

Still riding the crest of last year's 70th anniversary, the CSO overtures another season of memorable performances

Watching a group of three-year-olds shimmy and giggle as the Charleston Symphony Orchestra tootles and trills through a rollicking rendition of Dr. Seuss' *Green Eggs and Ham*, it's hard to imagine they would ever grow up to believe that appreciating classical music is a chore. And that's an overriding goal for this dynamic group of musicians—to stir souls of all ages through entertaining, educational performances.

"The CSO is accessible to everyone," says Laura Deaton, the symphony's COO, noting both the broad range and affordability of performances—from ABBA to opera, Tchaikovsky to Dixieland—as well as the performers' behind-the-scenes dedication to partnering with schools to enhance musi-

cal education. "Our real focus is to make sure we're as available to the community as we can be."

Founded in 1936, the symphony has crescendoed over the past 23 years under the leadership of music director and conductor David Stahl, growing into a full-time, professional cadre of 46 musicians. "They are the top-of-the-line in terms of artistic excellence," Deaton says. "Most of them have gone to conservatories, many have master's degrees, and some have doctorates in their areas of study. They have dedicated their lives to excelling and providing world-class music to Charleston."

After a period of financial uncertainty, the symphony ended its recent fiscal year in the black, developing a solid business infrastructure that underlies a vibrant new season divid-

ed into three parts: the classical masterpieces in the Masterworks Series; the lighthearted, hum-along McCrady's Pops Series; and the new Backstage Pass at the Sottile Series. "Backstage Pass is designed to entice a new audience," says Deaton, explaining how the lively series of hour-long concerts is an ideal introduction to the symphony in a relaxed, club-like atmosphere. "It's cutting-edge work, featuring contemporary composers, and it's casual, meaning feel free to come in your jeans."

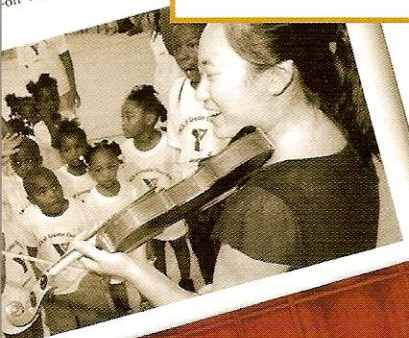
Deaton credits tremendous community support for the symphony's re-energized cadence. "Our future direction is innovation and growth," she says. "We're committed to not being a symphony of the past but an organization that serves Charleston's future."

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—Laura Deaton,
Chief Operating Officer ❖❖❖

David Stahl returns this year for his 24th season conducting the CSO. During his two-plus decades there, Stahl has grown the orchestra to a full complement of musicians who bring top-drawer musical performance to the city.

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Family Concerts
These lively one-hour Saturday morning performances at the Charleston Music Hall take the audience on a symphonic adventure and explore new musical
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