

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 582**Are you a 501(c)3 organization in good standing with the IRS?**

Yes

According to your 501(c)3 letter, in what town is your official office located?

Hartford

Where will your project be performed or exhibited?

Hartford

Will this activity occur after May 1, 2026 ?

Yes

Are you a recent grantee?

Yes

Enter your Report Code

GRF-T3-2025

Organization Name

Hartford Symphony Orchestra

Organization's IRS Tax ID #

060637319

Principal Contact Name

Mariel Christiana

Title

Corporate & Foundation Relations Manager

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Hartford, Connecticut 06106
United States
[Map It](#)

Website<https://hartfordsymphony.org>

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 582**Amount requested this application**

\$25,000.00

What is the organization's mission/vision statement?

To enrich lives and community through great music!

Provide a brief history of your organization and its activities.

The Hartford Symphony Orchestra is one of Connecticut's leading cultural institutions, serving the Greater Hartford region and surrounding communities through live orchestral music and community-based programming. With a professional ensemble of more than 80 musicians, HSO presents a range of performances each season including Masterworks concerts, Pops! programming, and family concerts designed to engage audiences of all ages.

HSO's Masterworks series is presented at The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts and serves as the cornerstone of the orchestra's season, featuring guest artists, guest conductors, and repertoire spanning traditional masterworks and contemporary compositions. The Talcott Mountain Music Festival brings accessible outdoor performances to thousands each summer in a relaxed community setting, while the Press Play series offers informal, genre-blending concerts in nontraditional venues designed to engage new audiences and reduce barriers to orchestral music.

Education and community engagement are central to HSO's mission. The organization reaches thousands of students annually through school partnerships, youth concerts, in-school ensemble performances, and programs such as Link Up in partnership with Carnegie Hall. Additional initiatives, including Symphony in Schools, chamber ensembles, library concerts, Musicians Care, and Strings of Hope, extend access to schools, healthcare environments, senior living communities, and public spaces.

Geographically, HSO serves Hartford County and surrounding communities, with education and outreach extending statewide. Through its performances and engagement initiatives, HSO remains committed to expanding access to live orchestral music, strengthening community connections, and ensuring its programming reflects the evolving needs of the region. Now in its ninth decade, the orchestra continues its dedication to artistic excellence, accessibility, and lifelong engagement with music.

Describe the demographics of your audience/people served by your activities.

The Hartford Symphony Orchestra serves diverse audiences across Greater Hartford and Connecticut through performances and education programs. Audiences span all ages, from students in school programs to adults and seniors at concerts and festivals. Programs like Symphony in Schools, Discovery Concerts, and community events expand access in schools, healthcare settings, and public spaces. HSO does not collect comprehensive demographic data but engages a broad age range.

Describe your organization's governance.

The board meets every other month, excluding July and August, with standing committees meeting monthly. Committees include Development, Finance, Audit, Capital Campaign, Marketing, Investment, Learning and Social Impact, and Governance. Average attendance across board and committee meetings is approximately 70%, reflecting steady and ongoing engagement from members. Since the last application cycle, there have been no substantial changes to organizational leadership.

Ethnicity/Race + %

Hispanic or Latinx 4%

Ethnicity/Race + %

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Asian 7%

Ethnicity/Race + %

Black or African American 18%

Ethnicity/Race + %

White 68%

Ethnicity/Race + %

Two or more races 4%

Ethnicity/Race + %

Male 61.5%

What percentage of your board makes personal financial contributions to your organization?

100% of Hartford Symphony Orchestra board members make personal financial contributions.

Project Name

2026-2027 Masterworks Season

Is this project related to the Visual Arts?

No

Project Description

The Hartford Symphony Orchestra's 2026–2027 Masterworks Season is a series of nine concert weekends presented at The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts. Each program is performed Friday through Sunday, providing broad access to live orchestral music for audiences across the region. The season features a diverse range of repertoire, from classical masterworks to contemporary compositions, performed by HSO musicians and guest artists.

This season coincides with HSO's search for its next Music Director. Four finalist candidates will each guest conduct during the Masterworks series, offering audiences and musicians the opportunity to experience their artistic vision. These performances play an important role in the selection process while contributing to a dynamic and engaging concert season. This season will conclude with our final performance under the baton of HSO Maestra Carolyn Kuan. Concert and repertoire specifics are outlined in the attached Masterworks flyer.

Total estimated project budget

\$1,760,974.00

Project start/opening

10/02/2026

Project end/closing

06/13/2027

Project venue

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Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts, 166 Capitol Ave, Hartford, CT

Project town

Hartford, CT

Admission fees, attendance, and activity details

Admission fees range from \$42.50–\$94.50 for adults, with \$10 student tickets available. To support access, up to 20 complimentary tickets per concert are distributed through the Hartford Public Library. The series includes 9 Masterworks concert weekends at The Bushnell (27 performances) open to the public. Total attendance is projected at 16,000–17,000, including both paid and complimentary tickets.

How do you intend to promote/market this project?

