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The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra achieves budget surplus for 2019.20, maintains financial health and continues to share music with community in face of pandemic

- Organization reached the largest audience in its history through live performances and digital concerts
- SPCO added new “encore broadcasts” to its digital concert offerings to continue sharing music during the pandemic
- SPCO and Capri Theater presented the second Northside Celebration
- Three new permanent members began their tenure with the orchestra
- New Artistic Partner Rob Kapilow made his debut
- SPCO premiered four new works while three premieres were canceled or deferred due to COVID
- Engagement at Lincoln Center and performances of Mozart’s Requiem with the St. Olaf Choir were canceled due to the pandemic
- Organization balanced FY20 budget with a surplus of \$74,135 and continued to build Rainy Day Fund
- FY20 financial results will help protect SPCO amid ongoing challenges of the pandemic and economic downturn

Saint Paul, MN, December 16, 2020 — At its Annual Meeting of Members today, The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra (SPCO) announced a balanced budget with an operating surplus of \$74,135 for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2020 (FY20). This balanced budget — the 25th in the past 27 years — continues a long history of financial discipline for the SPCO. Total operating expenses for the period were \$9,678,620. Expenses and revenue both decreased by

approximately 11% compared to the previous fiscal year because of concert cancellations and economic conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of its most recent strategic plan, adopted in 2016, the SPCO has built a Rainy Day Fund designed to protect the organization and allow it to continue to serve the community through economic downturns. The surplus from FY20 was added to the Rainy Day Fund, bringing the fund total to \$762,284. These financial results will help protect the organization in the coming years amid ongoing challenges of the pandemic and economic downturn.

The SPCO's 2019.20 season was cut short as concerts were canceled from mid-March through the end of the season. This led to a reduction in the number of audience members attending concerts in person compared to the previous season, which had been an all-time high. The overall SPCO audience, however, including both in-person concert attendees and those visiting the organization's online Concert Library, reached a record high at 286,950 attendees and Concert Library visits throughout the fiscal year – an increase of nearly 100,000 over the previous season.

The total amount contributed to the Annual Fund in FY20 decreased by 7.2% from the previous year to \$3,558,556. While corporate giving declined significantly due to COVID-19, individual giving remained relatively stable, with a \$50,000 increase in total giving from the division of donors giving \$1,500 or less annually. In total, the SPCO received \$6,457,398 in contributed operating support from individuals, foundations, corporations and institutions. As of the end of FY20, the SPCO's donor base was made up of 5,760 unique households, with 721 donors making recurring monthly gifts as sustainers. In addition to making direct charitable contributions, SPCO patrons supported the organization during the pandemic and economic downturn by continuing their monthly Concert Membership payments and converting nearly 55% of the value of tickets from canceled concerts into donations.

“During this especially challenging time, we are pleased with the positive results we were able to achieve last year thanks to the generous support of our community,” said SPCO Managing Director and President Jon Limbacher. “A commitment to careful financial management allowed us to enter the pandemic in a strong financial position and to respond quickly to the shifting environment. We're grateful for the generosity of our donors who continued to contribute to our Annual Fund in the midst of a crisis and in some cases even gave additional gifts to help us weather this storm, and to all the patrons who turned their ticket purchases into contributions and continued their monthly membership payments after concerts were canceled.”

SHARING MUSIC AND SERVING THE COMMUNITY DURING THE COVID CRISIS

Upon the onset of the COVID pandemic, the SPCO's senior leadership and Board of Directors established three core objectives for navigating the crisis: maintaining the financial health and sustainability of the organization, maintaining employment and compensation for staff and musicians, and adding as much value as possible to the community by sharing music in a safe and responsible manner.

“It is our mission to serve the community by sharing music, and that mission continues even during times of crisis,” said Limbacher. “We are committed to preserving the financial health of the organization so we can continue to share music for many more years to come. We are also striving to maintain our financial commitments to our musicians and staff who perform the concerts and deliver the programs that make our mission come to life. We are so pleased that we’ve been able to achieve these core objectives to date.”

Unable to stream live performances from March through June due to stay home orders, the organization’s digital team created new “encore broadcasts” of concert videos recorded earlier that season and in previous seasons. These broadcasts also featured musician interviews and new “at home” performances by SPCO musicians, including musicians performing with their family members and playing ensemble pieces together virtually via video.

68,531 people attended its 92 concerts in 20 different venues throughout the metro area before the onset of the pandemic. Thousands more experienced the SPCO through its free online Concert Library, which received 89,188 visits prior to the pandemic and 129,231 visits from March to the end of the season. Total annual visits were 218,419, more than 2.5 times higher than the previous season. The orchestra also shared music with several thousand people through its community engagement and education programs, including its CONNECT music education program in 10 Minneapolis and Saint Paul public schools. To support families and educators using the Concert Library as a learning and enrichment tool during the pandemic, the SPCO created an online collection of [engagement resources](#) to accompany digital concerts.

