

CMC CLASSICAL MUSIC CHICAGO

2025–26 IMPACT REPORT



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GRACE HUDSON-MAIRET, PROGRAM SUPPORT INTERN

A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND BOARD PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

As we reflect on 2025–26, we are grateful for the community that makes Classical Music Chicago (CMC) possible. Throughout the year, CMC brought free, exceptional classical music to audiences across Chicago—from weekly Dame Myra Hess Concerts and summer Rush Hour Concerts to performances in Chicago Public Schools and community settings serving older adults. CMC's programs connect Chicago audiences with exceptional musicians at every stage of their careers—from emerging artists building their professional lives to established Chicago performers. At the heart of every program are the artists who share their talent with our audiences and the supporters who make those experiences possible.

This year also marked an important period of growth and renewal for CMC. We continued to expand our reach beyond traditional concert venues, deepen our commitment to emerging musicians, and build a stronger community of people who believe that classical music should be accessible to everyone.

As we look ahead to 2026-27, we are especially excited to celebrate 50 years of the Dame Myra Hess Concerts. This milestone gives us an opportunity to honor the artists, audiences, and supporters who have shaped CMC's history while looking toward the next generation.

We invite you to join us in celebrating this remarkable legacy—and in helping shape what comes next.

With gratitude,

Mark Riggleman
Executive Director



Will McGrath
Board President



108
Free Concerts

2025–26 IMPACT AT A GLANCE

A year of opening the door to the transformative power of classical music.

171
Individual Artists Featured



40
School Performances



8 Performances in Senior Centers and Nursing Homes

45
Live Radio Broadcasts



37,000+
People Reached In-Person and Online

A HISTORY OF CONNECTING ARTISTS AND AUDIENCES

1976

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FOUNDATION [IMF] IS FOUNDED
Al Booth establishes IMF with a mission of bringing exceptional classical music to Chicago audiences.

1977

DAME MYRA HESS CONCERTS BEGIN
The first free Wednesday lunchtime concert launches what becomes CMC's longest-running program.

1982

YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONCERTS BEGIN
CMC's long-running commitment to introducing young people to live classical music begins—formerly known as *Live Music Now*.

2000

RUSH HOUR CONCERTS LAUNCH
Deborah Sobol creates a new free summer concert series bringing chamber music to Chicago audiences.

2000s

TWO ORGANIZATIONS, GROWING IMPACT
Both IMF and Rush Hour expand opportunities for musicians and audiences.

2016

TWO LEGACIES BECOME ONE
International Music Foundation and Rush Hour Concerts merge, bringing their programs, audiences, artists, and expertise together under one organization.

2016–21

BUILDING ON TWO TRADITIONS
Dame Myra Hess Concerts, Rush Hour Concerts, and Young People's Concerts continue, while CMC expands its reach through live performance and digital access.

2022

CLASSICAL MUSIC CHICAGO IS BORN
International Music Foundation adopts the name Classical Music Chicago, reflecting its commitment to making classical music more accessible to Chicago audiences.

2023–24

MUSIC BEYOND THE CONCERT HALL
Concerts for Well-Being and Rejuvenation expand CMC's work into senior centers, healthcare settings, and community organizations.

2024–25

A BROADER VISION FOR CMC
CMC expands its mission, making classical music more accessible to all while supporting and showcasing the next generation of classical musicians.

2025–26

LOOKING TOWARD THE NEXT 50 YEARS
CMC prepares to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Dame Myra Hess Concerts in 2026–27.

Presented throughout the year, this series provides a professional platform for exceptional young artists at the beginning of their careers, introducing audiences to musicians who are poised to become the next generation of classical music leaders.

DAME MYRA HESS CONCERTS

For nearly 50 years, the Dame Myra Hess Concerts have offered Chicago audiences a weekly opportunity to experience exceptional classical music—free of charge. Presented throughout the year, this series provides a professional platform for exceptional young artists at the beginning of their careers, introducing audiences to musicians who are poised to become the next generation of classical music leaders.

