

A photograph of a man playing a saxophone on a stage. He is wearing a white shirt and a patterned tie. In the background, a piano is visible with the text "& SONS" on its side. A large circular graphic with a red-to-blue gradient border is centered over the image, containing the years "2025" and "2026" and the title "ANNUAL REPORT".

2025

ANNUAL REPORT

2026

St. Cecilia
Music Center
CHAMBER
JAZZFOLK

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2025/26
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With
Gratitude





CATHY HOLBROOK
Executive and
Artistic Director

FROM SCMC'S EXECUTIVE & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

It is my pleasure to share that the 2025/26 season was one of the best attended in St. Cecilia Music Center's history. Through our mission-driven performance and education programs, we engaged more than 12,000 community members from West Michigan and beyond, a testament to the vibrancy of this organization and the community that sustains it.

Our Presenting Series drew record-breaking crowds, School of Music ensembles welcomed students and adults in near-record numbers, and we received recognition both locally and nationally for the impact SCMC has made over more than a century of service. We launched a new mentorship program connecting the next generation of music educators with our Philharmonic musicians. We honored Diana Sieger for her transformative leadership with the Helen DeVos Legacy Award. And thanks to the generosity of The Meijer Foundation and supporters like you, we exceeded an ambitious fundraising goal through the Meijer Match campaign. In the pages that follow, you'll find the full story behind each of these milestones.

None of this would be possible without your generosity and belief in our mission. On behalf of the entire SCMC community, thank you for your continued support as we look ahead to the 2026/27 season.

It has also been a personal privilege to mark my 20th year with this remarkable organization. I am grateful to have shared it with supporters like you.

With gratitude,

Cathy Holbrook
Executive and Artistic Director

2025/26 SEASON HIGHLIGHTS



JEFF DANIELS OPENS SCMC'S HIGHEST- SELLING SEASON ON RECORD

The 2025/26 Presenting Series hit the ground running in August 2025, with a tune and a hilarious story or two from Michigan native actor and folk musician Jeff Daniels. **Overall, the Presenting Series welcomed more than 9,000 individuals — a record-breaking season for attendance.** Post-concert surveys reflect overwhelmingly positive experience with 97% of patrons rating their time at an SCMC concert 8 or higher out of a possible 10.



CMS CELEBRATES 14 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP

The season welcomed the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center for three exceptional concerts in their 14th year of partnership with SCMC: GILBERT KALISH & THE VIANO QUARTET; QUINTET REVELATIONS; and SCHUBERTIADE, **which featured a four-handed piano performance from the incomparable Wu Han and Anne-Marie McDermott.** Thanks to support from the Rosemary and David Good Family Foundation, 154 students attended CMS concerts at free and reduced ticket costs.



BRANFORD MARSALIS RETURNS AFTER 20 YEARS

In 2006, Branford Marsalis performed his first concert at SCMC as a part of the Great Artist Series. We were thrilled to welcome the Grammy winner and NEA Jazz Master back again on March 19, 2026, as part of our 2025/26 Presenting Series, where he performed with his quartet to a sold-out crowd. **"It was magical. We loved how engaged everyone was with each other and the band and the students,"** said one patron following the performance.



SAM BUSH WELCOMES BLUEGRASS SENSATION BILLY STRINGS AS SURPRISE GUEST

Mandolin aficionado Sam Bush is no stranger to Royce Auditorium. When he and his band took the stage on March 26, 2026, **the crowd was in for an incredible surprise as he welcomed bluegrass musician and hometown hero Billy Strings to perform.** SCMC's Acoustic Café Folk Series has built a reputation for these special moments, made possible by our intimate space. The series was named the 2026 **Best Local Music Series** by *Grand Rapids Magazine* voters.



JAZZ SERIES PAIRS LONGTIME FANS WITH FIRST-TIME STUDENT AUDIENCES

The 2025/26 Jazz Series included Grammy Award-winning vocalist Catherine Russell, world-renowned guitarist and vocalist John Pizzarelli, celebrated jazz pianist Emmet Cohen, and the legendary Branford Marsalis Quartet. Through SCMC's partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, students are invited to attend jazz concerts at free or reduced rates; **92 students joined us across all four Jazz Series concerts; and Branford even gave students a lesson in jazz during his performance.**



MEIJER FOUNDATION CELEBRATES CATHY HOLBROOK'S 20 YEARS WITH SPECIAL GIFT

SCMC's Executive and Artistic Director Cathy Holbrook celebrated 20 years with SCMC in 2026. Her visionary leadership was honored in March, when **Beth Snyder of The Meijer Foundation presented the organization with a \$20,000 gift to mark Cathy's immeasurable contributions to arts and culture in Grand Rapids.** The gift was added to SCMC's Meijer Match. SCMC's loyal supporters and new donors matched and surpassed the increased goal of \$70,000.

