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ISO Announces Personnel Changes Due to COVID-19 Impact

(April 7, 2020) – Extraordinary circumstances created from the COVID-19 outbreak caused the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra to cancel performances through May 27. In an unprecedented step to protect its long-term viability, the ISO last week placed its musicians and stagehands on unpaid furlough, and laid off nearly half of its administrative staff.

ISO leadership has applied for financial relief through the Paycheck Protection Program as part of the recently passed CARES Act. CEO James Johnson has advised employees on furlough or layoff to seek unemployment benefits. The ISO has committed to providing healthcare coverage through May.

“Given the far-reaching economic impact of COVID-19, the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra is implementing measures to best protect its financial stability during this time,” Johnson said. “These personnel actions are extraordinarily difficult, but necessary to manage the challenges faced by our organization. The health and safety of our employees remains a priority. I am grateful that our Board of Directors has pledged to fund health insurance for employees for the near future.”

As is the case with all organizations in the performing arts and entertainment industry, the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak has prevented the ISO from being able to announce, promote or confirm plans for future performances until there is definitive guidance on when it will be safe to gather and perform again. During this hiatus, the ISO is retaining a minimum administrative staff on reduced pay and benefits to maintain basic operations. Johnson said that while the ISO is preserving its resources, it is planning for the moment when it can reunite its workforce.

“At this time, our thoughts are for those on the front lines of the pandemic, especially first responders and healthcare workers,” said Johnson. “However, we know that music will have a role to play in bringing relief to our community. We look forward to the time when it is safe to resume performing. We will be ready and eager to play our part. It is the ISO’s intention to emerge from this challenging period better, stronger, and more clearly focused on delivering on our mission to serve the community.”

Members of the community interested in supporting the ISO’s efforts to recover from the challenges related to the COVID-19 outbreak are encouraged to visit www.indianapolissymphony.org/donate to find more information about making a financial contribution or donating the value of tickets from cancelled concerts.

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About the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra:

Under the leadership of Music Director Krzysztof Urbanski and Principal Pops Conductor Jack Everly, the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra has become a leading orchestra in the nation with its commitment to artistic excellence, diverse and creative programming inside and outside its historic Hilbert Circle Theatre home, its engagement with communities throughout the state of Indiana and its ambitious approaches to music education, performance and collaboration. In the decades since its founding in 1930, the ISO has presented a range of classical, pops, family and holiday programming to hundreds of thousands of people each year; received national and international acclaim with its radio broadcasts, tours and recordings; and became the first major orchestra with a resident ensemble.

The ISO continues to engage new audiences through innovative programming including the Fifth Third Bank Lunch Break Series of casual 45-minute performances each summer, the holiday traditions of the IPL Yuletide Celebration, the Stella Artois Happy Hour at the Symphony Series, and the popular Bank of America Film Series.