



La Crosse Symphony Orchestra

Case Statement

DRAFT: 4.14.26

www.lacrossesympphony.org

KEEP THE MUSIC PLAYING

La Crosse has always been a community that builds for the future. My family arrived here in the 1850s, and in 1897 founded a business rooted in service and stewardship. At nearly the same moment the first notes of what would become the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra began to sound. For more than a century, generations of residents have sustained this orchestra because they understood that great communities invest in enduring cultural institutions.



Time and again, visionary leadership has carried the Symphony forward. In the 1970s dedicated board members and community champions gave generously of their time and resources to strengthen the organization's foundation. Decades later, during the financial uncertainty following the housing crisis, supporters once again stepped forward. In 2012 they established an endowment to protect the Symphony for future generations, a decisive investment in stability, excellence, and growth.

That foresight reshaped what the Symphony could become. Endowment support enabled the appointment of Maestro Alexander Platt, whose leadership elevated artistic standards and drew outstanding professional musicians from across the region. Today, the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra is recognized as a premier regional ensemble performing ambitious repertoire and reaching audiences far beyond the concert hall through statewide broadcasts.

Most importantly, the Symphony's impact extends deep into our community. Each year, thousands of students experience the transformative power of live orchestral music through our education programs. We partner with multiple school districts and Boys & Girls Clubs to ensure young people have access to meaningful musical experiences that build creativity, discipline, and confidence. Demand for these programs continues to grow, and we are preparing to serve even more students in the years ahead. Now, we stand at another defining moment.

To meet expanding educational needs, sustain artistic excellence, broaden performance programming and ensure long-term financial strength, we must grow our endowment once more. This is not simply about funding concerts. It is about securing access to inspire children, preserving a cultural cornerstone for families, and strengthening the creative vitality that makes La Crosse an exceptional place to live. An investment in the Symphony is an investment in legacy, one generation choosing to enrich the next.

We invite you to help shape this next chapter. With your support, the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra will continue to inspire audiences, educate young people, and serve as a cultural beacon for generations to come.

Eva Marie Restel

EVA MARIE RESTEL

Executive Director, LSO

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Mission

The mission of the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra (LSO) is to provide high-quality orchestral music, offer engagement opportunities to all greater La Crosse area community members, and enhance the education, diversity, and arts culture in our community.

Core Values

- 🎵 High-quality performance of orchestral music
 - 🎵 Fiscal responsibility and sustainability
 - 🎵 Commitment to organizational excellence
 - 🎵 Enhancement of education and arts culture in our community
-

Vision

- 🎵 Continually improve the quality of orchestral performance
- 🎵 Become a recognized regional orchestra
- 🎵 Generate substantial financial resources
- 🎵 Increase diversity and engagement in the symphony program
- 🎵 Make performances widely available





THE MUSIC THAT MOVES US

Dear Friends,

The La Crosse Symphony Orchestra stands out among regional orchestras. We are one of the smaller communities that sustains a professional orchestra; we bring in world-class artists to our concerts; and we provide exceptional performances. This reflects La Crosse's culture of generosity and the love for music.

As Board President of the LSO, I write to you with deep gratitude for your past support. For over 125 years our symphony has been inspiring our audience and serving the community through live music. We are committed to continue to do so for the next 125 years and beyond.

Like many great orchestras, our symphony relies upon sponsorships, fundraising, and philanthropy to fill the gap between ticket sales and our operating budget. In addition to economic pressure and increases in expenses, we must address essential commitments: musician compensation, increasing venue rental fees, and the ever-rising costs of presenting high-quality performances.

These financial realities present us with a vision and an opportunity to secure our orchestra's future. After a comprehensive Campaign Readiness Study in 2025, early donor conversations, and careful planning, our Board of Directors has unanimously concluded that a \$3.5 million Capital Campaign is both necessary and achievable.

Our board has led the way by making financial commitments and dedicating our time, energy, and networks to this effort. We have stepped forward first because we deeply believe in our mission: to provide high-quality orchestra music, offer engagement opportunities to all Greater La Crosse Area community members, and enhance arts education and culture in our community.

We hope you join us as we embark on this important endeavor. Your involvement would not only help us move forward with our shared goals, but it will also inspire others in our community to join us as well. We have been able to serve because of you.

Thank you very much for being with us on our journey forward.

Musically yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chau Nguyen".

CHAU NGUYEN

Board Chair (2026-27)



To serve others, you must
serve the music first

- Martin Marks, pianist





The La Crosse Symphony Orchestra Board of Directors, Conductor, Musicians, and Staff

are grateful for the assistance of the many campaign volunteers who have worked diligently to advocate for this project.



La Crosse Symphony Orchestra

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Beth Wagner
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Aaron Wickesberg

Executive Director

Eva Marie Restel

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Endowment Campaign

Volunteer Committees

Case Statement Committee

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Brad Weber

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Sister Mary Ann Gschwind
Bill LaRue
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Eva Marie Restel
Joe Skemp
Barbara Skogen
Aaron Wickesberg

Executive Summary

SETTING THE STAGE

A symphony performance is more than a stage and a score. It is a gathering place that brings people together. In the concert hall families sit side by side with students who may be experiencing a live performance for the first time and seniors who have cherished decades of musical productions. These shared moments transcend generations, creating traditions and memories that last long after the final note fades.

Just as the Mississippi River flows through the history of La Crosse, the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra (LSO) flows through the cultural current that makes this region exceptional. With a history spanning more than 125 years, LSO is a rare asset that deserves continued care and investment.

LSO has arrived at a moment of extraordinary possibility—one where the community’s collective commitment can ensure the orchestra’s musical legacy will resonate for generations yet to come.

