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**PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY OF ORANGE COUNTY'S PHILHARMONIC BALL
CELEBRATES VIENNA PHILHARMONIC RESIDENCY AND RAISES \$1.6 MILLION
FOR ARTISTIC AND YOUTH MUSIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**California Performing Arts Visionary Award presented to
Elizabeth Segerstrom and Maria Manetti Shrem**



Vienna Philharmonic © Tiffany Rose, Getty Images

(March 10, 2025, IRVINE, CA)—The Philharmonic Society of Orange County celebrated the launch of its highly anticipated Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra residency with an unforgettable **Philharmonic Ball** on Sunday, March 9, 2025, at The Westin South Coast Plaza. The elegant event raised an outstanding \$1.6 million in support of the Philharmonic Society's artistic and

youth music education programs, including its Strike Up the Band grant program, which provides musical instruments and teaching materials to school music programs.

The spectacular evening was made possible through the vision and generosity of honorary chairs and residency sponsors **Maria Manetti Shrem** and **Elizabeth Segerstrom**, along with event chairs **Donna L. Kendall**, **Debra Gunn Downing**, and **Jane Fujishige Yada**. Event Committee members included **John W. Benecke**, **Lauren Claus**, **Jean Felder**, **Margaret Gates**, and **Kari Kerr**. The Philharmonic Society also recognizes **Britt Meyer** and **Sandy Segerstrom Daniels** for their major support of the Philharmonic Ball.



Elizabeth Segerstrom & Maria Manetti Shrem
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Decor
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Donna L. Kendall & Debra Gunn Downing
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VIENNA PHILHARMONIC RESIDENCY

The Vienna Philharmonic's California tour brings the orchestra and conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin to the West Coast for an exclusive residency and performances in spring 2025. The tour began in Northern California with three concerts hosted by Cal Performances at Zellerbach Hall (March 5-7, 2025) and concludes in Orange County with two performances presented by the Philharmonic Society of Orange County at the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall (March 9-11, 2025). The California tour is made possible by major funding from longtime California arts enthusiasts and philanthropists Maria Manetti Shrem from the San Francisco Bay

Area and Elizabeth Segerstrom from Orange County. Additional support for Vienna Philharmonic's residency in Orange County is provided by the Donna L. Kendall Foundation and the Shanbrom Family Foundation.

PHILHARMONIC BALL HIGHLIGHTS

The festivities began in the afternoon with a floral-lined, red-carpet entrance leading guests to the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall, where they enjoyed a performance by the **Vienna Philharmonic** under the baton of Grammy Award-winning conductor **Yannick Nézet-Séguin**. Audiences in the sold-out concert hall heard Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 featuring pianist **Yefim Bronfman**, followed by Richard Strauss' monumental tone poem *Ein Heldenleben* (A Hero's Life), Op. 40. For encores, Bronfman offered "Poissons d'or" (Golden fish) from Debussy's *Images*, Book II, while the orchestra delighted the enthusiastic audience with Johann Strauss' waltz medley "Rosen aus dem Süden" ("Roses from the South"), Op. 388.

Immediately following the concert, guests walked over to The Westin, where they were greeted by the delicate sounds of a string quartet from the Philharmonic Society's Orange County Youth Symphony. The cocktail reception was a visual and sensory delight. The space was transformed with exquisite decor: a stunning display of crystal chandeliers twinkled overhead, and the entire hallway and foyer were enveloped in gold velvet, creating a warm, intimate and luxurious atmosphere. Artwork panels of the Musikverein, Vienna's iconic concert hall, lined the walls, showcasing the grandeur of the Golden Hall with its neoclassical design and gilded accents.

Guests mingled, enjoying tray-passed tuna tartar, risotto crisp, and fromage au miel while sipping on wine, champagne, and cocktails. An elaborate floral ice luge, over six feet wide, added a whimsical touch to the evening. A chocolate-tasting station sponsored by Läderach offered guests delicious varieties of their signature FrischSchoggi to indulge in, and at the end of the night, each guest was gifted with a box of Läderach chocolates to take home.

Herald trumpeters signaled the opening of the ballroom doors. The ballroom, its perimeter lined with gold velvet and adorned with six sparkling chandeliers, was transformed into a sophisticated garden setting inspired by Austrian artist Gustav Klimt, with vibrant hues and exquisite floral arrangements. From one of the ballroom's golden stages, the Orange County Youth Symphony played a festive polka as guests took their seats. The orchestra then transitioned to Johann Strauss II's famous "The Blue Danube" waltz, at which point dancers from the American Ballet Theatre William J. Gillespie School at Segerstrom Center for the Arts took to the dance floor located in the center of the ballroom.