“When we launched our online Concert Library and began livestreaming performances back in 2017, we could not have imagined that one day, the Concert Library would become our only means for delivering on our mission to share music with our community,” said SPCO Artistic Director and Principal Violin Kyu-Young Kim. “We’re so grateful for the initial investment from our generous donors that allowed us to develop our video production infrastructure and technology, and for the ongoing financial support from our community that has allowed us to continue livestreaming performances and providing on-demand concert videos and other engaging digital content during the COVID crisis.”

The SPCO has received numerous notes from viewers expressing their appreciation for free access to the Concert Library and sharing the impact it has had in their lives during this challenging time, including these notes from thankful viewers:

“This is heartbreakingly good. The performance feels incredibly close and brings the joy of the concert experience as near as it can be in these times.”

“We miss you terribly and ache for when we can return to see you perform up close, so until then, we are grateful that we can enjoy your virtual presence.”

“An amazing orchestra with fantastic values; making music available to all, not just the people who can afford to buy an expensive ticket.”

ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENTS

SPCO Musician-led Performances

Firmly established as a primarily uncondacted ensemble led by its own musicians, the SPCO presented 59 uncondacted, musician-led performances in the 2019.20 season prior to the pandemic. Twelve SPCO musicians were featured as soloists with the orchestra, some soloing on multiple programs throughout the season. Several SPCO musicians also performed in small ensembles for SPCO at Icehouse, SPCO at Turf Club, the Chamber Music Series and family programs.

Premieres and Commissions

The SPCO commissioned four pieces last season and planned to perform premieres of seven new works. Four of these works were premiered in the fall and three additional premieres scheduled for April through June were canceled or deferred when concerts were halted due to COVID-19. SPCO Principal Bass Zachary Cohen gave the U.S. premiere of American composer Missy Mazzoli's Contrabass Concerto *Dark with Excessive Bright* on October 31-November 2, and the orchestra premiered Color Preludes for String Orchestra, a newly commissioned work by Stephen Prutsman on November 29-December 1. Concerts on January 10-12 featured U.S. premieres of works by Nico Muhly and Andrea Tarrodi.

The SPCO's Liquid Music Series presented three final projects in the fall of 2019 before the SPCO transferred ownership of the series to its curator Kate Nordstrum. Projects included Minneapolis-based Bharatanatyam dancer/choreographer Ashwini Ramaswamy's *Let the Crows Come*, composer Ted Hearne's theatrical song cycle *In Your Mouth*, and *The Sun Still Burns Here*, a collaboration between Perfume Genius and choreographer Kate Wallich.

Northside Celebration

Celebrating ten years of partnership on the Northside, the SPCO and the Capri Theater presented in January the second Northside Celebration – three collaborative concerts celebrating the North Minneapolis community through music. Performances were held at North Community High School, where tickets were offered free of charge, and at the Ordway Concert Hall. This unique program brought the gospel choral tradition, orchestral music and spoken word together under the thoughtful direction of Sanford Moore, Dennis Spears, Kevin West, Courtland Pickens, Dr. Kristina Boerger and Sherri Orr.

The Northside Celebration brought over 100 artists together on stage, including a Northside Celebration Choir comprised of North Minneapolis community members and Known, Courtland Pickens' community youth choir. The celebration featured familiar works like *The Storm Is Passing Over*, an original work by Sherri Orr and several arrangements for choir and orchestra together. Many pieces on the program were arranged by Sanford Moore, including *The Dream* and *Jesus Lover of My Soul (Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring)*. The program also featured original spoken word by MaLLy and Northside student Amari Wilson.

Debut of New Artistic Partner Rob Kapilow

The SPCO announced a new kind of Artistic Partnership for the 2019.20 season with the appointment of composer and musical commentator Rob Kapilow as the orchestra's newest Artistic Partner. Kapilow is known throughout the music world for his special concert format, *What Makes It Great?*® "the kind of enlightening musical seminar in which you hang on to every word and note" (*The New York Times*). Kapilow helps audiences listen with new ears, taking them deeply inside music from the composer's point of view to hear what makes it tick and what makes it great. He joined the SPCO in March for an in-depth exploration of Ludwig van Beethoven's iconic Seventh Symphony, illuminating both the inner workings of the music and the process by which the SPCO musicians work together as a conductorless ensemble. Kapilow was scheduled to lead this program for two weeks in several of the SPCO's venues around the metro area, but the second week of performances was canceled as the pandemic struck the Twin Cities.

Newly Appointed SPCO Musicians

Three new appointments to the orchestra were announced at the end of the 2018.19 season: Cassie Pilgrim as Principal Oboe, Richard Belcher as a new member of the orchestra's cello section and Eunae Koh as a new violinist with the orchestra. These musicians saw their first official performances in their new positions at the start of the 2019.20 season. Belcher took the spotlight in former SPCO Composer-in-Residence Chen Yi's *Sound of the Five* for solo cello with string quartet in December and Pilgrim joined Concertmaster Steven Copes as soloist on Johann Sebastian Bach's Double Concerto for Oboe and Violin in February.