A Campaign for Future Generations

In early 2025 the LSO Board of Directors and Executive Director determined now was the time to invest in growing its permanent endowment, so LSO can serve future generations with confidence and stability. To assess organizational readiness and community enthusiasm, the Board and Executive Director engaged Crescendo Fundraising Professionals, LLC, to conduct a Campaign Readiness Study for a potential \$1.5M endowment campaign, and the community’s appetite for such a campaign. The study, completed in late 2025, was highly favorable and demonstrated LSO was well-positioned to move forward with a larger campaign goal of \$3.5M. Of particular note, even prior to establishing campaign committees and volunteers, LSO has already received more than \$500,000 in

outright gifts and pledges. Leading the Campaign Name as co-chairs are Chao Nguyen, Kelly Colgan, and David Reedy. Their combined enthusiasm and love of LSO is certain to lead to success.

More Than Music

Every season LSO presents six main season concerts. Every concert is an event beyond the performance. Attending an LSO concert is an event in and of itself. Hundreds gather in the FSPA Lobby at Viterbo University prior to the concert to enjoy camaraderie, refreshments, and local live music. A pre-concert lecture with LSO’s music director and conductor, Alexander Platt, is standing room only as he puts the music into a three dimensional context enhancing the experience of hearing the symphony. Post performance, patrons gather again for refreshments and can continue the evening festivities at an off-site, post-concert party. For many, a night out at the symphony is an opportunity to connect with friends, old and new.

While many see full concert performances as the full scope of LSO’s work, a central part of LSO’s mission is providing musical experiences for people of all ages, especially young people. Through its partnerships with schools and community organizations, LSO reaches more than 5,000 children and youth each year. A cornerstone of this outreach is the annual Symphony for Youth





6,000+
Annual Attendees



5,000+
Youth Reached
Annually



6
Regular Season
Concerts



2
Symphony for Youth
Concerts



\$825,000
Annual Operating
Budget



\$1.7M
Endowment



127 Years
of History



50 – 70
Contract Musicians



12
String Scholarships



\$33M
Economic Impact of Arts
& Cultural Organizations
in La Crosse*

**The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts and Cultural Organizations and Their Audiences in the City of La Crosse WI, (Fiscal Year 2015), Arts & Economic Prosperity®5 A Project for the Arts*



concert, which welcomes third through fifth-grade students from both public and private schools to experience classical music in a professional concert setting.

LSO also collaborates with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse, local school districts, and the La Crosse Area Youth Symphony Orchestras on Play It Forward–La Crosse. Play It Forward is a musical instrument donation program that gathers gently used, playable instruments that are then distributed to students in the School Districts of La Crosse, Onalaska, Holmen, and West Salem as well as the two Boys & Girls Clubs in La Crosse and West Salem. This program gives students who may not have the means to own or rent instruments the opportunity to participate in school band and orchestra.

LSO's violin lesson programs at the Boys & Girls Club locations provide students with the opportunity to grow as young musicians while also learning valuable life skills. Young musicians participate in recitals and live auditions which build confidence to perform under pressure. Under the guidance of dedicated and gifted instructors, students not only learn to play the violin but also build meaningful mentoring relationships - a crucial component of the program's success.

Additional offerings, such as LSO's String Scholarships and Angels in the Audience, further reduce barriers so every child can discover, learn, and be inspired by music.

Musicians Carry the Tune

LSO's strength begins with its extraordinary music director, Maestro Alexander Platt, and the 70 core musicians who shape its sound. Attracting and retaining top talent is critical to the audience experience. After reviewing musician compensation

data, LSO found its musicians were paid significantly below industry standards. To remain competitive, the organization implemented an 18% increase in musician pay for the 2024–25 and 2025–26 seasons. While this increase helps bring musician compensation closer to that of comparable regional orchestras, LSO continues to strive toward wages that are within the 50th percentile of comparable regional pay.

Although many of LSO's musicians call this region home, others live or work elsewhere outside of the performance season. Rising travel and lodging costs for these musicians, along with increased facility rental expenses, have placed additional burdens on LSO's operating budget. Over the 2024–25 and 2025–26 seasons, rental rates are expected to rise by an estimated 41%, with additional increases of 28% and 15% expected in the following two years. In total, this represents an 84% rise over three years, a dramatic increase that places significant strain on LSO's operating model and underscores the need for a more resilient financial base.

CAMPAIGN NAME

A Campaign for Continuity

LSO operates on an annual budget of \$825,000 and maintains a current endowment of \$1.5M. Ticket sales cover about 30% of concert costs, slightly below the national average of 35%. The remaining 70% comes from sponsorships, compared to the 65% national average. Rising costs and the unpredictable nature of sponsorship funding make this balance increasingly difficult to maintain. Raising ticket prices to offset higher costs is not a viable option, given the demographics of the audience and LSO's commitment to keeping performances accessible.





Shortly after my family moved to the area about ten years ago, I had the opportunity to sub with the LSO; it was such a delight. I feel very fortunate to be able to make music with fantastic colleagues, under Alexander’s tremendous leadership – and also to be a part of the LSO’s engagement and connection with our community that goes beyond the thrilling performances.

- Michelle Lee Elliott

LSO’s vision is to secure the future with long-term excellence and accessibility. This campaign will fund four essential priorities:

- 🎵 **Commitments to our artists** - sustaining our musicians with fair pay, bringing orchestral professionals to our region with up-to-standard hotel and travel packages, attracting world-class guests artists, elevating key symphonic and organizational components by supporting our music director Alexander Platt. These commitments will protect artistic quality even in challenging economic times.
- 🎵 **Programming** - We will enrich our programming by maintaining our beloved annual Chamber concerts in an intimate setting, launching a Rising Stars concert for families and young audience featuring competition winners and local pre-college talents, and adding a third Symphony for Youth concert to reach up to 1000 additional school-age students.
- 🎵 **Education** - We will expand youth music education and outreach by partnering with more Boys and Girls Club locations to provide free violin lessons, and by extending our String Scholarship program to serve additional students and teachers across the region.
- 🎵 **Operation support and Infrastructure enhancements** - As the LSO expands its artistic and production activities, secondary costs rise accordingly. These expenses - including facility rentals at Viterbo, administrative operation, office needs, music library development - form

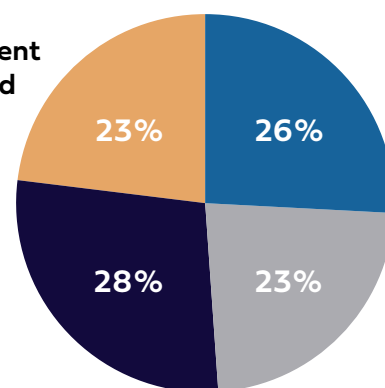
critical infrastructure required for LSO’s capacity to deliver high-quality programming. At the same time, we are streamlining advertising spend through smarter, more efficient channels while protecting and enhancing sponsorship revenue.

