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Colburn School Receives \$1 Million Bequest From Iona Benson

Largest Realized Bequest in Colburn's History

(Tuesday, September 26, Los Angeles) - The Colburn School has received a \$1 million bequest from the estate of Iona Benson. The gift, the largest realized bequest in the school's history, will support need-based scholarships at Colburn's School of Performing Arts.

Iona's relationship with the Colburn School began with a generous gesture. After watching the 1982 documentary *Child's Play* which was about the Community School of Performing Arts - the forerunner of today's Colburn School - Iona sent the school an unsolicited donation. Toby Mayman, who served as president of the school at the time, responded to thank Iona, and invited her to visit the school in person. From that point forward, Iona became an integral and beloved part of the Colburn School community.

As a volunteer for nearly two decades, Iona oversaw arrangements for Colburn's community outreach program, Musical Encounters, from coordinating all the logistics with various public school partners, to personally writing thank you notes to each and every one of the young performers. Iona also championed Colburn's Summer Encounter program, created when the school moved to its current home on Grand Avenue in 1998.

During the 1991-92 academic season, when the Colburn School undertook its first capital campaign for the then new building on Grand Avenue, Iona was the first contributor. She joined the Board of Directors in 1998 and was named an Honorary Life Director.

Toby Mayman, who served as Executive Director of the Colburn School from 1980-1999, and as President of the school from 1999-2001, remembers Iona fondly. "Iona had a profound passion for excellence in teaching in every and all aspects of the performing arts. The mission of the Colburn School resonated with her clearly, as did the commitment of the school's faculty, and the institution touched her very soul."

Iona expressed her heartfelt appreciation of the Colburn School in a letter sent to Toby in 1987. "One of the most rewarding things that I have ever done for myself," wrote Iona, "has been to become acquainted with the community school." She continued, "Nothing can quite describe the delight of seeing these young people joyfully producing a joyful sound. But what moves me so profoundly are the steps along the way. To watch the open classes, the Friday Night Recitals, the Master Classes, the School's Recitals and now the Chamber Music Recitals, is to see these steps. The interplay between

students and teachers and families so vital to their development as musicians and as whole beings; the coming together of striving young individuals in that special world of making music; the sense of something beautiful and worthwhile, shared.”

About the Colburn School

The Colburn School comprises four academic units united by a single philosophy that all who have a desire to study the performing arts should have the opportunity and access to excellent training. The degree granting Conservatory of Music, the open enrollment Community School of Performing Arts, the Music Academy for pre-college musicians, and the pre-professional Dance Academy, a program of the Colburn School’s Trudl Zipper Dance Institute, provide training to over 2,000 students from the Los Angeles area and across the world. The renowned teachers, performers, and scholars that make up Colburn’s dedicated faculty serve as invaluable mentors to guide students’ artistic development. The Community School of Performing Arts acts as an entry point to performing arts education, offering beginning to pre-collegiate training in music, dance, and drama to students of all ages and skill levels. Young musicians from around the world study at the pre-college Music Academy, which features a rigorous curriculum of conservatory preparatory training to high school aged students. The pre-professional Dance Academy prepares a select class of young dancers for careers in ballet. Dance classes at the Community School and the Dance Academy are programs of the Trudl Zipper Dance Institute. Finally, the Conservatory of Music is one of the preeminent training grounds for classical musicians, with undergraduate and advanced degrees in music performance. A robust community engagement initiative delivers performing arts education to low-income students in the surrounding areas through outreach and scholarship programs. Located in downtown Los Angeles, the Colburn School’s campus boasts state-of-the-art performance and rehearsal spaces. Each season, the school presents over 300 concerts and performances, many of which are free and open to the public, at its downtown home and throughout Southern California.

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