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Arkansas Symphony Orchestra Ends Crescendo Capital Campaign

Fundraising Effort for Music Center, Educational Programs Surpasses \$13M

LITTLE ROCK, AR. (Jan. 23, 2025) – The [Arkansas Symphony Orchestra](#) (ASO) proudly announces the successful conclusion of its Crescendo Campaign, which raised \$13.35 million to fund its new ASO Stella Boyle Smith Music Center, which opened in September, and add \$1.6 million to the endowment to support the Symphony's annual operations.

The 20,000-square-foot Stella Boyle Smith Music Center, located in Little Rock's East Village, is the orchestra's first permanent home in its 60-year history. This state-of-the-art facility houses the E. Lee Ronnel Music Academy, a broadcast and recording studio, ASO staff offices, and the River Rhapsodies Chamber Music Series, making it a radically welcoming hub for musical education and performance in Arkansas.

"The completion of the Crescendo Campaign is a testament to the passion and generosity of our supporters who believe in the transformative power of music," said Brigita Gardner, a Life Member of the ASO Board of Directors and Chair of the Crescendo Committee. "This incredible achievement ensures that the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra will continue to enrich and inspire our community for generations to come."

Among the final gifts to the campaign was \$500,000 from the Windgate Foundation, which had previously donated a \$1.5 million two-to-one challenge grant for construction of the music center. The campaign, which began in July 2019, raised \$11.75 million to pay for the music center and \$1.6 million for the endowment.

More than 200 donors contributed to the campaign, including ASO musicians, staff and board members. Major donors include The Stella Boyle Smith Trust, Susie and Charles Morgan, Gus Vratsinas, Terri and Chuck Erwin, Pat Becker and Jim Wallis, the Windgate Foundation, E. Lee Ronnel, Simmons Bank, and the State of Arkansas.

"This campaign is a defining moment for the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra and for music in our state," ASO CEO Christina Littlejohn said. "The ASO Stella Boyle Smith Music Center represents our commitment to making music accessible to all Arkansans, and we are deeply grateful to the many people and organizations who made this dream a reality. I want to thank the Windgate Foundation for its second major gift to this project. And I want to congratulate Brigita and the entire Crescendo Committee for their outstanding leadership and dedication. Their

efforts have profoundly strengthened the financial foundation of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra and its impact on the Little Rock and Arkansas community.”

The ASO Stella Boyle Smith Music Center is located at 1101 E. Third St. in Little Rock, between Heifer International and the Clinton Presidential Library, further enhancing the cultural vibrancy of Little Rock’s East Village. Designed by Witsell Evans Rasco Architects and built by Bailey Construction & Consulting LLC, both of Little Rock, the music center represents a collaborative effort to create a world-class music facility in Arkansas. The new facility provides space for rehearsals, classrooms and community programming, enabling the orchestra to expand its reach and better serve its audience.

About The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra

The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra is the leading employer of professional performing artists in Arkansas and is celebrating its 59th season in 2024-2025. 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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