The {Campaign Name} will infuse \$3.5M into the LSO’s existing endowment, bringing the total value up to \$5M within three years. This growth will increase the annual endowment draw from \$70,000 to \$250,000. Trust Point has managed the LSO endowment since 2013. Over that time, the endowment has generated \$885,000 in gains, with an average annual return of 6.8%. This strong performance demonstrates responsible stewardship and readiness for growth. Now is the time for LSO to grow its permanent endowment.

The pie chart below shows how campaign resources will be allocated across these four priorities, ensuring a balanced investments in people, programs, education, and long-term stability.

How the additional \$175,000 dispersement from the 3.5M Endowment Campaign enhances and secures the LSO

- Artists
- Programming
- Education
- Enhancements



Financials

La Crosse Symphony Budget

Program Revenue

	FY 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Budget
Admissions - Season Tickets	\$121,987.43	\$132,560.00
Admissions - Single Tickets	\$93,861.51	\$94,061.00
Sponsorships	\$265,245.00	\$263,300.00
Miscellaneous Sales	\$215.00	–
Total Program Revenue	\$481,308.94	\$489,921.00

Contributions & Grants

	FY 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Budget
Contributions	\$71,753.90	\$55,000.00
Contributions to Endowment	\$713.84	–
Grants / Foundations	\$19,250.00	\$32,580.00
Total Contributions & Grants	\$91,717.74	\$87,580.00

Fundraising

	FY 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Budget
Events	\$89,405.00	\$92,955.00
Donor Restricted	\$90,679.06	\$96,190.00
Conductor Wannabe	\$73,703.86	\$60,000.00
Miscellaneous	\$4,970.00	\$20,000.00
Total Contributions & Grants	\$258,757.92	\$269,145.00

Total Operating Income	\$831,784.60	\$846,646.00
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Program Expenses

	FY 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Budget
Musician Expense	\$330,484.69	\$336,614.90
Concert Expense	\$94,779.01	\$83,865.80
Advertising & Marketing	\$76,910.36	\$35,000.00
Education / Youth	\$59,905.86	\$72,250.00
Total Program Expenses	\$562,079.92	\$527,730.70

	FY 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Budget
Fundraising Expense	\$74,660.09	\$70,187.20

Managemtn & General

	FY 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Budget
Payroll	\$192,953.33	\$200,507.80
ASCAP & BMI	\$2,161.70	\$4,500.00
Office Supplies	\$15,870.27	\$12,500.00
Bank & Credit Card	\$31,416.62	\$15,000.00
Insurance	\$6,293.48	\$6,000.00
Accounting Audit	\$38,704.00	\$37,000.00
Dues & Membership	\$5,626.18	\$7,600.00
Postage	\$1,568.71	\$2,000.00
Licenses & Fees	\$4,788.79	\$5,000.00
Other & Miscellaneous	\$7,418.66	\$7,700.00
Total Management & General Expense	\$306,801.74	\$297,807.80

Total Expense	\$943,541.75	\$895,725.70
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Net Operating Income	\$(111,757.15)	\$(49,079.70)
Other Income*	\$174,522.00	\$59,020.00
Net Income	\$62,764.85	\$9,940.30

*Other Income includes In-kind, Endowment Draw, Interest, Realized and Unrealized Gain/Loss







The First Movement

LSO made its debut in 1898 under the direction of Marcellus Greenwood. It is one of the Midwest's oldest orchestras, predating both the Minnesota Orchestra and the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. The orchestra's initial formation had the support of the city's three newspapers. After one of its first concerts, the *La Crosse Morning Chronicle* proclaimed that LSO was "one of the best and most meritorious musical undertakings La Crosse has ever known."

A COMMUNITY'S COMMITMENT TO ITS ORCHESTRA

Since the beginning, sustaining the orchestra has required a shared commitment and drive to secure the support necessary to keep the music playing. During its first year, La Crosse businessmen and musicians established a \$300 fund to purchase musical instruments. LSO blossomed, folded, and reorganized seven more times, emerging after World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II. There were many times the orchestra lacked financial support in the community, but individuals like Leigh Toland, John Colmean and Leigh Elder guided LSO and kept the orchestra in the community spotlight. In 1916, the *La Crosse Tribune* wrote, "La Crosse needs this orchestra. Why should not everybody, musical or not, rally around its director and officers?"

LSO was not alone in navigating financial pressures of the time; many orchestras across the country were struggling as well. In those years the organizations that secured consistent, reliable funding were the ones that persisted. During the late 1980s and early 1990s LSO again faced a period of financial strain, yet its leadership responded with discipline and resolve by conducting a careful financial review, adopting a sustainable budget, and launching a successful fund drive that generated \$50,000 for operations. Through perseverance, thoughtful leadership, and the support of the community, LSO has continued to thrive, sustaining a musical tradition that has endured for 128 years.

After the financial downturn in 2008, it became increasingly obvious that LSO needed to shore up its financial foundation. In 2012 then-president of the Board of Directors, David Reedy, announced the launch of an endowment campaign, stating that a strong endowment was a necessity, not a luxury. In a short period of time the campaign raised \$1.5M to support operations and establish a permanent endowment.

