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***Arkansas Symphony Orchestra Announces Grand Opening
Celebration for Stella Boyle Smith Music Center
Three-Day Event to Welcome All Arkansans to \$11.75M Music Hub***

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (July 18, 2024) — The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra (ASO) will celebrate the grand opening of the Stella Boyle Smith Music Center with a three-day community celebration Sept. 13-15, 2024. The state-of-the-art, \$11.75 million facility will be the first permanent home for the ASO in its 59-year history.

The weekend festivities will begin with a private event on Friday, Sept. 13, honoring the generous donors who made the center possible. On Saturday, Sep. 14, the ASO will open its doors for a full day of public celebration, kicking off with a morning parade from the Riverfront Amphitheater through downtown Little Rock to the music center, near the William J. Clinton Presidential Library & Museum and Heifer International in the East Village neighborhood.

“This grand opening weekend will be a one-of-a-kind event that celebrates every type of music — a perfect way to debut this radically welcoming hub of musical activity for all Arkansans,” said ASO Chief Executive Officer Christina Littlejohn. “We’re thrilled to invite the entire community to experience the transformative power of music in our new home.”

The Saturday celebration will feature a unique “sonic” ribbon-cutting ceremony, followed by a day filled with music both inside and outside the center. The highlight will be performances in Morgan Hall, where ASO musicians will play publicly in the new space for the first time. Family-friendly activities, building tours and food trucks will create a festive, welcoming atmosphere on the music center’s grounds.

“The Stella Boyle Smith Music Center is not just the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra’s new home, but a place where music of all kinds and for all Arkansans will live, grow and thrive,” said ASO Music Director Geoffrey Robson. “This space will amplify our ability to bring world-class performances and educational opportunities to our community, and we want to celebrate that with music lovers of all ages.”

Saturday evening will feature a free dance party in Morgan Hall, showcasing ASO musicians performing a journey through various musical eras. While this event is free, space will be limited. More details on securing tickets to this event will be posted in the coming weeks on the ASO website and its social media channels.



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The weekend will conclude on Sunday with additional tours of the building and the inaugural ASO Youth Orchestra rehearsals in the new center, underscoring the ASO's commitment to music education and community engagement.

A full schedule of events, musical acts and other performers for the grand opening week will be released in the coming weeks on the ASO website and social media portals.

"Our task force for the grand opening has been hard at work ensuring the music center's grand opening is a historic celebration for the City of Little Rock and the entire state," Robson said. "Our biggest goal that weekend is to make sure the community feels a part of this wonderful new space and can call it home just as we — the staff, musicians and volunteers — will."

The music center will boast state-of-the-art features for youth and adults who participate in the E. Lee Ronnel Music Academy, including music classrooms and practice spaces. Morgan Hall, named for long-time ASO supporters Susie and Charles Morgan, will serve as a versatile space for rehearsals and concerts, fostering an immersive musical experience. The center will also provide residents from all corners of the state access to performances and music making through a broadcast and recording studio.

ASO broke ground on the music center on Aug. 10, 2023, following years of efforts by community supporters to privately fundraise and identify a suitable location. More than 200 generous donors contributed to the project, including 48 musicians. Major donors include the Stella Boyle Smith Trust, the Morgans, Gus Vratsinas, Terri and Chuck Erwin, the Windgate Foundation, E. Lee Ronnel, Pat Becker and Jim Wallis, Simmons Bank, the State of Arkansas and members of the ASO Board of Directors. Additional supporters include the orchestra, staff, youth orchestra parents, volunteers and numerous community members.

While ASO performances will still be held at Robinson Center, the Stella Boyle Smith Music Center will provide the opportunity for additional community gatherings and allow ASO to grow its programs.

The Stella Boyle Smith Music Center was designed by WER Architects of Little Rock; Bailey Construction & Consulting LLC of Little Rock is the general contractor. To learn more about ASO and the new Stella Boyle Smith Music Center, visit arkansassymphony.org.

About Arkansas Symphony Orchestra

The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra is the leading employer of professional performing arts in the state of Arkansas and is celebrating its 59th season in 2024-2025. The ASO is the resident orchestra at Robinson Center, and performs more than 60 concerts yearly for more than 165,000 people through its Stella Boyle Smith Masterworks Series, First Orion Pops Series, River Rhapsodies Chamber Music Series, and numerous concerts around Arkansas. In



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addition, the ASO offers numerous community outreach programs and brings live symphonic music education to more than 26,000 schoolchildren and more than 200 schools throughout Central Arkansas. The ASO employs 13 full-time musicians, more than 70 part-time musicians and 18 administrative staff members with an annual operating budget of \$4 million. The ASO 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.

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