

IGNITE

PASSION | EXPRESSION | CREATIVITY

2025—26 SEASON

MEI-ANN CHEN, MUSIC DIRECTOR



Chicago
Sinfonietta

Bollywood & Beyond

Fri, October 17 | 7 pm | Wentz Concert Hall

Sat, October 18 | 7 pm | Studebaker Theater

WELCOME FROM MEI-ANN CHEN

Welcome to a new season, and a new chapter in Chicago Sinfonietta's history! Storytelling has always been at the heart of every program, of every musical piece, with each work holding the potential to spark something inside us, connecting us more deeply to each other and the world, inspiring, affecting change and celebrating the community we help to create. *Bollywood & Beyond* is a celebration of the old, new, and the spirit of inclusion in music, looking forward to the future while looking back at the foundation that has brought us to today.

Journey with us in a first half that presents the Chicago premiere of beloved Bollywood film favorites newly arranged for Western instruments, featuring a variety of iconic songs, including from the cult classic 1978 Bollywood action thriller *Don*, 1951's third-highest grossing Indian box office hit, the musical comedy *Albela*, and the 1998 romantic thriller *Dil Se*, sung by renowned North American Bollywood singer **Anurhada "Juju" Palakurthi** in her Chicago Sinfonietta debut, and conducted by acclaimed Indian American conductor and former Freeman Conducting Fellow **Roger Kalia**, who shares the podium with me in this Season Opening program.

The second half celebrates a few historic moments from my early tenure with Chicago Sinfonietta, highlighting my and the orchestra's commitment to promoting women composers and composers of color, as well as the orchestra's command of beloved popular works: Ravel's enchanting fairy tale-infused *Mother Goose Suite*, Reena Esmail's *Teen Murti*, the invigorating "Saibei Dance" by An-Lun Huang, and Tyzen Hsiao's *The Angel of Formosa* (reflecting my original roots from Taiwan) - the last two pieces being significant works in my first program as Music Director of Chicago Sinfonietta after our beloved Maestro Freeman passed the baton to me in 2011.

Thank you for joining us!



Mei-Ann Chen,
Music Director, Chicago Sinfonietta



Celebrating
music that
makes the
heart sing.

BMO 

BMO is proud to support the **Chicago Sinfonietta** and its mission to inspire equity and inclusion through music and dialogue.

THE FUTURE OF MUSIC

Since our founding in 1987 by the legendary Maestro Paul Freeman, Chicago Sinfonietta has been driven by a simple but powerful vision: to reimagine what an orchestra can be. From championing diverse artists and composers to nurturing the next generation of musicians, we are committed to ensuring that symphonic music is inclusive, inspiring, and accessible to all.

Every year, Sinfonietta reaches more than 2,800 students through our school partnerships. These teachers often tell us how meaningful the experience is. Educator Stephanie B. from Louis Pasteur Elementary shared: *“By being able to see musicians who looked like them, dressed like them, and spoke like them, it clicked that they [the students] were also capable of doing that.”* For these youth, symphonic music opened a door to self-discovery and belonging. It’s part of why we believe so deeply in music’s transformative power.

This 38th season, we continue our mission to present culturally relevant programs that challenge expectations and celebrate the richness of our communities. Annual gifts from donors like you fuel in-school residencies, empower emerging musicians, and ensure that the joy of live symphonic music reaches everyone—not just a select few.

I encourage you to make your gift today—your support ensures the music continues to resonate in every corner of our community. Please visit chicagosinfonietta.org/give/ or use the QR below. We thank you for your support!

With gratitude and warmest regards,



Sidney P. Jackson, Jr.
President & CEO



RAFFLE: ARTWORK INSPIRED BY MUSIC

Purchase a raffle ticket for your chance to win a limited edition giclée print, 1 of only 25 copies! Artist Kimberly Perl and Maestra Chen will both sign the print at our Afterbeat reception. Raffle closes before the second half, see a staff member at our Patron Services table. Full season subscribers are automatically entered to win.



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Kimberly Perl is a Chicago native artist whose style is inspired by the Pop Art style with a realistic flair. She specializes in portraits, but extends to sculpture, auditory, and textile art.

Perl began as an elementary teacher with a masters in curriculum and instruction until she became a mom of three daughters. Although always interested in arts and crafts, she did not begin painting until the Pandemic. A personal art project morphed into a profession. Perl has had her work shown at the Illinois and Houston Holocaust Museums. She has received a formal Declaration from the Mayor of Deerfield for her women's portraits displayed for Women's History Month. Perl had her solo gallery show at August House Studio in Chicago featuring her exhibit, "Power With Purpose, Women Who Lead". Her art has also been featured in "Deerfield Neighborhood Magazine".

Perl has participated in numerous gallery shows throughout the Chicago area and Texas and has been commissioned for her pet portraits both nationally and internationally. She is currently completing her latest exhibition, "Walk A Moment In Our Shoes".

She is thrilled to be working with the Chicago Sinfonietta by providing limited edition giclee's of her original piece, "The Magic Wand," a portrait of the charismatic Maestra Mei-Ann Chen.

