

For Immediate Release

Calgary Philharmonic's Ad Astra capital campaign tops \$6 million thanks to two large donations

Calgary Alta. (October 20, 2021) – Two major gifts from longtime supporters have lifted the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra's *Ad Astra* capital campaign over the \$6 million mark. Irene and Walt DeBoni made a significant donation to start a New Initiatives fund for innovation and progress, and Robbin Shandel provided the financial support to endow two chairs in the violin section.

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

The DeBonis' focus on New Initiatives reflects their ongoing interest in building an Orchestra for the future, which is one of the goals of the capital campaign. They set up the DeBoni New Works program in 2012, resulting in more than a dozen original Calgary Phil commissions to date — from composer Abigail Richardson's score for the beloved children's story *The Hockey Sweater*, to the *True North: Symphonic Ballet* collaboration involving composers from across Canada, to the recent commissions by Canadian composers in celebration of Beethoven's 250th birthday.

They hope the New Initiatives fund will foster the same spirit of creativity and innovation that has fueled the development of new commissions, but they are not tying it to any specific outcomes. Instead, they want to provide an opportunity for a 'roundtable' of people who share a common interest in orchestral music, but bring diverse backgrounds and approaches, to explore possibilities and come up with truly unique ideas.

"We've always been interested in progress and innovation," says Walt, a former chair of the Calgary Phil's board of directors. He developed his world view working in the oil industry for 40-plus years, where he spent every day questioning how to do things differently, to do things better, and anticipating what was coming up on the horizon. "For an orchestra it's the same thing. It's great that we have Beethoven and Bach and all the other Bs and so on, but let's take it to the next step — it shouldn't stop now."

The Orchestra is one of many local organizations the Calgary couple has supported over the years, including the Calgary Public Library, National Music Centre, Alberta Ballet, Glenbow, Telus Spark Science Centre, and the Calgary Zoo. Irene says they all play a vital role in the community by creating valuable experiences for people of all ages who live here — and she hopes others will support them as well. "We've been lucky in our life," adds Walter. "We didn't start out with a

silver spoon in our mouth — Calgary has been good to us, and we think it's important to give back.... We get a lot of satisfaction out of seeing the progress these organizations make and the impact they have on the community. Helping them achieve their mission is important and we're glad we're able to do it."

The Ad Astra Capital Campaign's gift from Robbin Shandel will honour her mother by endowing the Principal Second Violin Chair and the Assistant Principal Second Violin Chair under the names of Esther Violet Hall née Young and Debbie Lynne Hall, with Violet being Shandel's mother. The Endowed Orchestra Chairs program contributes to the Orchestra's artistic vision by making it possible to attract and retain high-calibre musicians and elevate the quality of performances.

Lorna Tsai, Principal Second Violin, says she and her seatmate Stephanie Soltice-Johnson, Assistant Principal Second Violin, were honoured to hear about the double chair endowment. "It is extremely heartwarming to be reminded there are individuals who care about making meaningful contributions to the local community," she says. "The endowment helps us ensure the gift of live music will continue to enrich the city of Calgary for years to come."

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

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 many organizations — Calgary Opera, Alberta Ballet, Making Treaty 7 Cultural Society, 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.

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 runs independently and at arms-length from the Calgary Philharmonic. Members of the Ad Astra Campaign Cabinet include Liz Middleton (Co-Chair), Elizabeth Evans (Co-Chair), John Lacey (Honorary Chair), Michelle Bailey, Walter DeBoni, Ann Calvert, Jeremy Clark, and Ryan Stasynech.