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**The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra grows in-person audiences since returning to performances at full capacity, fosters creation of new music through Sandbox Composer Residencies, and balances budget while maintaining an accessible pricing model in 2022.23**

- Audience almost doubled in size returning to full capacity live performances in the 2022.23 season, but has not recovered from the pandemic period with overall attendance down by 30%
- Streamed five concerts live from the Ordway Concert Hall and added 27 new pieces to its free on-demand Concert Library, which received 92,318 visits from Minnesota and 316,657 visits worldwide
- Collaborated with the Arts Partnership's pilot season of Ordway Inside Out to host two simulcasts in Rice Park
- Commissioned five new works, including two world premieres by Sandbox composer Viet Cuong
- Welcomed the return of Artistic Partners: British Baroque specialist Richard Egarr, American composer and musical commentator Rob Kapilow, South African cellist Abel Selaocoe, and German violist Tabea Zimmermann
- Celebrated 13 years of partnership with the Capri in North Minneapolis by co-presenting the third iteration of the Northside Celebration featuring 100 collaborating artists
- Continued expansion of mission to make concerts accessible by developing a new, intermission-less concert format: Express Concerts
- Balanced FY23 budget with operating surplus of \$77,600 despite reductions of foundation and corporate giving, as well as lower audience attendance since pre-pandemic
- Continued commitment to accessible pricing with 20,673 tickets being sold for \$15 or less, 12,920 tickets distributed free of charge and 11,819 seats reserved by Concert Members

**Saint Paul, MN, December 5, 2023** — At its Annual Meeting of Members today, The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra (SPCO) announced a balanced budget with an operating surplus of \$77,600 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023 (FY23). This balanced budget — the 28th in the past 30 years — continues a long history of financial discipline for the SPCO.

These positive results come despite a continued shift of corporate and foundation support away from the arts sector and a significant decline in ticket revenue compared to pre-pandemic. These challenges were offset with special one-time gifts which will not be sustainable in the long term.

The organization entered the pandemic in a position of financial health, and the results from FY23 allowed the orchestra to expand its Rainy Day Fund to \$4.54M, providing resources that will be critical to ensuring the organization can maintain financial stability as it continues to navigate the challenges of the pandemic recovery years. The organization expects to draw on its Rainy Day Fund in the years ahead as it rebuilds and expands its core revenue sources including ticket sales, annual giving and income from its endowment.

Total operating expenses for FY23 were \$10,565,362 and total operating revenue for the period was \$10,642,962. The SPCO received \$7,159,851 in contributed operating support for FY23 from individuals, foundations, corporations and institutions, with \$3,235,564 contributed to the Annual Fund. As of the end of FY23, the SPCO's donor base was made up of 5,204 unique households, with 705 donors making recurring monthly sustaining gifts throughout the year.

"We define success as being able to deliver at a high level on our mission to the community while maintaining our financial health," said Managing Director and President Jon Limbacher. "By that definition, this past season was indeed a great success. The hero in this wonderful story is, as always, our devoted community of supporters who make it all possible."

"The 2022.23 season, our first since the pandemic to welcome audiences back to full capacity concerts, saw the SPCO musicians reach new artistic heights with a stellar roster of Artistic Partners, a plethora of musician-led programs and the successful launch of our Sandbox Residency with composer Viet Cuong," said SPCO Artistic Director and Principal Violin Kyu-Young Kim.

## **SHARING MUSIC AND SERVING THE TWIN CITIES COMMUNITY**

After the 2020.21 season where the orchestra was not able to perform for in-person audiences due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the SPCO welcomed live audiences back to performances with social distancing and 50% capacity limits at the Ordway Concert Hall in September 2021 and at its Neighborhood Series venues in March 2022. The 2022.23 season saw a complete return to performances in the orchestra's full range of venues, including the Ordway Concert Hall and the SPCO's many Neighborhood Series venues.

Audiences have nearly doubled in size, growing from 35,559 in the 2021.22 season to 70,895 in the 2022.23 season. While these numbers represent a significant increase in live audience attendance since the beginning of the pandemic, they also mark a 30% audience decrease since the 2018.19 season, which was the SPCO's last full season before the pandemic. A contributing factor to decreased attendance is the loss in subscribers, which made up 45% of pre-pandemic audiences and have decreased by 39% since the 2018.19 season.

