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Dear ASO family,

I am so excited to welcome you to ASO's 60th anniversary season. What a milestone!!! This September, we celebrated the first anniversary of the ASO Stella Boyle Smith Music Center, our first permanent home. If you have not attended a concert in Morgan Hall, please don't miss this year. *River Rhapsodies* concerts are now offered at night and during the day, so you can come when it works with your schedule. If you can't make a concert, drop by over the weekend to hear our youth ensembles or Community Orchestra rehearsing, or on a weekday to hear young violin students or our Quapaw and Rockefeller Quartets rehearsing. The acoustics in our home are so good that you can't actually hear the music unless you are in the room where it happens.



We could not be more delighted and surprised with the opportunities our new home has opened up to ASO and our community. Susie and Charles Morgan are making a \$1M investment in our youth programming so we can expand our most accessible programs to include *Intro to Violin* classes and a children's choir, and expand our service to our most advanced students, including chamber music coaching and two free private lessons before college or All-State auditions. That is just year one! We'll be announcing more programs for years two through five of the grant.

Community organizations, including the Mosaic Templars Cultural Center and the Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum, have come to us with amazing partnership ideas. We look forward to continuing our partnerships with the Saint Mark Baptist Sanctuary Choir and CALS this year. Many windows and doors have opened up for us to share music and build community through music with our new home.

This year's concert season features incredible repertoire for new concert attendees and those of us who have been attending for more decades than we can count. *Don Juan*, *Carmina Burana*, Dvořák, Beethoven, and Tchaikovsky are always new when I hear them; I'm truly a different person with each decade that zooms by.

Thank you for attending our concert tonight! If you are a subscriber, you get our deepest love. If you are a concert member, you are making orchestra history. And if you are neither, *why not?* Join the cool kids and become a subscriber or concert member so you don't miss a single moving, communal experience with your ASO. Visit our website or call our box office to find out how to enrich your life with more music!

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christina Littlejohn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Christina Littlejohn

ASO

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MASTERWORKS Series

Dear Music Lovers,

Welcome to this concert with your Arkansas Symphony Orchestra! Whether this is your first symphony concert or your 100th, you can expect to be treated to an inspiring display of musicality, passion, and virtuosity from the outstanding professional musicians of the ASO. It is a true honor and pleasure to be in my third season as the Music Director of this fine ensemble, and we continue to work our hardest to achieve ever greater heights of artistic excellence. I believe that each concert we perform is an opportunity to build connections through the shared experience of listening to live music. Each concert is its own unique event that can never be precisely recreated, and I like to think of each as an opportunity to leave the audience in a harmonious and uplifted mindset.

As Music Director, one of my primary responsibilities is to select the music we will perform on this stage here at the Robinson Center. It is always my goal to introduce the audience and the orchestra to new music each season, written by talented and creative living composers, that shows that the orchestral art form is full of vitality and relevance in the 21st century. We also perform iconic works written by the giants of the past, that have thrilled music lovers for generations; we connect with our musical ancestors as we fill the air with the transcendent sounds of the Romantic, Modern, and Classical musical eras.

Over the course of the season, we also showcase the ensemble's versatility. Whether we are performing heart-thumping music from the soundtrack of an action film or a holiday favorite, paying tribute to a popular artist, or playing Broadway show tunes, the lush and vibrant sound of the ASO truly brings the music to life. I encourage everyone to hear the orchestra play music in a variety of styles, and our concert membership program is the ideal, most accessible way to have this experience.

As the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra is now in its second year in its new home, the ASO Stella Boyle Smith Music Center, I want to highlight that the orchestra's professional musicians do so much more than just play in the orchestra. Virtually everyone is a teaching artist, dedicated to sharing their knowledge and passion with younger generations, helping to ensure that central Arkansas remains a place where music education is accessible, fun, and a uniting experience.

The ASO Stella Boyle Smith Music Center is the home of our Youth Ensembles, String Academy, and all of our continuing education programs for youth and adults. I encourage everyone to visit our website, not just to find out about upcoming concerts, but to explore the full range of opportunities to play music and learn about music that are available in our Music Center, which we have dubbed a "radically welcoming hub of musical activity for ALL Arkansans." We are so proud of this facility, and of our world-class instructors who are all members of this wonderful orchestra!

With that, I invite you to sit back and enjoy this and every special concert this season with your Arkansas Symphony Orchestra.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Geoffrey Robson". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a long, sweeping horizontal line at the end.

Geoffrey Robson



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BEETHOVEN & BLUE JEANS

Geoffrey Robson, *conductor*

Orion Weiss, *piano*

| | | |
|---|---|-----|
| REVUELTAS, Silvestre (1899-1940) arr. Hindemith | Suite from <i>La noche de los Mayas</i> I. Lento II. Andantino – Allegretto – Andante | 13' |
| RAMOS, Marco-Adrián (b. 1995) | Guadalupe o Retablo (2021) | 18' |

I N T E R M I S S I O N

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|-----|
| BEETHOVEN, Ludwig Van (1770-1827) | Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, Op. 58 I. Allegro moderato II. Andante con moto III. Rondo. Vivace | 34' |
|--------------------------------------|--|-----|

Orion Weiss, piano

The guest pianist's appearance with ASO is made possible through an anonymous gift in memory of E. Lee Ronnell.

| | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----|
| MÁRQUEZ, Arturo (b. 1950) | Danzón No. 2 | 10' |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----|

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The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra is supported in part by a grant from the Arkansas Arts Council, an agency of the Department of Arkansas Heritage.

