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BSO Creates Levi Family Chair

BY JT STAFF | JUNE 27, 2018

The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (BSO) announced a major commitment from the Hecht-Levi Foundation to endow the Orchestra's Principal Timpani position. The gift will create the Levi Family Chair and marks the Orchestra's first endowed chair in over 13 years.

"The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra is a vital community institution, and it has always held a special place in my family's heart," said Sandra Levi Gerstung, president of the Hecht-Levi Foundation. "My mother Ryda was especially passionate about the BSO, and with this gift, we hope to ensure its continued success and prosperity, so that future generations may benefit from its exceptional programs."

The Hecht-Levi Foundation is a longtime supporter of the BSO, and Sandra Levi Gerstung serves on the Orchestra's Board of Directors. The Levi family's involvement spans multiple generations: her father, Robert "Bob," and her mother, Ryda, joined the BSO's Board of Directors in the late 1950s and early 1960s and remained highly engaged during their lifetimes.

"We are extraordinarily grateful to the Levi family for their generosity," said Peter Kjome, president and CEO of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. "Our community has fostered one of the finest orchestras in the world, with exceptional musicians who enrich our community through superb concerts and educational programs. We greatly appreciate the incredible leadership and support of the Levi family and their gift that will help sustain artistic excellence and strengthen the foundation for the future."

Prior to the Principal Timpani chair, the most recently endowed position was that of the Associate Concertmaster in 2005.

"The Hecht-Levi family has been a mainstay of philanthropic support for the BSO over years of dedication and loyalty," said Barbara Bozzuto, chair of the BSO's Board of Directors. "It is both fitting and very gracious for the family to continue their enduring legacy and to recognize that the endowment is critical to our future. We are enormously grateful for their vision and generosity."

Along with the family's annual operating support, previous commitments have included a major gift to endow the Principal Oboe Chair and funding to underwrite numerous BSO recordings, including "Red Violin," "Kaddish," "Bernstein: MASS," "Jeremiah" and, most recently, "Romeo and Juliet."

"I've had the great pleasure to get to know Sandi and the Levi Family over the years; they are generous and loyal supporters of the BSO and believe strongly in the power of the arts and music to bring people together," said Marin Alsop, BSO Music Director. "This gift comes at an exciting time for us and is a testament to the family's dedication to our musicians and the artistry that they bring to the stage."

The Principal Timpani Chair is currently held by James Wyman. Wyman joined the BSO in the beginning of the 2013-14 season. Prior to his appointment with the BSO, Wyman held Principal Timpani positions with the Erie Philharmonic, the Reading Symphony and the Fort Wayne Philharmonic.

"I am incredibly honored to hold the Levi Family Chair," said Wyman. "This is an exciting time for the Orchestra, and I am grateful to the family for their extraordinary investment."