Through its various iterations a consistent theme runs through LSO: audiences respond to the level of musicianship that only professional musicians can deliver. Yet traditional funding models have proven that a professional orchestra, regardless of its location or size of its budget, cannot rely on ticket revenues alone to remain viable.



The La Crosse area is unusually blessed by the extraordinary talent of the LSO's music director, Maestro Alexander Platt.

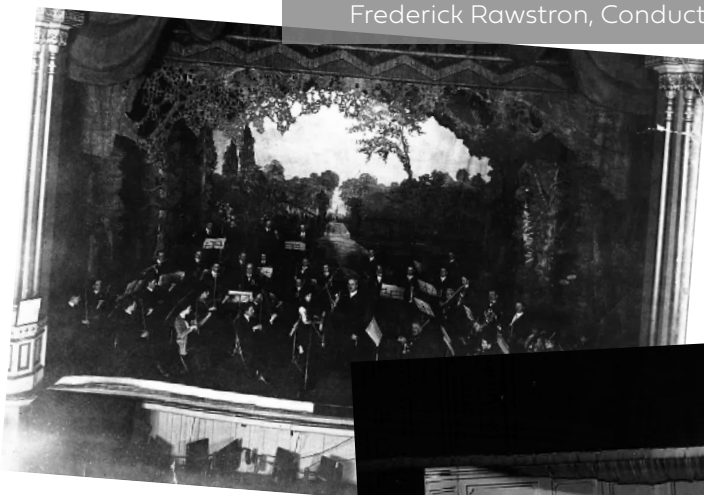
A highly regarded conductor among patrons, musicians, and colleagues, Platt comes to La Crosse having built a unique career spanning the worlds of symphony, chamber music and opera as conductor, music director, curator and host. A graduate of Yale College and King's College, Cambridge, where he studied as a British Marshall Scholar, Platt also completed conducting fellowships at both Aspen and Tanglewood.

Platt has served as the Music Director of the La Crosse Symphony since 2010. Based in Chicago and New York, he has appeared as a guest conductor with orchestras throughout the United States and World.

Platt's leadership attracts not only a loyal audience but musicians as well. Musicians purposefully choose to perform under Platt which enhances LSO's ability to attract and retain some of the best musicians in the Midwest.



La Crosse Symphony Orchestra 1914
Frederick Rawstron, Conductor



La Crosse Symphony Orchestra
1948 Leigh Elder, Conductor





I love serving a beautiful community here in the Driftless Region – beautiful, inside and out – that really loves its Orchestra! Every day spent in La Crosse is a pleasure, whether I’m conducting or not.

La Crosse Symphony Orchestra has the potential to join the ranks of regional orchestras in the Upper Midwest in the tradition of the Duluth Symphony, the Quad Cities Symphony, Orchestra Iowa, and others. It would be a great accomplishment to offer the public a professional symphonic experience once a month throughout the winter season, thus fulfilling our role in making La Crosse an attractive place to live, work, and retire.

Classical music is the zenith of artistic expression and the lodestar of our humanity: the encapsulation of society’s noblest hopes and dreams, the most elevated vessel for our storytelling. Along with our schools, churches, sports teams, hospitals, and universities, it is the “glue” that holds our communities together, and in that regard, there is nothing that can bring a community together like the thrill of a great orchestra performance.

Quite simply, having the resources from which to hire professional musicians allows all of these dreams to take flight. You just can’t achieve a level of greatness without paying professional musicians a competitive wage; otherwise, it’s like trying to land airplanes without a runway.

This endowment campaign is absolutely vital to making the above vision a reality.

Alexander Platt

– Alexander Platt, Music Director,
La Crosse Symphony Orchestra

THE NEED

Strengthening LSO for Generations to Come

The League of American Orchestras partners with TRG Arts, a consulting firm specializing in arts and cultural organizations, to collect and analyze patron data from orchestras across the country. The "Arts & Culture Benchmark" report demonstrates overall positive trends in audience ticket purchases and increased ticket revenues. However, ticket prices have never covered the cost of the production. According to the data for FY23, the average performance revenue per attendee was only \$32.

That means for every attendee, an orchestra must find approximately \$150 in contributions and sponsorships or draw from its endowment to cover the actual cost of the performance. LSO is not immune to this reality; its ticket revenues are consistent with its peer organizations. This heavy reliance on sponsorships and contributed dollars puts LSO in a precarious position should it lose a large sponsor or grant.



My students were fortunate to attend this year's Symphony for Youth. I loved watching my students' faces light up as they recognized pieces performed and made connections to the instruments and sounds we have studied in class. Bravo to LSO S4Y for creating a program that excites young minds and makes going to the symphony accessible to so many.

- Mandy Parmeter, K-5 Hamilton/SOTA 1 Music Teacher

SOURCE OF REVENUE COMPARISON

Symphony	Revenue	Ticket Sales	Contributions and Sponsorships
La Crosse Symphony Orchestra	\$635,669.00	30%	67%
Minnesota Orchestra	\$45,012,946.00	20%	78%
Madison Symphony Orchestra	\$6,040,000.00	34.8%	64.3%
Fox Valley Symphony Orchestra	\$687,000.00	35.5%	65.2%
Dubuque Symphony Orchestra	\$6,477,719.00	6.9%	86.1%

The cost per listener to produce a live, professional symphony orchestra performance often significantly exceeds the ticket price. The cost of an individual concert is not just the cost of musicians; it includes time and rental space for rehearsals, purchasing music rights and sheet music, guest artists, performance hall rental, and more. In 1971, according to a report by the American Symphony Orchestra League, the cost per listener was \$26.17. Although this industry-wide average is no longer reported as “cost per audience member,” current financial data from major orchestras and the League of American Orchestras estimate the cost in 2025 to be between \$180 to \$220 per audience member (This will vary significantly based upon the operating budget of the organization).