2025/26 PRESENTING SERIES



9,072
attendees

815
community members
served through free
and discounted ticket
opportunities

249
student attendees

IMAGES

Chamber Music Society of
Lincoln Center series (Above),
Jazz vocalist Catherine Russell
performs (R), Folk artist Joy
Oladokun's sold-out concert (R)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER SERIES

NOVEMBER 20, 2025
*GILBERT KALISH & THE VIANO
QUARTET*

APRIL 16, 2026
QUINTET REVELATIONS

MAY 14, 2026
SCHUBERTIADE

SPECTACULAR JAZZ SERIES

OCTOBER 9, 2025
CATHERINE RUSSELL

JANUARY 15, 2026
JOHN PIZZARELLI TRIO

FEBRUARY 26, 2026
*EMMET COHEN: MILES AND
COLTRANE AT 100*

MARCH 19, 2026
BRANFORD MARSALIS QUARTET





ACOUSTIC CAFÉ FOLK SERIES

AUGUST 20, 2025

JEFF DANIELS

SEPTEMBER 9, 2025

THE MILK CARTON KIDS

SEPTEMBER 25, 2025

SIERRA HULL

OCTOBER 23, 2025

CHRIS THILE

NOVEMBER 2, 2025

JOSH RITTER

NOVEMBER 18, 2025

JOY OLADOKUN

DECEMBER 4, 2025

YONDER MOUNTAIN STRING BAND

MARCH 8, 2026

SHAWN COLVIN

MARCH 26, 2026

SAM BUSH

APRIL 30, 2026

JOAN OSBORNE

“ONE OF THE BEST CONCERTS
I HAVE SEEN!”

“ALWAYS A GREAT EXPERIENCE,
EXCELLENT MUSIC. THE BEST VENUE
IN GR.”

“BEST VENUE IN MICHIGAN.”

“OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE, AND AS
ALWAYS A PROFOUND ACOUSTICAL VENUE.”

“FIRST TIME AT THE VENUE.
ABSOLUTELY SPECTACULAR.”

patron post-concert survey feedback

THE ACOUSTIC CAFÉ
FOLK SERIES NAMED THE
2026 **BEST LOCAL MUSIC
SERIES** BY *GRAND RAPIDS
MAGAZINE* VOTERS.

SCMC NAMED **BEST OF THE
WEST LARGE-SCALE MUSIC
VENUE** BY *REVUE MAGAZINE*

A photograph of a band performing on stage. The background is a blue curtain. In the center, a large dark blue circle with a red-to-teal gradient border contains the text "MUSIC THAT MOVES US FORWARD" in yellow. Below the circle, four musicians are visible: a guitarist on the left, a drummer behind him, a guitarist in the center, and an acoustic guitarist on the right. Stage equipment like amplifiers and microphones are also visible.

MUSIC THAT MOVES US FORWARD

Since its founding in 1883, the mission of St. Cecilia Music Center has been to promote the appreciation, study, and performance of music in order to enrich the human spirit and enhance the quality of life for the residents of West Michigan. For more than 140 years, that mission has moved us forward — through changing times, changing audiences, and an ever-expanding vision of what music can do for a community.



CAREER DEVELOPMENT & MENTORSHIP

In the 2025/26 school year, SCMC launched a mentorship partnership with Grand Valley State University (GVSU) designed to cultivate the next generation of skilled talent in music education.

The program embeds eight university music education students as coaches within the 76-member Philharmonic youth orchestra, which features high school players from across West Michigan. This structure creates a two-way pathway into the field: youth musicians receive individualized, section-level coaching beyond what a single conductor can provide, while university mentors gain hands-on teaching experience and a stipend that helps offset the early-career “experience gap,” a common barrier to entry that keeps talented young educators from establishing a foothold in the industry. The initiative builds a more accessible on-ramp into music education as a career path, while fostering a sense of belonging for mentors and students alike.