For longtime audience member Deneen, the concerts have become much more than a weekly performance. She first discovered CMC in 2016, at a time when she was looking for something that would "make my heart sing again." With no previous exposure to classical music, she gradually developed an appreciation for the music through the concerts and the people she met through CMC.

Today, she values both the quality of the performances and the opportunity to discover emerging artists and composers she might not otherwise encounter. "This truly is quality classical music," she says. She also looks forward to the camaraderie among the regular audience members who return week after week.

BY THE NUMBERS

48
Number of Concerts

9,968
Number of Audience Members In-Person

15,793
Number of Audience Members Online

92
Number of Artists

45
Number of Radio Broadcasts

RUSH HOUR CONCERTS

Each summer, Classical Music Chicago's Rush Hour Concerts bring free chamber music to Chicago audiences from June through August. This series combines the artistry of established Chicago musicians and exceptional emerging artists, creating opportunities for audiences to experience exceptional performers in an inviting, accessible setting.

For violinist Eric Gratz, performing for a free and open audience carries a particular responsibility—and opportunity. He believes audiences should be both welcomed by familiar works and challenged by music that expands their expectations. "We don't need to underestimate the potential of new audience members to enjoy different pieces of classical music," he says.

That spirit of discovery resonates with longtime audience member Tom, who describes Rush Hour as "a relaxing cap to the day and an uplifting start to the evening." He appreciates performances that range from classical favorites to works that "push my boundaries," as well as pre-concert talks that offer context and invite listeners to listen more deeply.

Together, these perspectives capture what Rush Hour makes possible: a welcoming entry point to chamber music, meaningful opportunities for artists, and a shared experience that encourages audiences to return, explore, and discover something new.



Presented throughout the summer, this series brings together exceptional emerging and established Chicago musicians, offering audiences an inviting opportunity to experience outstanding chamber music and discover new artists and repertoire.