Increasing Ticket Prices Not Advised

While most business models would suggest that LSO increase its ticket price, this is simply not feasible. LSO would need to charge approximately \$145 for a ticket to cover its full cost per listener. Although it is not unusual to pay that much or more for a sporting event or pop concert, data indicate orchestra patrons are not amenable to higher prices. In fact, some professional orchestras are reducing ticket prices and as a result are seeing increased attendance.

The good news is the audience demographic is shifting. A 2022 study by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra found that people under age 35 are actually more likely to listen to classic music than their parents. According to the report, more than half of classical audiences are newcomers to the space, with less than a third being longtime fans. While it is encouraging to see new patrons, orchestras must overcome the hurdle that young audiences perceive performances as overly formal and inaccessible. Therefore, orchestras must adapt to this new audience while continuing to appease its long-term patrons. LSO has observed this dynamic as new patrons freely express their pleasure with applause in between movements, while long-time patrons feel this disrupts the flow of the performance.

One way LSO has adapted to evolving audiences is through online programming on its YouTube channel. With the success of the capital campaign, LSO aspires to broaden its YouTube offerings. Trends show both long-time and new patrons gravitating to streaming services as they seek flexibility in when, where, and how they enjoy an orchestra performance.

With a stronger operating endowment, LSO will have the ability to adapt to its audience demands by adding performances to its live concerts, such as chamber music, and increasing its online offerings.

The Second Movement



I have seen firsthand the impact these lessons and instruments have on students who might not otherwise be able to have this experience. Music lessons train the brain to think in more complex ways – by giving this experience to these students, the La Crosse Symphony has opened up many doors for these students!

- Clara Hofland, Erickson BGC Instructor

BEYOND THE CONCERT – YOUTH EDUCATION AND PROGRAMMING

LSO is proud to offer an array of educational programs and opportunities to area youth through its Dick Record Educational Programs. It is committed to encouraging a love and appreciation for music with a variety of educational programs designed to expose children and young adults to the magic of orchestral music and live performance.

Symphony for Youth

Every year more than 1,000 third-grade students from across the area have the opportunity to attend the Symphony for Youth (S4Y) concert. They get to experience a professional performance of a musical masterpiece. The performance lasts approximately 45 minutes and includes an educational element. Students are taught performance and theatre etiquette and are encouraged to applaud and even stand up if they liked what they heard and saw. They

are also taught that it is okay if they did not care for it, but not to say anything unkind when leaving.

The cost to deliver two S4Y concerts during the 2025-26 season was \$29,000. Moving forward, LSO hopes to give even more children the opportunity to experience a live orchestral performance. By adding \$300,000 to the current endowment, LSO would be able to add a third S4Y concert and introduce an additional 1,000 youth to the orchestra. A \$1M permanent endowment would fund the three concerts in virtual perpetuity.

Youth Violin Lessons

In 2022 the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra was honored as the Volunteer Program of the Year by the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse Mission Awards. In its 11th year, LSO has partnered with the Boys & Girls Clubs and the School District of La



Crosse to provide free after-school violin lessons at three Club locations: the Terry Erickson and Amie L. Mathy Clubs in La Crosse, and the Don & Cheryl Brenengen Club in West Salem. LSO's professional musicians teach the lessons, and students from the Tri-M Music Honor Society volunteer their time to support practice sessions on non-lesson days. Access to professional musicians is uncommon even in large metropolitan areas—yet this program brings that rare opportunity directly to young people in our rural region.

Studies show that music instruction improves academic performance, strengthens social and behavioral skills, and provides lifelong benefits. Students perform recitals for family and peers and will be prepared for live auditions which build confidence in front of live audiences.

Beyond hands-on learning, participants receive free tickets to LSO's October, November, and March concerts. They and their families may also purchase tickets to the December, April, and May concerts at the student rate, regardless of age. The cost to deliver this life-changing program is just \$10,000 per year. An additional \$60,000 would allow LSO to expand to a fourth site. A \$250,000 permanent endowment would secure the program's future for generations of young musicians.

Play It Forward

An extraordinary program, Play it Forward, provides the violins for Boys & Girls Club participants. This removes a substantial barrier to students who would otherwise be unable to afford to purchase or rent a violin. But the impact of Play It Forward extends beyond Boys & Girls Club participants.


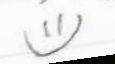


Compared to all other horns I've played, this one is by far the highest quality. Its sound, appearance, and overall feel are amazing, and I'm very thankful for your donation



-Theo Hatchkiss,
trombone section

Hi, this Kiley and I, am a 7th grader at Onalaska Middle School. I was the girl who recieved the Clarinet when I transfered here! Thank you so much for donating the clarinet to the school! I enjoy playing this clarinet so much and it works perfectly! Again thank you!

- Sincerely, Kiley 




BEYOND THE BOW

Not all children are enrolled at a Boys & Girls Club, and not all are interested in learning violin. However, many students want to learn an instrument and participate in their school music programs but lack the financial resources to purchase or rent one. In other cases, schools do not have enough instruments available for every interested student. Play It Forward helps bridge this gap by providing a variety of instruments to students who might otherwise miss the opportunity to participate in music.

LSO and its partner, Leithold Music, accept donations of gently used, playable instruments which are then loaned out to students in the La Crosse School District.

The opportunity to impact youth does not stop there. Because not everyone has a used instrument they would like to donate, Leithold Music maintains a list of needed instruments for the schools in the

district and has gently used instruments that can be purchased for the school of their choice. People can also donate to a maintenance fund that allows for the upkeep of the instruments, extending their playable life. The 2025-26 budget for Play It Forward is \$5,000. An endowment of \$100,000 would sustain the program over time.

