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CSO's new educational outreach: Challenger Strings

COLUMBUS, GA, October 23, 2015 – Some children who may have never held a violin are now taking lessons from an accomplished string musician through a new educational partnership between the Columbus Symphony Orchestra (CSO) and Columbus State University Continuing Education's Empowered Youth of Columbus.

Called Challenger Strings, the program is a collaboration to bring violin lessons into local elementary schools. CSO musician Barbara Careaga-Mitchell is providing lessons to up to 12 children at Downtown Elementary Magnet Academy every Tuesday and Thursday.

In addition to violin lessons, students receive free reading and math tutoring and homework help through the Empowered Youth of Columbus (EYC) program.

CSO's Music Director George Del Gobbo said, "We are very pleased to be collaborating with EYC (Empowered Youth of Columbus) and Downtown Elementary School to bring small group instrumental music instruction to a number of their students. It is our hope, over time, to greatly expand this activity. We must not underestimate the power of music, and all of the arts, in the shaping of young lives."

The lessons are completely free for students. The goal of these lessons is to instill the children with discipline, the powers of concentration, and the teamwork necessary to be successful not only in music, but in life.

"We greatly appreciate this partnership and investment by the CSO and EYC on behalf of our students. The Challenger Strings concept is a good match for Downtown Elementary Magnet Academy and aligns well with our district's emphasis on STEAM education," said David Lewis, Superintendent of Education for Muscogee County School District. "The program objectives clearly extend beyond the tremendous opportunity for students to receive violin lessons from the fine professionals of the CSO as it also serves as a vehicle for focusing on character, scholarship, and leadership development afforded through the EYC."

"We are thrilled to be partnering with such a cultural icon in our community," said Susan Wirt, director of Columbus State University's Continuing Education division. "This innovative new program fits in perfectly with our goals of providing service to the community and exposes EYC students to the artistic excellence that the Columbus Symphony brings."

Cameron Bean, CSO Executive Director said, "The collaboration and sharing of resources with Columbus State University's 'Empowered Youth of Columbus' program is allowing us to align artistic instruction, character development and social justice to fill the lives of our community's young people with more beauty and greater opportunities for prosperity."

The Columbus Symphony Orchestra, formed in 1855, is the second orchestra founded in the nation and the first founded in Georgia. The CSO, under the direction of George Del Gobbo, has long been considered one of the Southeast's premier musical ensembles. The CSO's performance venue at RiverCenter for the Performing Arts, Bill Heard Theatre, seats 2,000 patrons and provides a state-of-the-art visual and acoustic experience. The 2015-16 season includes four classical concerts, two exciting family pops concerts, a Mozart Festival, and one Champagne and Dessert concert. For more information about the CSO visit our website at www.csoga.org.

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