MAJOR ARTISTIC PROJECTS CANCELED DUE TO PANDEMIC

Lincoln Center's Great Performers Series

The SPCO's scheduled performance in New York City in May 2020 as part of Lincoln Center's 54th Great Performers Series was canceled due to the pandemic. Since its inception, the series has showcased many of the world's most accomplished and inspirational musicians in the concert halls and performance spaces that span the Lincoln Center campus. On May 16, 2020, the SPCO was scheduled to conclude the Great Performers Series in an unperformed performance with violinist and Artistic Partner Pekka Kuusisto.

Mozart's Requiem with the St. Olaf Choir

Another artistic casualty of the pandemic was the cancellation of a planned collaboration between the SPCO and the world-renowned St. Olaf Choir for performances of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Requiem at the Cathedral of Saint Paul and Ordway Concert Hall. Shrouded in mystery and controversy, Requiem is one of Mozart's most famous works. Unfinished at the time of his death, the piece was finished shortly after by Franz Süssmayr, who worked as a copyist for Mozart at the end of his life. The planned program also included additional choral works and famous unfinished works by Franz Schubert and Johann Sebastian Bach.

ARTS PARTNERSHIP COLLABORATION

In early March 2020, the SPCO joined fellow members of the Arts Partnership (the Ordway, Minnesota Opera and Schubert Club) in presenting Sphinx Virtuosi, a chamber ensemble comprised of the nation's top Black and Latinx string soloists, at the Ordway Concert Hall. The Sphinx Organization is dedicated to transforming lives through the power of diversity in the arts, and the Arts Partnership was pleased to collaborate with Sphinx for the fourth consecutive year.

Planned for April 25, the Partnership's third annual Family Arts Blast, a free family event that welcomes hundreds of families to the Ordway Center to participate in a plethora of arts activities and performances, was canceled due to the pandemic.

In addition to collaborating on programming, the members of the Arts Partnership also worked together to raise more than \$785,000 for the Arts Partnership Fund, which on an annual basis provides resources to reduce rent costs for each organization, invest in the upkeep of the Ordway facility and support co-presentations. In FY20, these funds also provided additional resources to maintain the financial health of the Partnership.

The mission of the Arts Partnership is to strengthen its member organizations in service to the community through growing collaboration and stewardship of its shared assets. The partners seek to expand access to the Ordway, to deepen the community's engagement with the art that is created and performed there, and to develop the resources to sustain this beloved community asset for generations to come.

ABOUT THE SAINT PAUL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Renowned for its artistic excellence, remarkable versatility of musical styles and adventurous programming, The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra is widely regarded as one of the finest chamber orchestras in the world. Now in its 62nd season, the SPCO has recently undergone transformational change with the opening of its new home, the Ordway Concert Hall, the addition of a new generation of players, and significant changes in its artistic vision. The SPCO is primarily an uncondensed ensemble that performs a broad range of repertoire from Baroque to new music and works in close collaboration with a dynamic roster of Artistic Partners, whose engagements with the orchestra have been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The virtuoso musicians of the SPCO present more than 100 concerts and educational programs in the Twin Cities each year. The orchestra's free online Concert Library receives more than 330,000 visits annually and offers both live and on-demand videos of concerts that can be viewed anytime, anywhere, completely free of charge. Through its partnership with Classical Minnesota Public Radio, the SPCO is regularly heard on public radio programs that reach nearly 850,000 listeners each week on over 250 stations. Additionally, the SPCO has released 67 recordings, including the 2018 Grammy Award-winning recording of Franz Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* with violinist and former Artistic Partner Patricia Kopatchinskaja. The SPCO has commissioned 150 new works and tours nationally and internationally, including recent

engagements in Europe and New York City, and a prestigious residency with Cal Performances at the University of California, Berkeley.

The SPCO is nationally recognized for its commitment to broad community accessibility and its innovative audience engagement efforts. Regular subscription series are performed in a variety of different venues across the Twin Cities metropolitan area each season, a unique commitment to geographic accessibility for a major orchestra. The SPCO offers the most affordable ticket prices of any professional orchestra in the United States, with over 50 percent of tickets available for \$15 or less, and has expanded accessibility even further by offering free tickets for children and students starting in the 2016.17 season as a part of the New Generation Initiative. The orchestra also offers an innovative ticket membership model in which members pay \$9 per month to attend unlimited concerts. The SPCO's award-winning CONNECT education program reaches over 3,000 students and teachers annually in 10 Minneapolis and Saint Paul public schools, and its Target Free Family Music program provides engaging and educational experiences for thousands of Twin Cities children and families each year.

MISSION OF THE SAINT PAUL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Our mission is to sustain a world-class chamber orchestra at the highest standards of artistic excellence that enriches the Twin Cities community by sharing dynamic, distinctive and engaging performances. We are actively committed to accessibility and intentional inclusivity in all aspects of our work and continually strive to provide all people in our community with opportunities to connect with the music we perform.

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