

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**THE CHARLOTTE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ANNOUNCES  
THE 2025–26 SEASON**

**MUSIC DIRECTOR KWAMÉ RYAN CONDUCTS**  
**CSO Annual Gala: GIL SHAHAM Plays Tchaikovsky**

**SIX CLASSICAL SERIES CONCERTS INCLUDING WORKS BY**  
**Mason Bates, Bernstein, Copland, Dvořák, Gershwin, Jennifer Higdon, Ives,**  
**Gabriel Kahane, Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky, and George Walker**

**Season-long Artistic Explorations: *HOME* and *CSO SPOTLIGHT SERIES***

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**HOME**

**A Musical Reflection on the Meaning of Home Explored Through**  
**American Voices and Global Perspectives, Spanning the 19th Century to Today**

**Coinciding with the 250th Anniversary of the United States of America**

**A Special Performance of RAVEL'S *BOLÉRO* with Film, Showcasing Charlotte as Home**

**SEASON FINALE: GABRIEL KAHANE'S *EMERGENCY SHELTER INTAKE FORM***  
**Conducted by KWAMÉ RYAN**

**Featuring a Choir of Community Members Directly Touched by**  
**Homelessness, Eviction, or Housing Insecurity**

**CSO SPOTLIGHT SERIES**

**A New Series That Focuses on a Singular Artistic Voice Each Season**

**2025–26 CSO SPOTLIGHT ARTIST GABRIEL KAHANE'S**  
***Judith, Pattern of the Rail, and emergency shelter intake form***

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**ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS**

**U.S. Premiere of Anna Clyne's *The Years***

**N.C. Premiere of Malek Jandali's Clarinet Concerto**

**The Iconic Fifth Symphonies of Beethoven, Shostakovich, and Tchaikovsky**  
***Dolly Parton's Threads: My Songs in Symphony, Black Panther in Concert***

**March 11, 2025 | Charlotte, NC** – The Charlotte Symphony Orchestra's 2025–26 season, marking the Orchestra's 94th season and Kwamé Ryan's second as Music Director, offers a dynamic blend of symphonic cornerstones, new musical discoveries, and artistic explorations

across the Classical, Pops, Movie, and Family Series. Highlights include a season-long musical reflection on the meaning of home, coinciding with the 250th anniversary of the United States; the debut of the *CSO Spotlight Series*, an ever-expanding look at the work of this season's CSO Spotlight Artist, Gabriel Kahane; performances of audience favorites like Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and Ravel's *Boléro*; and more thrilling events showcasing the Orchestra's breadth, from the music of Dolly Parton to *Black Panther* in Concert.

"This season is especially meaningful to me as it marks the first that I've had the privilege to shape from the start," said Music Director Kwamé Ryan. "It's an opportunity to share music that excites and inspires me, and I can't wait to experience it together with Charlotte audiences. I'm particularly thrilled to welcome Gabriel Kahane as our first-ever CSO Spotlight Artist — his work is bold, thought-provoking, and deeply human. This season also invites us to explore the idea of home through powerful storytelling, iconic masterworks, and new perspectives, and I look forward to embarking on this journey with our musicians and our community."

"We're looking forward to welcoming more Charlotteans to experience the Symphony in new and exciting ways this season," said President & CEO David Fisk. "Whether you're looking for a family-friendly outing, a relaxed concert atmosphere, something traditional, or something unexpected, our doors are open for you. We invite you to join us and see what we have to offer — you just might find that your new favorite way to enjoy live music is right here at the Symphony."

## THE CLASSICAL SERIES

### MUSIC DIRECTOR KWAMÉ RYAN

This season marks the first fully shaped by Music Director Kwamé Ryan, showcasing his signature style and artistic vision. With dynamic programming that spans centuries and styles — bridging symphonic masterworks and contemporary voices — Ryan's influence is woven throughout the season. Audiences will experience his vision firsthand as he leads the Charlotte Symphony in six Classical Series programs and the Annual Gala.