BY THE NUMBERS

12
Number of Concerts

3,101
Number of Audience Members In-Person

4,207
Number of Audience Members Online

62
Number of Artists

BY THE NUMBERS

40

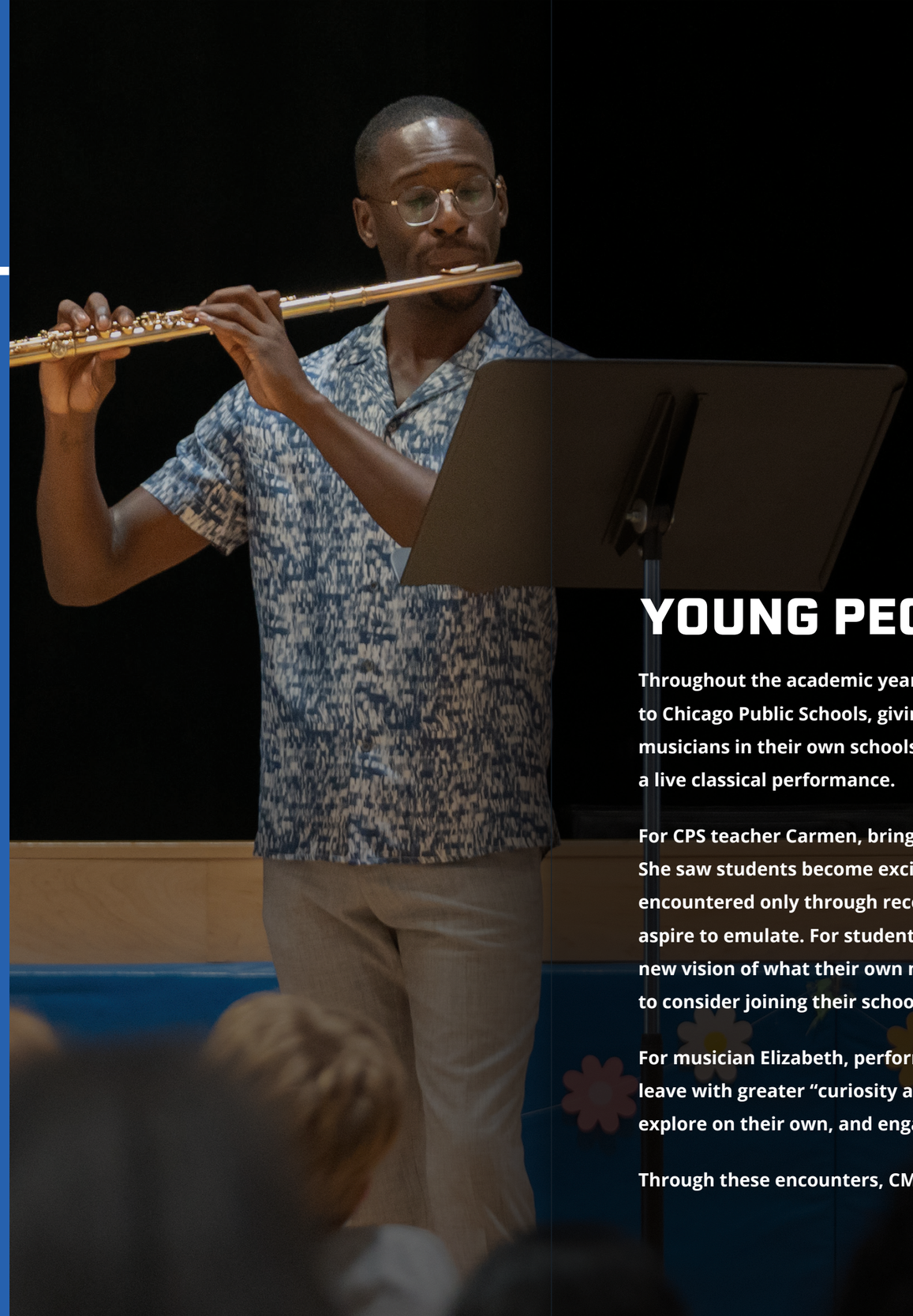
Number of Concerts

3,672

Number of Audience Members In-Person

19

Number of Artists



Classical Music Chicago brings classical musicians directly to Chicago Public Schools, giving students the opportunity to experience professional musicians—many for the first time.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONCERTS

Throughout the academic year, Classical Music Chicago brings classical musicians directly to Chicago Public Schools, giving students the opportunity to experience professional musicians in their own schools. For many students, it may be their first opportunity to hear a live classical performance.

For CPS teacher Carmen, bringing the concert to her students was “an awesome experience.” She saw students become excited not only by hearing instruments they had previously encountered only through recordings, but also by seeing professional musicians they could aspire to emulate. For students already playing in school bands, the experience offered a new vision of what their own musicianship could become—and encouraged other students to consider joining their school’s band.

For musician Elizabeth, performing in schools is equally meaningful. She hopes students leave with greater “curiosity and excitement” about music and a desire to try instruments, explore on their own, and engage with music throughout their lives.

Through these encounters, CMC helps open the door to music, inspiration, and possibility.

CONCERTS FOR WELL-BEING & REJUVENATION

Through Concerts for Well-Being & Rejuvenation, Classical Music Chicago brings the experience of live classical music directly to communities throughout Chicago, reaching audiences in senior centers, residential communities, and nursing homes. During the 2025–26 season, CMC presented concerts at Central West Senior Center, Self-Help Home, Southwest Senior Center, West Town Senior Center, Connecting Edgewater, and Sunrise of Lincoln Park.

By bringing professional musicians into these welcoming community settings, CMC makes live music accessible to people who may face barriers to attending traditional concert venues. The program creates opportunities to experience the joy and connection of a live performance close to home, while bringing CMC's artists into direct contact with new audiences.

From neighborhood senior programs to residential care communities, these concerts extend CMC's reach beyond the concert hall and demonstrate how music can enrich everyday life. By meeting audiences where they are, CMC is helping make the transformative power of classical music available to more Chicagoans.

By bringing professional musicians into these welcoming community settings, CMC makes live music accessible to people who may face barriers to attending traditional concert venues.