Scholarships & Financial Support For Youth

In addition to the youth education and outreach programs outlined, LSO offers a string scholarship to children in grades three through 11 enrolled in a public or private school, or homeschooled, within the greater La Crosse geographic region. Scholarship recipients receive financial support for private lessons with an LSO or local professional musician, 50% off tuition upon acceptance into a La Crosse Youth Symphony Orchestra performing group, and two complimentary full-season tickets to LSO concerts. Currently, students cannot receive a scholarship in consecutive years. The annual budget for

string scholarships is \$5,250. Establishing a more robust endowment of at least \$100,000 would allow LSO to expand the program's reach, support additional students each year, and potentially offer scholarships to deserving young musicians in consecutive years.

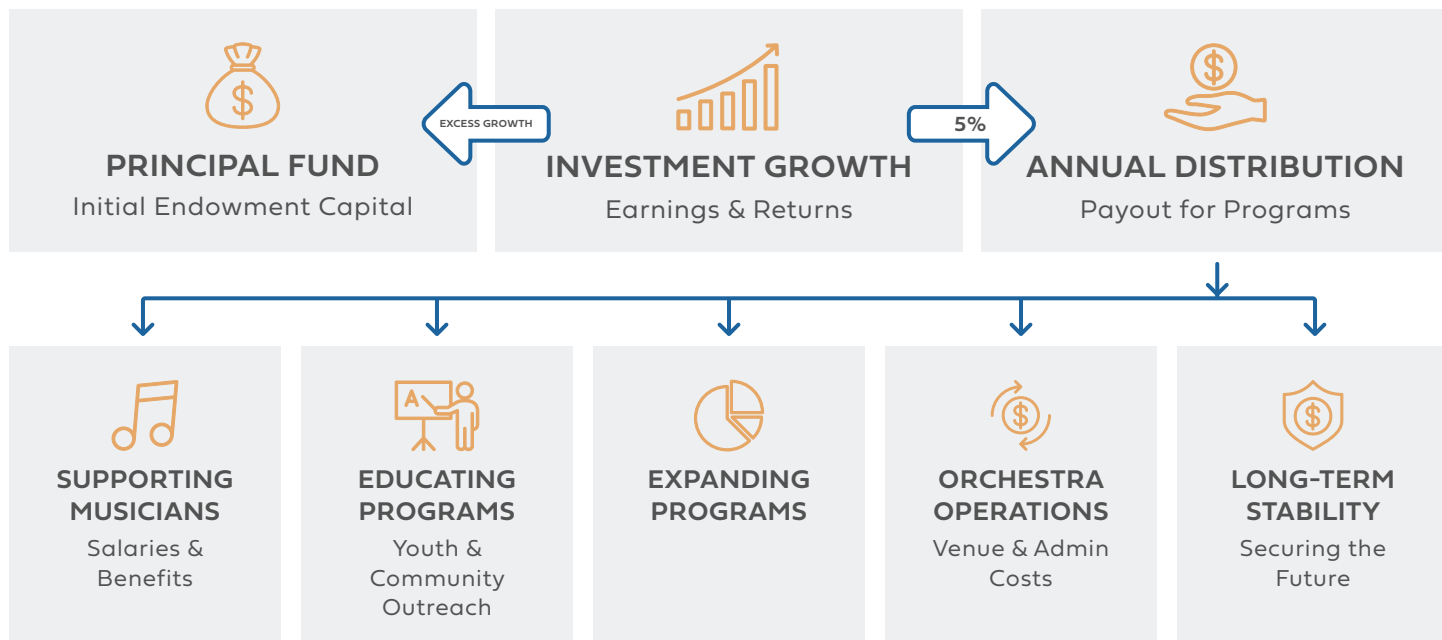
LSO is also fortunate to have the Emplify Health Fellowship Program that brings promising violinists and violists who are 38-years or younger and pursuing an orchestral career to La Crosse. Fellows work with local middle school programs, perform for the Emplify Music Healing program, and are actively involved in the Boys & Girls Club free violin lessons. They also attend and interact with patrons at the Guest Artist Society events and post-concert coffee and treats. This mutually beneficial arrangement provides Fellows the opportunity to gain valuable mentorship experience, audition preparation, and community engagement training, while youth and patrons are exposed to up-and-coming musicians.

Another powerful way the LSO enriches youth music education beyond the concert hall is through the Richard Record Rising Stars Concerto Competition. In the digital age and with the rise in technology, online video auditions have become the norm. While convenient, they often exacerbate inequities among pre-college students. Many families struggle to afford proper performance attire, quality recording equipment, or access to good instruments and suitable spaces for filming—let alone the resources needed to produce a polished, professional audition video.

In contrast, the Rising Stars competition stands out as one of the few remaining in-person events in the tristate area. It creates a true even playing field where every student is judged on their live performance, not on production value. Here, young musicians learn the invaluable art of performing live: rigorous preparation, managing stage nerves, connecting with an audience, and giving their very best to the music. These experiences build confidence, resilience, and a deeper development of what it means to serve the art form.



The Third Movement



UNDERSTANDING HOW AN ENDOWMENT WORKS

Endowment funds are unique to the nonprofit world, which is why many people are unfamiliar with the term, much less with how they work. In simple terms, an endowment fund is set up to provide a source of income for a specific charitable purpose. Contributions to an endowment make up what is called the “principal.” The principal and any additions to the principal are never spent by the nonprofit. Instead, the funds are invested to generate growth and income. Using the nonprofit’s spending policy, the endowment makes annual distributions from the fund’s proceeds, which then can be used for its operations and offerings.. Any earnings in excess of the organization’s spending policy are reinvested in the endowment, allowing it to grow and help protect it against market fluctuations and inflation.

Trust Point, a local wealth management firm that has operated in La Crosse since 1913, has administered LSO’s endowment since 2012 when LSO, under the volunteer leadership of David Reedy, launched its first capital campaign to establish an endowment. The “Beyond 115 Years: A Legacy of Symphonic Music” campaign raised \$1M and has served the operational needs of LSO ever since.

