome more than 65,000 music lovers to Kroger *Symphony on the Prairie*. You helped us reach over 15,000 young people across Indiana with education programs that spark creativity, build confidence, and nurture a lifelong love of music.

Your generosity also brought music beyond the concert hall through partnerships that made a lasting impact. From *Symphony on the Circle* and *Symphony in the Parks* to collaborations with Butler University, Indianapolis Ballet, and GANGGANG, the ISO reached thousands in neighborhoods, schools, and community spaces. These initiatives reflect your commitment to accessibility, creativity, and connection across our city.

You also helped achieve important milestones: completing a new five-year strategic plan, refreshed mission and vision statements, and a comprehensive facilities study. These initiatives will guide us as we approach our centennial in 2030—ensuring that the ISO remains an innovative, welcoming, and sustainable leader in the arts.

Thank you for believing in the power of symphonic music and supporting the ISO as we create an even brighter future for Central Indiana.

With gratitude,



James M. Johnson, CEO



*It is the musicians
of the ISO who
generously bring
their best talent
and artistry to our
community and
beloved audience
on a weekly basis!*

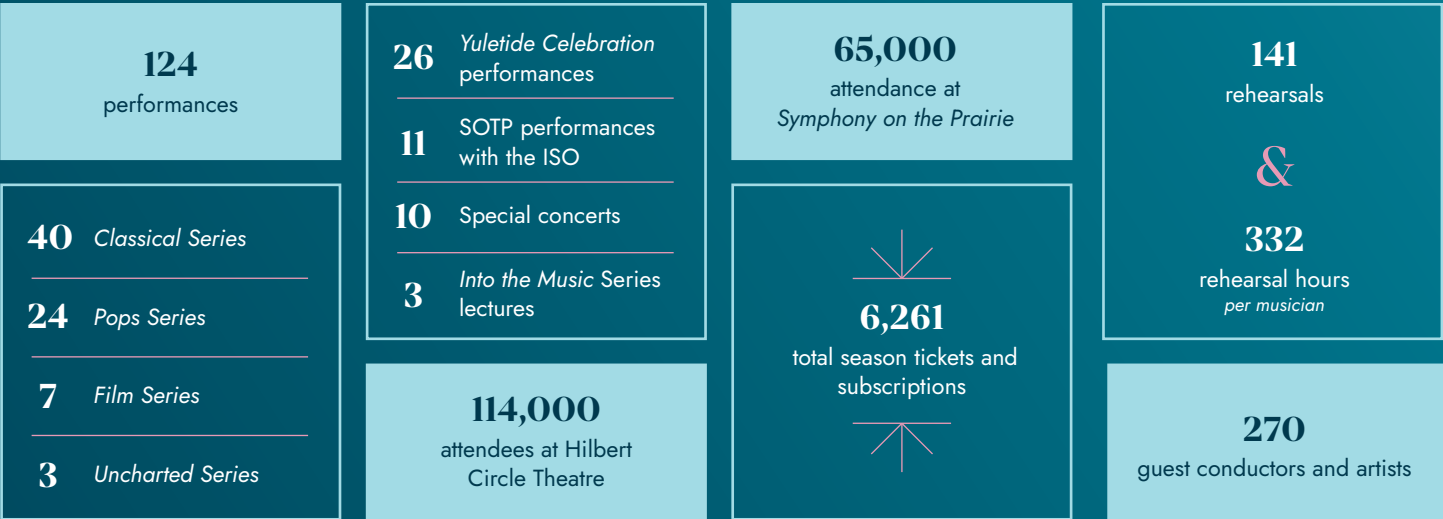
—LI LI, VIOLA



THE *PEOPLE* OF THE ISO



2024-2025 SEASON *RECAP*



STRATEGIC PLAN, MISSION & VISION, AND ECONOMIC IMPACT

Strategic Plan

As the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra approaches its centennial in 2030, we embrace a vision to be a dynamic and unifying leader in the arts, dedicated to inspiring, innovating, and making musical and educational experiences accessible. Our new five-year strategic plan focuses on long-term sustainability through investment in creative programming, artistic partnerships, and organizational capacity building.

The plan outlined three areas of focus and seven key goals:

The strategic planning process included an extensive assessment of our facilities and operations. The ISO partnered with Indianapolis-based Schmidt Associates to develop a comprehensive facilities master plan. Additional expert partners included Schuler Shook, Akustiks, Hunden Partners, the Indiana University Public Policy Institute, and Arts Consulting Group. Their collaborative efforts helped create a research-driven approach addressing the needs of musicians, staff, patrons, and the broader community.