Maestro Ryan launches the season with the **Annual Gala Concert** on September 18, 2025, leading the Orchestra in **Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 1** and **Violin Concerto**, featuring world-renowned violinist **Gil Shaham**. This performance begins a Tchaikovsky cycle under Ryan's direction, which continues later this season with Symphony No. 5 and will be completed in seasons to come.

The Classical Series opens on October 10–11, 2025, with an electrifying program led by Ryan, featuring American composer **Mason Bates's *Attack Decay Sustain Release*** and two powerful works by **Shostakovich** — his **Cello Concerto No. 1**, with Joshua Roman as soloist, and the monumental **Fifth Symphony**, written under Stalin's oppressive regime. The program sets the stage for the season-long exploration of home, reflecting resilience and national identity in the face of adversity. (See pg. 3 for details about *Home*.)

Throughout the season, Ryan showcases his interpretive depth in a diverse range of programs:

- The Schumann cycle, begun in the 2024–25 season, continues with **Schumann’s Symphony No. 2**, January 20–22, 2026. The program also features **Ives’s *The Unanswered Question*** and **Prokofiev’s Piano Concerto No. 3**, with **Ran Dank** as soloist.
- The program on February 13–14, 2026, pairs **Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 5** with ***Pattern of the Rail*** by **CSO Spotlight Artist Gabriel Kahane**, who is the focus of this season’s *CSO Spotlight Series*. (See pg. 3 for details about the *CSO Spotlight Series*.)
- The season-long theme of home is reflected again in the program on March 27–29, 2026, which features **Dvořák’s “New World” Symphony** alongside **Walker’s *Lyric for Strings***. Soprano **Janai Brugger** returns to the Charlotte Symphony for **Barber’s *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*** and selections from **Floyd’s *Susannah*** and **Stravinsky’s *The Rake’s Progress***.
- The theme of star-crossed lovers takes center stage in the program on April 24–25, 2026, featuring **Svendsen’s *Romeo and Juliet***, **Fantasia for Orchestra**, **A Symphonic Picture** from **Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess***, and **Bernstein’s Symphonic Dances** from ***West Side Story***.

In the Classical Series finale, May 15–16, 2026, Ryan unites the season’s central artistic explorations, *Home* and the *CSO Spotlight Series*, in a compelling program featuring **Jennifer Higdon’s “SkyLine,”** a musical tribute to Atlanta’s signature skyline, **Copland’s *Suite from Appalachian Spring***, and **Gabriel Kahane’s *emergency shelter intake form***.

## **HOME**

Coinciding with the **250th anniversary of the United States of America**, the Charlotte Symphony’s 2025–26 season embarks on an exploration of “home” — what it means to belong, seek refuge, and reflect on the places that shape us. Through a diverse range of repertoire, the Orchestra examines America’s musical identity, performing works by American composers including **Samuel Barber, Amy Beach, Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, Carlisle Floyd, George Gershwin, Jennifer Higdon, and George Walker**.

The season also broadens the lens, exploring how composers from around the world have captured their own sense of home in music. From **Dvořák’s “New World” Symphony**, a reflection on his time in the United States infused with longing for his homeland, to the **U.S. Premiere of Anna Clyne’s *The Years***, a musical response to the forced isolation of the Covid-19 pandemic. This season’s repertoire offers a rich tapestry of perspectives on place, identity, and belonging.

A special performance of **Ravel’s *Boléro***, led by **Resident Conductor Christopher James Lees**, March 6–7, 2026, features a newly commissioned film showcasing the Charlotte Symphony’s musicians performing in iconic locations across the city — an artistic tribute to the Orchestra’s home and the musicians who shape its sound.

The season-long journey culminates on May 15–16, 2026 with **Gabriel Kahane’s *emergency shelter intake form***, a powerful look at housing insecurity. Conducted by **Music Director**

**Kwamé Ryan**, this oratorio-style work tells the story of becoming and confronting homelessness from several angles, ending with a performance by a **choir made up of community members directly touched by homelessness, eviction, or housing insecurity**, offering a deeply personal perspective on the meaning of home.

