

a SEASON⁺ 2025-2026
to REMEMBER



Thank You

from Jun and Jack

Dear Friend of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra,

Because of your generosity, we continued to inspire and unite our community through our music this past season.

Guided by the ISO's strategic plan to make symphonic music more accessible and welcoming, you helped bring the orchestra's artistry beyond the concert hall and into communities across Central Indiana. From unforgettable performances at Hilbert Circle Theatre to parks, schools, universities, community venues, and even arenas, your support made it possible to share the excellence of your orchestra with more people across central Indiana than ever before.

That same commitment to artistic excellence remained at the heart of every performance. During the 2025–26 season, you made it possible to present 146 performances at Hilbert Circle Theatre featuring internationally acclaimed guest artists alongside the remarkable musicians of the ISO. Every concert reflected hundreds of hours of rehearsal, preparation, and dedication, creating inspiring musical experiences for longtime patrons while welcoming thousands of first-time attendees.

Beyond the stage, your investment created new opportunities for people to experience symphonic music. Through collaborations with organizations including Butler University, the University of Indianapolis, Sphinx Organization, Indianapolis Ballet, and Indy Parks, as well as education programs that reached thousands of students, you helped remove barriers and invite people of all ages to experience the joy of live orchestral music.

The pages that follow celebrate what your generosity made possible this season. We are deeply grateful for your belief in the power of music and your commitment to ensuring that exceptional music is experienced by everyone.

With gratitude,

Jun Märkl, *Music Director*, and Jack Everly, *Principal Pops Conductor*

45
STAFF MEMBERS

The
People
of the ISO

41
CORPORATE SPONSORS

76
CURRENT FULL-TIME,
PROFESSIONAL MUSICIANS

160
VOLUNTEERS

31
FOUNDATION/GOVERNMENT PARTNERS

AND

3
LIBRARIANS

30,000
VOLUNTEER HOURS

4,200
INDIVIDUAL DONORS

80
FORTE MEMBERS

10,300
ISOA VOLUNTEER HOURS

420
NONPROFIT AND COMMUNITY
ORGANIZATIONS SERVED THROUGH
TICKET DONATIONS



“Live music enriches everyone who experiences it. As ISO musicians, we are proud to bring high-quality performances and educational experiences to people throughout Central Indiana. From families enjoying a night at Hilbert Circle Theatre to students in the Metropolitan Youth Orchestra, communities gathered at local high schools, and friends enjoying our outdoor concerts, we have the privilege of sharing music with people in so many different settings. It is incredibly rewarding to know that the artistry we share can create meaningful experiences that stay with people long after the performance is over.”

— MITCHELL BALLESTER, CONTRABASS, LIBRARY ASSISTANT

Guided by our Strategic Plan

The ISO's mission is to inspire and unite our community through our music. Since adopting our strategic plan in October 2024, that mission has guided every decision we make as we look toward our centennial in 2030. From presenting innovative artistic experiences and expanding community partnerships to investing in education, accessibility, and the future of Hilbert Circle Theatre, our strategic plan's goals continue to shape the ISO's work every day.

Throughout this report, look for the icons on the right highlighting stories and accomplishments connected to each of our three strategic priorities.

Together, they illustrate the meaningful progress made possible by your generosity as we continue building a vibrant future for the ISO.

THREE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:



**Innovate, Collaborate,
and Strengthen Capacity**



**Prioritize Community
Engagement and Advocacy**



Improve Our Facility



Jun Märkl: Leading the ISO Forward

Music Director **Jun Märkl** continues to elevate the ISO's artistic excellence through a deep commitment to connecting with audiences. This season, his vision came to life through performances, including the Rachmaninoff Piano Concertos and monumental works such as Mahler's "Resurrection" Symphony highlighting the extraordinary artistry and versatility of ISO musicians.

Whether introducing a piece from the podium or leading the *Into the Music* series, Jun invites audiences to discover the stories behind the music. His thoughtful approach welcomes both longtime classical listeners and those hearing these works for the first time.

