



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Arkansas Symphony Orchestra to Perform *Celebrate Little Rock, Together*, a Free Concert Kicking Off the 2021—2022 Symphony Season**

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (August 12, 2021) — [Arkansas Symphony Orchestra](#) (ASO) will perform *Celebrate Little Rock, Together*, a free concert celebrating the community's diverse musical traditions and previewing the ASO concert season at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, September 16 at the Robinson Center in Little Rock. Sponsored by the Stella Boyle Smith Trust and presented in partnership with the [Dunbar Historic Neighborhood Association](#), this special performance for the community will include selections from Dvorak's New World Symphony, music of Aretha Franklin, and the world premiere of Little Rock native and pioneering African American composer Florence Price's own orchestration of her Piano Concerto. Tickets to the concert will become available to the general public on September 2 starting at 10 a.m. on the steps of the Robinson Center on a first-come basis.

"We are delighted we found ways to perform for our patrons virtually and in innovative ways during the past year. Now we are ready to play for an audience. I am so excited that the Stella Boyle Smith Trust wanted to sponsor a free concert for all of our community members and orchestra to enjoy together as a way to kickoff the season," said ASO CEO Christina Littlejohn. "This concert is designed for us to have fun and recognize our community's own talent. The Arkansas Symphony represents our state's rich talent of symphonic musicians. Local favorite singer Genine LaTrice Perez will join us for 'Natural Woman.' We are also excited to feature the incredible contributions of Little Rock's own composer Florence Price, as well as to give the community a preview of some of the inspiring music in store for ASO patrons this year."

In 1933, Price made history when her "Symphony in E Minor" had its world premiere with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, making her the first African American woman composer to have her music performed by a major orchestra. Concert pianist [Karen Walwyn](#) will join ASO Artistic Director Geoffrey Robson as they make history with the world premiere of Price's own orchestration of her "Piano Concerto in One Movement."

"The Dunbar community is pleased to welcome the music of Florence Price back into her hometown. We're elated about all the accolades she is receiving as an iconic Black composer from people across the country and around the world," said Angel Burt, executive director of the Dunbar Historic Neighborhood Association. "Our goal is to preserve her history and legacy so the world will never forget her again."



The performance will be followed by a studio recording the following day. The free concert will also feature selections from Dvorak's New World Symphony, Bernstein and Gershwin and Little Rock's own vocalist Genine LaTrice Perez performing music from the great Aretha Franklin, whose music is featured in the symphony's spring lineup.

As the 2021—22 concert season approaches, ASO continues to closely monitor the evolving situation related to COVID-19 and related variants impacting our communities. ASO musicians must provide proof of vaccination or a recent negative test before participating in the concert. The Robinson Center has also installed a new, state-of-the-art air filtration system and new hand washing and sanitizing stations in the venue. The City of Little Rock and the Robinson Center require both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals to wear masks while on public property. To ensure the safety of our patrons, musicians and staff, ASO will strictly adhere to this requirement as well as guidance provided by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Arkansas Department of Health.

#### **About Arkansas Symphony Orchestra**

The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra celebrates its 56th full season in 2021-2022. ASO is the resident orchestra of Robinson Center Music Hall. They perform more than sixty concerts each year for more than 165,000 people through its Stella Boyle Smith Masterworks Series, Acxiom Pops Live! Series, River Rhapsodies Chamber Music Series, and numerous concerts performed around the state of Arkansas, in addition to serving central Arkansas through numerous community outreach programs and bringing live symphonic music education to over 26,000 school children and over 200 schools. ASO's education programs include the Sturgis Music Academy, which provides violin and cello instruction to more than 350 students, and the ASO Youth Ensembles Program, which has nearly 200 students enrolled in two full orchestras and a strings-only ensemble. ASO employs 12 full-time musicians, more than 70 part-time musicians and 15 administrative staff members with an annual operating budget of \$3.5 million. Arkansas Symphony Orchestra is a member of the League of American Orchestras and a partner orchestra of the National Alliance for Audition Support, an unprecedented national initiative to increase diversity in American orchestras.

For more information about the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra call 501-666-1761 or visit [www.ArkansasSymphony.org](http://www.ArkansasSymphony.org). Program notes, artist bios and high-resolution headshots available upon request.

#### **Media Contact:**

Cord Rapert, Ghidotti  
[cord@ghidotti.com](mailto:cord@ghidotti.com)  
870.819.6064

###