IMAGES

Sam Bush and Billy Strings perform (L), Philharmonic mentor and mentee in rehearsal (Above)

“Participating as a mentor in SCMC’s Philharmonic has made a huge impact on my music education journey [...] Working with a student who is blind has allowed me to feel comfortable teaching anyone with a disability. She is very inspiring to me because she has defeated all odds against her and is a fantastic oboist.”

- GVSU mentor and music educator

2025/26 SCHOOL OF MUSIC

195

youth orchestra
members

139

adult orchestra
members

600+

In the Classroom
program participants

50+

Middle School Band Camp
and Stella Royce Piano
Camp attendees



SCHOOL OF MUSIC ENSEMBLES WELCOME NEW CONDUCTORS

This season, Erin DeYoung, who conducted the Sinfonia ensemble for nine years, successfully transitioned to leading the Concert Orchestra, and Allison Holden, the orchestra teacher at North Rockford Middle School, had a wonderful first year as Sinfonia conductor. Longtime Philharmonic conductor Dan Scott led the orchestra for an interim year, and we are thrilled to welcome Dr. Alexander Koops as the incoming conductor. Xander is an Associate Professor and the Director of Music Education at Calvin College.



SCHOOL OF MUSIC ADULT ENSEMBLES BRIDGE GENERATIONS

SCMC's two adult ensembles bring musicians together across generations and skill levels, turning rehearsal rooms into real community. Beer City Winds is a symphonic band for high-level players. The Grand String Orchestra is a recreational ensemble, rehearsing throughout the season and performing two concerts each year at SCMC, plus outreach concerts for older adults in the community. Together, these ensembles draw nearly 140 musicians a year from across West Michigan — and that number keeps growing.



IN THE CLASSROOM

St. Cecilia Music Center's *In the Classroom* programs reached more than 600 young people in 2025/26. Student participants and school partners pay no cost; contributed revenue fully subsidizes these programs.

Strings to Schools: This program provides approximately 50 students from two local elementary schools with free beginning strings instruction onsite at their school three times a week throughout the school year. The program culminated in a concert celebrating these young musicians from Sibley and Dickinson on May 20, 2026, hosted in SCMC's Royce Auditorium.

Jazz and Folk In-School Assembly Program: The program collaborated with Buchanan, Shawmut Hills, and North Park elementary schools to give students a foundational understanding of the American roots of jazz and folk music. Each school received pre- and post-show educational materials, participated in two 30-minute in-school assemblies, one for jazz and one for folk, and attended a final performance at SCMC. Assemblies were held at schools in February and March, and the final concert was held at SCMC on April 1, 2026.

POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Feedback received from students, parents, and educators reflects the positive outcomes of *In the Classroom* programs:

100% of students who took the end-of-year survey said they would like to continue taking strings class. 73% of students made a new friend in strings class.

At the start of the year, nervousness about performing in front of others was nearly universal; almost every student listed "nervous" in their responses. By the end of the year, the dominant feeling had shifted to "excited," with nervousness appearing much less frequently.

59% of parents said their child's confidence improved, 33% said their child's focus improved, and 48% said their child was a better team player after participating.

IMAGES

Sinfonia youth orchestra concert (L), Grand Strings performance (L), Strings to Schools rehearsal (Above).

SUSTAINING THE MUSIC: STRATEGIC PLANNING AND FINANCES



SCMC BOARD & STAFF COMPLETE FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

In 2025, St. Cecilia Music Center Board of Directors and staff collaborated to develop a strategic plan, guided by four core principles: Excellence, Accessibility, Historic Relevance, and Financial Sustainability. The planning process celebrated recent progress as SCMC has evolved into a modern, multi-genre music venue, and set a vision to keep presenting the highest caliber artists while growing the School of Music into the region's leading destination for music education. The plan also commits to reducing barriers to participation through innovative pricing and programming, and to honoring SCMC's 1883 founding and its legacy of women's leadership as one of Grand Rapids' first cultural organizations.

Financial sustainability and stewardship of our historic building are central to the plan. Priorities include expanding endowment and planned giving opportunities, building strategic partnerships, and launching an internal capital campaign to establish a Building Reserve Fund for future capital needs.

