



EMBARGOED UNTIL 10 AM ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2018

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**SEVEN MUSIC EDUCATION ORGANIZATIONS JOIN FORCES TO SECURE A
\$3.5 MILLION GRANT FROM THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION,
ESTABLISHING THE CHICAGO MUSICAL PATHWAYS INITIATIVE**

*Merit School of Music, Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestras,
Chicago High School for the Arts, Chicago Sinfonietta,
The Negaunee Music Institute at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra,
DePaul University School of Music and The Ravinia Festival seek to
Discover and Nurture Promising Young Musicians
from Traditionally Underrepresented Communities Together*

CHICAGO, October 23, 2018 – An extraordinary \$3.5 million grant over three-and-one-half years from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to a consortium of Chicago-area organizations dedicated to music and education will be used to increase diversity in the classical music field through the establishment of the ***Chicago Musical Pathways Initiative (CMPI)***.

A multi-organization collaborative effort, *Chicago Musical Pathways Initiative* will identify and collectively develop exceptionally promising young musicians from traditionally underrepresented communities in the greater Chicago area. It will focus on students of African American, Latinx, American Indian, Alaskan Native, and/or South Asian/ Pacific Islander heritage musicians from lower income households who might be the first in their family to attend college. The goal is for CMPI musicians to be fully prepared with the skills necessary to excel in our nation's top conservatories and college schools of music and, eventually, the ranks of the nation's professional musicians and orchestras.

"The absence of diversity within the field of American classical music, and in American orchestras in particular, is a serious challenge to the vitality and future sustainability of classical music," stated Susan Feder, program officer in The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's Arts and Cultural Heritage program. "The Foundation is taking a systemic approach to address the seemingly intractable issue of four percent Black and Latinx representation in American orchestras -- a figure that has not changed in more than a generation. By funding collaborative initiatives in major urban centers, we hope to improve the pathways for highly talented and dedicated young musicians from historically underrepresented communities who have committed to the goal of becoming professional musicians. This is matter of access and opportunity, not one of a lack of talent. Mellon-supported consortia are already working in

Philadelphia and are concurrently beginning in Boston. As a major market for classical music and the third largest school district in the nation, Chicago was a natural site for such work, and CMPI has received our largest 'Pathways' grant to date. The members of CMPI and these other committed organizations are poised to work in ways that can inform national efforts and models for other regions."

This collaborative process was initiated and co-led by Merit School of Music, a nationally accredited music school based in Chicago's West Loop and working across the city to help young people of all backgrounds achieve lifelong success through music, and the Chicago Sinfonietta, the nation's most diverse professional orchestra, which promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion not only through its orchestra roster, but through a highly effective fellowship programs for orchestral musicians and conductors.

Implementation of the Chicago Musical Pathways Initiative will be led by Merit School of Music and the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestras (CYSO), an organization that has provided top-level orchestral programming for students from across the Chicago region for more than 70 years. Steering Team partners participating in the implementation of CMPI include:

- Chicago High School for the Arts (ChiArts);
- Chicago Sinfonietta;
- DePaul University School of Music;
- The Negaunee Music Institute at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; and
- The Ravinia Festival.

"Music and arts are inseparable from a well-rounded education, and in Chicago we are committed to expanding programs and initiatives designed to develop vital critical thinking skills and help all of our children realize their limitless potential," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "The Chicago Musical Pathways Initiative will help spark the imagination and creativity of students across the city."

"The reality that most of our nation's orchestras do not reflect the rich diversity of the country's population is a significantly limiting factor in the vibrancy, relevance, and sustainability of those organizations and the extraordinary art form that they celebrate," stated Demarre McGill, a Merit Conservatory graduate and CYSO alumnus who is principal flute for the Seattle Symphony. "More importantly, the lack of diversity and inclusion in our nation's orchestras reflects ongoing inequity in access to the arts, music, and 21st century skills at an early age – which we view as a civil rights issue."