BEYOND THE CONCERT HALL

Reaching audiences in communities throughout Chicago.

- Central West Senior Center
- Self-Help Home
- Southwest Senior Center
- West Town Senior Center
- Connecting Edgewater
- Sunrise of Lincoln Park

BY THE NUMBERS

8
Number of Concerts

302
Number of Audience Members In-Person

19
Number of Artists

INVESTING IN CLASSICAL MUSIC CHICAGO

In 2025–26, CMC supporters came together in many ways. Our annual fundraiser raised nearly $50,000, while individual gifts throughout the year helped sustain CMC's programs and expand our reach across Chicago.

Every year, Classical Music Chicago brings world-class musicians to Chicago audiences free of charge. Donors make that possible—supporting the artists who bring the music to life, sustaining free concerts and community programs, and helping CMC reach new audiences.

INVEST IN THE ARTISTS

Artist sponsorships provide direct support to the musicians who perform for CMC audiences, giving emerging artists an important professional platform while helping keep concerts free. Donors may sponsor a specific Dame Myra Hess or Rush Hour Concert, or support CMC's work more broadly. Every gift helps make the music possible.

INTRODUCING THE CMC MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

- Choose your circle. Deepen your connection. Shape CMC's future.
- Our new membership program recognizes the community of supporters who make CMC possible and offers new ways to connect with our artists, programs, and mission.
- Whether your priority is keeping concerts free, supporting artists, reaching new audiences, or investing in CMC's future, there is a membership circle designed for you.

SUSTAINER CIRCLE | UP TO $249

Keep classical music free and accessible.

Recognition in the CMC community, weekly email blasts, season announcements, and quarterly artist and concert stories

ADVOCATE CIRCLE | $250–$499

Be an active supporter of Chicago's cultural life.

All Sustainer benefits, plus recognition in program booklets and the annual Impact Report, and exclusive member updates

PATRON CIRCLE | $500–$999

Help sustain multiple concerts each season.

All Advocate benefits, plus a mailed Impact Report, annual donor coffee invitation, and priority communications

LEADERSHIP CIRCLE | $1,000–$2,499

Underwrite artistic excellence and access.

All Patron benefits, plus a personalized annual impact summary and invitation to an annual donor briefing

ARTIST SPONSOR CIRCLE | $2,500–$4,999

Support a specific artistic experience.

All Leadership benefits, plus the opportunity to sponsor a Dame Myra Hess or Rush Hour Concert, recognition in concert materials, personalized acknowledgment, and reserved seating at Hess concerts

VISIONARY CIRCLE | $5,000–$19,999

Sustain free classical music throughout Chicago.

All Artist Sponsor benefits, plus prominent recognition, an annual leadership luncheon and strategic briefing, and opportunities to engage with CMC's priorities

LEGACY CIRCLE | $20,000+

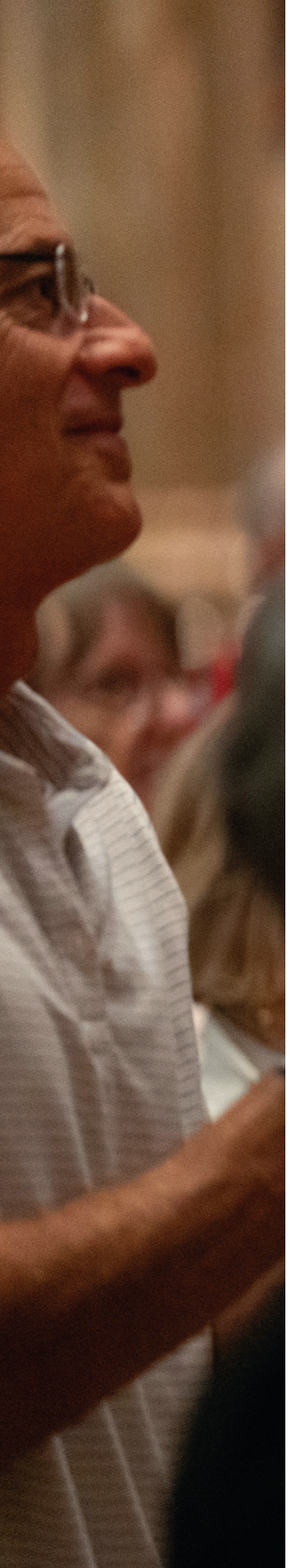
Shape the future of CMC for generations.

