

SEATTLE CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

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NEWS RELEASE:

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COMPLETION OF \$5M CAPITAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE CENTER FOR CHAMBER MUSIC

August 13, 2020, Seattle, WA – Seattle Chamber Music Society (SCMS) announced today the completion of its five-million-dollar fundraising campaign to build and endow its Center for Chamber Music. The 3800-square foot chamber music art center is part of Artistic Director James Ehnes' vision for Seattle Chamber Music Society. Located at 601 Union Street in downtown Seattle, the Center for Chamber Music gives the regional arts scene a place for people to experience and learn about this intimate musical form that SCMS has been performing since its establishment in 1982.

The most ambitious fundraising effort in the Society's 39-year history, the comprehensive campaign was co-chaired by board members Patricia Tall-Takacs and Diana Carey. Both are past presidents and long-time audience members. Gilbert S. Omenn and Martha A. Darling served as honorary co-chairs and made the keystone gift of \$1 million to endow the artistic directorship.

Ms. Tall-Takacs and Ms. Carey led the effort that raised not only the \$2 million budgeted for facility construction and program start-up costs, but also \$3 million for the Society's endowment, which would provide sustainable income for increased operating costs. At the campaign's close, 273 donors had participated.

Built according to Mr. Ehnes' plan, the Center features a 60-person concert salon-cum-living room for Festival musicians as well as two rehearsal rooms, a patron lobby and an administrative area for staff. Nearly all of these spaces carry the name of leading donors to the campaign, in recognition of the philanthropists whose major support built the Center's fundraising momentum and helped ensure its success.

"Seattle Chamber Music Society's concerts have always been grounded in the unique collaboration fostered by the rehearsal process, artists sharing social time and meals together, and connecting with our dedicated and knowledgeable Seattle audience on-stage and in the lobby," said Mr. Ehnes.

"The new Center for Chamber Music brings all of this together in a space that allows us to expand programming from our current Festivals to year-round events that will deepen this connection, as well as encourage new audiences to discover this captivating form of classical music."

“The generous support from our community has been overwhelming,” said Ms. Tall-Takacs. “It’s wonderful to know that so many people agree that the Center is worth their investment.”

Because the campaign and construction progressed on schedule, the facility was completed just as the COVID-19 pandemic prompted public health shelter-at-home directives in March. With its annual Summer Festival scheduled for July and its traditional concert venue at Benaroya Hall closed, SCMS reimagined a festival that could be filmed inside the Center and viewable over an internet connection, to reach people at home. As of this writing, the Festival concerts have been viewed more than 15,000 times.

“We had planned new concerts and programs for our first year at the center, but we never imagined that the building itself would come to save our entire Summer Festival,” said Connie Cooper, Executive Director since 1996. “We have our community of campaign donors to thank for that.”

SCMS’S staff is now planning to produce its 2021 Winter Festival in the same controlled conditions inside the Center, and to deliver it virtually over the internet.

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ABOUT SEATTLE CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY:

Each year, Seattle Chamber Music Society (SCMS) presents a Winter Festival in January and Summer Festival in July at the Illsley Ball Nordstrom Recital Hall at Benaroya Hall. In addition to its high-quality performances, SCMS offers community engagement programs for adults, youths and the community-at-large to encourage audience appreciation and understanding of chamber music. These programs bring audiences of all ages in close contact with musicians and their music through informal, accessible and enjoyable formats.