MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA



Good morning! Welcome to Orchestra Hall!

A SEASON OF WELCOME —

Thomas Søndergård received a memorable introduction to Minneapolis when he embarked on his role as our 11th music director in September 2023. In a heartfelt and high-voltage welcome, the city illuminated the skyline and prominent bridges in the red and white colors of Søndergård's native Denmark for his first performances. Audiences ran with the momentum and filled six celebratory opening concerts to capacity, as he made an "an epic debut" (*The Minnesota Star Tribune*). In this season of new beginnings, the spirit of welcome extended across all corners of the organization. We said hello to debuting artists, ranging from conductor Ruth Reinhardt and saxophonist Steven Banks–joining the Orchestra for February performances of Billy Childs' *Diaspora*–to Minneapolis hip-hop artist Nur-D, who lit up a sold-out Orchestra Hall with electric energy and joyful anthems in April.

Our youngest concertgoers were introduced to classical music—and welcomed to Orchestra Hall—through 22 Young People's Concerts and four Relaxed Family Concerts, one of which was led by Søndergård. ("I want to be the music director for all ages," he said.) And we concluded the season in June with a weekend of "Celebrating Pride" concerts curated by Søndergård to highlight the formidable contributions of LGBTQ+ composers to classical music. ("We exist of so many different emotions and colors within us," he said. "Let's just embrace that.")

Our *This Is Minnesota Orchestra* broadcast and livestream series extended a welcome mat to audiences across Minnesota and beyond, with an average of 6,000 viewers watching each concert broadcast live on Twin Cities PBS. Our social media channels built community one post at a time among 143,000 followers across all platforms, inviting fans behind the scenes to deepen their connections with the musicians and organization.

All told, the Orchestra welcomed nearly 225,000 guests to in-person Minnesota Orchestra concerts during the 2023-24 season, with Orchestra Hall filled to 75% paid capacity and 83% total capacity (including free and underwritten tickets). Almost 13,000 generous donors made gifts to support the Orchestra, and nearly 15,000 households experienced their first-ever Minnesota Orchestra concert. Here was another meaningful first: in April, 54 music educators from 37 cities across Minnesota traveled to Orchestra Hall to be part of our first Music Educator Side-by-Side, created as a way for the Orchestra to advocate for music education programs in the schools. Playing alongside their Minnesota Orchestra counterparts in two rehearsals and two concerts, these Minnesota educators were applauded by Søndergård, musicians and audiences alike for the work they do every day to bring music into the lives of young people.

Music educator Nyssa Jimenez, who teaches at Lac qui Parle Valley Middle School, described the Side-by-Side's culminating experience-performing Gustav Holst's *Jupiter* with the Minnesota Orchestra-in profound terms: "In that moment and in that melody, the world is greater than yourself." It's an apt description for the best moments in music. Over the last season, as we threw open the doors of Orchestra Hall to welcome a new music director and broad audiences to perform and partake in music, our world grew bigger and more magnificent, together. Your support and attendance made that happen. *Thank you*.

Mancy E. Sundahl

Nancy E. Lindahl BOARD CHAIR

Brent Assink

TO GREAT HEIGHTS

There's a magical moment of silence before each Minnesota Orchestra concert after the musicians have tuned and before the conductor takes the podium. For just a moment, the packed auditorium holds its breath in anticipation for the door to open, the baton to raise and the music to begin. And at the top of our 2023–24 season, this moment was even more special, as **Thomas Søndergård** waited in the wings before he **gave his first downbeat as the 11th music director of the Minnesota Orchestra**.

Søndergård, already an internationally recognized talent, joined the Minnesota Orchestra at a high point of artistic excellence. Together, they are poised to aim even higher.

Orchestra Hall was decked in red and white (a nod to the flag of Thomas Søndergård's native Denmark) for the 2023-24 season's opening concerts. Other prominent buildings and bridges in Minneapolis joined Orchestra Hall in painting the town red to welcome our new music director.





Concertmaster Erin Keefe greeted Søndergård at the top of his inaugural concerts as music director before he led the Orchestra in a program of Strauss and Mozart. The concerts, which also highlighted Principal Oboe Nathan Hughes as soloist, were performed to capacity houses and offered audiences a taste of what lies ahead artistically for Søndergård and the Orchestra.

"And the magic happens when the orchestra connects to what [Søndergård is] trying to communicate with his eyes, with his words, with his body, like he's speaking a multidimensional sign language."

