



Fiscal Year 2024 by the Numbers

MORE THAN
260
PERFORMANCES



4:3
STUDENT TO FACULTY RATIO



87
STUDENT RECITALS
were held, demonstrating
Curtis' learn-by-doing
philosophy

382
SEASON
SUBSCRIPTIONS,
a 47% increase over 2022–23

6
MAIN STAGE EVENTS
SOLD OUT,
including all Ensemble
20/21 (now Curtis New
Music Ensemble) concerts,
Curtis Opera Theatre's
production of George
Frideric Handel's *L'Allegro,
il Penseroso ed il Moderato*
(Sunday performance),
Curtis Presents: Nate's
World, and Curtis Presents:
String Sextets



**Curtis
Opera
Theatre**
ATTENDANCE
increased 60% over
2022–23

ONLINE REACH
50% year-over-year increase in followers on Instagram
26% year-over-year increase in YouTube subscribers
First Instagram reel to cross **100,000 VIEWS**
featured Yangyang Ruan's performance of Chopin's
Nocturne Op. 9, No. 1 in B-flat minor
1 MILLION annual views on YouTube

Dear Friends,

Looking back on the 2023–24 school year, Curtis Institute of Music continued building its impressive legacy. This annual report showcases another remarkable year of artistic excellence, educational innovation, and community engagement as we prepared to mark 100 years of transforming talented young musicians into mature artists.

The 2023–24 season demonstrated Curtis' enduring commitment to providing exceptional performance opportunities while pioneering new educational experiences. Our main stage events consistently drew capacity audiences, with several selling out. A highlight of our educational innovations was the inaugural three-week orchestra intensive for Curtis Symphony Orchestra students, providing thoughtful preparation that enhanced both individual and ensemble performance.

Curtis' influence continued to expand through digital channels, with significant growth in our social media presence bringing our artistry and mission to new audiences worldwide. Our students, faculty, and alumni achieved remarkable successes on international stages, while continuing to uphold Curtis' renowned tradition of musical excellence.

As we experience our centennial in 2024–25, we are presenting special performances and events that will celebrate our historic milestone while looking toward our future. These initiatives will showcase the extraordinary talents of our Curtis community and honor the institution's transformative impact on classical music over the past century.

The collective partnership of our brilliant students and alumni, dedicated trustees and donors, world-class faculty, and passionate staff continues to be the foundation of Curtis' success. Together, we stand poised to begin our second century of nurturing gifted young musicians and sharing their artistry with the world.

With deepest appreciation,

Roberto Díaz (Viola '84)
President and CEO
Nina von Maltzahn President's Chair
James and Betty Matarese Chair in Viola Studies



Strength in Collaboration

INSIDE THE CURTIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA INTENSIVE

Curtis Symphony Orchestra inaugurated its 2023–24 series with an innovative orchestra intensive designed to solidify the ensemble before launching into their full year of rehearsals and concerts.



Led by renowned pedagogue and Director of Orchestral Studies designate **James Ross** (Conducting '89), the experience covered six pieces of standard repertoire and focused on developing students' trust in their ability to learn music quickly and meaningfully.

Dasara Beta, a second-year trumpet student, felt the experience reflected Curtis' strong commitment to orchestral training. "It sends the message to the students that practicing how to play with other people...is just as important as practicing individually," he noted. "It's a separate skill that can only be

developed by rehearsing and experimenting in an orchestral setting, and there's truly nothing that can replace that when it comes to learning how to be an orchestral musician."

The intensive culminated in an open reading of three studied pieces, but when James Ross fell ill, he encouraged students from the orchestra to take his place at the podium. Among the volunteers was Tzu-Yi Yu, a second-year clarinetist who also aspires to become a conductor. "I started to have more confidence to fulfill my conducting dream," Yu said of the experience. "The most unforgettable moment

"Practicing how to play with other people...is just as important as practicing individually. It's a separate skill that can only be developed by rehearsing and experimenting in an orchestral setting."

—Dasara Beta, trumpet student



of that day was when I walked into the dining hall and everyone gave me a huge applause."

The orchestra faced another challenge when the scheduled soloist for their first concert became ill and they had less than a week to prepare a new piece. Alexandra Cooreman, a third-year violin student, observed, "This was very unfortunate but also a good experience for us, of being capable to switch very quickly to a different repertoire."