Scan here to read
the full report.



INNOVATE, COLLABORATE, AND STRENGTHEN CAPACITY

1. Expand audiences by investing in innovative programming and marketing.
2. Develop artistic partnerships to grow the orchestra's reach.
3. Build organizational capacity to achieve long-term sustainability.

PRIORITIZE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND ADVOCACY

4. Position the ISO as a leader in the arts.
5. Heighten the impact of education and community engagement.
6. Embrace and amplify the vibrancy of the community's diversity.

IMPROVE OUR FACILITY

7. Update Hilbert Circle Theatre to enhance the experience for guests, community partners, and artists.

Mission and Vision

Alongside the strategic plan, we refreshed our mission and vision statements to reflect its commitment to inclusivity, artistic excellence, and meaningful community connection.

MISSION

The Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra inspires and unites our community through our music.

VISION

The Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra sets new standards as a dynamic leader in the arts, serving our community by creating innovative, engaging, and accessible musical and educational experiences.

Economic Impact Study

An economic impact study by the Indiana University Public Policy Institute highlighted the ISO's significant contribution to the local economy. The orchestra generated approximately \$37 million annually through its concerts, programming, and operations, with additional spending by patrons on parking, dining, and entertainment contributing \$5.6 million in 2023 alone.

More than 100,000 annual ISO ticket holders positively influenced the downtown and Central Indiana economies, reinforcing the orchestra's role as a cultural anchor and an economic driver.

"The Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra is an essential leader of arts and culture in our city," said Taylor Schaffer, President & CEO of Downtown Indy, Inc. "With its performance venue just steps from Monument Circle, the ISO brings live music, engaging performances, and community activations that enrich the cultural life of Indianapolis."

The Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra is grateful to Lilly Endowment, Inc. for their generous support that made this project possible.

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The ISO can thrive and grow only as much as we are supported in the community and by our gracious donors and concert attendees. Please continue to attend concerts (and invite a friend!) so that the ISO can continue to thrive for years to come.

—BERT WITZEL, CONTRABASS

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This season marked an exciting milestone.

Jun Märkl completed his first full year as Music Director of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra.

From the very first concert, Märkl brought a thoughtful presence and genuine warmth to the podium. His deep musical insight, paired with a clear love for the orchestra and the Indianapolis community, shaped some of the most memorable performances of the year—from sweeping symphonies to intimate, emotional moments onstage.

“Maestro Jun seems to really care about the audience and musicians,” one concertgoer shared. That sentiment was echoed by many.

“Whenever Jun conducts, it seems like I’m hearing the piece for the first time,” another patron noted.


Audiences, musicians, and staff alike felt the energy he brings. As Märkl shared, “Music has the power to connect us—across time, cultures, and experiences. I’m honored to help build those connections here in Indianapolis.”

The ISO is grateful to have Jun Märkl leading the way as we step into a bold and inspiring new era.



JUN MÄRKLE'S **FIRST SEASON AS MUSIC DIRECTOR**

A LASTING LEGACY AND A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR ISO POPS



As the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra plans for the seasons ahead, longtime Principal Pops Conductor Jack Everly will gradually reduce his *Pops Series* appearances. In 2027–28, Jack will assume the title of Principal Pops Conductor Emeritus. In this role, he will continue to serve as Music Director and Conductor of AES Indiana *Yuletide Celebration*, the *Film Series*, and select *Pops Series* performances.

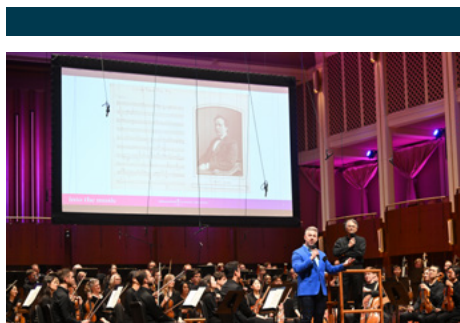
In 2025–26, Jack and Principal Guest Conductor of Pops Enrico Lopez-Yañez will each conduct three *Pops Series* programs. The ISO's newest Assistant Conductor, Hannah Schendel, will also make her *Pops Series* debut to conduct one program. In 2026–27, Jack is slated for four Pops programs and Enrico for three.