-MPLS.ST.PAUL MAGAZINE, APRIL 2024

Søndergård sat down with YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio host Melissa Ousley onstage to chat all things music and to meet Minnesota audiences.

All season long, Søndergård connected warmly and authentically with audiences. At events public and private, he spoke frankly about the passionate love for the Orchestra he felt from audiences in his first year. "You make this amazing organization soar," he said.



In his first collaboration with the Minnesota Chorale, Søndergård and the Orchestra performed the complete version of Maurice Ravel's evocative ballet *Daphnis and Chloe*, setting in motion a new partnership and era of music-making in the Twin Cities community.

MUSIC BRINGS

The Minnesota Orchestra has, in the last several seasons, prioritized building concert experiences and other initiatives to reach and resonate with more communities by broadening the circle of guest artists, repertoire and musical styles in our programming. **We believe that music belongs to everyone, and that everyone coming to Orchestra Hall has a place here.** Whether audiences are hearing a new commission, experiencing an innovative Symphony in 60 concert or bringing the kids for their first exposure to live music, the Minnesota Orchestra has something for everyone.





Notable Debuts 🧍

Award-winning cellist Sterling Elliott (far left) made his Minnesota Orchestra debut in April along with rising conductor Kristiina Poska (applauding), in Tchaikovsky's ebullient Variations on a Rococo Theme.

In February Steven Banks (left) performed Diaspora, a new saxophone concerto cocommissioned by the Minnesota Orchestra; it was written for him by Billy Childs and based on the poetry of three Black poets chronicling Black life in America. Conducted by Ruth Reinhardt, Banks' performance-programmed with works of Smetana and Prokofiev-was shared live on the web, radio and Twin Cities PBS (TPT 2) as one of several This Is Minnesota Orchestra broadcasts.

Getting Nur-D With It

In April, Twin Cities-based rapper Nur-D (aka Matt Allen) made his Minnesota Orchestra debut with Principal Conductor of Live at Orchestra Hall Sarah Hicks in two soldout performances. The shows featured songs from Nur-D's catalogue reimagined for symphony orchestra, and put on full display the rapper's trademark wit, humor and heart. His innovative and thoughtprovoking collaboration with the Orchestra brought to life our commitment to cultivating relationships with local artists and offering new ways for audiences to experience genreblending styles at Orchestra Hall.

Young concertgoers got a hands-on look at a bass before Thomas Søndergård conducted his first Relaxed Family Concert in January. Søndergård made it a priority to conduct this program in his first season, highlighting his strong commitment to reaching young people in the Twin Cities and beyond by offering what he calls "what is uniquely ours"-the power of symphonic music.







Our Symphony in 60 concerts featured a pre-concert happy hour, a shorter program and perhaps best of all, a chance for concertgoers and musicians to mingle onstage after the performance.

A Twin Cities drag performer regaled audience members in the lobby before one of our season finale "Celebrating Pride" concerts. These performances, which celebrated the rich contributions of LGBTQ+ artists throughout music history, were carefully programmed by Søndergård to share a message close to his heart-that Pride is a celebration of the fact that "we exist of so many different emotions and colors within us." Works by Dame Ethel Smythe, Francis Poulenc and Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky were a fitting close to an epic season.



Day of Music

The annual Day of Musicwhich took place entirely within Orchestra Hall to kick-start the venue's 50th anniversary celebration-provided young people multiple opportunities to get up close to the music. **Every corner of Orchestra Hall** was filled with activities and live music for over 12 hours, provided by local artists of all genres to shine a spotlight on the depth of talent around the Twin Cities. The Minnesota Orchestra-under the baton of guest conductor Stephanie Childress-offered two programs, while pianist and **Creative Partner Jon Kimura** Parker also joined Orchestra musicians onstage for an afternoon of chamber music.

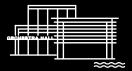








A SEASON BY THE NUMBERS



143 Minnesota Orchestra concerts were held at Orchestra Hall and beyond. In total, the Orchestra performed **280 pieces** written by **172 composers** during the 2023–24 season.



28,242 students and teachers from **240 schools** attended Young People's Concerts. **45%** of those students attended for **free** thanks to donor underwriting, while others received their ticket for just **\$6.25**.

224,049 guests attended in-person MinnOrch concerts; with audio streaming, digital concerts, TV and radio broadcasts included, that number reached more than **2.3 million**.





Orchestra Hall was filled to 75% paid capacity and 83% total capacity (including free and underwritten tickets) across the 2023–24 season. More than 14,800 households were first-time ticketholders in the 2023-24 season.