Through these experiences, Curtis Symphony Orchestra members gained invaluable lessons in trust, flexibility, collaboration, and mutual support. The orchestra intensive and subsequent challenges have not only enhanced these young musicians' ensemble skills but also strengthened their bonds as a musical community, ready to face whatever comes their way with skill and confidence.



"The most unforgettable moment of that day was when I walked into the dining hall and everyone gave me a huge applause."

—Tzu-Yi Yu, clarinet student





HAUSER FELLOWS

A Year of Growth and Leadership

The 2023–24 academic year marked another successful chapter for the conducting program at Curtis Institute of Music. This prestigious program continued to provide emerging conductors with invaluable podium time, real-world experience, and mentorship under the guidance of world-renowned conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

Throughout the year, second-year Rita E. Hauser Conducting Fellow **Micah Gleason** and first-year Hauser Fellow **Benoît Gauthier** immersed themselves in a diverse range of conducting experiences at Curtis. Gauthier kicked off the year by participating in Curtis Symphony Orchestra’s three-week orchestra intensive, culminating in an unexpected opportunity to lead the orchestra during the final open reading. “I think because I could present myself to the musicians and the Curtis community so early on, it was a good welcome

for me,” Gauthier reflected. He also had the honor of conducting the Philadelphia premiere of Gabriela Ortiz’s *Kauyumari* in January, which he described as “a great moment.”

Gleason’s year was equally eventful, featuring several high-profile performances. In October, she conducted “Dance of the Seven Veils” from Richard Strauss’ *Salome* as part of an all-Strauss program. “Getting to conduct on a concert alongside my mentor and all-time favorite conductor was really special,” Gleason exclaimed. Her diverse skill set was

“Getting to conduct on a concert alongside my mentor and all-time favorite conductor was really special.”

—Micah Gleason (Conducting ’24)

further showcased in November when she both conducted and sang Luciano Berio’s *Folk Songs* from the podium. Gleason’s Curtis journey culminated in December with her graduation recital, a sold-out performance featuring works by Manuel de Falla, Jessie Montgomery, and Jean Sibelius.

Beyond their podium duties, both fellows engaged in other enriching activities at Curtis. They provided one-on-one conducting lessons to fellow students, with Gleason noting, “I definitely heard my own teachers speaking through me and had a lot of thoughts emerge about how I might improve my own conducting from the process.” Gleason also participated in Curtis’ community artist program, organizing a workshop for her commissioned chamber opera, *DAUGHTER OF GOD*, which featured interdisciplinary discussions with experts from various fields.



As these experiences attest, the conducting program continues to serve as a vital bridge between formal education and professional conducting careers. With plans to expand to three conducting fellows and extend the program’s duration to three years starting in fall 2024, Curtis is poised to further develop its role in shaping the future of orchestral conducting.



JUNE 2023

Jacob Niemann (Conducting '23) received a Solti Foundation Career Assistance Award; Violist Emad Zolfaghari won first prize and Ray Ushikubo (Piano and Violin '22) won third prize at the Klein International String Competition; Hana Chang (Violin '21) was a grand prize winner of the 2023 Elmaleh Competition; Yeyeong Jin (Violin '21) won top prize at the 2023 Michael Hill International Violin Competition; Bryan Anderson (Organ '15) won first prize in the 2023 Longwood Gardens International Organ Competition.

JULY 2023

Faculty member Harold Hall Robinson was announced as the recipient of the International Society of Bassists' 2023 Distinguished Achievement Award, the ISB's highest honor.



AUGUST 2023

As their culminating project, the Viano Quartet, the Nina von Maltzahn String Quartet Program participants from 2021–23, released their debut recording, an audiovisual project entitled *PORTRAITS*, on the Curtis Studio label.



SEPTEMBER 2023

Curtis worked with Pentagram, a renowned design studio, to to complete a multi-year brand project with a new logo and visual system.

Abi Fayette (Violin '17, Community Artist Fellow '20) was appointed artistic director of the renowned Orpheus Chamber Orchestra; Danny Yehun Jin (Violin '23) was named assistant principal second violin of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

OCTOBER 2023

The Dover Quartet's first public appearance with new violist Julianne Lee (Violin '05), opened the Curtis Recital Series.