Enrico Lopez-Yañez recently extended his contract through the 2026–27 season. His energetic style and engaging presence have made an immediate impact—most notably during his shared podium appearance with Jack this past season for *Maestros in Concert*, which highlighted their strong artistic rapport.

Together, Jack and Enrico are shaping a thoughtful and inspired path forward for the ISO *Pops Series*—one that honors tradition while embracing new creative possibilities.

NEW INITIATIVES & CONTINUED PARTNERSHIPS

The 2024–25 season featured several new initiatives and continued collaborations that brought the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra into the community in meaningful ways. Together, these programs reached a total attendance of 8,000 and more, reflecting our ongoing commitment to accessibility, partnership, and artistic excellence.



ISO + FOX59 Into the Music with Jun Märkl

As part of welcoming Music Director Jun Märkl, the ISO introduced *Into the Music*—a free, community-focused experience at Hilbert Circle Theatre.

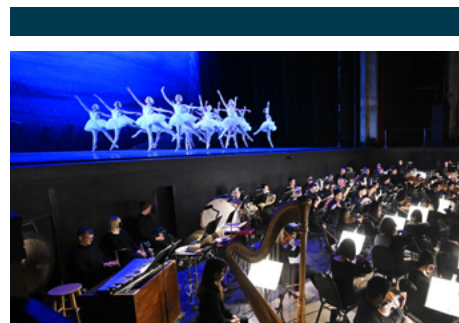
Three concerts featured an onstage conversation between Maestro Märkl and Ryan Ahlwardt (of FOX59's *Indy Now*), followed by a full orchestral performance of the featured piece for the evening.



ISO + Butler

The Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra and Butler University's Jordan College of the Arts launched a new collaborative concert series celebrating ISO musicians who also served as Butler faculty. This partnership deepened the relationship between two of Indianapolis' most respected cultural institutions, uniting artistry and education.

The series included four concerts held at Eidson-Duckwall Recital Hall, hosted by ISO Concertmaster and Butler Artist-in-Residence Kevin Lin. The performances offered audiences an intimate, educational chamber music experience.



ISO + Indianapolis Ballet

In the second year of our partnership with the Indianapolis Ballet, the ISO provided live music for *Swan Lake* at Clowes Memorial Hall. Set to Tchaikovsky's unforgettable score, the production brought classical ballet and orchestral music together in a breathtaking performance.

Principal Pops Conductor Jack Everly led the orchestra for this magical production, uniting two of the city's premier performing arts organizations for a sold-out run.

"This collaboration with the Indianapolis Ballet has quickly become a treasured part of our season. The beauty of live ballet and symphony together creates something extraordinary for our city," said ISO CEO James Johnson.

Presented by the Allen Whitehill Clowes Charitable Foundation.

Scan the QR code
to hear more about
this program.





ISO + GANGGANG

In a first-time partnership, the ISO and GANGGANG presented two exhibitions at Hilbert Circle Theatre curated by GANGGANG's visual arts team. Debuting during the 2024 NBA All-Star Weekend and extending through the fall, these exhibits showcased contemporary BIPOC artists and brought new energy to the theatre's Oval Promenade and Wood Room. The collaboration reflected both organizations' shared mission to elevate equity, creativity, and community engagement across the arts.

"We were proud to partner with GANGGANG to create more equitable opportunities for artists and deepen community connections through the arts," said James Johnson, CEO of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. "We look forward to future collaborations that unite visual art and symphonic music."

This partnership marked a significant step in the ISO's effort to bridge symphonic music with other art forms and support Indianapolis' growing visual arts scene.



ISO + Sphinx

The fourth year of the ISO's ongoing partnership with the Sphinx Organization—made possible by support from the Eli Lilly and Company Foundation—continued to highlight the work of young Black and Latinx classical musicians.

Together, ISO and Sphinx artists presented four programs throughout the city at:

- » Madam Walker Legacy Center
- » Sacred Heart Parish
- » Butler University's Eidson-Duckwall Recital Hall
- » Hilbert Circle Theatre

The series showcased overlooked, contemporary, or cross-genre classical works and brought chamber and orchestral performances into neighborhood spaces.



ISO + Schmidt Conducting Fellowship

This year marked the 30th anniversary of the Schmidt Conducting Fellowship, a program through the generosity of Dr. Paul Schmidt, Heidi Schmidt, and Dr. Max and Christine Schmidt. The fellowship has welcomed emerging conductors from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music to study and work alongside ISO's artistic leadership. These fellows bring fresh perspectives to the podium, gain invaluable professional experience, and carry forward the tradition of excellence that defines the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra.

