

Media Release

For immediate release

Calgary Philharmonic capital campaign to build a solid foundation kicks off with major donation

Calgary Alta. (Oct 16, 2020) – On Thursday, October 15 the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra launched a capital campaign that will secure a strong future for the organization and its role in Calgary. *Ad Astra: Building to New Heights* is focused on pursuing artistic excellence, strengthening our community, and ensuring a sustainable future.

The new campaign got a kick-start from longtime supporter Dr. John Lacey, who stepped up to pledge \$1 million and take the lead as the campaign's honorary campaign chair. He says he promised his late wife, Naomi, that he would do his best to ensure Calgary always has the orchestra it needs to be a truly vibrant city. "This is a personal commitment on my part to my wife. I will do everything in my power to help the orchestra thrive so it can continue to delight the citizens of Calgary," he says.

A philanthropist and arts supporter who has contributed to organizations across Canada, Dr. Lacey also started the Calgary Philharmonic's Naomi + John Lacey Virtuoso Program in 2008 — he is known for wearing his trademark red pants to every Virtuoso concert he attends. The program has helped bring in artists such as Yo-Yo Ma, Jan Lisiecki, Erin Wall, and Jeremy Dutcher. Dr. Lacey earned an Honorary Degree from the University of Calgary in 2018 in recognition of his contribution to the arts, and was named one of Calgary's Top 7 Over 70 in 2019.

Dr. Lacey says the pandemic has added to the financial challenges arts organizations are facing, but it has also shown how important they are to the community — not only for bringing hope and joy and comfort to people, but also for diversifying the economy and creating the type of city where people want to live. "Ideally, I'd like to see the Calgary Philharmonic gradually become self-supporting," he says. "I hope by strengthening the Foundation we also strengthen the orchestra so it can spread its wings and reach even more people."

In 1984, the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra Foundation established an independent endowment fund to support the orchestra's long-term operations — a portion of the return earned on the fund is contributed annually to the organization. The Foundation has become the orchestra's largest annual funder, exceeding all levels of government support.

"Through careful stewardship and smart investments, the endowment has grown to almost \$40 million," says Jeremy Clark, chair of the Foundation. "In recent years, while corporate donations have fallen dramatically, and government arts funding is inconsistent, the Foundation has been an essential source of revenue for the Orchestra."

The goal of the capital campaign is to grow the endowment by \$25 million over the next five years, which will provide a stable source of revenue that allows the orchestra to plan ahead with a focus on providing quality performance, education, and outreach programs.

“We need to build the endowment for long-term security,” says Clark. “A healthy Foundation is a must to ensure the Orchestra is here for generations to come and to weather any future storms.”

During the current crisis, the Foundation has helped make it possible for the Calgary Philharmonic to continue to employ its musicians full-time and provide the community with virtual performances and online education programs at a time when there is no ticket revenue coming in.

The Calgary Philharmonic is the largest not-for-profit performing arts organization in Alberta, with 30 administrative staff as well as the 66 musicians who contribute to the community by taking part in other musical projects and teaching. The Orchestra is also integral to the cultural fabric of the city and has fostered partnerships with numerous organizations — Calgary Opera, Alberta Ballet, Calgary Folk Festival, Kids Up Front, Calgary International Film Festival, Run Calgary, One Yellow Rabbit, and Calgary Pride, among others.

“We’re committed to sharing great music now and for the long-term,” says Paul Dornian, President and CEO of the Calgary Philharmonic. “We’re a cornerstone organization that collaborates broadly with other artists and arts organizations and provides innovative outreach and educational opportunities — people of all ages, from all walks of life, depend on our programs. The Foundation is our largest source of financial support — it provides the resiliency we need to continue our important work.”

The Ad Astra capital campaign invites supporters to be part of the Orchestra’s future. “When we work together, there are no limits to what we can achieve,” says Dr. John Lacey.

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Media Opportunities

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About the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra

The Calgary Philharmonic celebrates 65 years as a pillar of Calgary’s vibrant arts community in 2020 and has grown to be one of Canada’s most celebrated live music ensembles. Led by Music Director Rune Bergmann, the Calgary Philharmonic presents classical masterworks, pop favourites, bold collaborations, and cutting-edge new works, and attracts world renowned guest artists and dynamic conductors. The Orchestra welcomes over 100,000 visitors annually and, in 2017, launched its live-stream initiative — an immersive, digital concert experience for audiences around the world. Follow the Calgary Philharmonic @calgaryphil on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, and register for email updates at calgaryphil.com/newsletter.

Backgrounder: Calgary Philharmonic Foundation

The Calgary Philharmonic Foundation is an endowment fund created to support the long-term operations of the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra. Funds received by the Foundation are held in perpetuity. Donations made to the Foundation are eligible for a matching grant from the Canada Cultural Investment Fund, a program of the Federal Government's Department of Canadian Heritage.

A portion of the return earned on the endowment fund is contributed annually to the Calgary Philharmonic. The Foundation has become the Calgary Philharmonic's largest annual funder. The Foundation operates independently and at arms-length from the Calgary Philharmonic. The fund's administration is overseen by the Trustees of the Calgary Philharmonic Foundation.