All Visionary benefits, plus customized recognition, leadership briefings, and opportunities to engage in long-term strategic initiatives

MAKE AN IMPACT

Choose your circle.
Deepen your connection.
Shape CMC's future.





A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS.

Supporting the artists who bring music to life.

Legacy Circle ($20,000+)

Paul Angell Foundation
National Endowment for the Arts

Visionary Circle ($5,000 to $19,999)

Anonymous
Anonymous
Deborah Allen
Rowland Chang
Carl and Rosemary Gilmore
Illinois Arts Council
Irving Harris Foundation
John R. Halligan Charitable Fund
Loretta Julian
Will and Laura McGrath
Robert and Isabelle Bass Foundation, Inc.
Alexander Templeton

Artist Sponsor Circle ($2,500 to $4,999)

Rosalind Britton
John Covell and Constance Frydenlund
Gary Lawler
Richard Lipman and Debra Green
Guadalupe Simpson
The Saints

Leadership Circle ($1,000 to $2,499)

Anonymous
Joan Bieler and David Craig
Mary Cameron-Gray and Doug Gray
Nancy Dehmlow
Mark and Laura Fisher
Kathleen Gruber
Patricia Heimann
Jeff Kessler and Paul Mennen
Robert Kohl and Clark Pellett
Laurence Leive

Leadership Circle ($1,000 to $2,499) (cont)

David McCoy and Georgianne Urban
Jeffrey Modell
Karole Mourek
Ann Perce
in memory of Hyde Crandell Perce
Joyce and Richard Prince
Hedy Ratner
Heather Refetoff
Sahara Enterprises, Inc. Fund at
The Chicago Community Foundation
Tom and Pam Sheffield
in honor of Deborah Sobol
Gloria Kot and Gintaras Vaisnys
Manuel Valderrama
Thomas Weiss and Priscilla Read
Carol Wilkinson
Debra Yates

Patron Circle ($500 to $999)

Victor Asuncion
Anita Balodis
Norma Bramsen
Arthur Frank
Allisa Gam
Lee Hamilton and Tom Pado
Larry Hanes
Kathryn Hansen and Mark Kornegay
Anne Heekin
Jeremy Kazan and Kendra Thulin
Claudette and Paul Kolosowski
Louella Krueger Ward
in memory of Dr. Alan J. Ward
William and Harriet McGrath
Michael Rose
Elisa Ross
Marlon Rucker
Daniel Schiff

We are deeply grateful to the individuals, foundations, and institutions whose generous support made our 2025–26 programs possible. Your contributions help provide exceptional free and accessible classical music to audiences across Chicago. Thank you for being part of the CMC community and bringing music to life.

Patron Circle ($500 to $999) (cont)

Kenneth and Adair Small
Louise K. Smith
Marshall Sparberg
Zina Stephan
Bradley Sterrenberg
John Stocchetti
Andrea Swan
Anne Talluto
Margaret and James Weging
The Susan and Nathan Yost Fund
Emil Zbella

Advocate Circle ($250 to $499)

Sandra Allen
Brett and Carey August
Nancy Bryan
Diane Buckley
Janet Carl Smith and Mel Smith
Ellen Carnahan
Penelope Crittenden
Judith Falconer and E. John Saliba,
Cheryl Flinn and Wayne Christenson
Ben C. George
John Gill
Tad Gray
Hill and Cheryl Hammock
Paulette Hasier
Deneen Hesser
Honig/Weiss Family Charitable Fund
Jeff Jones and Kerry Ito
Sunwoong Kim
Karen Luckritz
Anne and Albert Menard
Hannah and Bill Metzger
Patrice Michaels and Jim Ginsburg
Susan Noel
Scott and Carrie Palmer

Advocate Circle ($250 to $499) (cont)

Beverly Perret
Richard Ryba
Keith Schuler
Pamela Semanik
Alejandra Ullauri
Joanne Volakakis
Mildred Zebrak

Sustainer Circle ($1 to $249)

We are profoundly grateful to the many supporters who contributed below $250—your generosity makes it possible for Classical Music Chicago to share world-class music freely with our community.