Jun's impact extends far beyond the concert stage. Through his leadership and the musicians he has recruited for the orchestra, he is shaping the ISO's sound for generations to come. Thanks to the generosity of donors, that vision continues to inspire audiences today and to build an even stronger future for the orchestra.



Jack Everly & Enrico Lopez-Yañez: Continuing the Tradition of Excellence

For more than three decades, Principal Pops Conductor **Jack Everly** has shaped the ISO's signature Pops experience with an unwavering commitment to showcasing the extraordinary talent of the orchestra's musicians. Whether leading beloved holiday traditions or innovative concert experiences, Jack's passion for the orchestra shines through every performance, inviting audiences to experience the skill, brilliance, and joy of the musicians on stage.

This season also highlighted a unique collaboration between Jack and Principal Guest Conductor of Pops **Enrico Lopez-Yañez** during the AES Indiana *Yuletide Celebration*. For the Clare Couture fashion show, Jack arranged the orchestral score while Enrico created an original electronic dance track that blended symphonic tradition with contemporary energy. Their partnership demonstrated the creative possibilities of Pops programming and the ways orchestral music continues to evolve.



Hannah Schendel Joins the ISO

The ISO welcomed **Hannah Schendel** as Assistant Conductor for the 2025–26 season, bringing a new artistic voice to the orchestra and community.

“It’s an honor to join the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra,” said Hannah.

During her first season with the ISO, Hannah conducted **26 performances and programs**, including concerts with student musicians through Side-by-Side, Discovery Concerts that reached thousands of Indiana students, special performances, and community events. She also provided artistic support for Music Director **Jun Märkl** and guest conductors.

“I enjoy the sense of community and camaraderie that has been fostered here. It’s rare to be able to work with a group of such talented and hard-working musicians, but it is even rarer to be able to work in such a genuinely warm and supportive environment.”

— BRYSON KARRER, VIOLIN

The Musicians of the ISO

ISO + ISO MUSICIANS REACH AGREEMENT



The ISO and its musicians ratified a three-year labor agreement, marking a new chapter of collaboration and shared commitment to the orchestra's future. The agreement covers the 78 musicians and librarians represented by the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra Players Association (ISOPA) and Local 3 of the American Federation of Musicians (AFM), reflecting a strong partnership between the organization and the musicians who bring the ISO's performances to life. Together, they continue working to inspire audiences and strengthen the ISO's role as a leader in the arts community.

PATCH AWARD WINNER



Each season, a musician is recognized for leading both on and off the stage. This year, First Violin **Vincent Meklis** received the Renato "Patch" Pacini Leadership Award for his dedication to fellow musicians and the community. From coordinating chamber music performances at Eskenazi Hospital to the annual Riley Christmas Concert, Vincent's kindness shines through in every detail, including his tradition of baking homemade chocolate chip shortbread for the Riley performers.



"I'm very thankful for the warm community the ISO has and enjoy being part of it. I also love that everyone here strives for artistic excellence and always wants to give their best for our audience. The diverse programming—pops, film, classical, ballet, collaborations with major competitions, and all the other series—also excites me every week!"

— ZHANBO ZHENG, VIOLA

AUSTIN HUNTINGTON + A 1695 GUARNERI CELLO



In October 2025, ISO Principal Cellist **Austin Huntington** received an extended loan of the only known cello crafted by Pietro Guarneri of Mantua in 1695. The rare instrument, owned by renowned cellist and pedagogue Ronald Leonard, was loaned to Austin through Rare Violins of New York's "In Consortium" Artists and Benefactors Collaborative program.

For Austin, this cello represents a lifelong musical connection. Having studied with Leonard as a young musician, he grew up listening to this instrument and developing his artistry alongside its extraordinary sound. "I am beyond honored to be entrusted with this cello," said Austin. "This is the very sound I imagine when I think of the perfect cello."

This remarkable opportunity reflects the exceptional artistry and caliber of the musicians who bring the ISO stage to life.