From the main stage, gilded and adorned with embellished with a flower truss arch, **Elaine Neuss** (Chair/CEO of the Philharmonic Society) welcomed guests and introduced Yefim Bronfman to the stage for an intimate performance of a Rachmaninoff prelude, which he dedicated to Maria Manetti Shrem and Elizabeth Segerstrom. Philharmonic Society President and Artistic Director, **Tommy Phillips**, then introduced Yannick Nézet-Séguin who gave remarks on the importance of supporting music and the arts. To honor her support of the Vienna Philharmonic's tour, Maestro Nézet-Séguin gifted Elizabeth Segerstrom with his afternoon concert's baton.

The three-course dinner began with a Wild Arugula Salad, comprised of arugula, endive, fennel, citrus, whipped goat cheese, and shallot vinaigrette. For the main course, guests savored a Dinner Duet of beef tenderloin with truffle jus and Chilean sea bass with marinated peppers, accompanied by potato gratin and New Zealand spinach. Dinner concluded with Austria's famous cake, a decadent Sacher Torte Classique, a rich chocolate cake with apricot jam and Chantilly cream.

CALIFORNIA PERFORMING ARTS VISIONARY AWARD

Shortly after the main course, Tommy Phillips returned to the stage to present the inaugural California Performing Arts Visionary Award to Maria Manetti Shrem and Elizabeth Segerstrom, recognizing their exceptional contributions to arts philanthropy.

The California Performing Arts Visionary Award honors individuals whose extraordinary dedication, generosity, and leadership have transformed the cultural landscape. Maria Manetti Shrem and Elizabeth Segerstrom were recognized for their extraordinary vision and support, particularly their underwriting of the Vienna Philharmonic tour, a landmark initiative that brought the world-renowned orchestra to both Orange County and Berkeley, enriching both communities with world-class music.

Their philanthropic efforts have strengthened the Philharmonic Society's mission and elevated access to artistic excellence, leaving a lasting legacy that inspires future generations. Through their tireless commitment, Mrs. Shrem and Mrs. Segerstrom have demonstrated the power of the arts to unite and uplift, fostering cultural exchange and ensuring music remains a vital part of California's communities. This award celebrates their profound impact on the arts and their dedication to shaping a future where music continues to flourish.

Following the award presentation, more surprises were in store. Remarking that the women also had discerning tastes in fashion, Phillips also presented Mrs. Shrem and Mrs. Segerstrom with one-of-a-kind bags from Italian luxury fashion house, Dolce & Gabbana. Phillips then revealed a surprise from Mrs. Segerstrom to Mrs. Shrem, an avid opera enthusiast: a surprise excerpt performance from Los Angeles Opera's latest production of Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. The performers were introduced by LA Opera President and CEO **Christopher Koelsch**: world-renowned baritone **Rod Gilfry** in the role of Don Alfonso, soprano **Erica Petrocelli** (an alumna of LA Opera's Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program) as Fiordiligi, and Tunisian-Canadian mezzo-soprano **Rihab Chaieb** as Dorabella. Together, these celebrated singers delivered a stunning tribute.

LIVE AUCTION & FUND A NEED

Auctioneer Vincent Zapien kicked off the live auction with a mystery box of **Diptyque** delights, won by Carl Neuss. Attendees then had the opportunity to bid on a **Tour of The Huntington**

package, which included a private 90-minute walking tour for six guests of the gardens and galleries of the Huntington Library & Gardens, followed by an afternoon tea at the Rose Garden Tea Room; it was quickly nabbed by Britt Meyer. Zapien then introduced an all-inclusive, luxury **15-day African Safari** by Ubuntu Travel Group, offering unforgettable wildlife encounters, including sightings of the Big Five (lions, leopards, elephants, rhinos, and buffaloes) in some of Africa's most pristine wilderness areas; thrilling game drives and canoe excursions in the Okavango Delta, a UNESCO World Heritage Site; and tracking elusive predators in Chitabe and MalaMala Game Reserve. The opportunity was won by Shirley Wang, who generously donated it back, and the package was ultimately won by Camille Vasquez. The final auction item was a **New Year's in Vienna** package, including two impossible-to-get tickets to the Vienna Philharmonic's iconic New Year's Day Concert, conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin, and a complimentary stay at the lavish Hotel Imperial Vienna; Connie and Peter Spenuzza emerged as the triumphant winners.

