PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA
Yannick Nézet-Séguin
Music & Artistic Director

EnsembleArts
Philly

Ambassador David L. Cohen and Rhonda R. Cohen Make Gift to The Philadelphia Orchestra and Ensemble Arts, Advancing the Orchestra's Role as a National Leader in Cultural Diplomacy and Supporting Artistic Innovation

$10.5 Million Gift Commitment Ahead of the Orchestra's 14th Tour of China, the Most of Any American Orchestra

President and CEO Position to be Named the Ambassador David L. Cohen and Rhonda R. Cohen President and CEO of The Philadelphia Orchestra and Ensemble Arts

Gift Also Advances Global Cultural Diplomacy and the Artistic Innovation Fund, Which Supports Orchestra and Music and Artistic Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin's Vision to Champion Diverse Artistic Voices

Philadelphia Delegation to Join the Orchestra in Incheon, South Korea

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (Philadelphia, October 22, 2026) – More than 50 years after The Philadelphia Orchestra became the first American orchestra to perform in the People's Republic of China, The Philadelphia Orchestra and Ensemble Arts announce a gift by Ambassador David L. Cohen (ret.) and Rhonda R. Cohen to advance the organization's next chapter in cultural diplomacy.

A $10.5 million commitment establishes the Fund for Cultural Diplomacy, which will support the Orchestra's domestic and international tours, residencies, performances, recordings, and educational exchanges around the world. It will advance mutual understanding while showcasing artistic excellence, innovation, and freedom of expression. The gift also creates the Artistic Innovation and Discovery Fund, guided by the artistic vision of Music and Artistic Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin, to support the performance of works by overlooked, underrepresented, and emerging composers, as well as celebrate the contributions of Jewish artists. In addition, in recognition of the gift, Ryan Fleur will now hold the Ambassador David L. Cohen and Rhonda R. Cohen President and CEO position.

“During our years of diplomatic service, we saw firsthand how music can build trust where other efforts fall short, and The Philadelphia Orchestra has led the way,” said **Ambassador David L. Cohen (ret.) and Rhonda R. Cohen.** “We have tremendous confidence in Ryan Fleur and the leadership of The Philadelphia Orchestra and Ensemble Arts, and we are proud to invest in the extraordinary vision of Ryan and Yannick Nézet-Séguin for the next chapter of this extraordinary legacy.”

“David and Rhonda Cohen have devoted their lives to public service and to Philadelphia, and we are deeply grateful for their generosity and their confidence in our organization,” said **Fleur**. “Cultural diplomacy has been part of The Philadelphia Orchestra’s DNA since we first traveled abroad to Canada in 1918. In 1973 we became the first American orchestra to perform in the People’s Republic of China and more than 50 years later, the artistic excellence of our musicians continues to open doors that few other institutions can. With the Fund for Cultural Diplomacy, we can continue to build lasting relationships through music and help bring the world to Philadelphia and Philadelphia to the world.”

The announcement comes just before the Orchestra departs for its 2026 Asia Tour and China Residency, the full ensemble’s 14th visit to China and the most of any American orchestra. The tour opens November 5 in Incheon, South Korea, sister city to Philadelphia, where business, civic, and arts leaders and Orchestra trustees will attend the performance as part of a delegation organized by the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia. True to its mission of sharing the joy of orchestral music through concerts and activities that serve as a bridge for musical and cultural exchange, the Orchestra acts as both convener and catalyst, opening conversations about Philadelphia as a cultural destination, a place to do business, and a city with deep international ties.

“Pennsylvania’s cultural institutions are a critical part of our economy, and for 125 years, The Philadelphia Orchestra has contributed to the economic vitality and global standing of our Commonwealth," said **Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro**. “The Orchestra’s more than century-long legacy of international touring and cultural diplomacy has helped bring foreign direct investment and hundreds of jobs to Pennsylvania, and my Administration was proud to support those efforts with a $2 million investment in the Orchestra’s future success. Thanks to Ambassador David L. Cohen and Rhonda R. Cohen's generous gift, The Philadelphia Orchestra and Ensemble Arts will maintain and expand their impact, helping Pennsylvania stand out as a cultural leader and a place where business thrives because the arts do, too.”

