

PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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Arkansas Symphony Orchestra Releases World Premiere Recording of Florence Price “Piano Concerto in One Movement” with the Composer’s Orchestration

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (March 29, 2022) – The [Arkansas Symphony Orchestra](#) (ASO) has released the world-premiere recording of groundbreaking Little Rock composer Florence Price’s own orchestration of her “Piano Concerto in One Movement.” Concert pianist [Karen Walwyn](#) joined ASO musicians and Artistic Director and Conductor Geoffrey Robson for the first commercial recording by ASO to be made available worldwide. This work was recorded at Robinson Center Performance Hall following a free community concert ASO performed in September 2021. The free concert celebrated the Little Rock community’s diverse musical traditions and kicked off a series of performances and events recognizing Florence Price’s musical legacy. The recording was released in advance of Florence Price Day, April 9, marking 135 years since her birth in Little Rock, Arkansas.

“It is our hope that this recording will contribute depth and clarity to the interpretation of Florence Price’s unique music. We feel the spirit of Little Rock in her music and believe this is a significant step forward in our efforts to honor and recognize the rich musical heritage of this region,” said Robson. “We hope this recording will serve as inspiration to others who are learning about and performing the music of this very important American composer, Florence Price.”

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. Despite her success, her music was largely ignored by orchestras during her life and in the decades afterward because of her race and gender. During her time in Arkansas, Price lived in Little Rock’s Dunbar neighborhood. The Dunbar Historic Neighborhood Association partnered with the concert sponsor Stella Boyle Smith Trust to present the free community concert which featured Price’s work. The performance also included an outdoor livestream of the concert for residents of the Dunbar neighborhood.

“While groundbreaking in her time, many musicians and music lovers are just now discovering the catalog of Price’s music almost three generations later. Her work is not only historically important but is also truly inspired music that has the power to move hearts and minds today,” said Michael Mayton, trustee of the Stella Boyle Smith Trust. “It has been an honor to play a role in bringing the music of Florence Price to the forefront, celebrate her contributions and help inspire the next generation of musicians and composers.”

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“When I reflect on the life of Florence Price, I am reminded of Dietrich Bonhoeffer who urged us to live as if we have a future no matter how many challenges and trials we encounter. In spite of spirit killing personal and professional disappointments and betrayals, Florence Price continued to compose exquisite music,” said Dr. Sybil Jordan Hampton, former president of the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, inductee into the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame and Life Member of the ASO Board of Directors. “The fact that this music was little known and rarely acknowledged during Price’s lifetime did not stop the quest for excellence. Florence Price had hope because she believed her work had meaning and purpose. Florence Price has given me the gift of soul satisfying music and an example of the fine art of growing roses in concrete.”

ASO’s world premiere recording *Florence Price: Concerto in One Movement* is now available on most major streaming platforms, including [Amazon Music](#), [YouTube Music](#), [Spotify](#) and Tidal. Visit ArkansasSymphony.org/price-concerto-cd for the full list of platforms where this recording can be streamed.

About Karen Walwyn

Karen Walwyn, a concert pianist, composer and Albany Recording Artist, is the first female African American pianist/ composer to receive the Steinway Artist Award. Walwyn is in constant concert demand nationally and internationally for both her repertoire from Frédéric Chopin to Florence Price, as well as for performances of her own works for solo piano, choir and instrumental ensemble. For more information, please visit: www.karenwalwyn.com

About Geoffrey Robson

Geoffrey Robson currently serves as artistic director and associate conductor of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, and music director of the Arkansas Symphony Youth Ensembles. During his tenure in Arkansas, he has conducted critically acclaimed and sold-out masterworks, pops, chamber, and educational concerts throughout the state. He also produces and writes *At the Symphony*, a concert preview radio series on KLRE Classical 90.5 in Little Rock. Learn more at: www.arkansassymphony.org/geoffrey-robson

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. Arkansas Symphony Orchestra performs 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

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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

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