146

PERFORMANCES AT HILBERT
CIRCLE THEATRE

358

REHEARSAL HOURS
PREPARING FOR THE STAGE

152

REHEARSALS BRINGING
PROGRAMS TO LIFE

45

GUEST SOLOISTS JOINED
THE ISO

18

GUEST CONDUCTORS
COLLABORATED WITH THE
ORCHESTRA

9

KROGER SYMPHONY ON
THE PRAIRIE ORCHESTRA
PERFORMANCES

1

WORLD PREMIERE PRODUCTION

Phenomenal Queen: Coretta Scott King by James Lee III, performed by
ISO and Angela Brown, conducted by Anthony Parnter.







Removing Barriers

The ISO continues to create more opportunities for children and families, students, and firsttime concertgoers to experience classical music.

Here are some of the ways we're making the orchestra more accessible to our community:

- The Access Pass program offers eligible participants \$5 tickets to Classical and select Pops concerts, while \$15 student tickets make performances more accessible for young adults.
- Children ages 6–18 can attend Classical Series concerts free with the purchase of an adult ticket, making it easier for families to enjoy the music together.
- Through the Prelude Pass program, groups of 10 to 30 people who have not previously attended an ISO Classical Series concert can experience a concert at no charge, connect with ISO musicians and the conductor when available, and receive 50% off a future classical concert.

495

ACCESS PASS TICKETS

7,800

STUDENT TICKETS

50

GROUPS USED THE PRELUDE PASS PROGRAM
(700 TICKETS!)

*These efforts are helping more people discover that **the orchestra is a place for them.***



"I think the ISO is doing a fantastic job of making classical music more accessible through programs like our free "Into the Music" concerts with Music Director Jun Märkl. These programs introduce audiences to major repertoire by breaking down the music and explaining the composer's intent and story. I've learned a great deal from performing in these concerts myself, and it's exciting to see audiences engage so deeply with the music."

— CLAIRE THAI, HARP

New Initiatives and Continued Partnerships



ISO INTO THE MUSIC WITH JUN MÄRKL

The ISO's *Into the Music* free series invited audiences to discover the stories behind works by Strauss, Debussy, and Schumann through engaging discussions with Music Director **Jun Märkl**, hosted by **Ryan Ahlwardt**. Jun and Ryan explored the composers, the inspiration behind each work, and what audiences could listen for, giving concertgoers a deeper appreciation of the music before the orchestra performed.



ISO + BUTLER UNIVERSITY AND UNIVERSITY OF INDIANAPOLIS

Through partnerships with Butler University and the University of Indianapolis, the ISO presented **eight free chamber** performances on campuses throughout the season, featuring string quartets, brass quintets, and other small ensembles of ISO musicians.

The four-concert ISO at Butler Series was hosted by ISO Concertmaster and Butler JCA Artist-in-Residence **Kevin Lin**. The ISO at UIndy Series featured four additional performances at the Christel DeHaan Fine Arts Center, bringing ISO musicians directly to the university community.



ISO + INDIANAPOLIS BALLET

The Indianapolis Ballet and the ISO continued their celebrated artistic partnership with a full-length production of *The Sleeping Beauty*, bringing Tchaikovsky's beloved score to life with the ISO under the direction of **Jack Everly**. Building on the success of previous collaborations, the production showcased the exceptional talent and shared artistic vision of two of Indianapolis' leading cultural institutions. Special thanks to the **Allen Whitehill Clowes Charitable Foundation** for making this collaboration possible.



ISO + SPHINX

The ISO was honored to once again partner with the Sphinx Organization, bringing ISO musicians together with emerging Black and Latinx classical artists for a free, four-concert series of chamber and orchestral music. Performances took place at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Phillips Temple CME Church, Madam Walker Theatre, and Hilbert Circle Theatre, bringing audiences closer to artists and repertoire that reflect the wide-ranging voices shaping classical music today.



ISO + PASIC + MUSIC FOR ALL

A spectacular one-night-only concert at Hilbert Circle Theatre celebrated the shared 50th anniversary of the Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC) and Music For All. Assistant Conductor **Hannah Schendel** led the ISO in a program featuring world-renowned percussionists **Michael Burritt** and **Ivan Trevino**, highlighted by the world premiere of an original work alongside Shostakovich's *Festive Overture* and Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*.