NOVEMBER 2023

Curtis observed its 10th annual "Live for Life" Wellness Day. Established in honor of late double bass student Louisa Womack, the event included a Rittenhouse Fun Run led by Jonathan Coopersmith, chair of musical studies at Curtis; a discussion on financial wellness for students by Paul Lafollette (Horn '98); and a Wellness Fair with representatives from local businesses, nonprofits, and Curtis.

DECEMBER 2023

Anthony McGill (Clarinet '00), holder of the William R. and Hyunah Yu Brody Distinguished Chair at Curtis, was named *Musical America's* Instrumentalist of the Year.



JANUARY 2024

Trio Zimbalist, represented by Curtis Artist Management, released their debut recording featuring piano trios by Mieczyslaw Weinberg, Lera Auerbach, and Antonín Dvořák on the Curtis Studio label.

FEBRUARY 2024

Grammy Awards: Yannick Nézet-Séguin, head of conducting at Curtis, and Eric Owens (Opera '95), director of vocal studies and Curtis Opera Theatre, won Best Opera Recording for their work on Terence Blanchard's *Champion*.

Yuja Wang (Piano '08) and Teddy Abrams (Conducting '08) won Best Classical Instrumental Solo for *The American Project* featuring Abrams' Piano Concerto with the Louisville Orchestra.

Curtis double bass faculty member Edgar Meyer won Best Contemporary Album and Best Global Music Performance for his album *As We Speak* with Béla Fleck, Zakir Hussain, and Rakesh Chaurasia.

Curtis faculty wind quintet Imani Winds won Best Classical Compendium for Jeff Scott's *Passion for Bach and Coltrane*.

MARCH 2024

Daniel W. Dietrich II Young Alumni Fund recipients announced: From a pool of 63 applicants, 23 alumni were selected to receive awards totaling \$75,000.

APRIL 2024

Curtis celebrated Ned Rorem's (Composition '44) life with a concert featuring performances by soprano Sarah Fleiss (Voice '23); mezzo-soprano Katie Trigg; baritone Jarrett Ott (Opera '04); and pianists Miloš Repický, Hirsig Family Chair in Vocal Studies, and Amy Yang ('06), associate dean of piano studies and artistic initiatives.

“You know what to do. Make some noise—some good noise—because good trouble and good noise are really the same thing...” —Dr. George Lewis

MAY 2024

George Lewis, internationally acclaimed, award-winning composer, musicologist, author, computer-installation pioneer, and trombonist, received an honorary Doctor of Music degree from Curtis, where he served as composer-in-residence for the 2023–24 academic year. Lewis gave an inspiring speech on “necessary trouble” in the face of oppression. Alluding to the late John Lewis’ exhortation for citizens to get into “good trouble, necessary trouble,” Dr. Lewis told students in his commencement speech, “You know what to do. Make some noise—some good noise—because good trouble and good noise are really the same thing, the forceful assertion of alternatives in the face of oppression. I thank all of you again for this honor and I hope that you can all join me in making that good noise.”



JUNE 2024

The *New York Times* published “At This School, the Students Live Entirely for Music”, offering a rare, behind-the-scenes look at the lives of five Curtis students. Throughout the 2023–24 school year, composer Delfin Demiray, flutist Julin Cheung, conductor Micah Gleason ('24), violist Dillon Scott, and soprano Juliette Tacchino were followed by senior staff photographer James Estrin and interviewed by assistant classical music and dance editor Joshua Barone.



FIELD CONCERT HALL ORGAN

A New Instrument for a New Century

A highlight of 2023–24 is the significant progress made on the plan to build a new organ for Field Concert Hall. Scheduled for installation in late 2025, this innovative instrument serves as a long-term investment in the school’s strategic vision, its renowned organ department, and its exceptionally talented young musicians.

Curtis’ existing organ is a four-manual Aeolian-Skinner pipe organ, Opus 1022, installed in 1941. This instrument replaced the original 1927 organ donated by Cyrus H. K. Curtis, the father of founder Mary Louise Curtis Bok and an accomplished amateur organist who played the first musical selection when Field Hall (originally Casimir Hall) was dedicated. While the 1941 organ retained some of the original Aeolian pipework, after more than eight decades of continuous use, it is now functionally obsolete, posing challenges to the school in educating its students and offering concerts to the public.

