OLD TOWN SCHOOL AND COLUMBIA COLLEGE CHICAGO
ANNOUNCE NEW STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP, INCREASING ARTS OPPORTUNITIES
FOR SOUTH LOOP COMMUNITY

Old Town School to operate Sherwood Community Music School programming, adding
Old Town School music classes and early childhood programming

(August 12, 2019) The Old Town School of Folk Music and Columbia College Chicago today announced a strategic long-term partnership that will increase arts programming for all ages in the growing South Loop community.

Effective September 1, 2019, the Old Town School will assume responsibility for the South Loop-based Sherwood Community Music School, 1312 S. Michigan Avenue, which merged with Columbia College in July 2007. Starting with the Fall session, Old Town School of Folk Music at Columbia College Chicago will manage existing Sherwood School individual music instruction in addition to launching its celebrated Wiggleworms® early childhood music program (which will replace the current Music Together early childhood offering). In January 2020, Old Town School will roll out its traditional group guitar and other signature Old Town School programming, increasing arts opportunities for South Loop residents and Chicagoans of all ages.

“We are very excited to partner with Columbia to strengthen community music, arts and dance programming in the South Loop and appreciate Columbia leadership’s vision to make this happen. This is an important step in the Old Town School’s long-term strategic plan to serve more people in their neighborhoods throughout Chicago—the greatest music city in the country,” said Old Town School CEO Jim Newcomb. “This opportunity provides us a chance to create a campus that’s convenient for the growing base of new families residing in the South Loop and Loop-based commuters. This locale joins our bustling Lincoln Square campus and beloved longtime home at 909 W. Armitage in Lincoln Park, not to mention satellite branches throughout the Chicagoland area.”

“A dozen years ago, Columbia College assumed responsibility for the Sherwood Community Music School to ensure continuity of community musical instruction in the South Loop. Our new partnership with Old Town School builds on that commitment by enhancing existing programming with the renowned Old Town School quality of offerings and brand,” said Columbia College Senior Associate Provost Suzanne Blum Malley.

The Sherwood School specializes in conservatory-style music programs, including Suzuki violin, alongside private lessons for all ages which will complement Old Town School’s broad offerings of group classes for adults, teens and children, Wiggleworms early childhood programs and many other classes taught in the folk tradition. This partnership will allow Sherwood faculty the opportunity to keep working with their students while providing new opportunities for current Old Town School faculty and Columbia students including internships and opportunities for Columbia music, arts management and communication students.
Added Columbia College School of Fine and Performing Arts Interim Dean Rosita Sands, “Old Town School's focus on the teaching and programming of a diverse body of music styles and genres provides great synergy with our music program’s focus on contemporary, urban, jazz and popular music forms. We also acknowledge the importance of American Music forms, with particular attention given to those rooted in black music traditions of the United States. We see this partnership as valuable in providing our students greater access to a broad range of musical expressions that emanate from world-wide cultures and traditions.”

Old Town School will host a series of public open house events tentatively scheduled to begin Tuesday, September 10, 5-8pm at the Sherwood campus to introduce the Old Town School community members to the South Loop neighborhood. Current Sherwood students should expect continuing classes to begin the week of September 15. More details about the transition and upcoming programming will be provided on oldtownschool.org in the coming weeks.

About the Sherwood Community Music School
Founded by William Hall Sherwood as the Sherwood Music School, the Conservatory officially opened its doors to students in 1895 and, from the 1920s, was a college of music offering professional degrees in performance to students from around the world. In 1986, challenged by the scarcity of quality music education opportunities in the Chicago metropolitan area, the collegiate programs were phased out and Sherwood Conservatory emerged as a community-focused institution. In July 2007, Sherwood merged with Columbia College Chicago.

Chicago’s Old Town School of Folk Music is the largest community school of the arts in the U.S. and a non-profit organization committed to celebrating American music and global cultures. Founded in 1957, the Old Town School of Folk Music provides a wide range of music, dance, and arts courses to people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. Whatever one’s interest, the Old Town School provides broad access to more than 700 accredited weekly class offerings, private lessons and over 400 concerts and community events per year. There are currently seven Old Town School branches throughout the Chicagoland metro area. For more information visit oldtownschool.org.

Columbia College Chicago is a private, nonprofit college offering a distinctive curriculum that blends creative and media arts, liberal arts, and business for nearly 7,000 students in more than 100 undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Dedicated to academic excellence and long-term career success, Columbia College Chicago creates a dynamic, challenging, and collaborative space for students who experience the world through a creative lens. For more information, visit www.colum.edu.

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