Guided by an investment policy, Trust Point has managed the endowment for both growth and income. Since 2013 the endowment has generated \$885,000 in



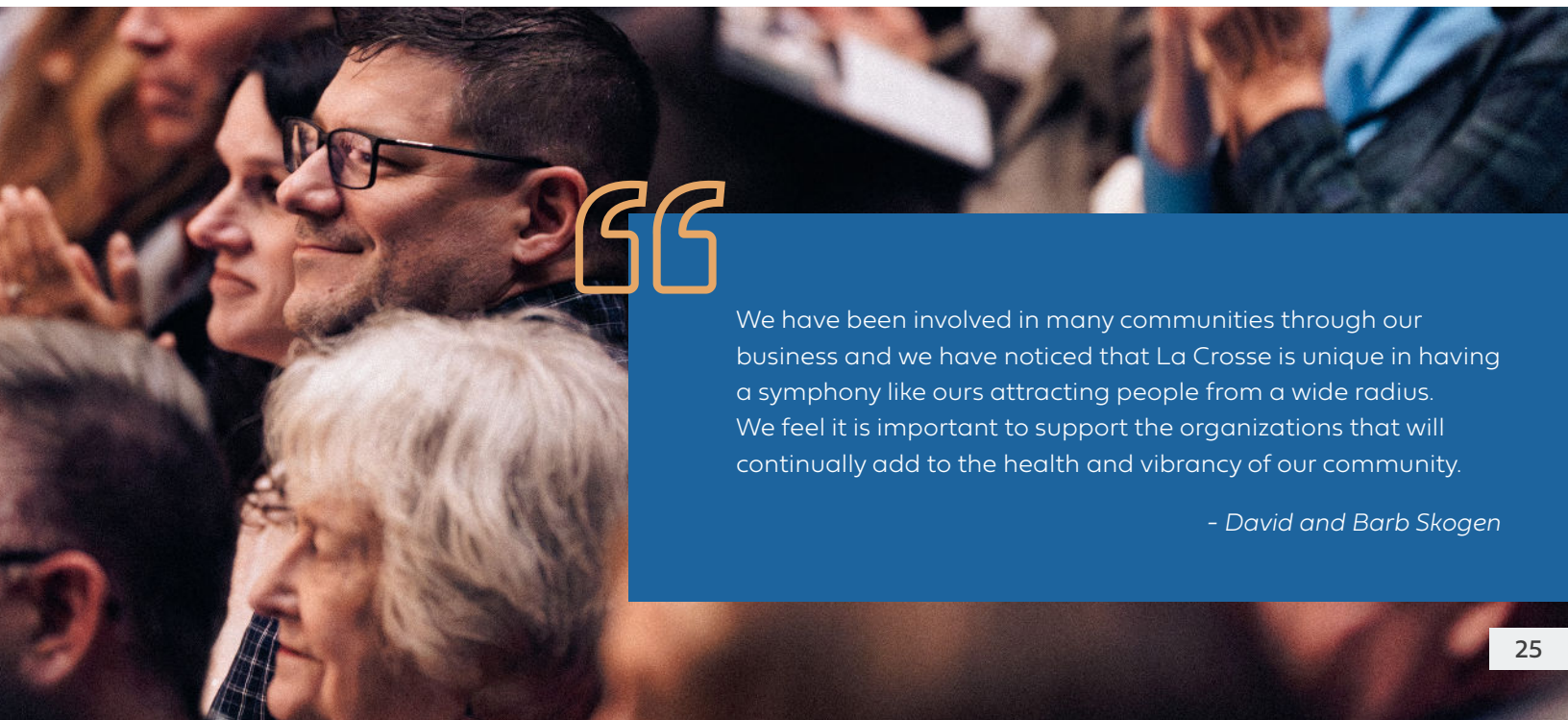
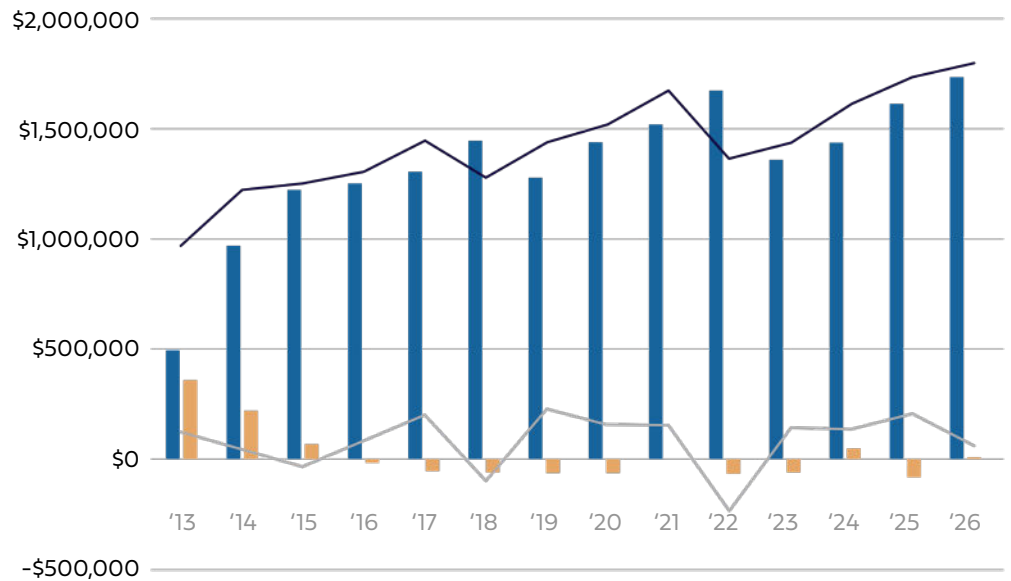
gains with an average 6.8% annual return. Today, the endowment is valued at \$1.77M. Using a prudent spending policy of 5% (nationally, orchestras' average endowment draw in FY23 was 4.8%), the endowment provides LSO with \$70,000 annually. The 5% is calculated based on the endowment balance on June 30 of the current and prior two years. This creates a "smoothing" effect as the market rises and falls. Earnings in excess of the 5% are invested back into the endowment, providing additional growth as a hedge against inflation.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN DETAILS