To contact Kimberly Perl please visit her website, kimberlyperl.com.

CONCERT ACTIVITY

Celebrate the vibrance of Diwali in full color. Enjoy mandala-inspired coloring pages in the lobby with beautiful designs for kids and adults.



AFTERBEAT: BOLLYWOOD & BEYOND

Join us in the lobby for a special AFTERBEAT: Meet & Greet reception with our guest artists and Sinfonietta leadership. Delectable Indian-inspired bites by Indian Harvest and sips from Adagio Teas, plus professional photography to capture your evening!

Thank you to our event partners, Saily Joshi, Indian Harvest, Adagio Teas, Indian American Community Outreach Advisory Board, and Patel Brothers.

Tickets \$60/ea. Purchase your ticket at the Sinfonietta's Patron Services table in the lobby. Limited availability.



Thank you to our media partner
Chicago Asian Network

TONIGHT'S PROGRAM: *BOLLYWOOD & BEYOND*

Conductor: Mei-Ann Chen, Chicago Sinfonietta Music Director

Various..... *Selections from Symphony Masala*

- I. *Asato Ma*
- II. *Roz Sham Aati Hai*
- III. *Shola Jo Bhadke*
- IV. *Pyaar Hua*
- V. *Jaadu Hai Nasha Hai*
- VI. *Yeh Mera Dil*
- VII. *Raat Baki*
- VIII. *Chaiyya Chaiyya*
- IX. *RD Medley*
- X. *Aaya Diwali*

Roger Kalia, guest conductor

Anuradha "Juju" Palakurthi, guest vocalist

—Intermission—

Tyzen Hsiao (1938-2015)..... *The Angel from Formosa*

Reena Esmail (b. 1983)..... *Teen Murti*

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)..... *Mother Goose Suite*

- I. *Pavane de la Belle au bois dormant* (Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty)
- II. *Petit Poucet* (Tom Thumb/ Hop O' My Thumb)
- III. *Laideronnette, Impératrice des pagodes* (Laideronnette, Empress of the Pagodas)
- IV. *Les entretiens de la Belle et de la Bête* (Conversations of Beauty and the Beast)
- V. *Le jardin féerique* (The Fairy Garden)

An-Lun Huang (b. 1949) *Saibei Dance*
from *Saibei Suite No.2, Op.21*

Estimated Run Time:
90 minutes, plus 20-minute intermission

TONIGHT'S GUEST CONDUCTOR

Roger Kalia

Indian American conductor **Roger Kalia** is a versatile communicator who brings unique and unmistakable energy to the podium. Now in his sixth season as Music Director of the Evansville Philharmonic, in his eighth season with Orchestra Santa Monica, and recently completed six seasons with Symphony New Hampshire. He was most recently appointed Music Director of the Terre Haute Symphony Orchestra beginning in the 2025-26 season. He is the recipient of several awards from the Solti Foundation, including an Elizabeth Buccheri Opera Residency with Lyric Opera of Chicago and five Career Assistance Awards.



Upcoming guest engagements include a masterworks debut with the Canton Symphony Orchestra, and a return to the Redlands Symphony as a finalist for the Music Director position. Kalia is cultivating new works, new spaces, and new thinking across his Music Director roles for the 2025-26 season. Highlights include Evansville's first-ever concert at Saint Benedict's Cathedral, and the premiere of Dan Powers' Centennial Celebration commissioned for Terre Haute Symphony Orchestra's opening night. Kalia's vivid and responsive programming has been featured on PBS's "On the Road with Brick Briscoe" and "Regional Voices."

In recent seasons, Kalia has also appeared with the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center, Chicago Sinfonietta, Louisiana Philharmonic, Baltimore Chamber Orchestra, Szczecin Philharmonic (Poland), Hollywood Chamber Orchestra, Boise Philharmonic, Spartanburg Philharmonic, Columbus Indiana Philharmonic, and

the symphony orchestras of Lima, Adrian, Bakersfield, Great Falls, Owensboro, Spokane, Amarillo, and Wheeling. Kalia also serves as Music Director & Co-Founder of the Lake George Music Festival,

Kalia has collaborated with a wide range of artists including singer Jubilant Sykes (appointed as Orchestra Santa Monica's inaugural artistic partner); Grammy-winning trio Time for Three; Indian tabla virtuoso Sandeep Das; singer/songwriters Randy Newman and Randy Jackson; rock musicians Johnny Rzeznik of the Goo Goo Dolls and Nancy Wilson of Heart; and actor Jack Black. He continues to be a sought-after interpreter of film scores including recent performances of Star Wars: A New Hope.

Kalia currently resides in Indiana with his wife, musicologist and violinist Christine Wisch, and their newborn son Adrian.

WE

THE WYNNING
EXPERIENCE

.....

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TONIGHT'S ARTIST

Anuradha "Juju" Palakurthi

Anuradha "Juju" Palakurthi is a North American Bollywood vocal sensation. Tonight is her second ever performance in Chicago and her debut performance with Chicago Sinfonietta.