We will promote the project through a multi-channel marketing strategy including radio, digital, and print advertising, as well as paid social media campaigns. Efforts will also include printed collateral such as concert guides and subscription acquisition postcards, in addition to email newsletters and listings to expand reach, strengthen audience development, and build awareness of the season.

How is your organization going to use Roberts funding?

The Hartford Symphony Orchestra will use Roberts Foundation for the Arts funding to support its Masterworks Season at The Bushnell, covering essential costs including venue expenses, musician compensation, marketing, and recruitment of guest artists. This support ensures a nine-weekend concert series (27 performances) and sustains artistic excellence, accessibility, and engagement for audiences across Greater Hartford through live orchestral performances.

How will Roberts support be recognized?

The Roberts Foundation for the Arts will be recognized for its support of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra through signage at Masterworks concerts, logo placement in the Playbill, on the HSO website, in concert guides, and eblasts throughout the season. The Foundation will also receive onstage recognition at select performances, as well as acknowledgment in season marketing materials and communications highlighting its support of the Masterworks Series.

What is your organization's definition of artistic excellence?

At the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, artistic excellence is defined by the highest standard of musical performance paired with meaningful audience connection. It reflects disciplined preparation, technical precision, and inspired interpretation that brings music to life in ways that resonate deeply with listeners. Our commitment to excellence is also expressed through thoughtful, innovative programming that honors the classical canon while embracing new voices, diverse composers, and contemporary works that reflect the world around us.

We believe artistic excellence is not static but an ongoing pursuit of growth. This includes advancing DEIA principles both on stage and in our audiences, expanding access to live orchestral music, and fostering inclusive spaces where all feel welcome. It also means investing in our musicians, collaborating with community partners, and ensuring financial sustainability so that our artistic impact can endure for generations.

How does this project align with that definition, and how does it advance your mission?

The Masterworks Series reflects our definition of artistic excellence by combining the highest level of orchestral performance with thoughtful, engaging programming that connects meaningfully with our community. Each concert is carefully curated to

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feature compelling repertoire, guest artists, and perspectives that reflect a broad range of voices, supporting our ongoing commitment to DEIA on stage and in the audience.

This project advances our mission to enrich lives and community through great music by creating shared, transformative experiences in the concert hall at The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts. Through performances that inspire both new and longtime listeners, the series strengthens access to orchestral music, expands audience engagement, and deepens its relevance and impact across the region.

How will your audience and the community benefit from this project?

The Masterworks Series provides audiences with high-quality orchestral performances that offer meaningful cultural and emotional experiences through thoughtfully curated programming featuring both established masterworks and contemporary voices. These concerts create opportunities for shared experiences that foster connection, reflection, and a deeper appreciation for live music among diverse audiences.

For the broader community, the series enhances Hartford's cultural landscape by presenting performances at The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts that attract regional audiences and contribute to the city's vibrancy. It also supports local economic activity through attendance-driven spending and helps sustain a thriving arts ecosystem, enriching quality of life for residents and visitors while strengthening the region's cultural identity.

How will this project be evaluated?

The Masterworks Series will be evaluated through a combination of audience feedback surveys, attendance and ticketing data, financial performance, and stakeholder input. We will also conduct post-concert focus groups following each of our four Music Director candidate concerts to gather deeper qualitative insights into audience experience, artistic impact, and community perception. Artistic outcomes are assessed through internal review of programming goals, as well as feedback from musicians, guest conductors, and staff. We analyze overall audience response alongside demographic data to evaluate progress toward DEIA commitments and expanded access. These findings are reviewed holistically to measure success in alignment with our mission and to inform continuous improvement, strategic planning, and future season development.

Cover letter

- [Cover-Letter.pdf](#)

Board list

- [Board-of-Directors.pdf](#)

IRS 501(c)3 determination letter

- [HSO-IRS-Determination-Letter.pdf](#)

Financial statement

- [HSO-Audit-Final-FY25.pdf](#)

Last year operational budget

- [FY25-PL.pdf](#)
- [FY25-Approved-Budget.pdf](#)

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 582**Current year operational budget**

- [FY26-YTD-PL.pdf](#)
- [FY26-Approved-Budget.pdf](#)

Balance sheet

- [HSO-Balance-Sheet-2-28-26.pdf](#)

Project budget

- [FY27-Masterworks-Budget-DRAFT.pdf](#)

Does your organization produce an annual report?

Yes

Annual report

- [2024-25-Annual-Message.pdf](#)

Has your organization adopted a strategic plan?

Yes

Strategic plan

- [HSO-Strategic-Framework.pdf](#)

Grant Report

- [Hartford-Symphony-Orchestra-Grantee-Reporting-Form.pdf](#)

Other materials?

- [Masterworks-Renewal-Flyer.pdf](#)

As we needed an extra submission box for demographics, the HSO board is 38.5% female.

Have you contacted the Executive Director by email or phone to discuss this proposal?

Yes

Is your cover letter signed by your senior executive? on your letterhead? with your official office address?

Yes