



Kansas City Symphony Sets All-Time Records for Attendance, Ticket Revenue in 2015-16 Season

Financial results combine with artistic excellence and community engagement to make a compelling success story

KANSAS CITY, Mo. | Aug. 10, 2016 — Five seasons after the opening of the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, the Kansas City Symphony's annual results show the organization is stronger than ever and consistently one of the hottest tickets around.

Having completed its 2016 fiscal year (July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016), the Symphony is proud to report all-time records for attendance and total ticket revenue. The Symphony points to record Classical Series single ticket sales, a loyal subscriber base and diverse programming as key components of these milestones. These elements allowed the Symphony to post a modest financial surplus for the year.

"Our continued success is testament to the combined efforts of our extraordinary board, staff, musicians and volunteers, and also to this remarkable community," says Symphony Executive Director Frank Byrne. "Kansas City is a city on the ascent, a place where the arts are an integral part of our identity. There is no better place to demonstrate the power and relevance of great music to people of all ages, and the response we've seen is very exciting. We believe there is even greater potential for the future, and we intend to be leaders in making that dream a reality."

Symphony Board Chair Bill Lyons agrees.

"Kansas City's positive and forward-looking arts environment has helped us build an exemplary, modern American orchestra," Lyons says. "Our clear focus on artistic excellence is generating record operating results and a subscriber base that is eager to renew its support every year. In addition, our Board has led a multi-year effort to build a much stronger and more sustainable financial foundation. The combination of these things, plus the leadership of Executive Director Frank Byrne and Music Director Michael Stern, should give Kansas City great confidence in the Symphony's future."

For the 2015-16 season, the Symphony sold \$2.9 million in subscriptions and nearly \$2.1 million in single tickets, resulting in a record of nearly \$5 million in total ticket revenue. The 2015-16 Symphony series performances were near capacity, at nearly 95 percent sold on average, with

an average of 79 percent of seats filled by season subscribers. With more than 100 performances last season, averages account for multiple sold-out concerts across all series and resulted in more than 100,000 attendees — another record. Advancing its “destination” reputation in the 2015-16 season, the Symphony attracted attendees from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and six foreign countries, not including additional out-of-town and foreign visitors attending as guests of others.

The Symphony also announced significant contract renewals in the 2015-16 season. In October 2015, Music Director Michael Stern [extended his contract](#) through the 2019-20 season. In December 2015, the Symphony announced that Jason Seber would succeed Aram Demirjian as the [David T. Beals III Assistant Conductor](#) beginning in the 2016-17 season. Kansas City Symphony Chorus Director Charles Bruffy, who leads the 160-volunteer member Chorus, also renewed his contract through the 2019-20 season.

Additionally, Symphony musicians and management successfully [ratified a four-year renewal](#) of the musicians’ collective bargaining agreement, negotiating without attorneys and reaching agreement more than a year before the expiration of the current contract.

The Symphony continued its popular and well-attended free Happy Hour chamber music series, part of its ongoing effort to make great music accessible. As in past seasons, the free Happy Hour concerts attracted both first-time Symphony-goers and current patrons, making audiences the most diverse of any Symphony series. The Symphony will offer five free [Happy Hour concerts](#) in the 2016-17 season.

The Symphony has a longstanding commitment to youth through its vibrant education series, which experienced nearly a 5 percent increase in student attendance. The Symphony’s youth and community programs reached more than 57,000 people in fiscal year 2016, with students from 328 schools in 77 communities in Kansas and Missouri.

The Symphony’s busy schedule features many other activities, including: the acclaimed Screenland at the Symphony Series featuring full-length feature films with live orchestral accompaniment; the vibrant Charles and Virginia Clark Inside Music Series where distinguished guest artists mentor young musicians; and the Symphony’s 60 performances as the resident orchestra for the Lyric Opera of Kansas City and the Kansas City Ballet.

In addition to ticket sales, the Symphony relies on strong fundraising to balance its \$15.6 million budget. The Symphony saw steady growth in contributions to its annual fund, with nearly \$2.7 million in individual gifts as part of the almost \$7.3 million in total donations. With one of the most effective volunteer forces in the nation, members of the Symphony’s five auxiliaries raised \$1.2 million for fiscal year 2016, up \$75,000 from the previous fiscal year.

Music Director Michael Stern agrees that the Symphony’s commitment to the Kansas City community is integral to its success. The Symphony continues to further its artistic growth under Stern’s direction, who begins his 12th season for the 2016-17 season.

“I am extremely proud of our artistic achievements over this past year,” Stern says. “Being part of the Kansas City community continues to be enormously gratifying, and it inspires us to reach higher. We have changed the culture of our organization through positive conversations with both our internal constituents and the public. Our great success reflects the wonderful fact that, together in Kansas City, we are making music matter. There is no limit to what we can achieve together.”

Stern and the Symphony built on their impressive discography in the 2015-16 season as well. Together with Grammy® Award-winning Reference Recordings, they recorded three one-movement symphonies (Barber’s Symphony No. 1, Sibelius’ Symphony No. 7 and Scriabin’s *Poem of Ecstasy*). The Symphony and Reference Recordings have two additional KCS recordings slated for future release — the music of American composer Adam Schoenberg and Holst’s “The Planets.”

To learn more about all the 2016-17 concert offerings, including Classical, Pops, Family, Holiday and special programs, visit kcsymphony.org or call the Symphony Box Office at (816) 471-0400.

For photo requests, interviews or other media inquiries, please contact Beth Buchanan at (816) 218-2621 or bbuchanan@kcsymphony.org.

###

About the Kansas City Symphony and Chorus

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 Chorus is a volunteer, 160-member ensemble led by multi-Grammy® Award-winning conductor, Charles Bruffy, that continues its long tradition of excellence as the choral voice of the Kansas City Symphony. 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 it often welcomes guests of international acclaim as part of its Classical and Pops Series.

Complementing its full schedule of concerts, the Symphony enriches the lives of Kansas City residents by providing music education opportunities for children and adults, such as KinderKonzerts, Young People’s Concerts, an instrument petting zoo and concert comments. Highlights each season include a range of free master classes, 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 performing at Symphony in the Flint Hills every summer.

The Symphony has released five highly praised CDs to date with Reference Recordings. Two additional projects have been recorded and slated for future release, including the music of contemporary composer Adam Schoenberg (recorded June 2014) and Holst’s “The Planets” (recorded January 2015). The Symphony and Stern recorded three one-movement symphonies (Barber’s Symphony No. 1, Sibelius’ Symphony No. 7 and Scriabin’s *Poem of Ecstasy*) in June on the Reference Recordings label.

The Symphony and Michael Stern also have recorded for the Naxos label. Kansas City Symphony 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 kcsymphony.org