Glowing reviews from patrons are incredibly rewarding affirming the hard work and dedication put into providing an exceptional experience: "This was my first experience at Orchestra Hall, and I hope to be back. Everyone was so helpful and welcoming—from greeters to bartenders to the Minnesota Orchestra themselves, we loved the experience. 5 stars!"





10 albums in the Orchestra's now-complete project to record all of Gustav Mahler's symphonies with Conductor Laureate Osmo Vänskä. The last disc, containing the composer's mighty Third Symphony, was released in June 2024 to critical acclaim, with *The Guardian* praising "the grandeur and beauty in Vänskä's sober approach." **7,800** "Hall Pass" tickets were issued during the 2023-24 season, allowing young people under 18 to attend concerts for free alongside the adults in their lives.



Here's what patrons have said about this special program:

Hall Pass helped our family of four experience the Orchestra for the first time. Our kids both especially had a great experience. Thank you.

This program allows a new generation to be exposed to the **power of** orchestra music.

The only barrier to us going is cost, so **THANK YOU!!**

Thank you for providing Hall Pass; it allows me to more easily share my love of orchestral performances with my neurodivergent teenager.

Thank you for the donation. Hall Pass makes someone like me, a single mom, able to afford amazing experiences like this for my boys.



12,967 donors made gifts that fueled the season's spectacular performances and programs.

All smiles with music educators during a side-by-side rehearsal. Here, Concertmaster Erin Keefe (front row, left) played alongside violinist Sheila Wilcox, a 36-year veteran orchestra director at Rock Ridge High School in Virginia, Minnesota. "Erin Keefe's warmth and kindness put me at ease, so I was able to enjoy making music to a very high degree," Wilcox said of the experience.



CHAMPIONING MUSIC EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

In late April, the Minnesota Orchestra invited 54 Minnesota music educators to participate in the Orchestra's first-ever side-by-side experience with music teachers. This idea was born out of conversations with educators, the Orchestra's Education and Community Engagement team, and Søndergård himself. Since his appointment, Søndergård has been a champion of music education, in particular supporting music educators across our state in their work to inspire young people. After two rehearsals, the educators performed with the Orchestra and Søndergård in two concerts. Throngs of excited students made their way to Orchestra Hall to see their own teachers in action onstage.

The side-by-side performances were part of a larger week focused on educational initiatives and included a performance conducted by Søndergård with the full Orchestra at Roseville Area High School as part of the ensemble's Symphonic Adventures series. "This was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I was surprised by the depth of appreciation the Orchestra members had for us. It just showed me that what we do matters, and it has pushed me to be better not only for myself, but for my students."

> -NYSSA JIMENEZ, GRADE 5-12 BAND DIRECTOR FROM LAC QUI PARLE VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT IN MADISON, MINNESOTA

This moment of advocacy and celebration of music education came at a crucial time for the city of Minneapolis. Amid budget concerns, the city school district had proposed cutting an instrumental music program—and these concerts were one part of a productive campaign in lobbying the district to save it. "The advocacy and support shown by the Minnesota Orchestra, including Thomas Søndergård, totally worked," wrote Reid Wixson, director of instrumental music at Southwest High School.





Finding time to socialize was a key aspect of the side-by-side experience. Here, Associate Principal Bass Kathryn Nettleman connected with a group of educators during a lobby reception.

"I get to play with professional musicians in the Minnesota Orchestra, how cool is that?"

> -ELIZABETH, STUDENT MUSICIAN, FLUTE AND PICCOLO



A group of students of Nora Tycast (far left) came from Hopkins High School in Minnetonka to watch their teacher play with the Minnesota Orchestra.

Søndergård and the Orchestra also welcomed young musicians from Minnesota Youth Symphonies and the Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies for side-by-side rehearsal experiences.



A WORLD OF POSSIBILITY: To learn more about this special week celebrating music education, scan the QR code to watch a mini-documentary chronicling the experience.



SPARKING A LOVE FOR MUSIC

For 113 years, the Minnesota Orchestra has welcomed thousands of students from across the state to Young People's Concerts–each year inspiring young minds with the power of music. These concerts cover a wide range of themes designed to explore how music can unite us across cultures. This year we again welcomed nearly 30,000 young Minnesotans to Orchestra Hall.



In November, we welcomed students for a series of Young People's Concerts called "Sounds of the Harvest." The Orchestra performed a program that encompassed vibrant harvest traditions and festivals around the world, featuring dancers Cheng Xiong and Pasha Yang. Through wide-ranging repertoire that included works from composers like Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate and Robert Schumann, students explored how music plays a part in harvest traditions held near and far.