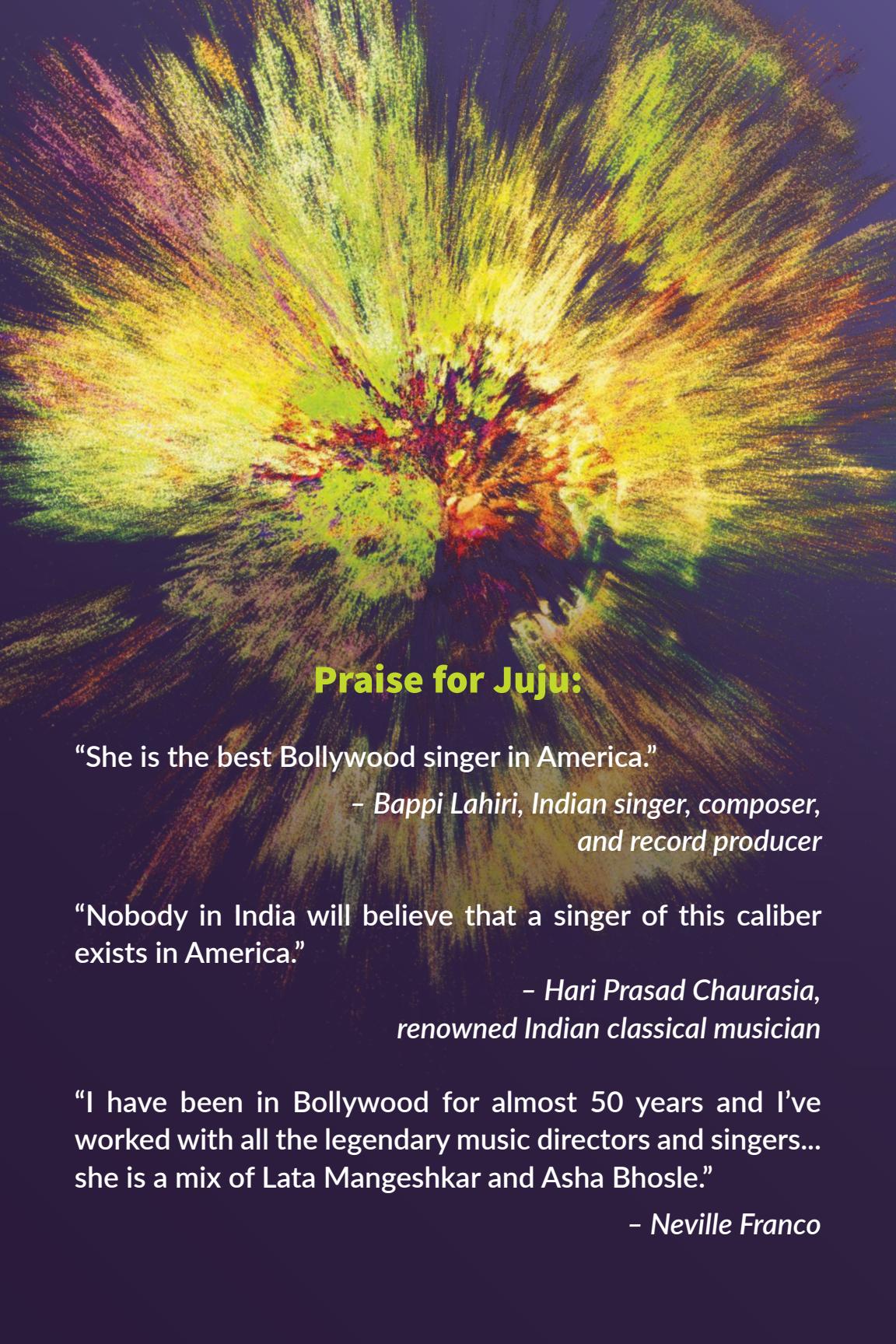
Anuradha is the serving Chairperson of MIT's Heritage Arts of South Asia (MITHAS) and co-hosts a weekly Radio Music India show on WLYN 1360 that educates and entertains listeners on the Carnatic & Hindustani classical roots of Indian Film music.



Anuradha has recorded playback for South Indian films. Widely regarded for her versatility across vocal genres, she was the featured female singer in live shows in the USA with Kumar Sanu, Suresh Wadkar, Deepak Pandit and Bappi Lahiri. Anuradha recorded a duet with Hariharan for Ekal Vidyalaya – a song written by Sunayana Kachroo and composed by Guitarist Prasanna, Drummer Sivamani and a group of 14 multiple-Grammy winning musicians from across the globe. Anuradha's R. D. Burman (Pancham) tribute in June 2015 at the Berklee Performance Center is considered to be one of the finest outside India.

Anuradha's widely-acclaimed, award winning album, *Jaan Meri*, was composed by Ustad Nishat Khan of the Imdadkhani Gharanal who said of her work: "Anuradha is the most versatile singer of Indian origin since Asha Bhosle-Ji."

Juju Productions is Anuradha's music and video production company. Artists and singers work with Juju to produce content that attracts global audiences – transcending national and cultural boundaries even while being rooted in Indian traditions. Juju appointed her husband, Prashanth to the role of CEO of Juju Productions.