The commission of the new organ was funded partly through a generous gift from an anonymous donor. Requiring tens of thousands of hours to build, this magnificent new instrument may incorporate elements of the original Aeolian organ, tying the past to the present.

“We are tremendously honored to be chosen to build a new pipe organ for Field Concert Hall,” said John A. Panning, president and artistic director of Dobson Pipe Organ Builders, Ltd. “We’re delighted that this instrument will help Alan Morrison and future organ faculty increase Curtis’ international reputation for artistic excellence. And we love that this will be Opus 100, our 100th new organ, built to celebrate Curtis’ 100th birthday.”

The Curtis community is invited to join the school’s anonymous donor to help fully fund the new organ. For more information on how to get involved, contact us at (215) 717-3131 or giving@curtis.edu.

Music of the Earth

A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY AND ADVOCACY

Throughout the 2023–24 academic year, Curtis Institute of Music’s annual All-School Project immersed students and faculty in the transcendent theme of “Music of the Earth.” On the cusp of the school’s centennial, this interdisciplinary initiative examined music’s profound connections to the natural world, environmental advocacy, and global justice through a kaleidoscope of performances, coursework, and co-curricular events.

Introduced in 2007–08, Curtis’ innovative All-School Project aligns curriculum and programming around a central annual theme. The “Music of the Earth” project reaffirmed Curtis’ commitment to developing 21st-century musicians while catalyzing important dialogues.

Ensemble 20/21 (now Curtis New Music Ensemble) supported the effort with innovative, earth-inspired programs. Their season opener on November 18, 2023, celebrated the wonder and complexity of the natural world through five groundbreaking works by living composers including John Luther Adams, Raven Chacon, Allison Loggins-Hull, Gabriella Smith (’13), and Gulli Björnsson. Under the direction of Nick DiBerardino (Composition ’18), dean and chair of Curtis’ composition department, the ensemble endeavored to spark environmental action and encourage an eco-conscious mindset.

“‘Music of the Earth’ highlighted music’s ability to connect each of us to our communities, spaces, places, and the broader culture and environments around us,” DiBerardino reflected. “It offered an opportunity to champion composers addressing environmental justice and one of the most pressing issues we face.”

Students further engaged through related electives such as Art of the Earth; The Artist’s Journal: Writing Nature; and Music and Climate Justice. Curtis’ Social Entrepreneur class, a one-semester, project-based course required for all third-year undergraduate students, focused on the intersection of music, climate justice, and community engagement (see related article on page 11). Additional large-scale Curtis performances reinforced the project’s theme, including the Curtis Symphony Orchestra’s performance of Richard Strauss’ sweeping, geographically-inspired *An Alpine Symphony* in March 2024 and Curtis Opera Theatre’s April production of Leoš Janáček’s *The Cunning Little Vixen*, which poignantly depicts the eternal cycle of life and death tying all living creatures to the earth.



Empowering Change

THROUGH MUSIC AND CLIMATE ACTION



As part of this year’s “Music of the Earth” All-School Project, the social entrepreneur class at Curtis explored the intersection of music, climate justice, and community involvement.

The one-semester, project-based course is required for all third-year undergraduate students and guided by Mary Javian (Double Bass ’99), chair of career studies. This year’s class was co-taught by Javian, Dr. Eva-Maria Swidler, and Zach Mowitz (Cello ’18). Swidler, an environmental historian on Curtis’ liberal arts faculty, previously led a critical climate studies course examining the science and economics of climate change. Mowitz recently served as a Curtis community artist fellow, where he worked with students at Carver Science and Engineering High School to create interactive performances themed around climate justice. Together, they showed the class how music can catalyze change by uncovering deeper meanings, creating communal experiences, and unlocking emotional connections to inspire action.

A central focus of the course was the question “How can we use music to raise awareness and inspire action around climate change?” The class studied positive climate work happening locally in Philadelphia and nationally, including cellist Yo-Yo Ma’s collaboration with performers Pattie Gonia and Quinn Christopherson to create “Won’t Give Up,” intended as an anthem for the climate change movement.

