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Decade of Fiscal Responsibility and Growth for Arkansas Symphony Orchestra

Ten years of balanced budgets, a new music academy, added concerts, the renovation of the Robinson Center, six commissions and paid-off accumulated deficit are highlights of the past decade for the orchestra.

Little Rock, ARK, July 18, 2019 - The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra announced its 10th break-even fiscal year in a row at the end of June. The 54-year-old Little Rock nonprofit has broken even or finished with a small surplus each year since the 2009-2010 season while growing from a \$2.8 million annual operating budget to a \$3.5 million budget. The orchestra achieved this monumental task through the support of the community, a hard-working and engaged Board of Directors, professional musicians and a culture of partnership with all musicians, leadership, volunteers and administrators.

The orchestra's Chief Executive Officer, Christina Littlejohn, expressed gratitude to the community. "On behalf of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, 'thank you' to the more than 3,500 individuals who have given to sustain live music, music education and Arkansas's quality of life. Your generosity shows how valued ASO is by the Little Rock and statewide community, and we are grateful and invigorated by your support." Littlejohn also said the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra will continue to be a disciplined, creative and innovative community partner in Little Rock and Arkansas for decades to come.

In addition to financial health, the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra's past 10 years have been marked by many achievements:

- Opened the Robinson Center with a free concert to say thank you to the community for the new concert hall. More than 2,000 tickets were distributed in 39 minutes.
- Formed a financial recovery task force in 2010 which set standards and practices which enabled the paying off of \$700,000 in accumulated deficit, the restoration of full-time and part-time musician pay, and issued cost of living increases.

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- Created the Sturgis Music Academy, providing string education to more than 250 students each week
- Made Sunday concerts free for 16,000 children with the Entergy Kids Ticket.
- Provided violin instruction to Bale Elementary School, Forest Park Elementary School, and Fulbright Elementary School with the Violin in Your School program
- Added a new neighborhood concert series and special performances, increasing the number of musician services
- Supported annual residencies of guest artists for the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra Youth Ensembles program starting with a residency of violinist Midori
- Performed in temporary venues for two-and-a-half years during the Robinson Center renovation, and used the opportunity to reach and entertain new, diverse audiences
- Nearly doubled the endowment (\$4 million in June 2010 to \$7.6 million as of May 2019)
- Set a new record for the largest Annual Fund ever raised by the orchestra, over \$1 million given for its annual fund in 2019
- Received national and local coverage of orchestra programs
- Commissioned and premiered six new works for orchestra including a commission of Christopher Theofanidis by orchestra musicians in honor of the Board of Directors
- Board of Directors recognized as "Best Non-Profit Board of Directors" by *Arkansas Business*
- Introduced SHARP, ASO's young professionals group and growing attendance from 30 in its first year to over 200 in four years

Chris White, Market President of Simmons Bank Central Arkansas, and a member of the Board of Directors, said the orchestra's education and community service programs, which serve more than 26,000 children each year, are the key to its future success. "Simmons Bank regards social and civic responsibility as an inherent part of everything we do. There's real value for Little Rock and Arkansas by supporting the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, and specifically its youth programs that foster disciplined, hardworking and team-oriented people."

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The 2019-2020 ASO season is focused on the Arkansas and Little Rock community, presenting programs in partnership with other community institutions, highlighting the compositions of local composers, and maintaining a commitment to accessibility, service, artistic excellence, and fiscal discipline. Subscriptions are on-sale now and offer discounts from single ticket prices as well as benefits exclusive to subscribers, such as guaranteed priority seating and free and flexible ticket exchange. Patrons interested in subscribing to the 2019-2020 season should visit ArkansasSymphony.org/season or call the Box Office at 501-666-1761, ext. 1.

About Arkansas Symphony Orchestra

The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra celebrates its 54th full season in 2019-2020. ASO is the resident orchestra of Robinson Center Music Hall, to which the orchestra returned in November of 2016 after a two-year renovation of the historic structure. 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, Intimate Neighborhood Concerts 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 employs 12 full-time musicians, more than 70 part-time musicians and 14 administrative staff members with an annual operating budget of \$3.5 million. Arkansas Symphony Orchestra is a member of the League of American Orchestras.

For more information about the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra call 501-666-1761 or visit www.ArkansasSymphony.org

Program notes, artist bios and high resolution headshots available upon request.

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