THE ISO EXPLORES THE ART OF GAMER MUSIC

The ISO expanded the possibilities of orchestral storytelling through *FINAL FANTASY XIV & XVI*, featuring music by renowned composer **Masayoshi Soken**. Performed by the ISO with the IU Jacobs School of Music NOTUS Choir, conductor **Arnie Roth**, and vocalist **Amanda Achen**, the multimedia concert brought the beloved video game series to life through orchestra, visuals, and storytelling.

The ISO also welcomed nearly 40 students from Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology's ludomusicology course, which explores the history and artistry of video game music. Students received a behind-the-scenes look at how conductors and musicians prepare for live multimedia performances, connecting their classroom studies with the work happening on stage.

Donors Fuel Innovation On and Off the Stage

Innovation comes to life in many ways at the ISO, and donor support makes it possible. The co-commission of Joan Tower's *Love Returns* reflects the orchestra's commitment to bringing new music to life and ensuring the orchestral repertoire continues to grow for future generations. Alongside sponsorship of Rachmaninoff's piano concertos, investment in the Auracast Assistive Listening System, and support for Metropolitan Youth Orchestra program resources, these gifts strengthen every part of the ISO's mission.





AES Indiana *Yuletide Celebration*

The 2025 AES Indiana *Yuletide Celebration* featured the return of a rarely used format for the ISO: two co-hosts sharing the stage for the evening. Broadway star **Ashley Brown** made her *Yuletide* debut alongside **Curtis Bannister**, who returned after appearing as a Featured Artist in 2024 to take on his new role as Co-Host.

The season also celebrated the remarkable legacy of costume designer **Clare Henkel** as she concluded 24 years of bringing the magic of *Yuletide* to life. Through *Clare Couture*, a special fashion show featuring some of her most memorable designs, audiences celebrated the lasting impact of her work and the unforgettable role she played in making *Yuletide* a cherished holiday tradition.





SYMPHONY IN THE PARKS

Symphony in the Parks brought the orchestra into two beloved Indy Parks, welcoming audiences to enjoy live music under the summer sky. Despite the summer heat, 500 people gathered at Garfield Park, and over 750 people came out for the long-awaited return to Ellenberger Park on Indianapolis' Eastside. The 2026 *Symphony in the Parks* series was made possible through support from the Margot L. Eccles Arts & Culture Fund, a CICF Fund, with premier sponsorship from the Indianapolis Colts, Inc., and support from the Indy Arts Council and the City of Indianapolis.



ISO in the Community

The ISO connected with more than 50,000 people through performances, festivals, school visits, and community events across Central Indiana. These appearances introduced new audiences to the orchestra while strengthening connections throughout our community.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS & EVENTS: A FEW HIGHLIGHTS

AMERICAN DAIRY ASSOCIATION INDIANA ICE CREAM SOCIAL

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF CENTRAL INDIANA CAREER EXPO

BROWNSBURG HIGH SCHOOL **ESKENAZI HEALTH MARIANNE TOBIAS MUSIC PROGRAM**

FAST FORWARD INDY **INDY PRIDE FESTIVAL** **INDYVOLVED**

IU HEALTH SIMON CANCER CENTER COMPLETELIFE ART SHOW

IU INDIANAPOLIS NONPROFIT EXPO **LAWRENCE CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL**

PENROD ARTS FAIR **ST. LUKE'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

UKRAINIAN SCHOOL FUNDRAISER **500 FESTIVAL KIDS DAY**



Music Starts Here

From first concerts to center stage, classical music opens new possibilities. This season, more than **12,600 people** across Indiana found new ways to listen, learn, create, and connect through the ISO. Along the way, young listeners discovered the joy of a live performance, students found confidence onstage and community members made music alongside professional musicians.

Every experience is an invitation to discover something new and find a place in the music.

