



KANSAS CITY SYMPHONY

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Kansas City Symphony Soars in 3rd Season at New Hall

Artistic excellence, diversified programming drive record sales, donations

KANSAS CITY, Mo. | Sept. 2, 2014 — Artistically and financially, the Kansas City Symphony has completed its most successful season. It also has become a cultural destination, attracting ticket purchasers for the first time from all 50 states and numerous foreign countries.

At the close of its 2014 fiscal year (July 1, 2013 to June 30) and its third season in Helzberg Hall at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, the Symphony is pleased to report multiple growth areas, including record ticket sales, donations and community presence from its 2013-2014 season. These positive financial numbers go hand-in-hand with the ever-increasing artistic growth of the Symphony under the baton of Music Director Michael Stern who begins his 10th full season this fall.

“I am thrilled with all we accomplished together this past season, both artistically and financially,” says Executive Director Frank Byrne. “Through diligent effort and observable passion, we have powerfully demonstrated that symphonic music is thriving in Kansas City. I am especially proud that we have done this in an atmosphere of trust and a mutually-supportive culture among all constituents: board; staff; musicians; volunteers and audiences. There is something special happening at the Kansas City Symphony, and it is my honor to lead this outstanding organization.”

In fiscal year 2014, the Symphony not only drew more visitors than ever before, as the organization recorded ticket purchases for the first time from all 50 states and numerous foreign countries, but the Symphony also increased attendance overall. Classical Series concerts averaged 96 percent sold; Pops Series averaged 97 percent sold and Family Series averaged 94 percent sold. Special concerts for fiscal year 2014, including concerts such as Ben Folds and Screenland at the Symphony, averaged an all-time high of 99 percent sold. These special concerts along with free Happy Hour chamber music concerts and Classics Uncorked concerts accounted for 38 percent, or the majority, of all first-time attendees.

The Symphony’s diverse range of programming has attracted new audiences and connected more deeply with the community. With increased attendance, the Symphony also recorded a 16-percent increase in total ticket revenue over the previous season. This was due in part to a 43-percent increase in revenue from individual concert tickets, or non-subscription income.

In addition to ticket sales, the Symphony relies on support from grants and generous donors to balance its budget. In the 2013-2014 season, the Symphony received nearly \$7.5 million in donations. The Symphony’s five auxiliaries raised a record \$1.36 million led by the extraordinary success of Symphony League’s Symphony Ball, which ranked as the second highest local fundraising event in Kansas City for 2013. Equally important, the total number of donors increased by 40 percent in fiscal year 2014, with more than a third of those gifts originating from first-time donors.

Byrne noted that the Symphony’s success this past season “is the result of outstanding and consistent board leadership over many years.” The Kansas City Symphony’s previous board chair, Shirley Bush Helzberg, held the position for 18 years — one of the longest tenures in any American orchestra.

Coming off his first full season as Kansas City Symphony Board Chair, William M. Lyons explains that these numbers are the results of years of good leadership, careful strategic planning and collective hard work.

“There is no doubt that the season just ended was one of our finest, on several levels,” Lyons says. “We are exceptionally fortunate to have all the elements of a great orchestra: strong and capable leadership from Michael Stern and Frank Byrne, very talented musicians, a beautiful performance hall, passionate audiences, a smart and generous Board, dedicated staff and volunteers and solid community support.”

California-based nonprofit advisor and co-founder of B Squared Consulting Steven Bronfenbrenner says the Symphony is “thriving.” In his experience with other orchestras, he says they often find sustaining financial performance in a new concert hall challenging, particularly two or three years after a grand opening. And with today’s economic landscape, he has seen other orchestras scaling back or shutting down altogether.

“KCS has avoided the ‘post-opening slump,’” Bronfenbrenner says. “Kansas City should be very proud of its hometown orchestra and its glorious new home — Helzberg Hall at the Kauffman Center. The Kansas City Symphony sets a standard of artistic, management and financial performance other ensembles strive to achieve.”

Stern agrees wholeheartedly. He says that he is also proud of the hard work of the organization and finds especially rewarding the level of music-making and artistic successes the Symphony has achieved in the past season.

“I love that we are defying expectations, artistically and organizationally,” Stern says. “It stems from the music-making, and it is extraordinarily gratifying to work with such dedicated and talented musicians. With each rehearsal, concert and recording, they prove their commitment to creating something special. We all realize the larger picture: making the case for music to our audiences and the larger community. We are not surprised that such a vital musical entity flourishes here in Kansas City — we know it firsthand — and work to make the next concert, the next season, better than the last. We want to give this great city the great orchestra it deserves.”

Building on its artistic achievements, the Symphony also furthered its partnership with Grammy®-Award winning audiophile label Reference Recordings on two projects in the 2013-2014 season. In March, the label and ensemble earned critical acclaim for the release of “Miraculous Metamorphoses,” featuring music by composers Hindemith, Prokofiev and Bartók, and in June, the Symphony recorded “The Music of Adam Schoenberg,” which is planned for future release.

“We’ve completed a remarkable year, but have even greater potential before us and that is very exciting,” Byrne insists. “Please join us this season to experience what makes Kansas City Symphony performances so inspiring.”

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About the Kansas City Symphony

Founded in 1982, the Kansas City Symphony has established itself as a major force in the cultural life of the community. Praised for performances of uncompromising standard, the orchestra is the largest in the region and enjoys a national reputation under the artistic leadership of Music Director Michael Stern. The Kansas City Symphony performs more than 100 concerts each year, while also serving as the orchestra for the Kansas City Ballet and Lyric Opera of Kansas City, and often welcomes guests of international acclaim as part of its Classical and Pops subscription series. Complementing its full schedule of concerts, the Symphony strives to enrich the lives of Kansas City residents by providing music education opportunities for children and adults, including KinderKonzerts, Young People’s Concerts and

an instrument petting zoo. Highlights each season include a range of free masterclasses, events and concerts reaching more than 200,000 community members, including the annual Bank of America Celebration at the Station concert each Memorial Day weekend and Symphony in the Flint Hills every summer. The Symphony has released four recordings on the Reference Recording label — *Shakespeare's Tempest*, the Grammy®-winning *Britten's Orchestra*, an Elgar/Vaughan Williams project and most recently, *Miraculous Metamorphoses*, which highlights composers Hindemith, Prokofiev and Bartók. Additionally, a Saint-Saëns album and an Adam Schoenberg album are slated for later release. The Symphony and Michael Stern also have recorded for the Naxos label. KCS performances can be heard locally each week on KCUR 89.3 FM, Kansas City's NPR affiliate. More information on the Kansas City Symphony is available at www.kcsymphony.org.