

CONSENT CALENDAR

December 2, 2025

To: Honorable Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Lunaparra (author), Mayor Ishii (co-sponsor),  
Councilmember Tregub (co-sponsor), Councilmember  
O'Keefe (co-sponsor)

Subject: Berkeley Symphony Orchestra Winter Promenade:  
Relinquishment of Council Office Budget Funds to General  
Fund and Grant of Such Funds

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution approving the expenditure of an amount not to exceed \$500 per Councilmember, including \$500 from Councilmember Lunaparra's discretionary fund and funds from any other Councilmembers who would like to contribute to the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra (BSO) for their 2025 Winter Promenade fundraising event with funds relinquished to the City's general fund for this purpose.

BACKGROUND

The Berkeley Symphony Orchestra (BSO) will host its Winter Promenade fundraising event<sup>1</sup> on December 4, 2025, at Berkeley City Club, located in District 7. This event is the Symphony's major annual fundraising opportunity in 2025-26, helping to ensure continued community access to live, high-quality orchestral music that engages curiosity, imagination, and intellect.

Founded in 1971 by Thomas Rarick, Berkeley Symphony has earned a national reputation for artistic innovation, community connection, and educational impact. Known for adventurous programming, the Symphony presents major new works alongside fresh interpretations of classical repertoire, often collaborating with local artists and organizations to create performances that reflect the spirit and diversity of Berkeley. Through culturally relevant programming and creative partnerships, the orchestra brings together cross-sections of the community, expanding the traditional concert experience and redefining the role of a community-based symphony.

Each year, Berkeley Symphony presents a four-concert symphonic series and a four-concert chamber series in Berkeley and Piedmont, reaching an audience of approximately 2,600 people across the Bay Area. The Symphony employs over 200 musicians and teaching artists, providing stable, meaningful work for local arts professionals. Its programs blend symphonic music with dance, multimedia, and other art forms, creating accessible and engaging concert experiences that celebrate both innovation and tradition.

Beyond the concert hall, Berkeley Symphony extends its reach through free community performances at civic events such as Solano Stroll and the Front Row Festival. Partnerships with the Downtown Berkeley Association, Berkeley Public Library, and the

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<sup>1</sup> [berkeleysymphony.org/event/winterpromenade](https://berkeleysymphony.org/event/winterpromenade)

Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive allow the Symphony to offer inclusive programming for audiences of all ages, strengthening Berkeley's identity as a city that values creativity, collaboration, and public access to the arts.

Education is a cornerstone of Berkeley Symphony's mission. Its award-winning Music in the Schools program, founded in 1993 with the Berkeley Unified School District, serves more than 4,000 students annually through over 150 free engagements, including classroom visits, "Meet the Symphony" concerts, and "I'm a Performer!" side-by-side performance opportunities. Through initiatives such as Elevate, which offers targeted engagement for students of color, and Students at the Symphony, which gives free or discounted concert tickets to K-12 students and their families, Berkeley Symphony is proud to offer multiple pathways for lifelong musical enrichment.

### CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Berkeley Symphony has long been a cultural anchor for the city — a source of artistic excellence, education, and community connection. Yet, like many performing arts organizations nationwide, the Symphony now faces severe financial pressures that threaten its ability to continue serving the community at its current level.

In recent years, rising production costs, declining funding, and ongoing post-pandemic challenges have created a structural deficit of approximately \$500,000 annually. Temporary relief funds and extraordinary gifts have helped the Symphony sustain operations, but those one-time funds have run their course. Without new investment and community partnerships, Berkeley Symphony may be forced to reduce or suspend programs that have served residents for decades — from free community concerts to its award-winning Music in the Schools program.

The Winter Promenade is central to sustaining these efforts. As the Symphony's primary fundraising event for the 2025-26 season, it generates critical revenue that supports concerts, music education, and community engagement initiatives. Support from the City Council would not only help cover rising costs but also reaffirm the city's commitment to the arts, ensuring that Berkeley Symphony can continue to inspire, educate, and bring joy to residents for generations to come.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No General Fund impact. \$500 is available from the Councilmember's office budget discretionary account.

### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

No environmental impacts.

### ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution

### CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Cecilia Lunaparra, 510-981-7170  
Jonah Gottlieb, Chief of Staff

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.  
SUPPORT FOR THE BERKELEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA'S 2025 WINTER  
PROMENADE

WHEREAS, the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra (BSO), a registered 501c(3) organization, has earned a national reputation for artistic innovation, community connection, and educational impact; and

WHEREAS, the Winter Promenade, hosted by BSO on December 4th, 2025, is the Symphony's major annual fundraising opportunity in 2025-26, helping to ensure continued community access to live, high-quality orchestral music that engages curiosity, imagination, and intellect; and

WHEREAS, rising production costs, declining funding, and ongoing post-pandemic challenges have created a structural deficit of approximately \$500,000 annually, which may force them to reduce or suspend programs that have served residents for decades — from free community concerts to its award-winning Music in the Schools program; and

WHEREAS, Councilmember Lunaparra has surplus funds in her office expenditure account.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Berkeley City Council that up to \$500 relinquished by Councilmembers – including \$500 from Councilmember Lunaparra – shall be granted to the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra (BSO) for their 2025 Winter Promenade.