This summer, the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra proudly revived the cherished tradition of Symphony in the Parks—a series of free community concerts that brought world-class music to neighborhoods across Indianapolis. Inspired by the ISO’s long history of park performances, this initiative brought nearly 2,000 people out for two joyful evenings of music under the stars.

Conductor Daniel Wiley led the concerts at the MacAllister Amphitheater in Garfield Park on July 8, and at Rock the Ruins at Holliday Park on July 9. Each performance featured a vibrant mix of classical favorites, film scores, and popular works.

“Bringing music to our community has always been part of the ISO’s mission,” said James Johnson, CEO of the ISO. “With Symphony in the Parks, we’re not just starting something new—we’re reconnecting with our roots and making world-class music more accessible to communities across Indianapolis.”

Plans are already underway to continue Symphony in the Parks next season with expanded locations and reach, thanks to the continued support of donors and partners who help bring these meaningful experiences to life.

The Margot L. Eccles Arts & Culture Fund, a fund of the Central Indiana Community Foundation (CICF), proudly supported the series.



SYMPHONY *IN THE PARKS* RETURNS

A photograph of three dancers in traditional Indian attire performing on a stage. They are wearing black long-sleeved tops, white saris with gold borders, and red bangles. The background shows the Indiana State Capitol building and a crowd of people. The title "SYMPHONY ON THE CIRCLE" is overlaid on the top left of the image.

SYMPHONY *ON THE CIRCLE*

This spring, the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra hosted the second annual Symphony on the Circle, a free, day-long festival celebrating the vibrancy of the city's arts community right in the heart of downtown. The event welcomed over 10,000 guests to Monument Circle on April 27, and featured over 45 local arts, cultural, and community organizations, along with family activities, live performances, and interactive art displays.

"Symphony on the Circle is our way of bringing the community together through music and the arts in one of the city's most iconic spaces," said James M. Johnson, CEO of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra.

Symphony on the Circle is more than a festival—it reflects the ISO's commitment to creating meaningful, accessible cultural experiences for all who call Indianapolis home.

"The Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra continues to shape the heartbeat of Monument Circle," said Taylor Schaffer, President & CEO of Downtown Indy, Inc. "Their commitment to making music accessible to all is one of the many reasons Indy's downtown is such a dynamic place to live, work, and gather."

This opportunity was made possible by the Margot L. Eccles Arts & Culture Fund, a fund of CICF, and KeyBank. Special thanks to Downtown Indy, Inc. and Patchwork Indy for serving as collaborative partners in making the day a success.

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS DOWNTOWN AND LAUNCHING THE *ISO DAY OF GIVING*

In October 2024, the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra marked 40 years at Hilbert Circle Theatre with our inaugural ISO Day of Giving—a new annual fundraising initiative held on the second Thursday of October.

The ISO moved to the Hilbert Circle Theatre in the fall of 1984, with the first concert in its new home on October 12, 1984. The Day of Giving was intentionally scheduled around this meaningful date to honor the orchestra's rich history.

Aligned with the Printing Partners Pops Series Rhapsody in Blue concerts on October 11–12, the Day of Giving invited supporters to help raise \$50,000 to fuel the ISO's vibrant community programs. Thanks to a generous \$20,000 challenge gift from James and Pat LaCrosse, reaching this goal unlocked even greater impact—ultimately raising nearly \$94,000.

"For 40 years, the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra has been at the heart of downtown's cultural life," said James M. Johnson, CEO of the ISO. "Each year, more than 200,000 people attend our performances and community events. Our Day of Giving was a powerful reminder of how deeply this music connects and unites us all."

*"Thank you to the ISO for making
volunteering such a joy. We've truly
enjoyed our time and look forward to
many more opportunities to serve."*

—DAVID & SHARON REED, VOLUNTEERS

AES Indiana *Yuletide Celebration* celebrated the gifts of Music Director Maestro Jack Everly, guest host Sandi Patty (for her 10th and final time as host), and 121 singers, artists, puppeteers, dancers, production assistants, choreographers, writers, stage crew members, wardrobe team, and more.

Did you know?