“The Philadelphia Orchestra is one of our city’s greatest ambassadors,” said **Mayor Cherelle L. Parker.** “For more than 100 years, it has carried Philadelphia’s name to concert halls around the world and built relationships that bring investment, partnerships, and opportunity back home to our neighborhoods. As Philadelphia leads the nation in celebrating America’s 250th anniversary, it’s fitting that the city where our democracy was born is also home to an orchestra that shows the world who we are. I thank Ambassador David L. Cohen and Rhonda Cohen, two tremendous citizens of our city, for this remarkable investment in The Philadelphia Orchestra and Ensemble Arts, and I’m proud to see Philadelphians joining the Orchestra in South Korea to share our city’s story with the world.”

“Artistic expression is essential to the human experience. By creating the Artistic Innovation and Discovery Fund, this gift allows our Orchestra to build on the progress we’ve made to ensure that the full breadth of global artistry takes center stage, today and for generations to come,” said **Yannick Nézet-Séguin.** “When more artists have the opportunity to shine, entire communities are strengthened. I am deeply grateful to Ambassador David L. Cohen and Rhonda R. Cohen for their generosity. Naming the President and CEO position in their honor reflects the trust they have placed in Ryan and me to realize our shared vision of lifting artists whose voices deserve to be heard.”

About Ambassador David L. Cohen (ret.) and Rhonda R Cohen

Ambassador David L. Cohen (ret.) and Rhonda R. Cohen are longtime civic, philanthropic, and business leaders in Philadelphia.

David L. Cohen served as the United States Ambassador to Canada from 2021 to 2025, following his nomination by President Joe Biden and unanimous confirmation by the U.S. Senate. Before his diplomatic service, he was senior advisor to the CEO and senior executive vice president of Comcast NBCUniversal, where he oversaw a broad portfolio that included corporate communications, legal affairs, government and regulatory affairs, public affairs, security, and community impact. He also served as Comcast’s first chief diversity officer. Earlier in his career, David was a partner and chair of Ballard Spahr and served as chief of staff to Philadelphia Mayor Edward G. Rendell from 1992 to 1997.

Rhonda is chair of the Board of The Glenmede Trust Company, one of the nation’s leading wealth management and trust companies, and the first woman to hold the position. A retired attorney, she spent 20 years at Ballard Spahr, including more than a decade as a partner, before devoting much of her career to civic and philanthropic leadership. She currently serves as president of The Christopher Ludwick Foundation and sits on the boards of Delaware Valley Friends School, Visit Philadelphia, ESF Dream Camp Foundation, and Swarthmore College. She previously chaired the Board of Trustees of Community College of Philadelphia, where she served for 18 years.

Both are graduates of Swarthmore College and the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School. They reside in Philadelphia.

About The Philadelphia Orchestra and Ensemble Arts

The Philadelphia Orchestra and Ensemble Arts bring together one of the world’s preeminent orchestras with the iconic venues that have anchored Philadelphia’s cultural life for nearly 170 years. As owner and operator of the Academy of Music, Miller Theater, and the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, and the programming partner for the historic Forrest Theatre, the non-profit organization serves as a cornerstone of the city’s artistic and civic identity, welcoming one million people annually to a vibrant constellation of stages across Center City.

Representing both the world-renowned Philadelphia Orchestra and a dynamic roster of resident partners and visiting artists, the Ensemble Arts spaces host more than 1,000 events annually that represent a wide range of programming, including Broadway, classical, comedy, theater,

jazz, dance, and family presentations, reflecting and serving the breadth of the region's communities. Through innovative programming, robust educational initiatives, a deep commitment to diverse communities, and expanding digital platforms, The Philadelphia Orchestra and Ensemble Arts acts as a convener and civic partner, bringing people together, fostering dialog, and creating an expansive, inclusive future for the arts in Philadelphia and beyond.

Read more about The Philadelphia Orchestra here.

Read more about Ensemble Arts Philly here.

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