Praise for Juju:

“She is the best Bollywood singer in America.”

– *Bappi Lahiri, Indian singer, composer, and record producer*

“Nobody in India will believe that a singer of this caliber exists in America.”

– *Hari Prasad Chaurasia, renowned Indian classical musician*

“I have been in Bollywood for almost 50 years and I’ve worked with all the legendary music directors and singers... she is a mix of Lata Mangeshkar and Asha Bhosle.”

– *Neville Franco*

BOLLYWOOD & BEYOND

Music has a way of gathering people together, carrying memory across generations, and sparking imagination across cultures. Tonight's program does all of those things, moving from the colorful soundscape of Bollywood to Taiwan, India, France, and northern China. Each piece tells its own story, but woven together they celebrate music's power to connect and uplift.

Symphony Masala



The concert opens with selections from *Symphony Masala*, a celebration of Indian culture that reimagines Bollywood songs in their first-ever symphonic arrangements, created by celebrated vocalist Anuradha "Juju" Palakurthi and acclaimed Indian American conductor Roger Kalia. The production premiered in 2022 with Symphony NH in Nashua, New Hampshire, where it introduced audiences to the energy and emotional sweep of Bollywood in orchestral form. In India, film songs are more than entertainment; they are a shared cultural language. Since the 1940s, Bollywood music has blended the ancient traditions of Indian classical ragas and rhythmic cycles with influences as wide-ranging as swing, disco, and Hollywood musicals. The result is a rich masala, or spice blend, that resonates deeply in daily life, sung at weddings, echoed in marketplaces, and cherished in diaspora communities around the globe.

PROGRAM NOTES

With orchestra, these songs shimmer in fresh colors. Strings sing with the warmth of legendary playback voices, woodwinds add sparkle and wit, brass glints with nightclub glamour, and percussion pulses with the heartbeat of tabla and dhol. The program ranges from the tenderness of *Pyaar Hua, Iqraar Hua* ("Love has blossomed, love has been confessed") to the hypnotic allure of *Jaadu Hai Nasha Hai* ("There is magic and intoxication"), from the exuberance of *Shola Jo Bhadke* ("When the flame ignites") to the celebratory joy of *Aaya Diwali* ("Diwali has arrived"). Each number creates its own world of emotion and imagery, but together they form a musical festival, affirming that music itself is at the heart of celebration and community.

That spirit resonates especially tonight. These performances on October 17 and 18 fall just before Diwali, the Indian festival of lights. Across India and around the world, families will soon illuminate their homes with lamps and fireworks, marking renewal, joy, and togetherness. Though our stage shines with orchestral sound rather than lanterns, the effect is similar: familiar stories and melodies glowing in new form, music illuminating memory and imagination.

After intermission, the program turns outward to show how composers from across the globe have drawn on their own traditions to create new voices in the symphonic world.

The Angel from Formosa

We begin with *The Angel from Formosa* (1999) by Tyzen Hsiao (1938–2015), a composer often called the "Rachmaninoff of Taiwan" for his lush harmonies and lyrical melodies. Hsiao's life mirrored Taiwan's complex 20th-century history. He studied in Japan and the United States but was unable to return home for more than a decade due to Taiwan's political climate. When he finally returned in the 1990s, he was soon recognized as a cultural hero. *The Angel from Formosa* is one of his most intimate works, a short orchestral elegy



dedicated to pianist Wen-wan Chen. Rising gently in the strings, the music swells with warmth and then fades into stillness. Many listeners hear it as both a personal memorial and a symbolic tribute to Taiwan itself, whose Portuguese name, Formosa, means “beautiful island.”

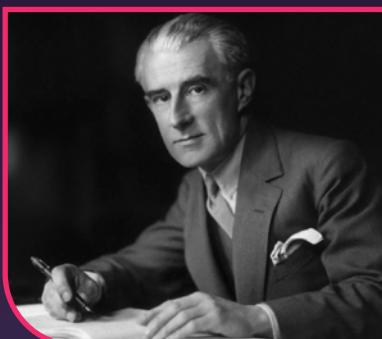
Teen Murti

The program continues with *Teen Murti* (2013) by Los Angeles-based composer Reena Esmail (b. 1983). Esmail has devoted her career to creating dialogue between Indian and Western classical traditions. A graduate of Juilliard and Yale, she also studied Hindustani music in India on a Fulbright fellowship. *Teen Murti* sets three Hindustani ragas within the sound world of Western strings. The title, which translates as “three statues,” suggests the work’s design: three musical figures, each drawn from a different raga—the nocturnal *Malkauns*, the devotional *Bhairav*, and the playful *Jog*. With deep roots in both Western and Indian classical traditions, Esmail shapes these figures into a symphonic meditation on contrast, character, and cultural exchange.