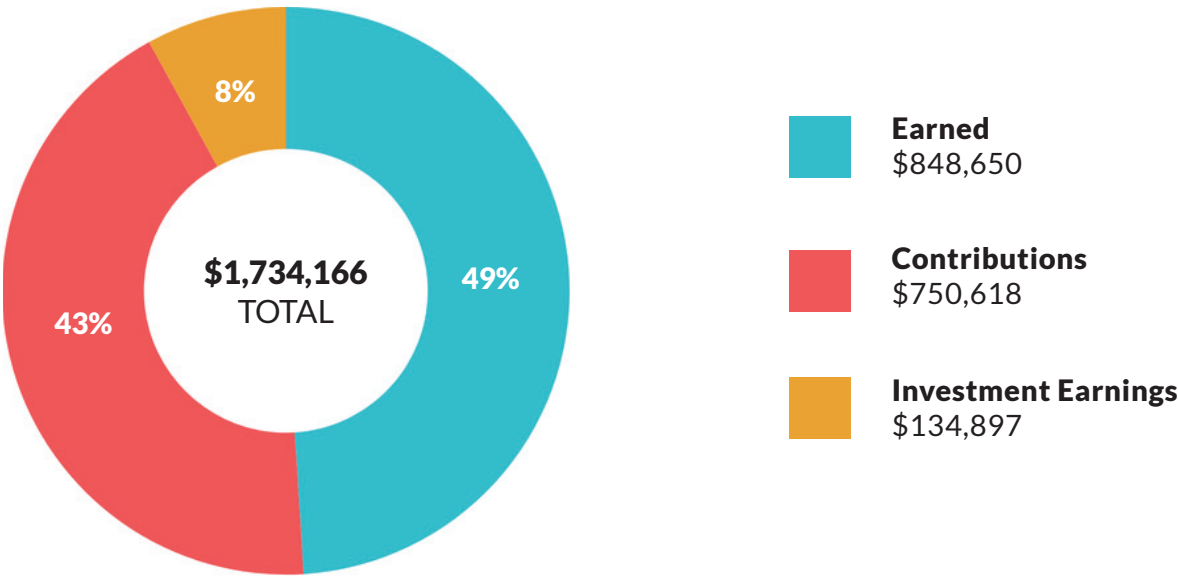
FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

SCMC's finances are overseen by a finance committee that is made up of staff, board, and community members who meet monthly to review SCMC's current fiscal status, discuss cash flow projections, implement policy, and keep the full board apprised of the overall financial position. The committee also works on the annual budget for board approval and conservatively sets goals so that the organization is working toward realistic expectations. An investment subcommittee monitors SCMC's \$4.9M Endowment Fund, a crucial piece of the organization's long-term sustainability.

