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Pittsburgh Symphony Announces 26/27 Schooltime Season

- **89th Season of PSO's Free Schooltime Series Pairs Music with Reading to Support Regional Literacy Efforts**
- **Third Consecutive Year of Growth: Schooltime Reached Nearly 23,000 Students and 196 Schools Across Southwestern Pennsylvania in 25/26**
- **PSO Now Reaches More Than Three-Quarters of Allegheny County's School Districts; Schooltime Bus Fund Awarded More Than \$40,000 to Increase Access**
- **Award-Winning Author and Illustrator Grace Lin at First Schooltime of the Season in November**

PITTSBURGH, PA—Today, the **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (PSO)** announced the [26/27 Schooltime season](#) alongside recent successes of the series, celebrating a third consecutive year of growth in 25/26 that brought the free program to nearly 23,000 students and 196 schools across Southwestern Pennsylvania. The coming season pairs orchestral music with reading and storytelling, supporting literacy efforts at a moment when the region and the nation grapple with historically low reading proficiency.

Schooltime is a beloved Pittsburgh tradition that brings K–12 students into the world of orchestral music and is free for all schools. In the 25/26 season, an "All-American" program introduced students to a broad range of American composers across all 12 Schooltime concerts at Heinz Hall, including a world premiere by a Pennsylvania high-school student. In 26/27, Schooltime turns to reading, exploring how music helps to tell a story, how artistic choices shape our understanding of a story, and why myths have endured in literature and music.

Registration for the 26/27 Schooltime season is open now at www.pittsburghsymphony.org/schooltime.

"Our Learning & Engagement programs exemplify our vision of bringing great music into every life," said **Melia Tourangeau, President & CEO**. "To reach 23,000 students with one program, and more than three-quarters of Allegheny County's school districts, is a milestone we're proud of. We're continuing to

find new ways to increase schools’ and educators’ access to our programs, eliminate barriers, and continue the incredible success of our music learning initiatives.”

"I'm very proud of what we have accomplished this year through the Schooltime concerts," said **Suzanne Perrino, Senior Vice President of Learning & Engagement**. "I look forward to connecting great music with literature to support and amplify efforts to meet a community need, while continuing to foster curiosity, imagination, and a lifelong love of music making."

Highlights of the 26/27 season include:

- Associate Conductor Jacob Joyce leads the full 13-concert series at Heinz Hall.
- Award-winning author and illustrator Grace Lin appears on stage in November to read her children's story *Once Upon a Book* (grades K–2).
- Three actors join the orchestra for a deep dive into Prokofiev's *Romeo & Juliet*, investigating how the artistic choices of Prokofiev in his ballet shape our understanding of Shakespeare’s story (grades 7–12).
- PSO English Horn Tim Daniels is featured soloist in March 2027 on Sibelius's *Swan of Tuonela*, part of a program exploring myths and legends from around the world (grades 4–6).
- The popular “Meet the Orchestra” program is accompanied by a recommended reading list and activities for students to read and write stories about the orchestra (grades 2–4).
- The series continues to be offered free to all schools, and the Schooltime Bus Fund returns with increased funding based on the success of 25/26.

25/26 Schooltime Series Success

Over the 25/26 school year, Schooltime reached 22,943 students from 196 unique schools, all in Southwestern Pennsylvania, which represents a 4.1% increase in attendance over 24/25 and a third consecutive year of growth. The program grew 16% in participating schools and 15% in participating districts year over year.

Schooltime Growth, 25/26	25/26	% change vs. 24/25
Unique schools	196	+16%
Total attendance	22,943	+4.1%
Allegheny County districts reached	33 of 43 (76.7%)	up from 62.7%

Expanded Reach in Allegheny County

Schooltime deepened its relationship with Allegheny County schools in 25/26, reaching 33 of the county's 43 school districts (76.7%), up from 62.7% the year prior, and drawing 147 unique schools from across the county. Twenty Allegheny County schools were new to Schooltime this season. Through the PSO's ongoing partnership with Pittsburgh Public Schools, the program continued to see 100% PPS participation.

Schooltime Bus Fund Exceeds Expectations

The Schooltime Bus Fund, which helps cover the cost of roundtrip transportation to Heinz Hall, far surpassed its goals: the PSO awarded more than \$40,000 in bus funding, well beyond the \$25,000 originally planned. That initial \$25,000 was fully committed within one month of registration opening, and, thanks to the generosity of individual donors, the PSO increased the fund to meet demand so that no

eligible school was turned away. Every Allegheny County school district new to Schooltime in the 25/26 season used the bus fund to participate.