The SPCO's commitment to accessible pricing continued through the 2022.23 season with 20,673 tickets being sold for \$15 or less. On top of that, 12,920 tickets were distributed free of charge, of which over 60% were to children and students as part of the SPCO's [New Generation Initiative](#). Another pillar of the SPCO's commitment to accessibility is the \$9/month recurring [Concert Membership](#) program which ended the season with 1,488 Concert Members and 11,819 seats reserved throughout the season.

### **Continued Growth and Commitment to Expanding Access to the Concert Library, Including Simulcasts for Ordway Inside Out**

Changes in audience members' lifestyles and habits through the pandemic reinforced the importance of online streaming as essential to the SPCO's mission to serve its community by expanding access to its performances. During the 2022.23 season, the SPCO streamed five concerts live from the Ordway Concert Hall and added 27 new pieces to its free on-demand [Concert Library](#). Throughout the season, the Concert Library received 92,318 visits from Minnesota and 316,657 visits worldwide.

Through a new partnership with Twin Cities Public Television (TPT), SPCO concerts originally produced for the Concert Library were watched by an estimated 50,000 households across the state on TPT and other Minnesota Public Television Association stations. Minnesota Public Radio's 55th season of SPCO radio broadcasts included four live broadcasts and the recording of dozens of other concerts for the weekly SPCO Spotlight program.

In September 2022, the [Arts Partnership](#) — the nonprofit organization consisting of Minnesota Opera, the Ordway, The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and Schubert Club — announced the pilot season of Ordway Inside Out. This outdoor event series in Rice Park was first launched in FY23 as an Arts Partnership initiative that utilizes digital technology to dramatically increase access to artistic programming in Saint Paul. To date, the SPCO has simulcast two of its concerts being performed in the Ordway Concert Hall to an audience across the street, where community members gathered to watch the concert for free on a giant 23' x 13' video wall. The first stream in Rice Park, which featured an SPCO performance with guest pianist Conrad Tao, drew over 150 people, and the Partnership aimed to increase that number with a four-concert expansion in 2023 that included one performance of each of its member organizations. For its second event with Ordway Inside Out, the SPCO simulcast its 2022.23 season finale with guest conductor Gábor Takács-Nagy. The June event drew 300 attendees in Rice Park, a 200% increase from the first livestream in October 2022.

## **Express Concerts**

After a season of presenting concerts without intermission as a pandemic safety measure in 2021.22, the SPCO resumed full-length concerts with intermission while also offering several weeks of Express Concerts featuring the same amount of music without the intermission. As a way to reduce potential exposure to new and evolving virus variants during the pandemic, Express Concerts were first created to remove intermissions when audience members would typically gather for refreshments between the two halves of a concert. Though born of a commitment to audience, musician and staff safety, this new concert format offers an alternative way for audiences to experience SPCO performances. Audience feedback was overwhelmingly positive regarding the reduced concert time format, which offer many a more accessible way to attend:

*“We like the format of no intermission and a running time that is reasonable.”*

*“Superb guest artist. Loved the fact that there was not an intermission — never understood what people were supposed to [do] for 20 minutes in a church during a break. Please keep doing this.”*

*“One of our very favorites in a long time. Kudos to Maureen Nelson for curating such a unique program of beautiful, but underperformed music. Nelson’s composition was a highlight of the concert. FYI — The express format is a preference for us.”*

*“Loved hearing and experiencing music done from a different culture. Loved the venue and the time 75 minutes no intermission.”*

*“Wonderful. The no-intermission format is a nice variable.”*

*“I renewed for this series next year so I plan to be back. I like how the venue is in my hood and no intermission performances.”*

*“Loved the first movement by a composer I had never heard of. Loved that the concert had a great selection of music but wasn’t too long. Especially liked that the orchestra performed close to my home, in the suburbs! Thank you for coming to us rather than always having to come to the cities, park, then struggle to leave crowded parking ramps ... it was extremely convenient to us and would definitely attend again.”*

## **ARTISTIC PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS**

### **Sandbox Composer Residencies, Premieres and Commissions**

The SPCO commissioned five new pieces in the 2022.23 season. With a commitment to commissioning and programming works by composers who have been historically

underrepresented in orchestra repertoire, two of the pieces premiered in the 2022.23 season were commissioned from Viet Cuong as part of his inaugural SPCO Sandbox Composer Residency in which he collaborated with the orchestra in several workshops during the development of the compositions. Members of the community were invited to an open rehearsal early in the season, where Cuong led a workshop and hosted a Q&A with audience members. The SPCO filmed a [feature](#), which was shared for free via the online Concert Library and offers the community behind-the-scenes insight into the compositional process.

