



ANNUAL REPORT

2023 / 2024

MSO MILWAUKEE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
KEN-DAVID MASUR / MUSIC DIRECTOR



As I look back on the 2023.24 season, our third official full season in the Bradley Symphony Center, I can confidently say that we have adjusted to our new home and our new future. We have finally realized, at least in part, the first significant step into an exciting era for the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, our patrons, and our community, the MSO is now in the best position, perhaps in its history, to solidify our place in Milwaukee's arts community for generations to come.

Arriving here took the vision and leadership of a great number of people within our community. One of those people is Susan Martin, who has been our board chair for the last four seasons. Susan took the helm of our board in December 2020 amid a global pandemic that had canceled the MSO's first season in the Bradley Symphony Center. She led the orchestra through the financial challenges of the pandemic, as well as the successful pivot to live virtual performances in February 2021, and then through the triumphant grand opening of the Bradley Symphony Center. She took an even greater leadership role when I suffered a stroke in November 2021, and she was working closely with Interim President Susan Loris until Loris sadly passed away in January 2022. With understanding and grace, Susan kept us focused on the future and the vision for this orchestra through our first three seasons in our new home. I don't think she expected any of this when she agreed to take on this role, but she was the right leader at the right time for the MSO. We cannot thank her enough for her service to our organization. We are deeply grateful for her dedication.

As you read through the pages of this report and the many successes that the MSO has experienced over the last year, I'd like you to remember one important truth — none of this is possible without you. Tens of thousands of audience members each year are uplifted and inspired by live orchestral music; students are able to enjoy educational performances by our orchestra; people with autism and sensory sensitivities are able to come to a concert where they feel comfortable; and mothers and caregivers are able to utilize the Lullaby Project to foster deep and meaningful connections to their children, all because of the generosity of our donors, our patrons, and our community. Every gift to the MSO makes a unique and powerful impact on someone's life — whether they need inspiration, comfort, or an escape, the MSO and the Bradley Symphony Center strive to give our community the experience that they need most. And that is done through the hard work of all of you. We are thankful for your continued support, and I'm looking forward to seeing you at the Bradley Symphony Center or at one of our many community events soon.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Niehaus" followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Mark Niehaus

President & Executive Director
Michael and Jeanne Schmitz Chair

ARTISTIC HIGHLIGHTS



The 2023.24 season began as **Music Director Ken-David Masur** led the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Bass-baritone **Dashon Burton**, in his first season as artistic partner, took to the stage to sing timeless favorites from Schubert, as well as to perform the Milwaukee premiere of Eleanor Alberga's *The Soul's Expression*.



It was a year that welcomed new talent to Milwaukee, including **Concertmaster Jinwoo Lee** and **Assistant Conductor Ryan Tani**, who gave his own MSO debut in style: in October, the MSO joined forces with hometown heroes the **Violent Femmes** for a sold-out performance that was filmed by Milwaukee PBS. Tani rose to the occasion again in November — with only a few hours' notice, he filled in for Music Director Laureate Edo de Waart in an evening featuring pianist **Joyce Yang**, playing Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, and Elgar's "Enigma Variations."



The holiday season saw the Bradley Symphony Center aglow with musical merry-making, with a tribute to Vince Guaraldi's *A Charlie Brown Christmas* performed by local jazz ensemble **The Commercialists**, annual performances of Handel's *Messiah* led by Masur, and the Holiday Pops concerts led by **Byron Stripling**, who would later be appointed the orchestra's principal pops conductor. The MSO also traveled outside the Bradley Symphony Center with local tours to Brillion, Brookfield, Cedarburg, Fond du Lac, Green Bay, Hartland, Ripon, and West Bend.





After back-to-back concerts celebrating **Mozart** in January under the batons of both guest conductor Bernard Labadie and Masur, Iván López Reynoso made his U.S. debut with the orchestra in February, leading the musicians in Ravel's glittering setting of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Later that month, rising superstar violinist **Randall Goosby** gave his Milwaukee debut.