All-American Programming and a Student World Premiere

Across all 12 Schooltime concerts in 25/26, the "All-American" season introduced students to a broad range of American composers. The season featured one world premiere, *Qilin* by Pennsylvania composer Ethan Hsu, the winner of PSO's Schooltime Call for Scores, alongside seven PSO premieres, including works by Margaret Bonds, Kathryn Bostic, Michael Daugherty, Duke Ellington, Amanda Harberg, Florence Price, and William Grant Still. About half of all Schooltime music was by living composers.

26/27 Schooltime at Heinz Hall Full Schedule

Once Upon a Book (Grades K–2)

November 18 & 19, 2026 | Jacob Joyce, Conductor

How can music help to tell a story? In Grace Lin and Kate Messner's book *Once Upon a Book*, a young girl escapes the winter doldrums by immersing herself in stories set in faraway places. Award-winning author and illustrator Grace Lin joins the PSO on stage to read *Once Upon a Book*, with illustrations projected above the stage and full orchestral accompaniment.

Romeo and Juliet (Grades 7–12)

January 20 & 21, 2027 | Jacob Joyce, Conductor

How do artistic choices shape our understanding of a story? William Shakespeare and Sergei Prokofiev are just two of the many artists who have taken on the telling of *Romeo and Juliet*. Three actors join the orchestra for a deep dive into one of literature's most influential stories, examining the creative decisions behind the tale as music and spoken word combine.

Myths & Legends (Grades 4–6)

March 9, 10 & 12, 2027 | Jacob Joyce, Conductor

Why have myths endured? Across time, people around the globe have used storytelling to make sense of the world around them. Organized by type of story—origin tales, hero myths, and more—this program explores myths and legends through a wide range of orchestral music, featuring PSO English Horn Tim Daniels as soloist on Sibelius's *Swan of Tuonela*.

Meet the Orchestra (Grades 2–4)

April 29 & 30, May 4–7, 2027 (May 6 reserved for PPS schools) | Jacob Joyce, Conductor

How do instruments make sound? Students explore how sound is created as they build the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, meet the instrument families, and discover how those sounds work together—paired this season with a recommended reading list and activities for students to read and write stories about the orchestra.

With Gratitude

Schooltime is made possible by generous support from the Jack Buncher Foundation, the Henry C. Frick Educational Fund of The Buhl Foundation, David R. and Frances F. Levin Charitable Foundation, EQT Foundation, U. S. Steel, Firewater Response, Audia Group, and M&T Bank. Schooltime is also supported in part by PSO's Educational Improvement Supporters: Kurt J. Lesker Company; Dollar Bank; Oil Services Inc.; Miller McCurry LLC; Rush Order Tees; Ninja Transfer LLC; Baird; Williams Coulson;

Aspire Grant and Development; P.J. Dick, Trumbull, Lindy Paving; PPG Industries Foundation; Frank B. Fuhrer Wholesale Company; NexTier Bank; UPMC Health Plan; Friends Of Education; Mr. & Mrs. Matthew Helfrich; Nancy N. & Maurice A. Nernberg; Angela & Mike DeVanney; Mr. & Mrs. Keith A. Impink; Susan Silversmith & Larry Leventon; Mr. Robert H. Wyche.

The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra is also grateful for overall support provided by local and state government entities: the Allegheny Regional Asset District; the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Community and Economic Development; the Pennsylvania Department of Education; and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Romeo and Juliet, Op. 64. Music by Sergei Prokofiev; libretto by Sergei Radlov, Adrian Piotrovsky, Leonid Lavrovsky and Sergei Prokofiev. Presented under license from G. Schirmer, Inc., copyright owners.

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About the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra

Now entering its 131st season, the internationally acclaimed Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (PSO) engages audiences of all ages through unparalleled live musical experiences, community collaborations, and educational programming that enrich every life with great music. The GRAMMY® Award-winning symphony has been led by globally acclaimed [Music Director Manfred Honeck](#) since 2008. Past music directors have included many of the greatest conductors of the twentieth century, including Fritz Reiner, William Steinberg, André Previn, Lorin Maazel, and Mariss Jansons. The Pittsburgh Symphony has a long and illustrious history in the areas of recordings and live radio broadcasts dating back to the 1930s. Lauded as the Pittsburgh region's international cultural ambassador, the orchestra began touring in 1896 and has embarked on scores of domestic and international tours. Heinz Hall, PSO's home located at 600 Penn Avenue in downtown Pittsburgh, is also owned and operated by the Pittsburgh Symphony. Follow the Pittsburgh Symphony online at pittsburghsymphony.org, on [Facebook](#), on [Instagram](#), and on [YouTube](#).

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