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Arkansas Symphony Orchestra Unveils 60th Season Concert Lineup

LITTLE ROCK, AR. (Feb. 26, 2025) – The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra (ASO) has announced its highly anticipated 60th concert season, showcasing a dynamic lineup of performances across its three major concert series, Stella Boyle Smith Masterworks, First Orion Pops, and River Rhapsodies. ASO Music Director Geoffrey Robson said audiences can look forward to an exciting blend of classical masterworks, vibrant and timely pops performances, and intimate chamber music experiences at the ASO's new Stella Boyle Smith Music Center.

Season highlights include renown pianist Joyce Yang's opening night Masterworks performance of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's "Piano Concerto No. 1" in October and a special Pops revue of "The Legacy of Quincy Jones" in February, which celebrates the music of the legendary composer, producer, arranger, and bandleader who died last year. The ASO will also return to a galaxy far, far away in October, when it performs John Williams' score for "Star Wars: Return of the Jedi" alongside the film.

"Our 60th season opens with Romantic passion, with music of Strauss and Tchaikovsky," Robson said. "The Beethoven and Blue Jeans tradition continues with one of my favorite piano concertos, Beethoven's 4th. That program is rounded out with a brand-new commissioned work and two popular works by Mexican composers. I am thrilled that we are going to present a large-scale choral work for the first time since becoming music director — Carmina Burana!"

Associate conductor Valery Saul said she will conduct the final Masterworks concert of the season, on May 2 and 3, 2025, which includes "Symphony No. 8" by one of her favorite composers, Antonín Dvořák.

"I can't wait for this program, which also features Debussy's 'Afternoon of the Faun' and Haydn's 'Cello Concerto No. 2' with acclaimed soloist Gabriel Martins," she said. "The ASO brings so much depth and vitality to each performance, and it's such a joy to be on stage with them."

The ASO also announced dates for its intimate River Rhapsodies chamber music series, which takes place in the Susie and Charles Morgan Hall at the ASO Stella Boyle Smith Music Center in Little Rock's East Village. The performances feature ASO musicians, soloists, and members of the ASO's two string quartets, the Rockefeller Quartet and the Quapaw Quartet. Pianist Orion Weiss and violinist Julian Rhee will join the ASO for two River Rhapsodies performances. The ASO will release details about the other performances at a later date.

Season subscriptions are now available for purchase by calling the ASO Box Office at 501-666-1761. Single tickets will be available in the summer. The 2025-2026 season schedule is available below:

Stella Boyle Smith Masterworks

All Masterworks performances will take place at the Robinson Center in Little Rock.

Opening Night: Oct. 4 and 5

- Vivian Fung: "Earworms"
- Richard Strauss: "Don Juan"
- Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky: "Piano Concerto No. 1" with Joyce Yang, piano

MW II: "Beethoven and Blue Jeans," Nov. 15 and 16

- Marina Lopez: Commission - 3rd performance Toulmin Foundation Orchestral Commissions - American Composers Orchestra
- Ludwig van Beethoven: "Piano Concerto No. 4" with Orion Weiss, piano
- Silvestre Revueltas (arr. Hindemith): "Suite from La noche de los Mayas"
- Arturo Márquez: "Danzón No. 2"

MW III: Jan. 24 & 25

- Lili Boulanger: "D'un matin de printemps"
- Sergei Prokofiev: "Violin Concerto No. 2" with Alexander Kerr, violin
- Dmitri Shostakovich: "Symphony No. 5"

MW IV: Feb. 28 and March 1, 2026

- Carl Orff: "Carmina Burana"
 - Keely Futterer, soprano; Nicholas Simpson, tenor; TBD, baritone

MW V: March 21 and 22, 2026

- Tania León: "Pasajes"
- Benjamin Britten: "Violin Concerto" with Julian Rhee, violin
- Modest Mussorgsky (arr. Ravel): "Pictures at an Exhibition"

MW VI: May 2 and 3, 2026

- Conducted by Valery Saul
- Claude Debussy: "Prélude à 'L'après-midi d'un faune'" ("Afternoon of a Faun")
- Joseph Haydn: "Cello Concerto in C" with Gabriel Martins, cello
- Antonín Dvořák: "Symphony No. 8"

First Orion Pops

The Pops performances will also take place at the Robinson Center.

- **Pops Special: Oct. 18 and 19** – “Star Wars: Return of the Jedi”
- **Pops 1: Dec. 19, 20 and 21** – “Home for the Holidays”
- **Pops 2: Feb. 14 and 15** – “The Legacy of Quincy Jones”
- **Pops 3: March 14 and 15, 2026** – “Symphonic Sci-Fi” with guest conductor Herb Smith
- **Pops 4: May 9 and 10, 2026** – “The Three Broadway Divas” featuring vocalists Dee Roscioli, Alli Mauzey, and Scarlett Strallen

River Rhapsodies

Held at the ASO Stella Boyle Smith Music Center in Little Rock's East Village, the River Rhapsodies series offers audiences an intimate chamber music experience.

- **CH I:** Oct. 7 and 8
- **CH II:** Nov. 18 (with Artist of Distinction Orion Weiss, piano)
- **CH III:** Jan. 27 and 28
- **CH IV:** Feb. 17 and 18
- **CH V:** March 24, 2026 (with Artist of Distinction Julian Rhee, violin)
- **CH VI:** April 21 and 22, 2026

More: Click [here](#) to access artist bios and photos. All programs, artists, and dates are subject to change.

About The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra

The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra is the leading employer of professional performing artists in Arkansas and is celebrating its 60th season in 2025-2026. The ASO recently opened its first permanent home, the ASO Stella Boyle Smith Music Center, in the East Village between Heifer International and the Clinton Presidential Library. The state's first music center is a radically welcoming hub of musical activity for all Arkansans, housing programs of the E. Lee Ronnel Music Academy, a broadcast studio, and the River Rhapsodies Chamber Music Series. ASO is the resident orchestra at Robinson Center and performs over 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 throughout Arkansas. The E. Lee Ronnel Music Academy reaches over 30,000 Arkansans in over 200 schools from ages 4 to 104 through the string academy, youth ensembles, bucket band, community orchestra, the annual Children's Concert, and more. In 2020, over 1 million people in over 30 countries viewed the ASO musician-led Bedtime with Bach series. The ASO employs 13 full-time musicians, over 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. For more information about the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra call 501-666-1761 or visit www.ArkansasSymphony.org.

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