### ***CSO SPOTLIGHT SERIES*** **Featuring Gabriel Kahane**

The Charlotte Symphony introduces the *CSO Spotlight Series*, a new initiative launched by Music Director Kwamé Ryan to provide a deeper, more expansive exploration of a singular artistic voice each season. The series begins with a focused look at an artist's work and gradually widens — illuminating more facets and revealing a fuller picture over the course of the season. Across three programs in the 2025–26 season, the *CSO Spotlight Series* will feature composer, singer-songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist **Gabriel Kahane**.

The exploration begins with Kahane's *Judith*, based on the song “Last Dance,” a character study of a fictional older widow. Later in the season, Ryan leads the Charlotte Symphony in *Pattern of the Rail*, with Kahane himself singing and playing piano in this deeply personal work, inspired by his cross-country train journey through the United States in the wake of the 2016 Presidential election. The series culminates in the season finale with *emergency shelter intake form*.

Through this rich exploration, the *CSO Spotlight Series* invites audiences to engage with an artist's work in increasing depth, offering new perspectives and deepening connections with groundbreaking voices in music today.

### **ADDITIONAL CLASSICAL HIGHLIGHTS**

- The Charlotte Symphony performs **Beethoven's iconic Symphony No. 5**, October 24–26, 2025.
- **Concertmaster Calin Ovidiu Lupanu** performs **Chausson's Poème** and **Ravel's Tzigane**, January 9–10, 2026, led by conductor Shiyeon Sung.
- **Principal Clarinet Taylor Marino** performs the **Clarinet Concerto** by Charlotte-based Syrian-American composer **Malek Jandali**, Queens University Composer-in-Residence, March 6–7, 2026, led by Resident Conductor **Christopher James Lees**.
- **The Charlotte Master Chorale** joins the Charlotte Symphony for three programs including **Durufle's Requiem**, November 14–15, 2025; **Handel's Messiah**, December 5–7, 2025; and the **U.S. Premiere of Anna Clyne's The Years**, April 10–11, 2026.

### **POPS AND MOVIES**

The 2025–26 season of the **Sandra and Leon Levine Pops Series** opens with **Dolly Parton's Threads: My Songs in Symphony** (October 17–18, 2025), a multimedia experience featuring Dolly on screen, leading audiences through a visual-musical journey of her songs, her life, and her stories. **Holiday Pops: A Carolina Christmas** (December 12–13, 2025) is a celebration of North Carolina's rich musical heritage with the sounds of bluegrass, blues, and gospel converging with traditional holiday songs. Audiences will delight in timeless hits with **The Music of Motown** (January 23–24, 2026), a tribute to the legendary sound that changed the

music industry. The series culminates with **The Concert: A Tribute to ABBA** (February 27–28, 2026), featuring the world’s top ABBA tribute band performing the iconic hits that defined a generation.

The Charlotte Symphony’s **Movie Series** brings blockbuster films to life with unforgettable scores performed live. Audiences can set sail with *Pirates of the Caribbean* (October 3–4, 2025), experience the mischievous holiday magic of *Home Alone* (November 28–29, 2025), sing along with *Encanto* (March 20–21, 2026), and step into the Marvel Cinematic Universe with *Black Panther* (June 5–6, 2026), featuring Ludwig Göransson’s Oscar-winning score performed live.

## FAMILY AND EDUCATION

The Charlotte Symphony believes that music plays a vital role in lifelong learning and is committed to nurturing a passion for orchestral music in Charlotte through diverse educational programming and excellent instruction.

The 2025–26 season **Family Series**, presented by Domtar, includes four one-hour concerts designed for children 4–9 years of age. Each event includes pre-concert hands-on activities, storytelling, and musical games in the lobby of the Knight Theater. This season will include **Peter and the Wolf** (October 18, 2025), **Holiday Pops** (December 13, 2025), and **Beethoven Lives Upstairs** with Classical Kids Live! (January 24, 2026), and **The Orchestra Games** (February 28, 2026), where musicians compete in Olympic-style musical events to showcase their instruments’ strengths and personalities — tied to the 2026 Winter Olympics.