“It really is a dream come true to be able to collaborate this way,” Cuong said. “All these visits, where at first I got to hear the orchestra play, get to know them. They were very outspoken, there was a lot of mutual trust. I could experiment, and tailor things to what that person or section was really good at. I’m just grateful that they took the plunge with me” ([MinnPost](#)).

In addition to Cuong’s works, *Doubling Back* which premiered in September 2022 and *Now and Then* which premiered in November 2022 at the culmination of Cuong’s inaugural Sandbox Residency, the 2022.23 season also brought three additional commissions. In February 2023, the orchestra gave the U.S. premiere of Brett Dean’s Piano Concerto *Gneixendorfer Musik — Eine Winterreise (Gneixendorf Music — A Winter’s Journey)*, a work co-commissioned by the SPCO, Dresden Philharmonic, Orchestre National de Lyon, NFM Wrocław Philharmonic Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony and the BBC, and written as part of the SPCO’s Beethoven/5 commissioning project. In March 2023, Artistic Partner Richard Egarr returned to conduct Stephen Hartke’s cello concerto *Da Pacem*, performed by SPCO Principal Cello Julie Albers and co-commissioned by Oberlin College and Conservatory; the SPCO; Aspen Music Festival and School, Robert Spano, Music Director; and American Composers Orchestra. In the 2022.23 season finale, SPCO Principal Clarinet Sang Yoon Kim gave the world premiere of a commissioned arrangement by Geoffrey Gordon of Claude Debussy’s *Première rhapsodie*.

In addition to its commissions, the orchestra also focused its efforts on arranging works for chamber orchestra to highlight the strengths and personalities of its musicians. Arrangements in the 2022.23 season included Stephen Prutsman’s *Three Songs of Duke Ellington for Chamber Orchestra*, an arrangement of Ellington’s *Blue Pepper* and *Bluebird of Delhi* made possible by support from Michael Hostetler and Erica Pascal; Jonathan Posthuma’s arrangements of Artistic Partner Abel Selaoe’s works *Ibuliye I’Africa/Africa is Back*, *Roaming Pulses in 11/8*, *Tanzanian Blue*, and *Kea Mo Rata*; Posthuma’s arrangement of Ludwig van Beethoven’s *Heiliger Dankgesang*; and a collaborative arrangement of Cristóbal de Morales’ *‘Parce mihi, Domine’* from *Officium Defunctorum* between Selaoe and Posthuma.

The 2022.23 season also brought a renewed focus on the artistic leadership of the orchestra’s own musicians. In the SPCO’s unique musician-led artistic model, members of the orchestra are deeply engaged in every aspect of the organization’s artistry, including selecting repertoire, shaping artistic interpretations, choosing Artistic Partners and collaborators, and leading unconduted rehearsals and performances. Musicians are also empowered to bring forward project ideas and — in a major advancement of that principle in the 2022.23 season — four

musicians served as Creative Leads, curating four special programs that showcased their musical interests and passions. These Creative Lead programs included:

**Baroque Marvels with Julia Bogorad-Kogan (December 2022)**

A selection of Baroque chamber music by well-known composers Johann Sebastian Bach and Georg Philipp Telemann and their lesser-known female contemporaries Isabella Leonarda and Élisabeth-Claude Jacquet de la Guerre

**Romantic Landscapes with Eunae Koh (January 2023)**

Women composers from the Romantic era to the present day respond musically to emotional and natural landscapes in a program featuring music by Clara Schumann, Louise Farrenc, Valborg Aulin and Hilary Tann