The Fund a Need portion of the evening benefitted the Philharmonic Society's Strike Up the Band program, which aims to foster the appreciation of music within the community's youth and create meaningful impact on school music programs through the granting of musical instruments and teaching materials. Over the past 12 years, funds raised through annual galas for the Strike Up the Band grant program have allowed the Philharmonic Society to provide \$613,000 in instruments, teaching materials, and supplies to 72 schools across Orange County, including 47 Title I schools, where at least 40% of students come from low-income families. In the 2024 Strike Up the Band grant application cycle alone, the Philharmonic Society received requests from over 70 schools, totaling more than \$700,000 in needs for musical instruments and materials.

Claire Demland, a member of the Orange County Youth Symphony and a student at Los Alamitos High School, took to the stage to share the impact of her school receiving a recent Strike Up the Band grant. Claire described the challenging situation before the grant, which mirrors the struggles faced by many schools: a lack of playable instruments, with students

sharing instruments and unable to take them home for practice. Her heartfelt testimony deeply resonated with many guests, who responded by submitting pledge cards to support the program and were gifted long-stemmed roses in appreciation.

The evening festivities concluded with dancing accompanied by music provided by the Chris Norton Band.

ON THE SCENE

Among the 240 attendees of the Philharmonic Ball included Honorary Committee members: Hung Fan and Michael Feldman, Elizabeth Henry, Dee and Larry Higby, Whitney and Jerry Mandel, Elaine and Carl Neuss, Patricia and William Podlich, Gail and Robert Sebring, Deirdre and Douglas Smith, and Connie and Peter Spenuzza.

Also on the scene were: **Marcia Gay Harden** and Mason Harden; **Jean-Yves Thibaudet**; **Anton and Jennifer Segerstrom**; **Michael Postl**, Consul General of the Republic of Austria in Los Angeles; **Daniel Froschauer**, Chairman of the Vienna Philharmonic; **Elizabeth An** and Gordon Clune; Kimberly and Nicolo Bini; Paola Porrini Bisson; Katherine and Howard Bland; Ashley Boudier; Mark Cappellano; Mary and John Carrington; Lauren and Cor Claus; Semira Dariushnia; Santana Davies; John Flemming and Mark Powell; Manfred Flynn-Kuhnert and Peter Iacono; Atsuko and Ichiro Fujimori; Tina and Rod Gilfry; Dee and Lawrence Higby; Barbara Johnson; Tatiana and Zeev Kain; LaVon Kellner; Laura and John Killen; Zoya and Leonid Lerner; Britt Meyer; Mark Moshayedi; Merle Mullin; Aya and Yoshi Okamoto; Rona and Frank Parker; Sherry and John Phelan; Stella and Dana Pizzuti; Casey Reitz; Terry Schreyer; Gail and Robert Sebring; Ann and Eric Smyth; Jessica Soy; Katya Sorokko Spencer and Greg Spencer; Connie and Peter Spenuzza; Pat and Charles Steinmann; Barbara Tober; Camille Vasquez; Shirley Wang; and guests from corporate sponsors South Coast Plaza, Bvlgari, and Graff, among others.

ABOUT PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY:

Founded in 1954 as Orange County's first music organization, the Philharmonic Society of Orange County presents national and international performances of the highest quality and provides dynamic and innovative music education programs for individuals of all ages to enhance the lives of Orange County audiences through music.

Since its inception, the Philharmonic Society has evolved and grown with the county's changing landscape, presenting artists and orchestras who set the standard for artistic achievement from Itzhak Perlman, Gustavo Dudamel, Yo-Yo Ma, and Renée Fleming to the Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and many others. In addition, the Philharmonic Society celebrates multi-disciplinary performances under its Eclectic Orange brand and embraces music from a wide range of countries with its World Music performances. Its celebrated family concerts introduce children to classical music with creative and inspiring performances, instilling music appreciation for future generations.

The Philharmonic Society's nationally recognized Youth Music Education Programs, offered free of charge, engage more than 100,000 students annually through curriculum-based music education programs that aim to inspire, expand imaginations, and encourage learning at all levels. These programs are made possible by the Committees of the Philharmonic Society comprised of 500 volunteer members who provide more than 90,000 hours of in-kind service each year. As a key youth program, the exceptional Orange County Youth Symphony and String Ensemble provide top-tier training to the area's most talented young musicians through multi-level ensemble instruction, leadership training, touring opportunities, challenging professional repertoire, and performances in world-class venues. The Philharmonic Society also promotes life-long learning by connecting with colleges and universities to conduct masterclasses and workshops and providing pre-concert lectures to introduce audiences to program selections.