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CHARLOTTE SYMPHONY PARTNERS WITH CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHOOLS TO ELIMINATE FEES FOR CMS ALL-COUNTY HONORS ORCHESTRA AND BAND

This Joint Donation Will Remove Financial Barriers That Prevent Student Participation

November 23, 2021 | Charlotte, NC – The Charlotte Symphony (CSO) and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) are partnering to eliminate all fees for students who wish to participate in CMS’s All-County Honors Orchestra and Band. The joint donation will remove all financial barriers that may have prevented students from taking part in the popular honors instrumental program, which includes two middle school orchestras, one high school orchestra, and one middle school band — made up of students throughout the county.

For more than 20 years, thousands of CMS students have enjoyed performing in the honors music programs alongside their peers from across the county. A loss of funding from the non-profit Charlotte Concerts in 2020 left the district no choice but to begin charging families a small per-student fee to participate, until the Charlotte Symphony and CMS Superintendent Earnest Winston stepped in.

“Encouraging and creating opportunities for the next generation of musicians and music lovers is a huge part of the Charlotte Symphony’s mission,” said Charlotte Symphony President and CEO David Fisk. “Financial status should never be a barrier for students to experience these vitally important music programs. We are so grateful to Symphony supporters for making this gift possible and to Superintendent Winston for his leadership in matching our donation and keeping these programs freely available for all.”

“It is so important that we support our students who excel in the performing arts,” said CMS Superintendent Earnest Winston. “Participation in this prestigious program is a reward for a job well done, and I am thrilled that we can make this happen for our families free of charge. I want to thank the Charlotte Symphony for its generous support and for encouraging our students to pursue their passion.”

The Charlotte Symphony has been serving Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools since the early 1950s when it began offering weekday education concerts for schools, a tradition that has continued over the past 70 years — including during the pandemic when the CSO offered the virtual concert “One Musical Family” which reached over 17,000 CMS elementary school students.

For many years, Symphony musicians have introduced students to orchestral instruments and repertoire, or used music to teach core subject matter, such as the history-based “Music and the Holocaust” program. CSO musicians and conductors have provided countless hours of individual and group instrumental coaching in middle and high schools across the county and since 2006

the CSO has partnered directly with Northwest School of the Arts to bolster the city's only performing arts magnet. Beginning in 2010 at CMS's Winterfield Elementary, the CSO launched what would later become Project Harmony, a free after-school music program serving families who face challenges and seek to provide greater opportunities for their children. Together with project partner Arts+, that program serves more than 200 children in an average year, with plans to grow in the near future.

About the Charlotte Symphony

Celebrating its 90th anniversary in the 2021–22 season, the Charlotte Symphony is committed to uplifting, entertaining, and educating the diverse communities of Charlotte-Mecklenburg and beyond through exceptional musical experiences. Led by internationally renowned Music Director Christopher Warren-Green, the Symphony upholds the highest artistic integrity and takes bold steps to engage the community through music. The CSO employs 62 professional full-time orchestra musicians, serves three youth orchestras, and offers significant educational programming aimed at serving areas of our community with the greatest need. The Charlotte Symphony plays a leading cultural role in the Charlotte area and aims to serve the community as a civic leader, reflecting and uniting our region through the transformative power of live music.

About Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) provides academic instruction, rigor and support each school day to more than 140,000 students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade in 180 schools throughout Mecklenburg County. CMS is proud of its diverse mix of students who represent 184 countries and speak 204 languages and dialects. CMS offers an extensive range of magnet programs in 71 of its schools to nurture the talents of students who have interest and ability in specific areas. CMS also educates, supports and meets the needs of students with learning and physical disabilities.

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