For their final project, the class visited the Philadelphia High School for Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA), where they performed



earth-inspired music, provided climate advocacy information, and guided 60 music students through a rehearsal of “Won’t Give Up.” The CAPA students also wrote original lyrics to Antonín Dvořák’s instrumental work “Silent Woods” and were able to ask questions about auditioning and applying to music schools.

By linking music’s emotive power with environmental advocacy, this innovative social entrepreneur class helped empower young artists at Curtis to be active participants in their communities. The students experienced how artistic expression can complement and amplify crucial climate messages, leaving them better equipped to use their art for this most urgent challenge.

CURTIS MUSICIANS CHAMPION

Underrecognized Composers



As two projects completed in 2023–24 illustrate, Curtis students and alumni are shining a spotlight on the works of underrepresented composers from diverse eras and backgrounds. Their passion for expanding the canon is inspiring new collaborations and creative programming that celebrate these important musical voices.

Second-year viola student **Dillon Scott** curated and performed in Chamber Music of Black Composers, a thoughtfully researched program he proposed after spending close to six months delving into scores and recordings at Curtis’ Rock Resource Center. Featuring contrasting works by Eleanor Alberga, David Baker, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, and George Walker (Composition and Piano ’45), the program took place at Curtis’ Field Concert Hall on December 6 and at All Hallows Church in Wyncote on December 9 and featured sixteen Curtis student musicians including Scott.

“Countless Black voices throughout the centuries have contributed to this art form and have gone unnoticed for too long,” said Scott. “I wanted to expose the works to the faculty and students so they can call upon this experience later in life.”

Scott’s ambitious project resonated across the community, garnering excitement from peers, administrators, arts organizations, and even employees at local businesses. “I was unaware of how much excitement would surround it as the project gained momentum,” he reflected. “This project brought the community together and raised awareness about this music to magnitudes I could only have dreamed of.”

Meanwhile, as a member of the Catalyst Quartet, alumna **Abi Fayette** (Violin ’17, Community Artist Fellow ’20) is amplifying marginalized composers through the quartet’s “UNCOVERED” project, a performance, research, and multi-volume recording anthology highlighting string quartets by historically important Black composers. Supported by a Daniel W. Dietrich II Young Alumni Fund grant, in February 2023 the quartet released Volume 3, spotlighting works by Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson, William Grant Still, and George Walker. Volume 1 showcased the music of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor with guest collaborators Stewart Goodyear (Piano ’98) and Anthony McGill (Clarinet ’00), Curtis’ William R. and Hyunah Yu Brody Distinguished Chair. Volume 2, devoted to Florence Price, featured pianist Michelle Cann (Piano ’13, ArtistYear ’15), the Eleanor Sokoloff Chair in Piano Studies at Curtis.

“Over the course of time there have been many overlooked artists in classical music, because of their race and/or gender,” Fayette noted. “It is important to acknowledge that we have not yet heard the whole story due to this sidelining of voices.” Through their inspiring work, Curtis students and alumni like Scott and Fayette are righting that imbalance and ensuring these masterworks find a permanent place in the standard repertoire.

