

Trio Chicago & Friends

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TC&F is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation to which donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.



Trio Chicago & Friends is an American music ensemble praised for its annual tours to remote parts of the globe as cultural ambassadors. The group has been consistently recognized for its stylistic versatility in concerts, and for its master classes and teaching interchanges with local students. TC&F features American music by composers such as Gershwin, Ellington, Bernstein, Copland, Pat Metheny, Cole Porter and Irving Berlin.

Trio Chicago & Friends made the first of three initial tours to China in 1996, and in 1999 they accompanied the Governor of Illinois on an historic state trade and cultural delegation to Cuba, followed by a return visit in 2000. The musicians' spirit of adventure has since taken them to Belize, Venezuela, Barbados, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Turkey, Ethiopia, Mali, Zambia, Uganda, the Russian Far East, Djibouti, Jordan, Egypt, Mongolia, Paraguay, Botswana, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, United Arab Emirates, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, South Korea, Singapore, Peru, Kuwait, Chile, Saudi Arabia, and again to China in 2012. As cultural ambassadors, TC&F often works through and enhances the activities of United States Embassies. In 2003, at the invitation of Ethiopian President Girma, TC&F performed at the National Palace for the opening event in a series celebrating the Centenary of Ethiopian-American relations. In 2005, the group returned to Vietnam for the tenth anniversary celebration of the normalizing of relations between the US and Vietnam. In 2006, the group was honored at the US State Dept. in Washington, D.C. "for sustained and exceptional contributions and services to cultural diplomacy in Africa." In early 2007, TC&F performed at the invitation of the Cambodian Government at the World Culture Expo in Angkor Wat. In 2008, the US State Dept. again honored the group "for sustained excellence in promoting cultural diplomacy and mutual understanding through music in the East Asian and Pacific region."

Until his death in July, 2019, the group was led by one of Chicago's most distinguished violinists, Elliott Golub, who served as concertmaster of Chicago's Music of the Baroque since its inception in 1972 to 2006. Mr. Golub was formerly concertmaster of the Contemporary Chamber Players of the University of Chicago. In Washington, D.C., he was invited to play at the Kennedy Center, Library of Congress, and the White House. In 2006, he received the William Hall Sherwood Award "for outstanding contributions to the arts," and in 2010 received the Distinguished Alumni Award from the Cleveland Institute of Music "for excellence in promoting cultural diplomacy as an ambassador of music to the world." In 2011, he received the Otto Wirth Award for Lifetime Achievement from Roosevelt University, followed in 2018 with Roosevelt University's Distinguished Alumni Award.

Co-founder Marlou Johnston, who plays the viola and violin, has been concertmaster and soloist with the Kankakee (Illinois) Symphony Orchestra since 1982. She was formerly the concertmaster of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago. In 2004, she received the Distinguished Achievement Award from Carleton College (Minnesota) for "outstanding accomplishments and leadership in the field of music."

Flutist Laura Hamm has studied with Jean Pierre Rampal and James Galway, and received a master of music degree and a certificate in flute performance from Northwestern University. She has participated in numerous music festivals throughout the world. Ms. Hamm is on the faculty of the Music Institute of Chicago.

Soprano Suna Gunther received her doctorate from Indiana University and teaches at several music academies in Lexington, Kentucky. She is the assistant music director of University of Kentucky's Schmidt Opera Outreach Program and previously taught music theory at Indiana University. Ms. Gunther's varied operatic resume includes Cunegonde (Candide), Pamina (The Magic Flute), Josephine (HMS Pinafore), and Madame Lidoine (Dialogue of the Carmelites). She has performed with the Richmond Symphony, Apollo Chorus, Indianapolis Baroque Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Grant Park Chorus, and Light Opera Works.

Pianist Susan Chou is a doctoral candidate in Piano Performance at Indiana University, where she was awarded a full scholarship to study with Menahem Pressler. In addition to giving numerous solo and chamber recitals, she has worked with prominent musicians such as Cliff Colnot, Julian Martin, Ursula Oppens, Miriam Fried and Victor Yampolsky.

INTERNATIONAL TOURS (Where We Have Traveled)

- 2018 Saudi Arabia (Dharam, Al Ahsa, Ryhad)
- 2017 Chile (Santiago, Concepcion, Chillan)
- 2016 Federated States of Micronesia, Kuwait
- 2015 Cambodia, Peru (Lima, Cusco, Urubamba)
- 2014 Singapore, Marshall Islands, Turkey (Ankara)
- 2013 Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau
South Korea (Seoul, Gapyeong) - 60th anniversary of U.S.-Korea relations
- 2012 China (Beijing) - to commemorate the 40th anniversary of President Nixon's historic visit to China
Indonesia (Jakarta, Surabaya), United Arab Emirates (Abu Dhabi, Madinat Zayed, Fujairah, Raas Al Khaimah)
Thailand (Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Phayao, Lampang, Uttaradit) - Chiang Rai's 750th anniversary
- 2011 Turkey (Nigde, Sanliurfa, Nizip, Gaziantep, Malatya), Papua New Guinea (Port Moresby)
Turkey (Istanbul, Hereke, Esenler, Adana, Tarsus, Mersin), Thailand (Bangkok, Phitsanulok), Myanmar (Yangon)
- 2010 Botswana (Gaborone Maitisong Festival, Mahalapye, Mochudi), Australia (Sydney, Canberra, Wollongong, Goulburn)
- 2009 Djibouti (Djibouti City, Tadjourah, Ali Sabieh), Mongolia (Ulaanbaatar, Erdenet, Darkhan)
Thailand (Khon Kaen, Roi-et, Mahasarakham, Bangkok)
Paraguay (Asuncion, Villa Hayes, Ciudad del Este, Coronel Oviedo)
- 2008 Thailand (Bangkok, Chiang-Mai), Myanmar (Yangon, Mandalay), Egypt (Cairo), Jordan (Amman, Salt, Irbid)
- 2007 Laos (Vientiane), Cambodia (Phnom Penh, Battambang, Siem Reap)
- invited by the Cambodian Government to perform at the World Culture Expo in Angkor Wat
Thailand (Bangkok, Chiang-Mai, Chiang-Rai)
Jordan (Amman, Aquaba, Tafileh), Ethiopia (Addis Ababa, Gondar)
- 2006 Russian Far East (Vladivostok, Nahodtka, Khabarovsk, Birobijan)
- 2005 Uganda (Kampala, Mbale, Jinja), Ethiopia (Jimma, Mekelle, Addis Ababa)
Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City, Can Tho, Haiphong, Hanoi)
- chosen to celebrate the 10th anniversary of normalization of US-Vietnam relations
- 2004 Ethiopia (Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar), Zambia (Lusaka)
- 2003 Turkey (Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara)
Ethiopia (Addis Ababa, Nazareth, Awassa)
- chosen for the only musical event at the celebration of the 100th year of trade with the US
Mali (Bamako, Timbuktu) - first classical music concert in the history of Timbuktu
- 2002 Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi), Cambodia (Phnom Penh), Laos (Vientiane)
- 2001 Venezuela (Caracas, Merida, Maracaibo), Barbados (Bridgetown)
- 2000 Cuba (Havana)
- 1999 Cuba (Havana) - accompanied the Governor of Illinois on an historic cultural mission
Belize (Belize City, Belmopan)
- 1998 China (Beijing) - first live concert in the history of China Radio International
- 1997 China (Shanghai) - first performance of Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue
- 1996 China (Shanghai) - first performance of Vivaldi's The Four Seasons by the Shanghai Symphony