

# Media Release

For Immediate Release

## Donation to Calgary Philharmonic's Ad Astra capital campaign will benefit emerging artists for years to come

Calgary Alta. (June 29, 2021) – The Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra's capital campaign has reached almost \$4.8 million toward its goal after receiving more than a quarter of a million dollars in new donations in recent months, including a contribution that will provide a lasting benefit for emerging artists. *Ad Astra: Building to New Heights* was announced to the public in October 2020 and is focused on pursuing artistic excellence, strengthening community, and ensuring a sustainable future.

As the Honorary Patron of the Calgary Philharmonic Foundation and past Board Chair of the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, the Honourable Lois E. Mitchell, businesswoman, philanthropist, and former Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, says she is proud to see what the Ad Astra campaign has achieved so far. "This campaign is so important right now because what are we needing more than anything? Music," she says. "Music lifts us out of sadness and fear — and brings us hope and joy."

Mitchell adds that the Orchestra is an important part of a vibrant downtown and helps attract new people to the city, so it's heartening to see community leaders stepping up to show their support, which will benefit those living and working here now and in the future. "They are people who really care," she says. "It isn't just about the money; it's knowing how you can make a difference."

Letha MacLachlan Q.C. and her late husband John Ridge knew exactly how they wanted to make a difference. The couple founded the MacLachlan/Ridge Emerging Artist Program in partnership with the Calgary Phil in 2011 after learning that only five to 10 per cent of talented young musicians reach the point where they can sustain themselves as professional performers — and for many, the missing key to success was the right opportunity. The program gives emerging Canadian musicians the opportunity to perform with a professional orchestra and develop connections in the music world at a crucial point in their careers. MacLachlan recently made a significant contribution to the capital campaign to ensure those young artists continue to get that leg up for years to come.

"We created the program as a bridge between their academic studies and the opportunity to play with a professional orchestra," says MacLachlan. "The goal is to give them confidence, help them develop connections, improve their playing, and provide a taste of what it's really like to be on the world stage."

Canadian musicians who took part in the program and now enjoy flourishing careers include Charles Richard Hamelin, Blake Pouliot, Isabella Perron, Pavel Kolesnikov, Sheng Cai, Jaeden Izik-Dzurko, and Andrea Tyniec. The most recent artist featured was 15-year-old pianist and composer Kevin Chen of Calgary, who was scheduled to perform at a concert in January but instead gave a virtual recital for members of the Calgary Phil's Amadeus

Patron Program. "This program is incredibly important for young artists like me," Chen says. "It's because of the generosity of thoughtful people like Letha and John that I can continue to focus on my playing and performing."

Marg Southern, co-founder of Spruce Meadows and a renowned businesswoman and philanthropist, has also made a recent donation to the campaign. "I'm supporting Ad Astra because of the importance of having a sustainable Orchestra for Calgary," she says. "The ripple effects extend far beyond the concert hall to have a lasting, positive influence on our entire community and for the future of this city."

The money raised through the capital campaign goes directly to the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra Foundation's independent endowment fund, which supports the orchestra's long-term operations. All funds raised are eligible for a matching grant from Canadian Heritage's Endowment Incentives — Canada Cultural Investment Fund, which is based on a percentage of donations. Mitchell says she is a "firm believer" in matching programs because it's a fiscally responsible way for governments to support not-for-profit organizations while encouraging private donations, and it helps make every contribution go even further.

The Ad Astra capital campaign was announced to the public in October 2020 and the goal 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.

The Calgary Philharmonic is the largest not-for-profit performing arts organization in Alberta, with 30 administrative staff and 66 musicians. 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.

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### **Media Opportunities**

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### **About the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra**

The Calgary Philharmonic celebrated 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 Phil presents classical standards, pop favourites, bold collaborations, and cutting-edge new works, and attracts world-renowned guest artists and dynamic conductors. In a typical Season, the Orchestra welcomes over 100,000 visitors to the concert hall and reaches audiences around the world through its free and accessible digital programming and live-stream initiative — an immersive, online concert experience that launched in 2017. Follow the Calgary Philharmonic @calgaryphil on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, and register for email updates at [calgaryphil.com/newsletter](http://calgaryphil.com/newsletter).

## **About the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra 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, exceeding all levels of government support. The Foundation operates independently and at arms-length from the Calgary Philharmonic. Members of the Ad Astra Campaign Cabinet include Elizabeth Middleton (Co-Chair), Elizabeth Evans (Co-Chair), John Lacey (Honorary Chair), Michelle Bailey, Walter DeBoni, Ann Calvert, Jeremy Clark, and Ryan Stasynek.