Mother Goose Suite

From there we step into the world of childhood imagination with Maurice Ravel’s *Mother Goose Suite* (1911). Ravel (1875–1937), known for his exquisite orchestral color, wrote the original piano duet for the children of friends. He later orchestrated the suite, transforming it into one of his most enchanting scores. Each miniature conjures a fairy tale: *Sleeping Beauty* in a delicate pavane, *Tom Thumb* scattering crumbs only to hear the birds eat them, an empress of the pagodas in glittering pentatonic scales, *Beauty and the Beast* portrayed by clarinet and contrabassoon until the Beast is transformed, and finally a fairy garden, where the orchestra blossoms in radiant harmony. Though originally written with childlike simplicity, the orchestration elevates the suite into a timeless evocation of innocence and wonder, music



that speaks as vividly to adults as to children. Ravel's music glows with imagination, fragile and luminous, full of childlike wonder.

Saibei Suite No. 2, Op. 21: Saibei Dance

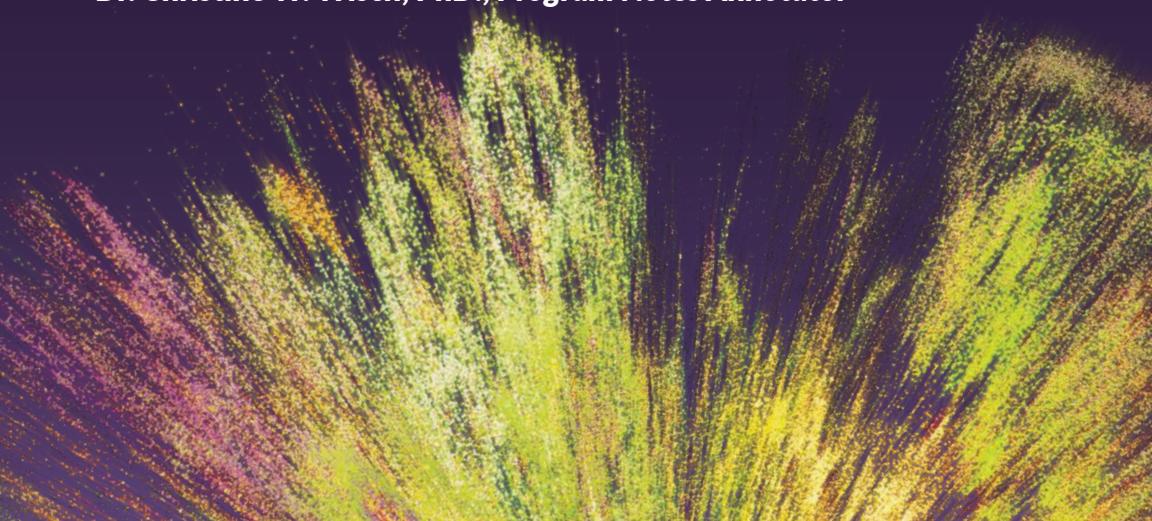
The concert concludes with An-Lun Huang's Saibei Dance from Saibei Suite No. 2, Op. 21 (1975). Huang (b. 1949), born in China and later trained in Canada and at Yale, is one of the leading Chinese composers of his generation. His works often blend Chinese folk traditions with Western symphonic practice. The Saibei suites take their name from the northern plateau region near Inner



Mongolia. Rather than quoting folk songs directly, Huang captures their vitality through bounding rhythms, pentatonic melodies, and brassy fanfares that suggest both Mongolian horsemen and sweeping open landscapes. The Saibei Dance bursts with celebration, a festive affirmation of community spirit that makes it a favorite closer for Lunar New Year and international concerts alike.

Taken together, tonight's program travels across cultures and centuries but shares a common spirit. Whether in the love confessed under monsoon rains, the spark of a flame, the intoxication of magic, the glow of festival lamps, or the imagined gardens of childhood, these works show music as a bridge. Music connects us, carries memory, and inspires wonder. And in doing so, it has the power to ignite our imagination and our sense of community.

Dr. Christine W. Wisch, PhD., Program Notes Annotator



CHICAGO SINFONIETTA

Sidney P. Jackson, Jr., President and CEO



A cross-disciplinary leader, non-profit executive Sidney P. Jackson, Jr. brings 19 years of progressive leadership experience in driving sustainable growth in the nonprofit sector, with a strong focus in organizational development, fundraising, cultivating relationships and developing community and education programs benefitting diverse communities. Committed to inspiring

and building communities through the transformative power of music in the cultural sphere, his work in the non-profit arts sector and others, including human services, children and family, anti-poverty, and justice initiatives has enabled him to create lasting impact across renowned institutions.

Jackson's unique, informed approach, blending strategic innovation and a deep commitment to equity and inclusion, has resulted in a dynamic perspective driving impactful change across arts, education, community health, and urban services sectors in today's evolving landscape.

He joins Chicago Sinfonietta from the East Coast, where he has recently served as Vice President for Development of the distinguished 102-year-old New Jersey Symphony. During his tenure, amongst his accomplishments, Jackson spearheaded a multi-million-dollar fundraising initiative that surpassed its target and expanded donor engagement and long-term support, as well as created and launched the orchestra's milestone Centennial celebration campaign.

