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ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRAS

Empowering Our Music Community

LONG BEACH SYMPHONY RECEIVES ACSO'S INAUGURAL SOCIAL IMPACT AWARD

Thursday, July 13, 2023 – The Association of California Symphony Orchestras (ACSO) announced today that the **Long Beach Symphony** is the recipient of its 2023 Social Impact Award.

Launched this year, ACSO's Social Impact Award is given to an organizational member that has created **positive change or addressed a challenge or injustice in its community**.

The Long Beach Symphony's initiative, Musical Bridges, celebrates the musical artistry of the many diverse communities in Long Beach through free, collaborative, multicultural performances. Its inaugural Musical Bridges project took five years to develop and was presented in April 2023 in artistic collaboration with the Long Beach Cambodian community, the second largest Cambodian population in the world.

The resulting concert and festival were called KHMERASPORA and told the Cambodian American experience from genocide to camp relocation, to the Long Beach ghettos, and ultimately, the integration into the broader community. The program celebrated traditional and contemporary Cambodian artists and featured three world premieres by Cambodian composer Dr. Chinary Ung for a 15-member Long Beach Symphony ensemble and Cambodian dancers, instrumentalists, and singers. The brilliant vision of praCh Ly, the Cambodian American rapper who wrote, directed, and performed the one-hour piece, was to unite the fragmented Cambodian community by using both traditional art forms (nearly decimated by the Khmer Rouge) as well as contemporary performers. The impact on the Cambodian community was profound and deeply moving.

Long Beach Symphony partnered with Cambodia Town Inc., United Cambodian Community, Khmer Parent Association, Long Beach-Phnom Penh Sister Cities, Cambodia Town Film Festival, and many more organizations that said the collaboration had a profound impact on the Long Beach Cambodian community. In a collective letter of support they wrote, "Our story is personal and tragic but also one of survival and strength and it deserves to be told. Many of our genocide survivors and their children and grandchildren finally feel seen and heard. We also had a public forum to share our story with people who may have known nothing or little about the Cambodian genocide. It is partnerships like this that inspire trust, mutual respect, and understanding between cultures."

"Thrilled to be in one of the most diverse cities in the United States, Long Beach Symphony has embraced its role to partner with many diverse groups and community leaders in our city of 500,000. Relevance and sustainability goals were outcomes of our recent, comprehensive strategic planning process," said Kelly Ruggirello, President of Long Beach Symphony. "The result [of our Musical Bridges Initiative] was a community that finally felt heard and seen through a very difficult journey to freedom. Non-Cambodian attendees were educated about an important historical event and its impact on 20,000 Long Beach Cambodians. Also, there is an immense sense of gratitude that the Long Beach Symphony helped heal, unite, inspire, validate, and educate our city's residents."

ACSO Executive Director Sarah Weber said "With the Social Impact Award, ACSO seeks to recognize the work that orchestras are doing to serve, strengthen, and improve their communities both inside and outside the concert hall. ACSO believes that an orchestra's value extends beyond the music that it performs - it can also serve as an agent to influence social change and make its community stronger and more connected. The Long

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Beach Symphony exemplified social impact by collaborating with and providing a platform for the Long Beach Cambodian community to tell its story.”

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The premier producer of live music in the greater Long Beach region and one of Southern California’s most renowned, professional regional orchestras, Long Beach Symphony’s vision is to unite people through the transformative power of music by engaging audiences of all ages and cultures through exceptional orchestral performances, community partnerships and meaningful educational experiences. www.longbeachsymphony.org

The Association of California Symphony Orchestras (ACSO), founded in 1969, is a member service organization representing 120 classical music organizations and their 2,000 board and staff in its network. ACSO’s members are comprised of professional, academic, youth, and community-based orchestras, choruses, and festivals in California and the western region. ACSO’s annual awards program recognizes remarkable individuals and organizations for their meaningful contributions to the orchestra field. To read about all our 2023 award winners, click [here](#). www.acso.org