“The Discovery Concert was excellent! The performance was beautiful, and the learning packets provided prior to the show were excellent learning sources. We really enjoyed learning about the different composers and the history of the music. We look forward to attending another show. Thank you very much for a wonderful experience!”

— TEACHER

2025-2026

223

STUDENTS IN GRADES K–12 BUILT RESILIENCE, LEADERSHIP AND CONFIDENCE THROUGH THE METROPOLITAN YOUTH ORCHESTRA (MYO) PRESENTED BY BANK OF AMERICA.

Education **Highlights**

47

STUDENT MUSICIANS FROM 17 SCHOOLS PERFORMED ALONGSIDE ISO MUSICIANS ON THE HILBERT CIRCLE THEATRE STAGE THROUGH THE SIDE-BY-SIDE PROGRAM.

9,088

STUDENTS AND TEACHERS FROM 18 COUNTIES EXPERIENCED LIVE SYMPHONIC MUSIC THROUGH DISCOVERY CONCERTS PRESENTED BY COMMUNITY HEALTH NETWORK, ALONG WITH ASL INTERPRETATION AND BILINGUAL CURRICULUM.

500+

STUDENTS TOOK PART IN BEHIND-THE-SCENES AND HANDS-ON LEARNING EXPERIENCES THROUGH HALL PASS, FROM THEATRE TOURS AND SCHOOL VISITS TO INTERACTIVE PERFORMANCES WITH ISO MUSICIANS.

99

COMMUNITY MUSICIANS, INCLUDING 28 EDUCATORS, PERFORMED ALONGSIDE THE ISO THROUGH CLASSICAL JAM.

2,600+

CHILDREN, AGES 3–6, DISCOVERED ORCHESTRAL INSTRUMENTS THROUGH STORY AND SONG IN THE TEDDY BEAR SERIES.

130

ATTENDEES MET ISO MUSICIANS AND GUEST ARTISTS AND PARTICIPATED IN INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCES THROUGH FIRST THURSDAYS.



Celebrating 30 Years of the Metropolitan Youth Orchestra

MYO celebrated its 30th anniversary, marking three decades of helping young musicians develop their skills, confidence, and connection to music. Serving 223 students and their families, MYO continued to expand beyond traditional orchestra instruction through weekly lessons, ensemble experiences, and programming that supports students both on and off the stage.

The anniversary season featured a special performance at Hilbert Circle Theatre with The String Queens, the premiere of a commissioned work by MYO alumnus **Alex McGrath**, and the publication of *A Symphony of Surprises*, a children's book celebrating the MYO journey.

As MYO looks toward its next 30 years, the program continues to create pathways for young musicians to discover their voice through music.



“MYO has been a godsend in that it has challenged our son. He has wanted to play violin since he was very young. MYO has taken his skills to the next level.”

— LENA CARLTON, MYO PARENT



Hilbert Circle Theatre: A Gathering Place for Indianapolis

Throughout the year, Hilbert Circle Theatre welcomed the community in ways that extended beyond the concert stage. The theatre served as a gathering place for organizations, industry leaders, and community partners, hosting events such as the American Dairy Association Ice Cream Social, the League of Historic American Theatres conference, and the International Association of Venue Managers conference. The theatre also welcomed MSA Safety's Fire Department Instructors Conference (FDIC International), bringing firefighters and public safety professionals from across the country to downtown Indianapolis. Through these gatherings and more, the ISO shared its historic home with guests from across the city and beyond.



"Music has been important to us all our lives. The ISO gives us world-class performances that we cherish and would be bereft without."

— ISO DONOR





Because of your generosity, the ISO and our musicians can share the power of symphonic music with audiences throughout Central Indiana.

We are grateful to the donors, sponsors, grantors, volunteers, and partners who believe in the impact of the ISO and the role music plays in our community.

As we look ahead to our centennial in 2030, your support helps shape an exciting next chapter for the ISO. Guided by our mission to inspire and unite through our music, we look forward to reaching new milestones as we celebrate the ISO's next century together.

Thank you.

INDIANAPOLIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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