Born in Charleston, West Virginia, Mr. Jackson grew up in Jacksonville, Florida. Prior to his post in New Jersey, Mr. Jackson worked in New York City for several non-profit organizations, amongst them Helpusadopt.org, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, and Harlem School for the Arts.

LEADERSHIP

Mei-Ann Chen, Music Director and Conductor



Bold, passionate and innovative, Taiwanese American conductor Mei-Ann Chen is renowned as one of the most versatile and dynamic conductors on the podium today, praised for the energy and enthusiasm with which she infuses orchestras and performances. Music Director of the MacArthur Award-winning

Chicago Sinfonietta since 2011, her contract has been unanimously extended through the end of the 2028-2029 season. Named Artistic Advisor of Springfield Symphony Orchestra (MA) in March 2024, Chen has been Chief Conductor of Austria's Recreation - Grosses Orchester Graz at Styriarte since fall 2021, following two seasons as the orchestra's first-ever Principal Guest Conductor, making her the first female Asian conductor to hold this position with an Austrian orchestra. She has served as the first-ever Artistic Partner of Houston's ROCO since 2019, and since 2022, as an Artistic Partner with Northwest Sinfonietta (WA). In the recording field, she has made recordings for Cedille Records, Innova Records, and Naxos. A passionate advocate for music education, Ms. Chen dedicates significant time in mentoring young conductors through various programs, including the Chicago Sinfonietta Freeman Conducting Fellowship program and the Taki Alsop Fellowship, and conducts ensembles at important educational institutions, both nationally and abroad. Highly regarded as a compelling communicator and a creative leader both on and off the podium, and a sought-after guest conductor, she has appeared with distinguished orchestras throughout the Americas, Europe, Taiwan, The United Kingdom, and Scandinavia, and continues to expand her relationships with orchestras worldwide (over 150 orchestras to date).

CHICAGO SINFONIETTA

Wendy Lewis, Board Chair

Lewis is Founder and CEO of Wendy Lewis, LLC, a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion practice firm; the creator of AllySHIFT™, a progressive and seismic platform for advocacy and sustainable equity; and the Executive Producer of the award-winning documentary, "Beyond Their Years, The Incredible Legacies of Herb Carnegie and Buck O'Neil."



Lewis formerly served as Global Chief Diversity Officer and VP of Community Engagement for McDonald's. Prior to McDonald's, Lewis served a trailblazing 30-year career with Major League Baseball, in which she became first-in-sports to lead HR and DEI roles and centralize both disciplines at the Club level with the Chicago Cubs and later as a league-wide practice.

Lewis is the new Board Chair for Chicago Sinfonietta after stepping in as Interim CEO during the 2024/25 season.

Staying true to the mission of our founder Paul Freeman is essential to Sinfonietta's strategic plan for continued growth," said Board Chair Wendy Lewis. "Freeman's legacy is embedded in all aspects of the organization. It grounds us as well as propels us forward in purpose, artistic excellence, commitment to communities, and the richness of diversity. I'm honored to be a part of leading this Board and this game changing institution.

LEADERSHIP

Paul Freeman, Founding Music Director

Maestro Freeman was the Music Director of the Chicago Sinfonietta for 24 years, having founded the orchestra in 1987. Born in Richmond, Virginia, he became one of America's foremost conductors. In 1996, Freeman also became Music Director and Chief Conductor of the Czech National Symphony Orchestra in Prague, balancing both positions. Between 1979 and 1989, he served as Music Director of the Victoria Symphony in Canada, Principal Guest Conductor of the Helsinki Philharmonic, and Associate Conductor of the Dallas and Detroit Symphony Orchestras.



Freeman conducted over 100 orchestras in more than 30 countries. A celebrated recording conductor, he made around 200 releases, including a nine-LP series on Black symphonic composers and collaborations with pianist Derek Han on the complete piano concertos of Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven. He also participated in numerous televised orchestra productions and earned two Emmy nominations.

Freeman earned a Ph.D. from Eastman School of Music and studied in Berlin on a U.S. Fulbright Grant. His honors include the Mitropoulos International Conducting Competition top prize and honorary doctorates from Dominican and Loyola Universities. In 2005, Freeman was named a HistoryMaker by the DuSable Museum for his contributions to African American culture and history.

Critics, including Robert Marsh of the **Chicago Sun-Times**, praised Freeman for his “remarkable” performances, noting that he brought the Chicago Sinfonietta’s sound “to the heights of angels.”

Enriching lives, inspiring new possibilities.



At U.S. Bank, we believe art enriches and inspires our community. That's why we support the visual and performing arts organizations that push our creativity and passion to new levels. When we test the limits of possible, we find more ways to shine.

U.S. Bank is proud to support the Chicago Sinfonietta.



