



Photograph of Elizabeth Eckford from the Will Counts Collection: Indiana University Archives

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Joshua Cook

Joshua@ghidotticomunications.com

501.777.5032

Oxford American and Arkansas Symphony Orchestra Collaborate on a New Arrangement of the No Tears Suite to Drive Community Conversations on Civil Rights, Then and Now

LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS (January 3, 2019) — The [Oxford American: A Magazine of the South](#), in collaboration with [Arkansas Symphony Orchestra](#), is proud to present the world premiere of the *No Tears Suite* with new symphonic arrangements written by GRAMMY-nominated jazz bassist and composer **Rufus Reid**. A special addition to *Oxford American's* 2018–19 Concert Series and inspired by Melba Patillo Beals's Memoir *Warriors Don't Cry* about the 1957 Little Rock Central High School desegregation crisis, the *No Tears Suite* honors the sacrifices and ongoing work of all those who strive to build a more just and equal society. The concerts will take place on **Saturday, March 2** at 8 p.m. at Mosaic Templars Cultural Center then on **Sunday, March 3** at 3 p.m. at the Central High School Auditorium. This extraordinary performance is made possible by presenting sponsor the Stella Boyle Smith Trust.

"The Oxford American provides platforms for artists whose work illuminates a deeper understanding of the South's complexity. We're honored to collaborate with the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra in creating this music and these events because they foster continued conversations between communities as we all work toward a more cohesive society," said Ryan Harris, Oxford American Executive Director. "This weekend will create a safe space for people to come together in mutual appreciation of each other and the role the arts

can play in bridging our cultural divides. We're extremely grateful for Chris Parker and Kelley Hurt's multi-year commitment to this project."

In September 2017, *Oxford American* premiered a 60-minute jazz composition entitled *No Tears Suite*, written by Little Rock jazz pianist **Chris Parker** and vocalist **Kelley Hurt**. The duo created the work in honor of unity on the 60th anniversary of the Little Rock Central High School desegregation crisis. In this reprisal, Parker and Hurt will again be joined by five exceptional jazz artists, including GRAMMY-winning jazz drummer **Brian Blade**, who played in the original 2017 ensemble, in addition to fifteen members of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra who will premiere the new, expanded symphonic arrangements of the *No Tears Suite* written by GRAMMY-nominated arranger, composer and bassist Rufus Reid.

"The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra as an organization is excited to collaborate with Oxford American and, perhaps more importantly, our world-class classical musicians are excited to collaborate with these world-class jazz musicians to create music that demonstrates what is possible with community unity," said Christina Littlejohn, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra Chief Executive Officer. "This project is an example of Little Rock's own Silk Road. The historic Silk Roads were a network of trade routes across land and sea along which people of many different cultures, religions and languages met, exchanged ideas and influenced each other. Jazz and classical musicians working together in Little Rock's historical venues of the Mosaic Templars and Central High School to create music around our past and present could be a catalyst for a richer, more robust future."

The jazz ensemble accompanying Parker and Hurt will once again feature GRAMMY-winning drummer, **Brian Blade**, in addition to **Rufus Reid** (bass), **Bobby LaVell** (tenor saxophone), **Marc Franklin** (trumpet) and **Chad Fowler** (baritone and alto saxophone). Arkansas Symphony Orchestra's **Geoffrey Robson** will conduct the group.

General Admission tickets to the 8 p.m. Saturday, March 2 performance at the Mosaic Templars Cultural Center are \$40 and go on sale to the general public on January 10. Tickets may be purchased online at ArkansasSymphony.org/no-tears, by calling the Box Office at 501-666-1761, ext. 1, or at the Mosaic Templars Cultural Center beginning 60 minutes before the performance.

On Friday, March 1 at Noon, a free-to-the-public panel discussion presented in collaboration with the National Park Service and Clinton School of Public Service will be held at Central High School National Historic Site. Featuring Rufus Reid and Bobby LaVell, the panel will be moderated by composer Chris Parker. The goal is to facilitate discussion on the ongoing work of social equity in the United States from the perspectives of people living in different communities and what role music and the arts play in affecting change in our society today.

Central High School students will also have the opportunity to participate in a workshop to learn from jazz masters Brian Blade and Rufus Reid on Friday, March 1. Blade and Reid will appear at Episcopal Collegiate School for an additional workshop on Monday, March 4. The public is also invited to attend a Sunday, March 3 matinee performance at 3 p.m. in the Central High School auditorium for free, encouraging ongoing engagement and conversation on civil rights issues in the community.

Additional partners on the project include National Park Service, University of Central Arkansas College of Fine Arts & Communication, Central High National Historic Site, Kay Kelley Arnold, Mid-America Arts

Alliance, National Endowment for the Arts, Arkansas Arts Council, Clinton School of Public Service and Mosaic Templars Cultural Center.

This project is generously funded by the Stella Boyle Smith Trust, Mid-America Arts Alliance, the National Endowment for the Arts and the state arts agencies of Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas.

MULTIMEDIA RESOURCES:

GRAPHICS: No Tears Suite 2019 Visual Assets (MANDATORY CREDIT: *Photograph of Elizabeth Eckford from the Will Counts Collection: Indiana University Archives*):

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/u1dhf6g3qpl5swd/AABRtZr9fVDgOBg1fY3TcOlda?dl=0>

SAMPLE AUDIO #1 – No Tears Suite: Overture <https://youtu.be/CXfqIC9wRPU>

SAMPLE AUDIO #2 – No Tears Suite: Don't Cry <https://youtu.be/Q4fysUNWvbg>

SAMPLE AUDIO #3 – No Tears Suite: Canon <https://youtu.be/0QGlyMoahas>

ABOUT THE OXFORD AMERICAN

Oxford American is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts organization and national magazine dedicated to featuring the very best in Southern writing, while documenting the complexity and vitality of the American South. The *Oxford American* is committed to the development of young individuals aspiring to work in the publishing industry and to the production and presentation of multidisciplinary arts events in and around Little Rock, Arkansas. Billed as “A Magazine of the South,” it has won four National Magazine Awards—including the 2016 Award for General Excellence in the category of Literature, Science and Politics—and other high honors since it began publication in 1992. The magazine has featured the original work of such literary powerhouses as Charles Portis, Roy Blount, Jr., ZZ Packer, Donald Harington, Donna Tartt, Ernest J. Gaines and many other distinguished authors, while also discovering and launching the most promising writers in the region. The magazine has also published previously unseen work by such Southern masters as William Faulkner, Eudora Welty, Walker Percy, James Agee, Zora Neale Hurston, James Dickey and Carson McCullers to name just a handful. The *Oxford American* is published in partnership with the University of Central Arkansas. For more information, visit OxfordAmerican.org.

About Arkansas Symphony Orchestra

The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra (ASO) celebrates its 53rd full season in 2018-2019, under the leadership of Music Director Philip Mann. ASO is the resident orchestra of Robinson Center Music Hall, to which the ASO returned in November of 2016 after a two-year renovation of the historic structure. ASO performs more than sixty concerts each year for more than 165,000 people through its Stella Boyle Smith Masterworks Series, ACXION 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 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.

For more information, contact:

Joshua Cook

Joshua@ghidotticommunications.com

501.777.5032

PRESENTING SPONSOR



EVENT PARTNERS



**Kay Kelley
Arnold**