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HONORING THE MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Hon. Keith Ellison
Of Minnesota
In The House of Representatives

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of the Minnesota Orchestra and Osmo Vanska to congratulate them on their Grammy award in the category of Best Orchestral Performance for their recording of Sibelius' first and fourth symphonies. The Minnesota Orchestra is a source of great pride for Minnesotans and is one of the institutions that makes our state's artistic culture so rich.

The Minnesota Orchestra began in 1903, the eighth major symphony orchestra to be established in the United States. Since then, it has represented Minnesota across the globe, performing in over 661 cities worldwide. Renowned composers Aaron Copeland and Igor Stravinsky have both guest-conducted the Orchestra.

Since its early years, the Minnesota Orchestra has been a great asset to our state, producing landmark recordings and touring ambitiously to critical acclaim and full houses. Under the leadership of former musical director Osmo Vanska, the Orchestra has grown to elite, world-class status. In 2010, *The New Yorker* wrote of their March 1 performance at Carnegie Hall, "the Minnesota Orchestra sounded, to my ears, like the greatest orchestra in the world."

I felt great sadness, then, when the Orchestra suspended its season two years ago. From October 1, 2012 to January 14, 2014, the Minnesota Orchestra musicians suffered the longest lockout of any American orchestra in history, leading to the resignation of esteemed conductor Vanska and significant hardship for the musicians who went without a secure salary or benefits. This was a painful period for Minnesota arts. That's why I was thrilled when both sides were able to reach a contractual agreement earlier this month, and I look forward to seeing the Orchestra return to the stage in February.

The Orchestra has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to artistic excellence and integrity, and this Grammy is well-deserved. I appreciate all that the Orchestra and Osmo Vanska have done and continue to do for Minnesota, and thank them for their exemplary achievement and service.