**Musical Distillations with Steven Copes (January 2023)**

A thrilling deep dive into masterworks by four early 20th century composers (Arnold Schoenberg, Richard Strauss, Edgar Varèse and Maurice Ravel), each distilling late-Romantic musical traditions into something fresh and modern

**Legends/Leyendas with Maureen Nelson (January–February 2023)**

Exploring the interwoven musical traditions of Spain and Latin America, featuring the legendary “Spanish Mozart,” Juan Crisostómo Arriaga, Andean-inspired music by Gabriela Lena Frank, a wind quintet by Maurice Ravel, and Renaissance works arranged by SPCO violinist Maureen Nelson

Creative Lead programs have been widely enjoyed by SPCO audience members:

*“We always love the virtuosity of the SPCO and this performance enjoyed the daringness of the music selections. My friend said to me “they take chances” which is a compliment.”*

*“The concert was beautifully curated. Excellent repertoire of great variety and interest. Beautifully performed.”*

*“The choice in music was very entertaining. The commentary to explain some of the pieces was also helpful. Of course, the musicians were amazing performers.”*

*“I loved the program. All the music was new to me. I was especially interested in the story of the composer Arriaga (this inspired me to investigate him and his music) and in the “interwoven musical traditions of Spain and Latin America” brought together by the wonderful Maureen Nelson.”*

*“I loved that Steven Copes gave us a musician’s eye-view of the Schoenberg piece which I’d heard before, but this time I REALLY enjoyed it. I also especially enjoyed Alicia McQuerrey’s solo performance. Fantastic.”*

## Continued Collaboration with SPCO Artistic Partners

The 2022.23 season saw the return of several SPCO Artistic Partners, both current and former. The orchestra was joined by returning Artistic Partners Jonathan Cohen, Richard Egarr and Rob Kapilow, and also welcomed the two new Artistic Partners who were appointed at the end of the 2021.22 season: South African cellist, singer and composer Abel Selaocoe and internationally renowned German violist Tabea Zimmermann. In its best-selling concerts of the season, former Artistic Partner and violinist Joshua Bell reunited with the orchestra in performances of Max Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1. The orchestra also opened its doors to the community in an open rehearsal that showcased Bell working with SPCO musicians ahead of their weekend of concerts in October 2023.

*"It was hard not to smile when **Bell** started bouncing around on his chair at the Mozart symphony's opening, repeatedly swiveling to various sections of the orchestra to invite them into his high-energy playhouse. They responded with expertly executed dynamic contrast, thunder becoming whispers at the drop of a hat."* ([Star Tribune](#))

*"... one more richly enjoyable argument for why any Twin Citian with a soft spot for music of the Baroque era ... should seek out an opportunity to experience [**Richard Egarr's**] collaborations with the SPCO."* ([Star Tribune](#))

*"[**Tabea Zimmermann**] reminds everyone with her playing that the viola is not an instrument that should be an afterthought. With her rich tones and clear, articulate fast notes, she delivers an immense performance."* ([Pioneer Press](#))

*"An encore on which **Selaocoe's** cello summoned up the spirit of such African "desert blues" artists as Ali Farka Touré put the finishing touches on an experience capable of breaking down any boxes into which you've placed classical music."* ([Star Tribune](#))

## Celebrating North Minneapolis through the Northside Celebration

The SPCO celebrated 13 years of partnership with the Capri in North Minneapolis in the 2022.23 season. In February, the orchestra performed in the third iteration of the [Northside Celebration](#), co-presented by the Capri and the SPCO.

The inspiration for the program originated during a luncheon with North Minneapolis community members and representatives of both the Capri and the SPCO in 2015. Amidst the discussion, clear themes emerged, including intense community pride in the face of adversity, a desire to collaborate and showcase local Northside talent, as well as a desire to use the arts to share joy and strengthen relationships in the community. The concept of a community event where musical traditions would be shared and where North Minneapolis would be celebrated was first voiced by Dennis Spears, Artistic Associate at the Capri. The first ever Northside Celebration debuted in March 2017, followed by a second iteration in January 2020.