Connecting Audiences

ACROSS THE GLOBE

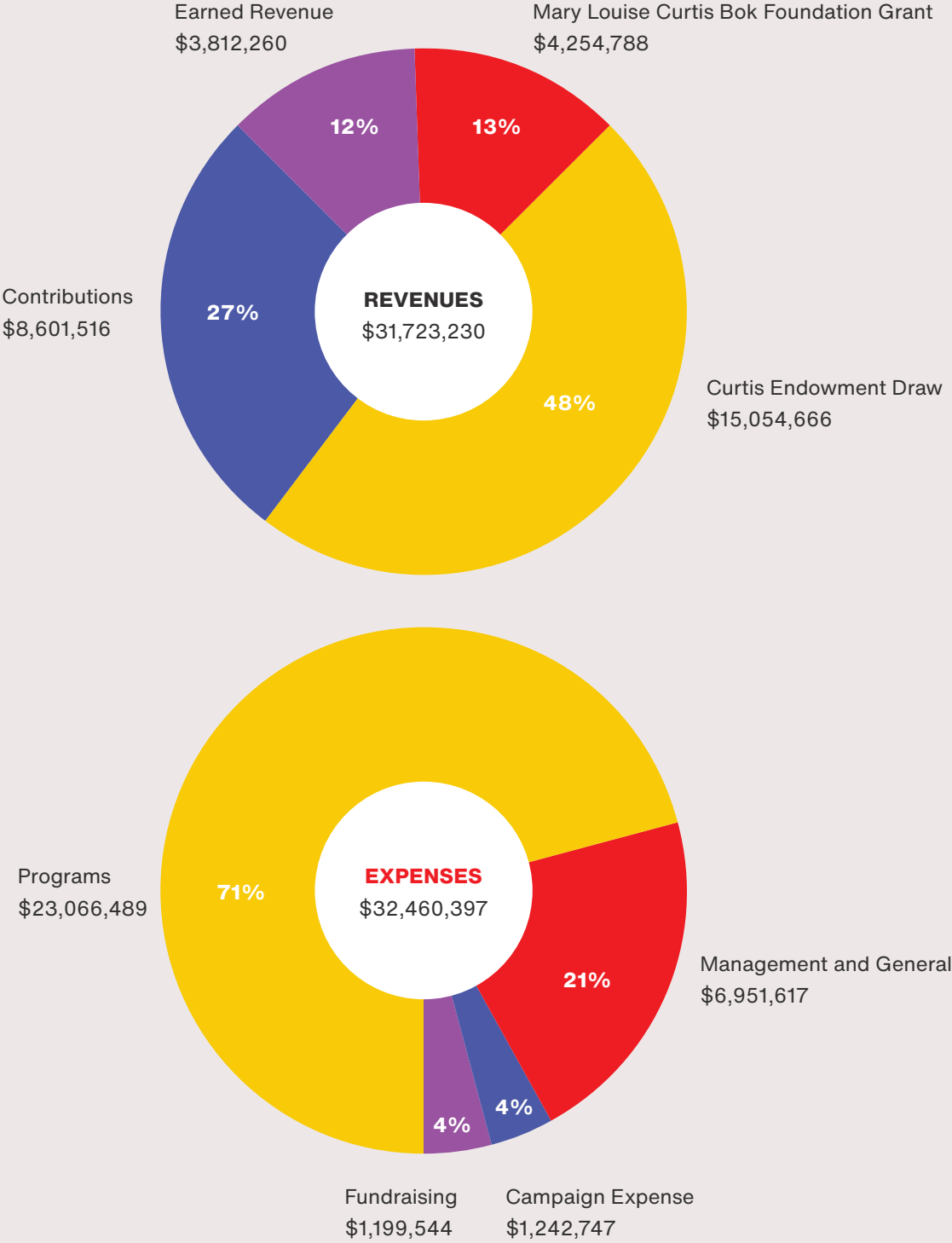
Curtis on Tour is the Nina von Maltzahn global touring initiative of Curtis Institute of Music. During the 2023–24 season, Curtis on Tour performed 39 concerts across 27 cities in eight countries. The seven tours featured guest artist conductor **Osmo Vänskä**, Curtis faculty members **Erin Keefe** (Violin ’03) and **Benjamin Beilman** (Violin ’12), and former Dover Quartet violist **Milena Pajaro-van de Stadt** (’11, String Quartet ’14). Also featured were cellists **Oliver Herbert** (’19) and **Francis Carr** (’21, Community Artist Fellow ’23), along with a new work by **Alyssa Weinberg** (Composition ’16), *Illuminating Arches*, commissioned by Curtis on Tour.



EUROPE	ASIA	NORTH AMERICA
Waterloo, Belgium	Hong Kong, China	Phoenix, AZ
Paris, France	Kaohsiung, Taiwan	Davis, CA
Berlin, Germany	Tainan, Taiwan	Sarasota, FL
Bremen, Germany	Taipei, Taiwan	West Palm Beach, FL
Munich, Germany	Taitung, Taiwan	Evanston, IL
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Vilagarcia, Spain		Brevard, NC
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		Philadelphia, PA
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		Fort Worth, TX
		Wichita Falls, TX

Financial Summary

2023–24



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