In early March, the orchestra performed the U.S. premiere of Bulgarian composer Dobrinka Tabakova's *Thrace*, and a few weeks later, the MSO produced its first **Bach Festival**, a week-long celebration devoted to the life and music of Johann Sebastian Bach, culminating in performances of the *Magnificat*, featuring the **Milwaukee Symphony Chorus**. The double-header Saturday concerts included a panel discussion with Masur, Bach scholar Christoph Wolff, Chorus Director Cheryl Frazes Hill, and festival artists-in-residence Rachell Ellen Wong and Mahan Esfahani.



In April, the orchestra performed with Italian tenor **Andrea Bocelli** at the Fiserv Forum before joining indie sensations the **Indigo Girls** in Allen-Bradley Hall for a sold-out show. The month of May was host to an all-**John Williams** program, which included a video interview between Masur and Williams filmed exclusively for Milwaukee audiences, and debuts by violinist Alexi Kenney and **Third Coast Percussion**. The season concluded in June with **Principal Trombone Megumi Kanda's** performance of Tan Dun's *Three Muses in Video Game*, Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*, featuring Dashon Burton and the Milwaukee Symphony Chorus, and violin virtuoso Augustin Hadelich's triumphant return playing Tchaikovsky's violin concerto.



EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS



The Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra's education team once again delivered engaging orchestral programs to students throughout southeastern Wisconsin, working with teachers and students in classrooms, and bringing nearly **30,000 students to the Bradley Symphony Center**.



The season's **Concert for Schools** program for students in grades K4-12 featured a diverse selection of composers, including Gustav Holst, John Williams, Aaron Copland, Florence Price, Arturo Márquez, Leonard Bernstein, Reena Esmail, Igor Stravinsky, Ludwig van Beethoven, and Sergei Prokofiev, to name a few. The MSO welcomed **20,684 students from 209 schools, 97 zip codes, and 72 cities** to Allen-Bradley Hall.



The MSO presented the **Teen Choral Partners** concert for local high school students in February. Students from three Wisconsin high schools — Germantown High School, Hartford Union High School, and Milwaukee High School of the Arts — performed with the MSO for their peers. Joined by Dashon Burton, MSO artistic partner, and Milwaukee Symphony Chorus member Olivia Pogodzinski, the students and the orchestra performed Fauré's *Requiem*.





During the 2023-24 school year, the MSO's **Arts in Community Education (ACE)** program provided arts-integrated programming to **21 area schools, totaling 5,817 students**. Of those students, 3,510 were from Milwaukee Public Schools. One of the longest-running programs of its kind, ACE connects students, teachers, school communities, and professional artists with an integrated approach to arts and curriculum. ACE embraces all art forms — dance and movement, drama, visual arts, spoken word, and every genre of music. ACE students also travel to the Bradley Symphony Center for grade-level-specific concerts that support the lessons that the students have experienced all year. During the third-grade concert, the eight winners of the MSO's yearly **Bach Double Violin Competition** performed for their peers.

In addition to the Bach Double Violin Competition, the MSO holds the Audrey G. Baird **Stars of Tomorrow Competition**. Open to all Wisconsin high school students, the competition's three finalists have the honor of performing a movement of a concerto with the MSO in the Stars of Tomorrow Concert in the spring. The semi-finalists and honorable mention winners are also given the opportunity to perform side by side with the musicians of the MSO in the same performance.

The MSO celebrated its third annual **Sensory Friendly Concert**, Orchestra Family Reunion, in May. Sensory friendly concerts are designed for people of any age on the autism spectrum or with a sensory sensitivity and their families, but all are welcome. New this year was the MSO's resource fair, which included organizations that provide support to families affected by autism or Down syndrome or that offer sensory friendly programming.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



With the hiring of Marquita Edwards as the director of community engagement in September 2023, the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra opened an exciting chapter in its growth as an institution committed to the cultural welfare of Milwaukee and the state of Wisconsin, forging a new path forward to reach community members both at the Bradley Symphony Center and throughout the city. Edwards worked to establish the MSO's **Community Advisory Council**, comprised of BIPOC Milwaukee community members and civic leaders. From their first meeting in February, the panel began building and sustaining a channel of communication that solicited feedback on programming and community engagement initiatives from underrepresented populations of the Milwaukee metropolitan area.