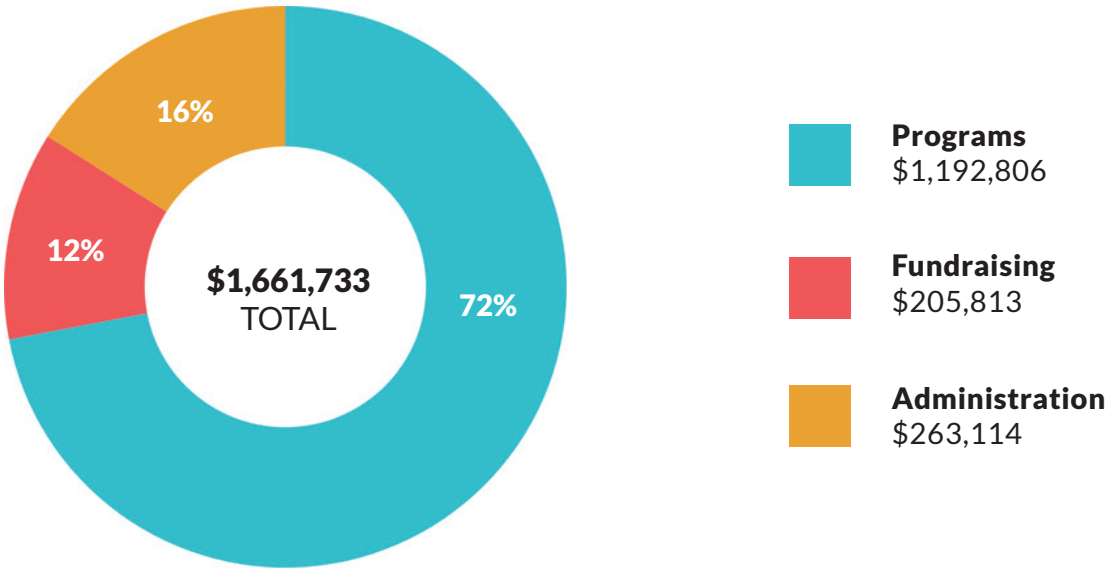
IMAGES

Philharmonic youth orchestra

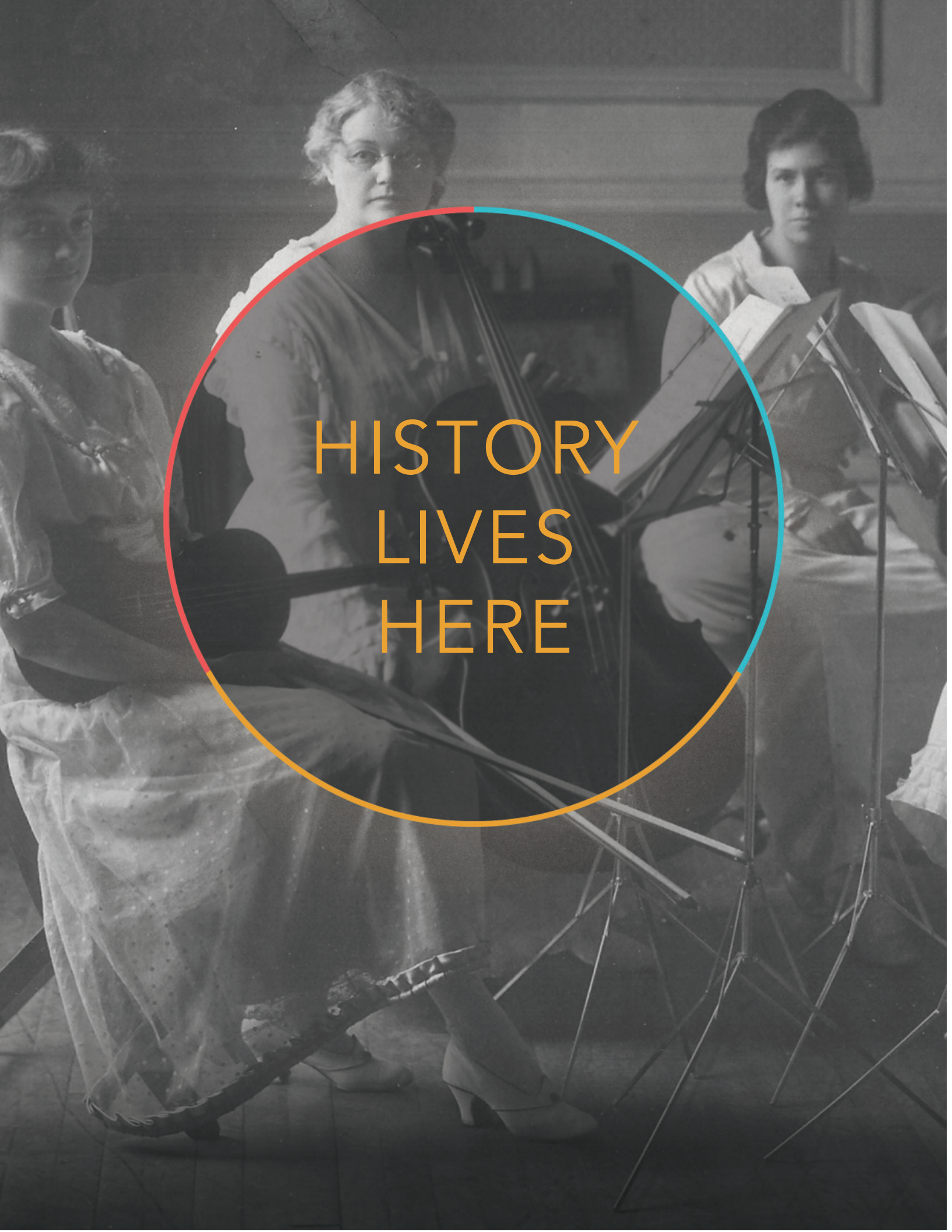
FY26 REVENUE



FY26 EXPENSES



The finance committee allocates fiscal year net revenue to support operating, endowment, and Building Reserve Fund needs.



HISTORY
LIVES
HERE

The Building Reserve Fund was established in 2025 to support essential building projects as they arise, to ensure capital expenses never impact SCMC's programming, and to preserve our historic building for generations to come.

