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The Cleveland Orchestra announces \$4.6 million gift from Myrna and Jim Spira



(Myrna and Jim Spira)

CLEVELAND — The Cleveland Orchestra announced it has received a generous gift of \$4.6 million from longtime patrons and supporters Myrna and Jim Spira. The contribution will help support The Cleveland Orchestra’s artistic programming, pension fund, and annual fund. The gift also endows the Myrna and Jim Spira Bass Clarinet Chair, currently occupied by Amy Zoloto.

Jim Spira joined The Cleveland Orchestra’s Board of Trustees in 2014. He said he considers it an honor to serve under the leadership of Board Chair Richard K. Smucker, Music Director Franz Welser-Möst, and Cleveland Orchestra President & CEO André Gremillet.

“It’s a privilege to be part of a community that has supported the development of an orchestra of this caliber in a city of this size. It’s a remarkable civic accomplishment,” Spira said.

Spira’s deep appreciation for music started at a young age. His father was a dentist, but he was also an amateur musician and played three instruments. Spira also said he greatly benefited from music programs in school as a student. When he and his wife, Myrna, settled back in their hometown after graduate school as a young, married couple in their 20s, they became active supporters of The Cleveland Orchestra. Their relationship with the Orchestra has continued to grow deeper ever since.

“I just grew up feeling that music is a very important part of human life,” Spira said. “Music frees you from a confined space and allows your heart and soul to move freely. It touches your heart in a unique way.”

Spira said two quotations best represented the importance of music in life. One by Victor Hugo, “Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent,” and the other by Alphonse de Lamartine, “Music is the literature of the heart; it commences where speech ends.”

“We are so grateful to Myrna and Jim for their generosity and continued support and are lucky to have them be part of our Cleveland Orchestra family,” Gremillet said. “This incredible gift is not only inspiring but also essential in supporting our efforts to broaden and deepen relationships with Cleveland Orchestra audiences. This meaningful support also helps to ensure our sustainability and legacy for future generations.”

About The Cleveland Orchestra

Now firmly in its second century, The Cleveland Orchestra, under the leadership of Music Director Franz Welser-Möst since 2002, is one of the most sought-after performing ensembles in the world. Year after year, the ensemble exemplifies extraordinary artistic excellence, creative programming, and community engagement. *The New York Times* has called Cleveland “the best in America” for its virtuosity, elegance of sound, variety of color, and chamber-like musical cohesion.

Founded by Adella Prentiss Hughes, the Orchestra performed its inaugural concert in December 1918. By the middle of the century, decades of growth and sustained support made it one of the most admired globally. The past decade has seen an increasing number of young people attending concerts, bringing fresh attention to The Cleveland Orchestra’s legendary sound and committed programming.

The 2023–24 season marks Welser-Möst’s 22nd year as music director, a period in which The Cleveland Orchestra earned unprecedented acclaim around the world, including a series of residencies at the Musikverein in Vienna, the first of its kind by an American orchestra, and a number of acclaimed opera presentations.

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Media Contact:

Jen Steer, jsteer@clevelandorchestra.com, 216-231-7637