



BSO receives \$6 million gift from Krieger Fund, earmarked for education

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By Tim Smith | The Baltimore Sun | September 12, 2015, 8:15 PM



The BSO and local students performing side-by-side at Meyerhoff Hall in 2004. (Credit Patuxent Publishing)



Zanvyl and Isabelle Krieger Fund gives \$6 million to BSO to support educational concerts "in perpetuity."

During its annual gala Saturday night at Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra announced the receipt of a \$6 million gift from the Zanvyl and Isabelle Krieger Fund, one of the largest contributions made to the BSO in recent decades.

The gift, added to the BSO's endowment, has been earmarked for the newly established Zanvyl and Isabelle Krieger Endowed Fund for Education. Money generated from the fund will support the BSO's programs at Meyerhoff Hall for students of Baltimore City schools, including concerts featuring student musicians playing side-by-side with BSO members.

"It's a very major investment in our educational concerts, guaranteeing them in perpetuity," said BSO president and CEO Paul Meecham. "We're thrilled. A gift of this size is very special indeed."

The Zanvyl and Isabelle Krieger Fund is a major nonprofit organization that has supported numerous social, cultural and health-related projects in Baltimore since the 1970s. (Zanvyl Krieger died in 2000, Isabelle in 1989.)

"Zanvyl and his wife personally donated about \$120 million," said Howard Miller, who is current president of the Krieger Fund and was Krieger's lawyer.

The BSO gift, pledged almost 20 years ago, required an unfortunate event before the orchestra could receive the money. That event occurred in May — the death of Robert I. Hiller, former president of the Krieger Fund.

The back story starts in 1996, when Buddy Zamoiski, then chairman of the BSO's board of directors, sought donors for a \$50 million capital campaign.

"In order to have a successful capital campaign, we needed five or six people to pledge \$5 million or \$6 million," Zamoiski said. "I went to see Zanvyl, who was always a great supporter of the symphony and was a member of the board for a time. He cared a great deal about the symphony. He was very receptive and agreed to give \$6 million."

There was a hitch.

"Bob Hiller told Zanyvl, 'You don't have \$6 million to give right now,'" Miller said. "So we decided to buy a \$6 million life insurance on Zanyvl. But he was 89 years old and not in good health. He failed the physical. Bob Hiller was about 15 years younger and very healthy, so we bought the policy on him."

Hiller died in May at age 93.

"And now we're paying the \$6 million to the BSO," Miller said.

The donation comes as the BSO, which has an annual budget of about \$27 million, opens its centennial season.

Meecham said he expects gross proceeds from Saturday night's gala, traditionally the biggest fundraiser of the year for the orchestra, to be \$900,000.

Before the \$6 million gift from the Krieger Fund, the largest single donations to the BSO from individuals, corporations and foundations in recent times have been \$1 million.