35,000+

total tickets
sold

27

shows in three
weeks

3

full days to build
the set

136

hours of rehearsals
in two weeks

Scan the QR code to watch
the *Yuletide Celebration* stage
installation from last year.



aes Indiana

YULETIDE CELEBRATION

ISO IN THE *COMMUNITY*

This past season, the ISO brought music to communities across Central Indiana through 30+ engagement events, partnering with local nonprofits and reaching audiences of all ages. Highlights include Penrod Arts Fair, ArtMix Arts for All Fest, Lunch Break Live at SPARK on the Circle, Marianne Tobias Music Program at Eskenazi Health, Indy Pride, and the Bicentennial Celebration at the Indiana State Library. Thanks to the generosity of donors, sponsors, and foundations, the ISO continues to make symphonic music accessible to more people than ever before.



MEET THE MUSICIANS

A GLIMPSE INTO THE LIVES OF ISO ARTISTS

Through our “Meet the Musicians” series, donors and patrons have had the unique opportunity to connect with the talented individuals who bring our music to life. These intimate interviews hosted on our YouTube channel offer insights into the personal journeys, inspirations, and passions of our musicians.

Featured artists include:

- » Jun Märkl, Music Director
- » Kevin Lin, Concertmaster
- » Austin Huntington, Principal Cello
- » Claire Thai, Principal Harp
- » James Norman, Principal Librarian
- » Melissa Deal, Section Violinist
- » Mark Ortwein, Assistant Principal Bassoon
- » And more!

Scan the QR code to
hear more from ISO
musicians and artists.



“*Symphonic
music is for
everyone!*”

—JENNIFER FARQUHAR, VIOLIN

EDUCATION PROGRAMMING FOR THE *NEXT GENERATION*

This season, the ISO reached more than 15,000 young people across Indiana with programs that inspire curiosity, build life skills, and create lasting connections to music. From preschoolers in our Teddy Bear Series discovering the joy of live performance, to students in the Metropolitan Youth Orchestra gaining confidence through music, to classrooms experiencing our Discovery Concerts aligned with Indiana Academic Standards, donors and corporate support helped bring music into lives at every stage.



Season Highlights:

METROPOLITAN YOUTH ORCHESTRA

200+ students in grades K–12 building resilience and leadership through music.

HALL PASS (FORMERLY ISO CONNECT)

1,600+ students engaged in behind-the-scenes and hands-on learning experiences, from theatre tours and school visits to interactive performances with ISO musicians.

TEDDY BEAR SERIES

2,500 children ages 3–6 introduced to orchestral instruments through storytelling and music.

SIDE-BY-SIDE

38 student musicians performed alongside ISO professionals on the Hilbert Circle Theatre stage.

DISCOVERY CONCERTS

10,000+ students from **17 counties** experiencing live symphonic music, many for the first time, with ASL interpretation and bilingual curriculum.

CLASSICAL JAM

101 community musicians, including **51 educators** performed alongside ISO professionals on the Hilbert Circle Theatre stage.



FIRST THURSDAYS

This behind-the-scenes program offered **300+ attendees** the chance to meet ISO musicians and guest artists, enjoy performances, and participate in interactive experiences in the Hilbert Circle Theatre lobby.

YOUNG MUSICIANS COMPETITION

Each year, the Michael Ben & Illene Komisarow Maurer Young Musicians Competition inspires Indiana's most talented young musicians to aim for the highest level of technical and artistic excellence.

In 2025, **fourteen students** applied, and nine advanced to the finals. Two extraordinary Virtuoso winners earned the honor of performing concertos with the ISO in February—turning their dreams into a standing-ovation reality.

“

What stands out about the parents and teachers in MYO is how genuine everyone is. There's no need to pretend—we can all just be ourselves. It's a welcoming, come-as-you-are environment where we're comfortable, connected, and truly care about one another's children.

– MYO Parent

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BECAUSE OF *YOU...*

the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra and our musicians can share their artistry with the community, inspiring audiences of all ages. Together, we can expand our reach to new venues and beloved spaces across Central Indiana. Every note played, every student encouraged, every gathering in celebration of music, and every moment of joy and discovery is possible because of you. Your generosity empowers the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, bringing unforgettable performances to life and ensuring music reaches far beyond the stage.

Contributions sustain more than one-third of our work, and your support profoundly impacts everything we do. Guided by our renewed mission and vision, we are excited to expand the ISO's reach, deepen our connection with the community, and continue shaping a vibrant future for symphonic music in Central Indiana.

Thank you.





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