The Charlotte Symphony continues to offer **Pre-Concert Talks** before every Classical concert — free of charge for ticketholders. Resident Conductor Christopher James Lees, or a guest conductor or artist, leads a discussion about the evening’s repertoire and composers, allowing concertgoers to feel more connected to the in-concert experience. Learn more [here](#).

The Charlotte Symphony’s four **Youth Orchestras** — the Youth Symphony, Camerata, Philharmonic, and Ensemble — offer extraordinary music education to the youth of Charlotte. The ensembles are inclusive, diverse, and accessible to all students, regardless of financial resources. Guided by professional conductors and Charlotte Symphony musicians, students develop their skills in a supportive environment, building lasting friendships through music. With regular performances at venues across the city, including the Belk and Knight Theaters, students also enjoy special access to the Symphony’s Music Director Kwamé Ryan and internationally acclaimed guest artists. Learn more [here](#).

**Project Harmony**, a tuition-free, after-school music program, continues in the 2025–26 season. A powerful program serving students and families from Title I schools and under-resourced Charlotte communities, Project Harmony provides free instruments and ensemble music training to its students. Together with Arts+, the CSO serves students grades 2–5 in four Charlotte community-based sites in the Montclair, West Sugar Creek, West Boulevard, and Winterfield neighborhoods. Learn more [here](#).

## IN THE COMMUNITY

**CSO Roadshow** returns in the 2025–26 season with ten performances bringing live symphonic music directly into neighborhoods across the region. Performed on the Charlotte Symphony’s mobile stage — wrapped in vibrant artwork by local creative Rosalia Torres-Weiner — this traveling concert series offers free performances that celebrate and reflect the unique character of each community. Developed in partnership with the City of Charlotte, with guidance from the Corridors of Opportunity initiative, CSO Roadshow continues to expand access to orchestral music throughout the city. Concert details to be announced at a later date.

The Charlotte Symphony’s popular **On Tap** series offers an intimate orchestral experience within the laid-back environment of a neighborhood brewery. Details for the 2025–26 On Tap series to be announced at a later date.

**Summer Pops** returns to Symphony Park in June 2026 with four concerts for its 43rd year. Summer Pops concerts have become an iconic summer experience in the community, bringing together tens of thousands of residents to share food, music, and fireworks under the stars with family and friends. Concert details to be announced at a later date.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

A complete listing of concerts for the Charlotte Symphony’s 2025–26 season can be found [here](#).

Subscriptions for the Classical, Pops, Family, and Movie series go on sale today, March 11, 2025. Individual tickets for all performances will go on sale to the public later this summer. For more information visit [charlottesymphony.org](http://charlottesymphony.org).

### **About the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra**

The Charlotte Symphony Orchestra (CSO) is one of the premier music organizations in the Southeastern United States and the oldest continuously operating symphony orchestra in the Carolinas. As Charlotte's most active performing arts group, the CSO presents around 150 concerts each season, reaching more than 150,000 music lovers. The CSO is committed to its mission of uplifting, entertaining, and educating the diverse communities of Charlotte-Mecklenburg and beyond through exceptional musical experiences. Led by Music Director Kwamé Ryan, the CSO employs 65 professional full-time orchestra musicians, fosters four youth orchestras, and offers significant educational support aimed at serving the under-resourced areas of our community. Founded in 1932, the Charlotte Symphony plays a leading cultural role in the Charlotte area and serves the community as a civic leader, reflecting and uniting our region through the transformative power of live music.

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## ALL PROGRAMS AND ARTISTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

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The Pops Series is presented by **Sandra and Leon Levine**

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The Family Series is presented by **Domtar**.

*Hi-res photography is available in the Charlotte Symphony's [photo gallery](#)  
or by contacting Deirdre Roddin at [droddin@charlottesymphony.org](mailto:droddin@charlottesymphony.org)*