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Concertmaster
Carol Dylan,
Assistant
Concertmaster
David Katz
Caroline Slack
James Sanders
Karla Galva
Carmen Llop Kassinger
Phyllis Sanders Griffin
Sylvia de la Cerna
Carl Johnston
Caitlin Edwards

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Principal
Dave Belden,
Assistant Principal
Emily Nash
Edith Yokley
Todd Matthews
Dominica Lungu
Lucinda Ali-Landing

VIOLA

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Principal
Seth Pae,
Assistant Principal
Becky Coffman
Scott Dowd
Vannia Phillips
Darren Carter

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Brenda Donati,
Assistant Principal
Alan Steiner
Grace Heintz

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Principal
Claudia Cryer
Laura Hamm,
Flute/Piccolo

OBOE

Ricardo Castaneda,
Principal
Amy Barwan

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Principal
Wagner Campos
Hank Landrum,
Utility Clarinet

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Principal
Andrei Muravev
Peter Brusen,
Bassoon/Contrabassoon

FRENCH HORN

Anna Mayne
John Schreckengost
Elizabeth Mazur-
Johnson

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Matt Lee
John Burson

TROMBONE

Robyn Smith,
Principal
Robert Hoffhines
John McAllister,
Bass Trombone

TUBA

Charlie Schuchat,
Principal

TIMPANI

Robert Everson,
Principal

PERCUSSION

Jeffrey Handley,
Principal
Michael Folker
Jon Johnson
Tina Laughlin

HARP

Faye Seeman,
Principal

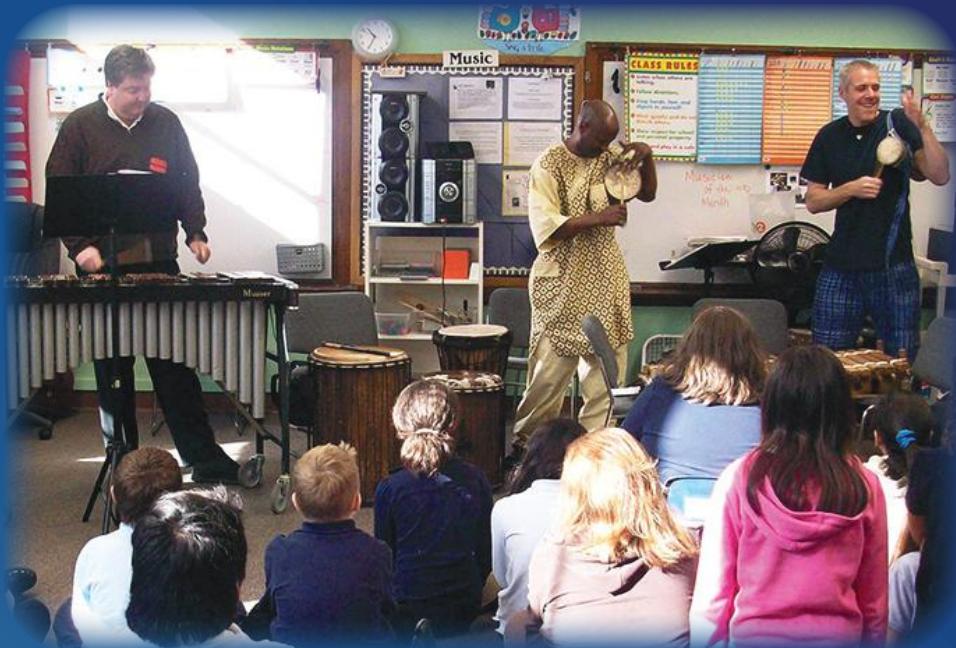
SINFONIETTA IN THE SCHOOLS



MakingMUSIC is an in-school music education concert series for 4th through 8th grade Chicago Public School students. These concerts introduce students to basic classical music concepts and instrument groups of the orchestra. MakingMUSIC provides a strong foundation for future music learning while facilitating music appreciation and curiosity. In addition to these in-school concerts, all Making MUSIC participants and their families also receive complimentary tickets to Sinfonietta performances, creating another bridge between the Sinfonietta orchestra and the communities CS serves.



One of Chicago Sinfonietta's signature education programs, ENCORE provides mentorship and instruction to high school students who are interested in continuing their music education at a higher level. Through private lessons and group coaching sessions led by Chicago Sinfonietta teacher musicians, ENCORE's highly individualized small ensemble settings emphasize students' technical mastery, collaboration skills, and professional growth.



FREEMAN FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Chicago Sinfonietta's landmark training program, the Freeman Fellowship program (referred to as Project Inclusion until 2022) is a nationally recognized groundbreaking initiative and an integral part of the organization's mission to change the face of symphonic music. Part of the orchestra's long history of work that has made Sinfonietta a leader in the field of diversity, equity and inclusion nationwide, the multi-faceted, in-depth, financially compensated 9-month professional development program is dedicated to developing emerging musicians, conductors, and composers into highly skilled, fully rounded artists who positively impact their communities and the world of music.

Launched in 2008 under late Sinfonietta founder Maestro Paul Freeman, and guided by Music Director Mei-Ann Chen since 2011, the Freeman Fellowship trains and mentors diverse early career musicians in the fields of chamber music, orchestral music, conducting and composing. Fellows are provided practical, firsthand experience and mentoring onstage and off, including but not limited to: one-on-one mentoring, performance opportunities and rehearsals, community events, masterclasses and workshops with experts in the field, publicity (including website development, social media, presentation, interviews, biographies, photos, and speaking skills), technical training, constructive feedback, and nuanced discussions on cultivating diversity, accessibility, community building, and leadership. Current Fellowships are offered on a rotating yearly basis.