His brother Anthony McGill, also a Merit Conservatory and CYSO alum who is principal clarinet for the New York Philharmonic, added, "Too many young musicians are still denied the educational and musical resources required to achieve success at the highest level in the demanding and rewarding world of professional musicians. If we truly believe that children of all backgrounds can achieve equally when given equal opportunity and support, then we must all act together in a highly intensive, collaborative, and sustained way to make this belief a reality in Chicago and beyond."

"Given that less than ten percent of CPS schools currently maintain an orchestra program and only 27 percent a band program, Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestras is honored to join Merit in developing a Chicago-specific model for reinforcing public school music programming and building a more effective and inclusive music training pathway for young musicians from

underrepresented backgrounds,” noted Susan Lape, Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestras Executive Director.

Charles Grode, president and executive director, Merit School of Music, stated, “The intent of this grant is consistent with the pathways Merit has built through our Merit Music in Communities (MMiC) program to our *Alice S. Pfaelzer Tuition-free Conservatory*, and, most notably, our flagship MMiC program at Carson Elementary, where more than 20 percent of this year’s Conservatory student body began their musical journey. Musicians selected for CMPI will be carefully assessed and provided with comprehensive supports -- musical and extra-musical -- including financial, instructional and academic, to remove many of the barriers to access that can discourage or derail the training of talented musicians from underrepresented backgrounds before they are able to fully realize their musical potential. This grant will help us identify and raise up the next DeMarre or Anthony McGill,” he added.

“Exposure to the arts provides students with more than the ability to play an instrument or perform on stage, it taps into their undiscovered talent, helps them find their voice and enhances their education,” said CPS Chief Education Officer LaTanya D. McDade. “We greatly appreciate this combined commitment from organizations across Chicago to expand arts programming and support the next generation of musicians.”

The *Chicago Musical Pathways Initiative* will begin recruiting young musicians to the program in spring 2019. Approximately 50 musicians from the greater Chicago area will be identified as participants in CMPI by summer 2019, with a total of approximately 150 young musicians engaged between 2019 and 2022. Each participant will benefit from individualized plans that create a career roadmap for them, including the professional training and mentorship necessary for success.

The *Chicago Musical Pathways Initiative* and its Steering Team will work closely with the following organizations to identify talented young musicians, and to collaboratively support them on their musical, developmental journey:

- Chicago Academy for the Arts
- Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University
- Chicago Jazz Philharmonic
- Chicago Mariachi Project
- Chicago Metamorphosis Orchestra Project
- Chicago Public Schools
- DePaul Community Music Division
- Grant Park Music Festival
- Hyde Park Suzuki Institute
- Hyde Park Youth Symphony Orchestra
- Ingenuity
- Lyric Opera of Chicago
- Midwest Young Artists Conservatory
- Music Institute of Chicago
- Musical Arts Institute
- Shift: Englewood Youth Orchestra
- The Chicago Philharmonic Society
- The People’s Music School

About the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation:

Founded in 1969, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation endeavors to strengthen, promote, and, where necessary, defend the contributions of the humanities and the arts to human flourishing and to the well-being of diverse and democratic societies by supporting exemplary institutions of higher education and culture as they renew and provide access to an invaluable heritage of ambitious, path-breaking work. Additional information is available at mellon.org.

About Chicago Musical Pathways Initiative

The long-term goal of the *Chicago Musical Pathways Initiative* (CMPI) is to help address the persistent lack of diversity in American orchestras – a condition which threatens the vitality and viability of classical, orchestral music. CMPI is aimed at building a more robust Chicago-area training pathway for talented student musicians from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds, from 6th grade through 12th grade. The project focuses on instrumental students of classical music who have demonstrated both aptitude and interest in pursuing intensive study and a career specifically in orchestral music.

The initiative will involve close collaboration and resource sharing among a diverse network of well-established non-profit Chicago youth and music-education focused organizations. Together, participating organizations will work to identify talented, motivated students early in their training. Musicians selected for CMPI will be carefully assessed and provided with comprehensive supports – musical and extra-musical (e.g., financial, instructional, academic, etc.) to remove many of the barriers to access that can discourage or derail the training of talented young musicians from underrepresented backgrounds before they are able to realize their full musical potential.

Learn more about CMPI at www.chicagopathways.org.

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