Collaborative Partners / In-Kind Supporters

98.7 WFMT
Jill McBride, Corporate Communications
Holy Name Cathedral
Rush University Medical Center
Seventeenth Church of Christ,
Scientist, Chicago
St. James Cathedral
Steinway & Sons
The Chicago Club
The Saints

Special Funds and Endowment Support

Boshart Lawrence support for the Dame Myra Hess Concerts
The Gore Family Memorial Foundation Trust
Ruth D. and Ken M. Davee Program Support Fund





FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Statement of Activities
Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2026

INCOME

Individual Donations	$124,315
Foundation Grants	$127,125
Government Grants	$38,450
Corporate Gifts	$7,000
Endowment Distribution	$77,179
Other Revenue	$11,227
Interest & Dividends	$71,363
In-Kind Service and Space	$57,800
Total Operating Revenue	**$514,459**

EXPENDITURES

Artist Fees & Concert Expenses	$249,426
Employment Costs	$287,448
Professional Fees	$24,020
Office Costs	$24,262
Other Expenses	$30,581
Total Operating Expenses	**$615,737**

Statement of Financial Position
Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2026

ASSETS

Cash	$57,545
Receivables	$98,250
Restricted Endowment Investments	$2,358,201
Operating Reserves	$417,705
Other Assets	$4,113
Long-Term Assets	$20,828
Total Assets	**$2,956,642**

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Payables	$12,233
Net Assets with Restrictions	$2,518,543
Net Assets without Restrictions	$8,161
Operating Reserves	$417,705
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	**$ 2,956,642**
Net Deficit	**($10,254)**

This year's operating deficit reflects the departure of several longtime major supporters — a reminder of why building a broader, more resilient base of giving is a priority for CMC going forward. Our new membership program, launched this year, is a direct response: growing the number of donors at every level so CMC's future isn't dependent on any single gift.

CMC
DAME MYRA HESS CONCERTS
50TH
ANNIVERSARY SEASON

CELEBRATE WITH US!

DAME MYRA HESS CONCERTS
50TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026–27

THE NEXT 50 YEARS BEGIN HERE

In 2026–27, Classical Music Chicago will celebrate **50 years of the Dame Myra Hess Concerts**. Since the first concert in 1977, the series has provided Chicago audiences with free access to exceptional classical music while giving generations of emerging musicians an important professional platform.

To celebrate this legacy, CMC will welcome five distinguished alumni of the Dame Myra Hess Concerts back to Chicago for a series of **Distinguished Alumni Concerts**. Their return will offer audiences an opportunity to celebrate the extraordinary artists who began their journeys on the Hess stage—and the enduring impact of a program that has connected artists and audiences for five decades.

The next 50 years will not simply be about preserving a tradition. They will be about building on it.

In the coming year, CMC will continue to expand opportunities for emerging artists, bring free summer performances to Chicago through **Rush Hour Concerts**, introduce young people to live classical music through **Young People's Concerts**, and bring music directly into communities through **Concerts for Well-Being & Rejuvenation**.

Together, these programs reflect a broader vision for CMC: a future in which classical music is accessible, relevant, and vital to people throughout Chicago.

Help us launch the next 50 years.

The first 50 years were made possible by people who believed in the power of music. As we begin the next 50, we're inviting new voices to join that legacy through **50 for 50** — our goal to welcome 50 new Patron Circle members at $500 and 50 new Leadership Circle members at $1,000 this season. Your support will help CMC carry this legacy forward — supporting artists, reaching new audiences, and opening the door to the transformative power of classical music for generations to come.



CLASSICAL MUSIC CHICAGO

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