

**Executive Director Annual Report  
ECSO Annual Meeting – July 9, 2019**

As our 2018-19 season has ended and I reflect on all that we accomplished this year, I am so proud of what we achieved and humbled to be one of the leaders of this great organization. We rolled out new programs, new partnerships, exceeded some of our budget goals and made lasting institutional gains that will continue to pay dividends into the future.

None of this would be possible without our dedicated family of supporters who show up every day, each in their own way. Since you're reading this report, you are part of that family and I am grateful to have the opportunity to work alongside you. All our efforts and viewpoints come together through our mission *"to inspire, educate, and connect our communities through live orchestral music"* and I would like to share some highlights from that perspective below:

**Inspire**

This year our orchestra continued to excite us with memorable concerts that demonstrate why we are so passionate about live orchestral music. Again and again, we heard from patrons that each performance was "perhaps the best that ECSO has ever sounded." These continued testimonials speak to the strengths of our artistic leader, Music Director and Conductor, Toshiyuki Shimada. His programming, dedication to the orchestra, and consummate musicianship continue to bring the orchestra and audience members to greater heights. Of course, those of who are fortunate enough to work with Toshi also know that he is also an intelligent, warm-spirited, kind-hearted collaborator who is never without something interesting to contribute to a conversation.

Performances this season featured amazing rhapsodies, a seldom-heard instrument outside of Hungary - the cimbalom, two phenomenal concerto performances by Concertmaster Stephan Tieszen and retiring Principal Bassist Thomas Green, a dazzling Young Artist Competition

winner – Justin Park, and an epic finale with Mahler’s *Symphony No. 1* and our Chorus performing Mozart’s *Coronation Mass*. One of the biggest hits of the season was the work that we co-commissioned along with a consortium of several other orchestras, Michael Torke’s *Sky*, a bluegrass-inspired violin concerto. This work was written specifically for, and in consultation with, Tessa Lark. Tessa charmed our audience with her personality and impeccable “Strad-grass” style of playing and we hope to have her back soon!

In terms of earned income, **subscriptions grew this year**, returning to numbers that we haven’t seen in several years, ending over budget at \$124,000. However, single ticket sales lagged the budget slightly. This is largely due to the family concert’s underperformance, which could be attributed to less than ideal weather on the day of the concert.

## Educate

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Our Music in the Schools program reached over 6,400 children and along with the Young People’s Concerts, **we reached 8,000 youth this year**. Beginning in August 2018, a new partnership was formed with the Riverfront Children’s Center in Groton. Together, our musicians enlivened their summer camp offerings, which concluded with an outdoor performance that had the children singing along to show their parents what they had learned. Grant funding was up this year, with Pfizer funding a STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, math) outreach program in collaboration with New England Science and Sailing (NESS). Three musicians taught students how frequencies and waves are similar, how instruments make the sounds that they do, and why pitches sound high or low, with musical demonstrations of each concept.

The Education Committee has been formed with many community leaders and education experts joining in to continue shaping this important part of our service to the community. One of the key areas of focus for next year will be to revise our Music in the Schools program to bring it into full alignment with our mission, by using ECSO musicians performing primarily orchestral music in an interactive fashion.

One of the largest programmatic changes for the 18-19 season was through our partnering with **Carnegie Hall to present their popular Link Up** program. We chose “The Orchestra Sings” which taught children about how composers craft great melodies. Children in grades 3 – 5 were taught custom curriculum designed by the Weill Music Institute at Carnegie Hall that incorporated recorder playing and singing. As students learned about music, they had the context of the pieces on the program to guide them and in May 2019, performed from their seats alongside the ECSO for an interactive culmination to the program. We are beyond excited to continue growing our Young People’s Concerts within the framework of Link Up; next year we’ll present “The Orchestra Moves”.

## Connect

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Connecting with our communities is the third aspect of our mission that enables us to share the joy that is orchestral music in myriad ways. Many partnerships have already been mentioned in this report, which is a critical part of fulfilling our role as a musical leader. One of our most impactful projects came together again this year as we saw the **return of the Cathedral of St. Patrick’s concert on Sunday, April 14**. With the help of Board members, the Diocese of Norwich, Bishop Michael Cote, the Lord Foundation, Knights of Columbus, and many others, we were able to join forces with our Chorus and soloists to present a free concert of Mozart’s *Requiem* to 800+ attendees.

We also applied for and won a new grant from the State of Connecticut titled “ARTE-accessible” for our family concert, Peter and the Wolf. This grant enabled us to reach the Spanish-speaking community through the use of translated materials in many forms. A postcard promoting the concert, program book for children and adults, and supertitle translations were all created in Spanish. Our narrator for Prokofiev’s *Peter and the Wolf*, Resurrección Espinosa-Frink, welcomed the audience in English and Spanish as dancers from the Eastern Connecticut Ballet took to the stage to help tell the timeless story.

## Looking Forward

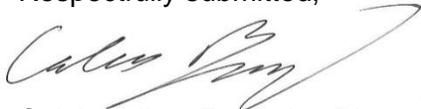
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Many building blocks came into place this year that will sustain our efforts moving forward. My partnership with Ellen Cummings as the new Board President for 18-19 has been incredibly fruitful as she does double duty as the Development Committee Chair. As corporate sponsorship becomes more elusive for every arts and culture non-profit across the country, initiatives to inspire giving from individuals are more crucial than ever before. In response, the Development Committee rolled out individual giving benefits to reward our donors and offer them behind-the-scenes access to many of the exciting moments that create our powerful performances. We reached another ambitious annual fund goal this year, which marks three consecutive years of growth from our generous supporters. We are also continuing to grow the Robert F. Shannon Society to bolster our invested assets that provide a significant portion of our budget through our yearly draw.

After an inspiring Board retreat to discuss the many significant milestones that are coming up for the ECSO, we are all excited for what’s on the horizon. **Next year will mark Toshi’s 10<sup>th</sup> year** with the orchestra and we plan to celebrate him and his artistic accomplishments all season long. Then, two years later in the 2021-22 season, the ECSO will turn 75, allowing for a large-scale, community-wide celebration of everything our orchestra has accomplished while looking forward to how we can continue to grow within our community.

As we plan for this upcoming season, let us continue to keep in mind that we are reaching more audiences than ever before through our concerts and education programs, and that the content of these programs gets better year after year. We have challenges to overcome, but with all of us staying connected to our mission, keeping in mind the thousands that we inspire each year, we will find ways to help our music resonate more deeply with those that need it the most.

Respectfully submitted,



Caleb Bailey, Executive Director