PRESERVING AND CELEBRATING OUR LEGACY

Built in 1894 and championed by nine pioneering Grand Rapids women, St. Cecilia Music Center's historic building at 24 Ransom Avenue NE in downtown Grand Rapids, MI, is a testament to music's unique ability to bring people together. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1971 with the designations of PERFORMING ARTS and ARCHITECTURE; the designation of SOCIAL IMPACT was added in 2026 to ensure the organization's contributions to Women's History were documented on the national record. As a community hub and rental venue, the building hosted more than 140 events over the 2025/26 season in addition to SCMC programs.

In March 2026, SCMC celebrated our legacy of women's history with a concert by Shawn Colvin on International Women's Day, and we invited local women's groups to gather for the concert and post-concert reception. On May 9, 2026, we honored Diana Sieger, long-time president of the Grand Rapids Community Foundation, with the Helen DeVos Legacy Award for her incredible leadership.

After less than a year, we have raised more than \$1 million of our first Building Reserve Fund goal of \$1.4 million thanks to the generosity of the SCMC community.

In 2025/26 the Fund supported significant building projects including:

- Weatherizing and stabilizing the south exterior wall and front facade
- Roof drain repair and reinforcement
- Sealing of wall openings on east wall to prevent pest intrusion

A new lobby display, celebrating SCMC's incredible history along with the Building Reserve Fund donor wall, will be installed in the spring of 2027 followed by a celebration to be held on March 19, 2027.

IMAGES

Early St. Cecilia Music Society musicians (L), Royce Auditorium today (Above), Diana Sieger, Legacy Award recipient, and gala attendees (R)





LOOKING AHEAD

St. Cecilia Music Center remains West Michigan's enduring "Home for Music," a distinction reflected in the record attendance Royce Auditorium welcomed throughout the past season. The organization looks ahead to another distinguished lineup of Chamber, Jazz, and Folk programming, including a 15th-anniversary expansion of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center Series to four concerts, an exceptional Spectacular Jazz Series roster featuring Kenny Barron, John Scofield and Dave Holland, Cécile McLorin Salvant, and a Coltrane tribute led by Branford Marsalis and Dianne Reeves, and an Acoustic Café Folk Series highlighted by Béla Fleck's "My Bluegrass Heart," a farewell appearance by Judy Collins, and so much more.

This growth extends beyond the concert stage. The School of Music's ensemble programs are at capacity, serving more than 400 young people and adults throughout the region, and the newly launched Philharmonic Student University Mentorship Program has begun connecting local music education students with Philharmonic ensemble members. Together with a record-breaking 9,000-plus attendees across the Presenting Series, these achievements reflect the organization's expanding impact, made possible by our generous community of supporters. Here's to another season of meaningful moments, made possible by music.

IMAGES

2025 Judy Collins concert

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Tim Raymer

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ARTISTIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE 2025/26

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Rob Reinhart

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WITH GRATITUDE

We extend our deepest gratitude to our 2025/26 donors, partners, staff, board members, volunteers, students, and audiences who make the work of our mission possible. For a full list of donors and to learn more, please see our 2026/27 program book and/or visit www.scmcgr.org.

RHAPSODY LEVEL

\$25,000 and above

Jeffrey and Caroline Cook
Rosemary & David Good Family Foundation
The Meijer Foundation
Michigan Arts and Culture Council
Steelcase Foundation
Wege Foundation

CADENZA LEVEL

\$10,000 - \$24,999

Ellen Arlinsky
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\$5,000 - \$9,999

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\$3,000 - \$4,999

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Sherwood and Coupe Family Foundation
Frank and Sharon Van Haven

ACOUSTIC LEVEL

\$2,000 - \$2,999

Anonymous (2)
Anonymous
in memory of Jack and Mary Morrison
Marcella Beck
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The Korff Foundation
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Kathy and Dr. James Moses
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Alice Warner-Mehlhorn

TEMPO LEVEL

\$500 - \$1,999

Anonymous (2)
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Donors of \$10,000+ who contributed to the current Building Reserve Fund campaign, beginning in 2026.

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 Jeffrey Ott and Mary Ann Sabo
 Charles and Stella Royce Fund for the Arts
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HOW TO DONATE

Online at WW.SCMCGR.ORG
or by calling 616.459.2224



SCAN THE CODE

St. Cecilia Music Center CHAMBER JAZZFOLK

CONTACT

WWW.SCMCGR.ORG

616.459.2224

24 RANSOM AVENUE NE
GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49503



IMAGES

Branford Marsalis performing (Front Cover), Sierra Hull performs as part of the 2025/26 Folk Series (Back Cover)