MUSIC MADE MORE ACCESSIBLE

The Minnesota Orchestra is made more accessible to listeners in our state and beyond through our award-winning digital and television broadcast series *This Is Minnesota Orchestra*. In the 2023–24 season, the Orchestra broadcast four concerts live and introduced Music Director Thomas Søndergård to state-wide audiences.

In February, the Orchestra released the Music & Healing initiative to its YouTube channel for free access. Hosted by Sarah Hicks, principal conductor of Live at Orchestra Hall, the unique concert broadcast and digital project explored the intersection of music and well-being in partnership with the Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing. Musicians and guests shared ways in which music helps us process and express anxiety.



"Wonderful integration of mindfulness education and practice listening to music with intention."

-MINNORCH PATRON



Thomas Søndergård explored Minneapolis landmarks with musicians in a series of popular video segments, watched by more than 10,000 viewers on YouTube. Here, Principal Oboe Nathan Hughes shares the history of Lake Harriet.

This Is Minnesota Orchestra by the numbers

6,000 – the average number of viewers who watched *This Is Minnesota Orchestra* on TPT 2 during each of the four live broadcasts and in the week following. This is **3 times** the capacity of Orchestra Hall. 309 – total hours of encore This Is Minnesota Orchestra rebroadcasts shared statewide over the last year on TPT's Minnesota Channel, which reaches 5 million households. **144,810** – number of views in 2023-24 for *This Is Minnesota Orchestra* digital concerts through the Orchestra's Digital Concert Hall platform.

KEEPING IT SOCIAL-

Did you know we're building a community online too? Through social media, we're broadening and deepening our connections with longtime and new audiences. Our social strategy increases awareness by engaging with cultural moments, showcasing our musicians and making audiences feel seen.



Cross-Platform Successes:

143,503 followers across all major social media platforms **5,767,787 impressions** (eyes on posts) 684,905 engagements (reaction, comment or share)

Some top posts from 2023–24:



Bring Ya A**

A timely Minnesota moment, based on Timberwolves star Anthony Edwards' commentary to Charles Barkley during the NBA playoffs in May. The result? Love from our community and coverage on ESPN.

Viral Moves

Conductor Fabien Gabel and pianist Bertrand Chamayou were excellent sports joining MinnOrch musicians in a viral dance trend. A fun backstage musician moment—showcasing the human connection audiences crave.



WORDS FROM OUR AUDIENCES

Here's a sampling of comments from concertgoers shared via our post-concert surveys.

Just wow! Our first time at Orchestra Hall! Amazing show, the sound was immersive and beautiful. Every single interaction with staff was top-notch. Can't wait to come back!

More excellent programming! I haven't heard a better performance of Beethoven's 4th.

Any event we have attended at MN Orchestra has been **uplifting, inspiring, community-building.** I am proud of our city which can support and appreciate cultural excellence.



Absolutely amazing! I can't explain how alive and energizing that made me fee!! Wow!! Just **so powerful!**

I brought my 9-year-old who started playing violin this past school year. He **loved it** and told me he would be up on that stage one day! Thanks for a lovely evening.

We had the most amazing time. **The staff is the best staff at a venue we've ever had.** The concert was also amazing. We couldn't have been happier.

MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA FINANCIAL REPORT 2023-24

The following financial results are summarized from the Fiscal 2024 audited financial statements.

SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL POSITION

SUMMARY OF OPERATING RESULTS

	(\$000 OMITIED)	
ASSETS	August 31 2024	August 31 2023
Current Assets	17,772	10,588
Noncurrent Receivables	5,585	8,570
Investments	128,864	136,537
Other Assets	43,604	45,433
TOTAL ASSETS	195,825	201,128

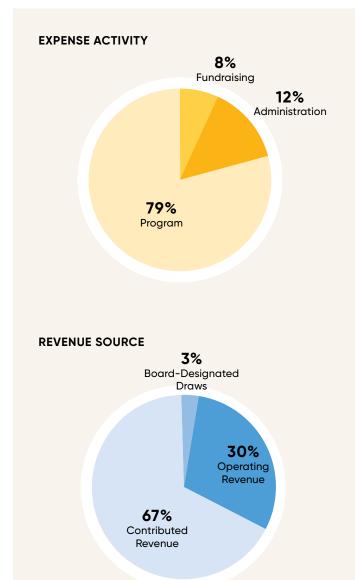
TOTAL LIABILITIES	10,275	15,020
Long-Term Liabilities	3,817	3,357
Deferred Concert Revenue	4,747	4,711
Current Liabilities	1,711	6,952
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		