The performances from February 17–19, 2023 at North Community High School and the Ordway Concert Hall featured two local choirs, the youth choir [Known MPLS](#), directed by Courtland Pickens and the [Northside Celebration Choir](#), directed by Sherri Orr and Dr. Adrian Davis; the Celebration Choir was formed specifically for this event and comprised of volunteer singers who live in, work in, worship in or were otherwise strongly connected to North Minneapolis. Between the orchestra members, choir members, spoken word artists, directors and arrangers, 100 artists collaborated on this event. In reflection of participating in the concert, choir members reported the extreme pride they felt honoring the North Minneapolis community in this way, and described the experience as healing, joyful and uplifting.

The Northside Celebration was enthusiastically received by attendees:

*“Sharing music is what this world needs more of. Amazing collaboration.”*

*“I walked away in serious awe!! It was one of the most spectacular shows I’ve experienced!”*

*“...everyone needs the hope that the event provided.”*

*“It was a JOYOUS event! I left with my heart filled with music and peace!”*

*“It was exceptional. The music and enthusiasm was palpable.”*

### **Living Traditions**

In October 2022, the SPCO worked with community partners to present Living Traditions, a weekend of concerts that featured artwork, poetry and traditional music of the Twin Cities Native communities.

The program was centered around Louis Ballard’s 1974 SPCO commission *Incident at Wounded Knee* and the celebration of heritage through modern artistic expressions. Ballard’s piece musically depicts both the events of the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890 and the protests in 1973 led by Lakota activists and the American Indian Movement. Pre-concert activities included a visual art exhibition curated by All My Relations Arts and Two Rivers Gallery with a pre-concert traditional red cedar flute recital by Bryan Akipa. Writer, artist and teacher Gwen Westerman hosted the program from stage while program notes and contextual commentary was provided by Richard LaFortune.

The full concert now lives in the [SPCO’s Concert Library](#) and can be viewed in full, along with commentary and context about the program.

Audiences shared their experiences of this concert:

*“Incident at Wounded Knee is one of the most important and powerful pieces I have ever experienced.”*



*“This was one of my favorite SPCO concerts ever! ... I very much enjoyed the opportunity to stay after and discuss the concert.*

*“Truly, I was knocked out by the performance ... It was certainly a highlight of this year’s concert attendance.”*

## **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 65th season, the SPCO is primarily an unconduted 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. The current roster of Artistic Partners consists of British Baroque specialist Richard Egarr, American composer and musical commentator Rob Kapilow, South African cellist Abel Selaocoe and German violist Tabea Zimmermann.

The virtuoso musicians of the SPCO present more than 100 concerts in the Twin Cities each year. The orchestra’s free online [Concert Library](#) offers both live and on-demand videos of concerts that can be viewed anytime, completely free of charge. Through its partnership with YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio and American Public Media, 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 68 recordings, including its recent critically acclaimed album of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Piano Concertos with former Artistic Partner Jeremy Denk and the 2018 Grammy Award-winning recording of Franz Schubert’s *Death and the Maiden* with violinist and former Artistic Partner Patricia Kopatchinskaja. In addition to its programs in the Twin Cities, the orchestra also tours nationally and internationally, including recent engagements in Europe and New York City, and prestigious residencies at the 2021 and 2022 Bravo! Vail Music Festival with violinists Joshua Bell and Stefan Jackiw, bassist Xavier Foley, and pianist and Bravo! Vail Artistic Director Anne-Marie McDermott.

The SPCO is deeply committed to expanding the orchestral repertoire, commissioning more than 160 new works throughout its 64-year history and receiving 17 ASCAP awards for adventurous programming. In a divergence from the industry standard of commissioning individual works from composers, the SPCO’s new [Sandbox Composer Residency program](#) invites composers to experiment freely across a variety of new works created in collaboration with the musicians of the SPCO. This alternative residency model will allow composers to workshop new pieces, experiment and revise, take risks, develop relationships with SPCO musicians and engage with SPCO audiences.

The SPCO is nationally recognized for its commitment to broad community accessibility and inclusion, along with 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 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, with a \$5 per month concert membership option for members of [club2030](#), the orchestra's program for audience members in their 20s and 30s.

The SPCO is a proud member of the [Arts Partnership](#), a strategic alliance of four performing arts organizations — Minnesota Opera, the Ordway, the SPCO and Schubert Club — that ensures equitable sharing and effective care of the Ordway Center as a vital cultural asset in the Twin Cities.

### **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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