

PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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Arkansas Symphony Orchestra Music Director Philip Mann to Accept New Title

2018-19 Season will be Mann's last at podium

Little Rock, ARK, May 24, 2018 - Following a resoundingly successful 2017-18 season, Maestro Philip Mann and the Arkansas Symphony have announced that the 2018-19 season will be his last as ASO Music Director.

Mann, ASO Music Director since 2010, has overseen an era of unprecedented musical success, artistic growth, community engagement, educational investment, new construction, enhanced statewide presence, and financial stability.

Mann has been asked by the ASO to assume the title of the Symphony's first ever "Music Director Laureate." It is the ASO's hope that Mann will be able to continue his highly successful relationship with the ASO as he grows his international conducting presence and broadens his role within classical music.

"For eight seasons, we've been delighted to have Maestro Mann on the podium to lead some of the most talented musicians performing some of the best music in the world here in Arkansas," said ASO Board Chairwoman Jan Hundley. "We know that Philip wants to broaden his musical influence internationally, and we wish him much success, as we know other people around the world will be as enriched and impressed by his talents as we have been."

Mann has helped increase public awareness of and support for the ASO in its important role in the culture and advancement of the state. Mann has traveled to every corner of Arkansas promoting the power of music to enrich lives and improve communities. He has been described as "a treasure of Arkansas" by two governors and is the recipient of several awards including Arkansas' "Communicator of the Year" and PRSA "Diamond Award Winner" for enhancing the image of the entire state.

"The ASO knew when we hired Philip that we would not be able to keep him here for long," said Richard P. Wheeler, ASO board member and former chairman. "We are grateful for the incredible work he has done to further develop the orchestra, continuing the positive trajectory established by his predecessors."

ASO Concertmaster, Kiril Laskarov added, "Maestro Mann is an inspiring leader, an extraordinary musician, and a devoted colleague. It is a bittersweet time for us – he is irreplaceable, but we are happy for his success."

Mann's tenure with the ASO has witnessed dramatic programmatic growth, with the addition several performance series, innovative initiatives, greater statewide impact, more weeks of classical repertoire, and a period where the ASO has played for more people in more places than at any point in its history.

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"In his tenure with the symphony, he has consistently challenged the musicians to achieve new artistic heights," said Susan Leon, ASO principal bassoonist. "His brilliant musicianship and remarkable ability to elicit compelling musical performances has deeply moved musicians and audiences alike. We will miss him - he is the best thing that has ever happened to the ASO."

Of his time with the ASO, Mann said, "I've been extremely fortunate to be the recipient of many honors in my life, but none compare to the honor of working with the musicians of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra."

His Composer of the Year Initiative brought many of the world's great composers to the state. Successful initiatives like the Intimate Neighborhood Concert series, "ACT OUT" and annual programmatic festivals drew greater interest to the region.

Mann also forged partnerships with other organizations such as Opera in the Rock, Ballet Arkansas, Arkansas Repertory Theater, Arkansas Arts Center, Argenta Community Theater and the CHARTS center. He was a founding member of the ACANSA festival.

As the quality of the ASO as grown under Mann's leadership and recruitment of great talent, a hallmark of Mann's programming has been his desire to feature ASO musicians in soloist roles across its series, and to involve stars of the orchestra in the presentation and production of performances.

Mann played a significant role in the design, public advocacy, renovation and reopening of the Robinson Center with its new concert hall.

Maestro Mann is in demand internationally. His 2017 recording of the Brahms 2nd Piano Concerto with the London Symphony Orchestra and pianist Norman Krieger was released on Decca records to critical acclaim. In the past season, Mann led the Royal Scottish National Orchestra in a recording of the works of Michael Fine and performed engagements with European capital orchestras.

Despite a two-season stretch away from the Robinson Center during renovations, the ASO has remained financially sound during Mann's tenure.

The ASO and Mann have recently utilized new technologies to reach new audiences and existing fans in innovative ways. This season, the ASO launched a program to air live-streamed concerts online and in other public settings. Next year, there are plans to use new technology to simulcast concerts in unique locations across the state.

Preparations are underway for Mann's farewell season, and plans for a celebratory performance to conclude his tenure as music director are forthcoming.

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“As we look ahead to next season and beyond, Arkansans should rest assured that we are a thriving, financially stable organization and our priority is to provide engaging, high-quality performances and offer music education initiatives around the state,” said ASO CEO Christina Littlejohn. “The ASO leadership will take time to consider the best long-term decisions for the community and will invite new ideas from patrons about how to position the ASO for continued growth and stability for generations to come.”

Littlejohn said the organization’s board will not immediately begin a search for a new music director.

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