Net Assets Without Donor Restriction	(41,162)	(27,490)
Net Assets With Donor Restriction	226,712	213,598
TOTAL NET ASSETS	185,550	186,108
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	195,825	201,128

	(\$000 OMITTED)	
REVENUE	Year Ending August 31 2024	Year Ending August 31 2023
Operating Revenue	11,622	9,545
Contributed Revenue	25,834	32,636
Board-Designated Draws for Operations	1,320	1,383
TOTAL REVENUE	38,776	43,564

Salaries & Benefits	29,902	28,679
All Other Expenses	12,728	13,735
TOTAL EXPENSES	42,630	42,414
NET OPERATING ACTIVITIES	(3,854)	1,150

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW



MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA FINANCIAL FACTS AT A GLANCE

Fiscal 2024

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The Minnesota Orchestra continued to feel reverberations of the pandemic in its fiscal 2024 report, with the organization encountering speed bumps while also achieving significant milestones over the course of the 2023-24 season. Total revenues for the year amounted to \$38.7 million, with total operating expenses of \$42.6 million, resulting in an operating loss of \$3.8 million.

On the contributed revenue side, the Orchestra saw a decrease due to the loss of federal Paycheck Protection Program funding; however, the organization also achieved its highest-ever levels of renewable annual fund donations. Earned revenue saw a 22% increase over the prior year, part of a longer-term strategy to increase and diversify revenue streams and a key indicator of audience support in Thomas Søndergård's first season as music director.

Despite inflationary pressures, the organization's total expenses increased only slightly over the prior year. Total net assets ended the year at \$185.5 million, virtually flat with the previous year's \$186 million. In the 2024-25 season, the Orchestra will continue to follow the financial road map outlined in its strategic plan to control costs and advance its work in increasing and diversifying revenue streams.

CONTRIBUTED REVENUE

Total contributions—comprising annual fund donations, major gifts, Symphony Ball gifts and trust distributions—reached \$25.8 million, representing an outstanding demonstration of community generosity. The fiscal 2024 contributed total fell shy of the previous year's \$32.6 million due to the loss of Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) support. In fact, fiscal 2024 marks the first year since 2020 when the Orchestra's contributed revenue totals have not included either PPP or Shuttered Venue Operators Grant funding.

In a strong showing of renewable support, total contributions to the annual fund reached an all-time high of \$10 million, driven by a record level of Board giving.

OPERATING INCOME

Total earned revenue for fiscal 2024—including revenue from ticket sales, fees, rental opportunities, and food, beverage and concession sales—reached an all-time high of \$11.6 million, an increase of 22% from the previous year's \$9.5 million. The increase was driven by solid ticket sales and strong rental activity. Orchestra Hall was filled to 75% paid capacity and 83% total capacity (including free and underwritten tickets), compared to, respectively, 72% and 82% in the previous season. More than 14,800 households were first-time ticketholders in FY2024.

Although the Orchestra continues to make steady progress back to pre-pandemic sales levels, total ticket sales capacities currently lag pre-pandemic levels by -9%.

Orchestra Hall's reputation as a high-service rental venue continued to grow, with income from rental opportunities reaching a record high, predominantly due to multiple week-long events including the International Gala Choruses Festival and corporate activities.

EXPENSES

Total expenses were \$42.6 million in FY24, only a slight increase over the previous year's 42.4 million. The organization was largely able to offset year-over-year cost increases with expense reductions in other areas.

224,049 guests attended in-person Minnesota Orchestra concerts in 2023-24, and an additional 168,810 watched digitally and on TV for a total audience of 392,859; with audio streaming included that number reached more than 2.3 million.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT!

We are grateful to the following individuals, and to the nearly 13,000 donors whose Guaranty Fund gifts help sustain the Minnesota Orchestra each year.

PARTNER WITH A SECTION PROGRAM \$100.000

Anonymous, Clarinets Martha and Doug* Head, Bassoons Kathy* and John Junek, Linda and Warren Mack, Flutes and Piccolo Al and Kathy Lenzmeier, First Violins Nancy and John Lindahl, Basses Marilyn Carlson Nelson, Trumpets Dr. Jennine and John* Speier, Cellos Margaret V.B. Wurtele, Oboes

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