Working closely with Music Director Ken-David Masur, Edwards developed the most substantial community program of the year: the MSO's first **Bach Festival**. The week-long celebration, devoted to the life and music of Johann Sebastian Bach, featured MSO musicians, community partners, and volunteers working together to produce a series of performances and lectures throughout the city in churches, cafés, lounges, partner arts venues, City Hall, and the Bradley Symphony Center.



The opening ceremony on March 18 featured members of the Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra, Just Bach, The Milwaukee Choristers, Holy Redeemer Institutional C.O.G.I.C. Choir, and the Northwest Thundering Eagles Drumline from Carmen High School of Science and Technology. Throughout the week, MSO musicians and community partners performed at venues that included City Hall, Trinity Episcopal Church, Milwaukee Youth Arts Center, St. Marcus Lutheran Church, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music, multiple Colectivo cafés, and more.





At the close of the 2023.24 Pops season, classical guitarist Leonela Alejandro and the exhilarating Latin musical ensemble, Caché en Trio, headed by **Cecil Negrón**, brought Latin American and Afro-Latin Caribbean music to the Ellen & Joe Checota Gallery for a post-concert event following the Saturday performance of **Latin Fire**, a program dedicated to the richly varied traditions of Latin pop music. **The Salsabrositas**, a local Latin youth dance team, gave performances of traditional dances, including the cha-cha, merengue, and salsa, offering concertgoers the opportunity to engage with local artists from Milwaukee's Latinx community.



For the seventh season in a row, the MSO's education department partnered with **Sojourner Family Peace Center**, the largest nonprofit provider of domestic violence prevention and intervention services in Wisconsin, for the Lullaby Project, a program of Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute. Five families worked with professional teaching artists to compose personal lullabies for their children, which were then professionally arranged, recorded, and debuted in a public performance on June 3, featuring MSO musicians and the family members.



In June 2024, the MSO joined the **Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce**, a consortium of businesses, corporations, and professionals committed to creating an inclusive state by fostering economic growth, providing educational programming, and creating opportunities for gay, lesbian, transgender, and LGBT-allied institutions.





UNITEDPERFORMINGARTSFUND

UPAF'S IMPACT

Thank you to UPAF's generous community of donors for their unwavering support of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and dedication to supporting arts and cultural organizations throughout our region. The MSO's extraordinary season of artistic excellence, essential education programs, and innovative community-based work would not be possible without UPAF's generous commitment.

UPAF funding continues to help support the MSO's artistic, education, and community programming, including:

ARTS IN COMMUNITY EDUCATION (ACE)
CONCERTS FOR SCHOOLS
SENSORY INCLUSIVE INITIATIVES
TEEN CHORAL PARTNERS
STARS OF TOMORROW

BACH DOUBLE VIOLIN COMPETITION
WISCONSIN YOUTH PIANO COMPETITION
BACH FESTIVAL
MEET THE MUSIC
LULLABY PROJECT

Notable Programming Spotlight thanks to UPAF support:

UPAF Bright Minds supports **Arts in Community Education (ACE)**, our nationally recognized program advancing children's learning and development by connecting students, teachers, school communities, and professional artists through engaging arts experiences in an arts-integrated curriculum. In the 2023.24 season, ACE served **21 schools** and **5,817 students**, more than half of whom were enrolled in Milwaukee Public Schools. Nearly **300** in-school Artist Ensemble visits occurred, and **3 new schools** were added as part of the MSO's efforts to bring ACE's proven impact to underserved student populations.