FREEMAN
FELLOWSHIP
PROGRAM



Michelle Isaac



Alexandra Enyart



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UPCOMING CONCERTS

Holidays of Hope

Friday, December 19 | 7 PM | Naperville

Saturday, December 20 | 7 PM | Hyde Park

Light up your festive revelry with a spirited, family-friendly concert filled with wonder and winter cheer—Chicago Sinfonietta-style. Led by former Freeman Conducting Fellow **Kedrick Armstrong**, this program gift-wraps beloved traditions in bright new sounds, from Duke Ellington's swinging take on *The Nutcracker Suite* to global holiday gems like *Piñata* by Robert Xavier Rodríguez.



Open Heart: MLK Tribute Concert

Sunday, January 18 | 4 PM | Naperville

Monday, January 19 | 4 PM | Chicago

This year's Martin Luther King, Jr. Tribute Concert beats with the spirit of compassion, courage, and community. We honor the revolutionary achievements of Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, a Chicago trailblazer who in 1893 performed the first successful open-heart surgery—just months before Dvořák's Symphony No. 9, "From the New World" premiered. A pioneer and founder of the first Black-owned hospital in America, Dr. Dan's legacy reminds us that opening hearts is both a medical miracle and a social mission.



Still I Rise

Friday, March 6 | 7 PM | Naperville

Saturday, March 7 | 7 PM | Chicago

Chicago Sinfonietta ignites the stage with an empowered tribute to women who break molds, blaze trails, and rise—again and again. **Conducted by Mei-Ann Chen**, this Women's History Month concert honors the strength, creativity, and cultural legacy of women past and present.



American Rhapsody

Friday, May 8 | 7 PM | Naperville

Sunday, May 10 | 3 PM | Evanston

As the nation approaches its 250th anniversary, Chicago Sinfonietta closes our IGNITE season with a salute of the many voices that built—and continue to shape—the American soundscape.



Learn more at
chicagosinfonietta.org/25-26-season/

Chicago Sinfonietta

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“Congratulations to Chicago Sinfonietta on an innovative and creative 2025-26 repertoire! By pushing the boundaries with bold performances, audiences have been encouraged to think differently and realize the benefits of diversity.

Huge congratulations to the entire team!”



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LEADING CHANGE IN

“Pure and simple: the most innovative and forward-looking orchestra in existence. The mission and message under the leadership of my friend, and former schoolmate, Mei-Ann Chen is a powerful one and a working model for all orchestras.”

– **Timothy McAllister, Grammy-winning saxophonist and CS guest soloist, 2024-25 Season Finale “Tonal Transformation”**



“I cannot say enough just how much the mentorship from Mei-Ann Chen, Blake-Anthony and everyone at the Chicago Sinfonietta prepared me for my professional conducting career. ...work with the Fort Worth Symphony would not have been possible without the life-changing growth throughout the Freeman Fellowship. You get to be right in the heart of the organization, collaborating with and learning from the wonderful musicians and staff, who all believe in you. I can't begin to express how empowering and unique that is in this field.



“I'm forever grateful to Mei-Ann who prepares us in every possible way for the professional conducting career. She is an incredibly generous mentor, not only guiding us with her insights but inviting us to be involved in the action, bringing ideas into reality. The classical music world is a better place thanks to the Chicago Sinfonietta, and I hope to always continue their work and share this spirit everywhere I go.

– **Taichi Fukumura, Conducting Freeman Fellow**

SYMPHONIC MUSIC



"The Chicago Sinfonietta stands as a breath of fresh innovation and inclusivity in the orchestral world. Having collaborated with them multiple times, I've witnessed firsthand their unwavering commitment to championing diverse voices and expanding the boundaries of classical music. What makes the Sinfonietta truly exceptional is their bold programming that weaves together traditional masterworks with newly written contemporary works, creating musical experiences that resonate with audiences from all walks of life. In our current cultural landscape, their work is now more relevant than ever."

– Clarice Assad, Grammy Award–nominated composer, pianist, vocalist, and educator



"Often conductors, especially coming from disadvantaged backgrounds and/or belonging to minority groups, don't have access to the experience, networks, and practices that can lead to a successful development of a career as a conductor. The Freeman Chicago Sinfonietta Fellowship was a life - and career - changing experience for me in that regard. As part of the Fellowship, I was able to be coached on building strong and competitive materials, have constant contact with a Public Relations specialist, and prepare myself to get a professional job, which I achieved after one year in the fellowship, becoming Director of Orchestras at the New England Conservatory Preparatory. The support of the fellowship goes beyond its time limits, giving me access to some of the best professionals in the area constantly, including with conductor Mei-Ann Chen and publicist Laura Grant until this day. I am thankful for the Freeman Fellowship and Chicago Sinfonietta for bringing me into their family, supporting my career, and making me part of their history."

– Juliano Aniceto, Conducting Freeman Fellow

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