Chao Nguyen, Kelly Colgan, and David Reedy, co-chairs of the Campaign Name are excited to lead this effort to raise \$3.5M for LSO's permanent endowment. They and a full cadre of dedicated volunteers will begin the silent solicitation stage in spring 2026 and will launch the campaign publicly on September 10 at the Capella Wedding & Events Center from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

ENDOWMENT PERFORMANCE OVER TIME

- Beginning Value
- Net Contributions & Withdrawals
- Investment Gain or Loss
- Ending Value



We have been involved in many communities through our business and we have noticed that La Crosse is unique in having a symphony like ours attracting people from a wide radius. We feel it is important to support the organizations that will continually add to the health and vibrancy of our community.

- David and Barb Skogen

The Fourth Movement

HOW TO SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN NAME

There is no time like the present to ensure the long-term future of LSO by making an outright gift or pledge to LSO's endowment. Pledges can be fulfilled over three or five years using a payment method that suits your personal financial situation. LSO will send out pledge reminders based on your requested payment schedule.

Ways To Give

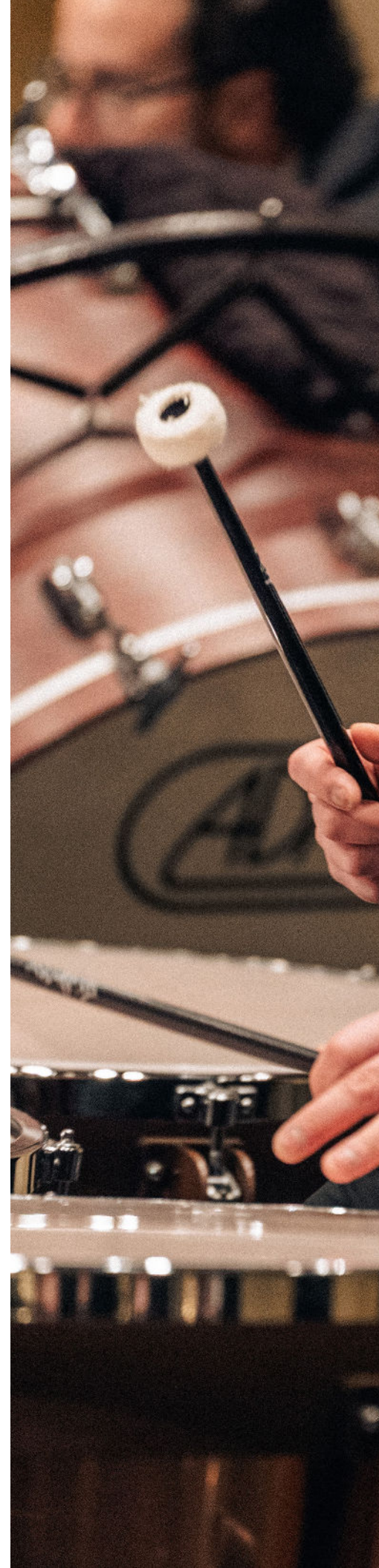
LSO provides a variety of ways to make your gift and/or fulfill your pledge.

- Cash
- Check
- Stock or Mutual Funds
- Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD) from an IRA
- Donor Advised Fund (Note: there are restrictions around using a DAF to pay a personal pledge. However, you can make a recurring grant request. Please ask your fund administrator for specific instructions.)
- Other options, such as gifting real property and life insurance, are available. Please contact Eva Marie Restel for specific instructions.

Donor Recognition Plan and Naming Opportunities

All contributions of \$1,000 or more to the CAMPAIGN NAME will be recognized on the website and in concert programs. All gifts of \$500 or more will be publicly acknowledged during the campaign without disclosing the amount (all gift and pledge amounts are kept confidential unless requested by the donor). Gifts may be made in honor or in memory of someone or in recognition of a specific event or accomplishment. A donor may also choose to remain anonymous.

The following giving societies were established by LSO to recognize gifts and pledges to LSO's endowment. Donors who have contributed previously to the endowment and make additional gifts during the CAMPAIGN will be recognized in the category based upon their cumulative giving. Donors will have the opportunity to identify how they wish their names to be listed in publications or permanent displays.





Giving Societies

Gift Amount

Overture Circle	\$500,000 and greater
Leadership Circle	\$250,000 to \$499,999
Conductor Circle	\$100,000 to \$249,999
Principal Circle	\$25,000 to \$99,999
Artist Circle	\$10,000 to \$24,999
Patron Circle	\$5,000 to \$9,999
Friends	\$1,000 to \$4,999
Stakeholders	Up to \$999

Donors who make a gift of \$50,000 may choose to have their name alongside a specific endowment fund.

Named Endowment Opportunities

Gift Amount

Symphony for Youth	\$1,000,000
Naming the Legacy Endowment Fund	\$750,000
Endowment for Music Director	\$500,000
Endowment for Music Education & Outreach	\$400,000
Strings for Youth	\$250,000
Endowment for Principal & Section Musicians	\$250,000
Endowment for Musical Mastery	\$200,000
Endowment for Artistic Vision & Impact	\$200,000
Endowment for Strings	\$125,000
Endowment for Woodwinds	\$125,000
Endowment for Percussion	\$125,000
Play It Forward	\$100,000
String Scholarship Program	\$100,000
Endowment for School & Community Programs	\$100,000
Endowment for Student Musicians & Mentorships	\$50,000
Endowment for Future of Orchestral Music	\$50,000



Music has always been an integral part of our family's life, and we make a point each year of enjoying the magic that is the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra. . . We encourage all who have felt the magic of the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra to join us in supporting them and their legacy for generations to come!

- Jeff and Patti Lokken

When you are asked to give
please give generously!

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