UPAF's Kasey's Fund supports **Sensory Inclusive Initiatives** and the annual **Sensory Friendly Concert**. This work improves our ability to welcome guests to the Bradley Symphony Center with sensory sensitivities through highly meaningful and essential programs, partnerships, and resources. **1 in 4 people** experience a sensory sensitivity. Of the 570 tickets issued for this event, **300 complimentary tickets** were utilized by **9 local social service organizations** serving individuals and families with disabilities. The MSO piloted a pre-concert resource fair, which hosted **8 organizations** sharing information about their sensory inclusive programming with concert attendees.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The 2023.24 season was the third full season of programming at The Bradley Symphony Center. There were a number of notable financial achievements:

- **Performance revenue increased by over 18%** to \$4.9 million. Classical concert revenue increased 9%, Pops concert revenue increased nearly 40%, and tour concert revenue increased 581% due in large part to the orchestra's performance with Andrea Bocelli at the Fiserv Forum.
- Unrestricted contributions declined by (\$576K) as the MSO requested (\$1.0M) less in special funding year-over-year. Excluding the (\$1.0M) reduction, **contributions increased nearly 4%** thanks to another year of strong support from our wonderful donors.
- Other revenue increased almost 4% due to Endowment distributions made to fund expenses for the Sound Legacy endowment-building campaign.
- **Operating expenses declined almost 1% year-over-year** due to tight spending controls and a lease buyout of our former office space on Market Street.
- Operations drove \$3.8 million of cash flow, which was utilized to repay \$1.6 million on the construction loan and reduce the total amount of the outstanding loan to under \$3.4M.
- **Beneficial interest in perpetual trusts (MSO Endowment & Long-Term Fund) increased by nearly \$6.7M, or 25%**, versus prior year. The successful start of the Sound Legacy campaign and strong market returns drove the improvement.

We are grateful for the enthusiasm and support of our donors, patrons, and the wider community who share our vision of success and look forward to the opportunities ahead in the next fiscal year.

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

MSO OPERATIONS

\$ IN THOUSANDS

	August 31, 2024	August 31, 2023
Performance Revenue	4,966	4,186
Unrestricted Contributions	10,720	11,296
Government Support	287	361
Other Revenue	2,946	2,844
Total Operating Revenue	18,920	18,687
Program Expenses	17,786	17,205
Management & General	6,041	6,935
Fundraising	1,606	1,453
Total Operating Expenses	25,433	25,593
Restricted Contributions	2,764	1,032
Change in Beneficial Interest in Net Assets in Perpetual Trusts	6,671	5,214
Other	237	1,010
Other Changes in Net Assets	9,672	7,256
Total Change in Net Assets	3,158	349
Endowment, beneficial interest in trusts	32,890	26,219
Consolidated Net Assets without Restriction	80,593	82,960
Consolidated Total Net Assets	119,503	116,345

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^Members who have stepped off the Board of Directors as of the releasing of the 2023.24 Annual Report on December 10, 2024

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Jennifer Bouton Schaub

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E-FLAT CLARINET

Benjamin Adler*

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Taylor Eiffert*
Madison Freed**

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Beth W. Giacobassi

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Chris Riggs

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Matthew Geise, *Assistant Librarian & Media Archivist*

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Paolo Scarabel, *Stage Technician & Deck Supervisor*

*Leave of absence 2023.24 Season

**Acting member of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra 2023.24 Season

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*Hannah Esch, *Senior Education & Engagement Manager*
Nathan Hickox-Young, *Concerts for Schools & Education Manager*

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Al Bartosik, *Box Office Manager*
Marie Holtyn, *Box Office Supervisor*
Adam Klarner, *Patron Services Assistant*

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*Françoise Moquin, *Director of Orchestra Personnel*
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Paul Beck, *Principal Librarian, James E. Van Ess Principal Librarian Chair*

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Albrecht Gaub, *Artistic Coordinator*
Matthew Geise, *Assistant Librarian & Media Archivist*
*Kelsey Padron, *Artistic Coordinator*
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*Jeremy Tusz, *Audio & Video Producer*
Tristan Wallace, *Production Manager/Live Audio, MSO | Technical Director, BSC*
Christina Williams, *Chorus Manager*

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Sam Hushek, *Events & Volunteer Manager*
Zed Waeltz, *Senior House Manager*
Lisa Klimczak, *House Manager*
David Kotlewski, *House Manager*

** Indicates an employee who is no longer with the MSO as of December 10, 2024.*

All employee listings will reflect their titles as of August 31, 2024.

ENDOWMENT

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Commitments of \$1,000,000 and above

One Anonymous Donor
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The Family of Evonne Winston and Paul Nausieda

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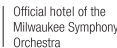


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