Beethoven & Blue Jeans

GEOFFREY ROBSON, conductor, *Pamela Diane Stephens Conductor's Chair*

ORION WEISS, piano

VIOLIN

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Concertmaster
Dora Paley Ronnel
Concertmaster's Chair
Andrew Irvin
Concertmaster
Katherine Williamson
Assistant Concertmaster

†*Meredith Maddox Hicks
Principal Second Violin
Eric M. Hayward
Memorial Chair

‡Linnaea Brophy
†Charlotte Crosmer
Leanne Day-Simpson
Lauren Elledge
‡Trisha McGovern Freeney
Karen Jarboe
Kristen Kunkel
Beth Massa
Sandra McDonald
Tom McDonald
Jordan Musgrave
Geronimo Oyenard
Lauren Pokorzynski
Tarrah Reynolds
Magdalena Ryszkowski
Dan Santelices
Algimantas Staskevicius
Ariya Tai

VIOLA

‡Katherine Reynolds
Principal
Dr. Howard & Celia
Barnhard Chair
Joe Joyner
Tatiana Kotcherguina
†Timothy MacDuff
Thomas McDonald
Ryan Mooney
Julian Pranata
Beth Robison

CELLO

David Gerstein
Principal
Linda Garner Riggs Chair
Casey Buck
Stephen Feldman
Joanna Klett
Rafael León
†Travis Scharer
Kristin Smith
‡Jacob Wunsch

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Sara Neilson
Jarrett Bastow
Joshua Gebhard
Patrick McKerlie
Sean O'Hara
Benji Wilson

FLUTE & PICCOLO

Carolyn Brown
Principal
Mara Goree

OBOE

Leanna Renfro
Principal
Rachel Fuller
Memorial Chair
Lorraine Duso Kitts

CLARINET

Marianne Shifrin
Principal
Karla Fournier

BASS CLARINET

Karla Fournier

BASSOON

Sofie Friedlander
Principal
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HORN

David Renfro
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Andrew Stadler
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PHOTO: JOE MAZZA

GEOFFREY ROBSON, *Music Director*

Geoffrey Robson, violinist and conductor, is the Music Director of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra. Prior to his appointment, his tenure as the Arkansas Symphony's Artistic Director and Principal Conductor was a significant success. His dynamic leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in national and state-wide visibility for the organization. The orchestra's *Bedtime with Bach* online concert series received nationwide acclaim and was featured by the *Washington Post* and the *Kelly Clarkson Show*.

During his tenure with the ASO, Robson has conducted critically acclaimed and sold-out masterworks, pops, chamber, and educational concerts throughout the state. His innovative programming has brought new audiences into the hall and made all feel welcome and has inspired and energized the orchestra.

In 2021, he conducted and served as executive producer for the recording of Florence Price's *Concerto in One Movement* with the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, featuring pianist Karen Walwyn. This was the orchestra's first commercial release in over 20 years. In the fall of 2024, the orchestra released a recording of Christopher Theofanidis' *The Wind and Petit Jean*, also conducted and produced by Robson.

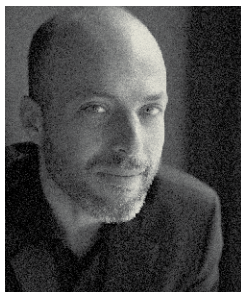
A champion of new music, he collaborates with and explores the music of renowned living composers. In 2016, he conducted the world premiere of James Stephenson's *Concerto for Hope* with celebrated trumpeter Ryan Anthony. He served as arranger, conductor, and violinist for the world premiere of *Billy Blythe*, a one-act opera based on the life of the young Bill Clinton, by Bonnie Montgomery. He conducted the premiere of *Into the Beautiful North* by Joe Brent, performed by the 9 Horses trio, as well as the premiere of *Richard III, A Crown of Roses, A Crown of Thorns*, an opera by Karen Griebbling. In 2021 and 2022, he secured co-commissions of new works by Tania León and James Lee III, which were performed by the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra.

An active violinist, Robson is an avid chamber musician and regularly collaborates with musicians across the country. He also serves as the Artistic Director of the Faulkner Chamber Music Festival, curating a summer concert series and directing the chamber music camp for students.

He served as concertmaster of the Connecticut Virtuosi Chamber Orchestra and as Assistant Concertmaster of the Waterbury Symphony. He is also recognized for his skill and versatility as a fiddle player and has established himself as a highly sought-after studio musician. He writes and performs string and orchestral arrangements for recording artists to assist them in achieving their goals in the studio. His arrangements have also been featured on numerous Arkansas Symphony Orchestra performances.

Robson studied orchestral conducting at the Mannes College of Music in New York City under the tutelage of David Hayes, and he holds violin performance degrees from Yale University and the Michigan State University Honors College. Primary violin teachers include Erick Friedman, Dmitri Berlinsky, James Krehbiel, and I-fu Wang.

He studied conducting at Yale University with Lawrence Leighton Smith, Edward Cumming, and Shinik Hahm. Other notable teachers include John Farrer, Neil Thomson, Joana Carneiro, Dirk Brossé, and Larry Rachleff.



ORION WEISS, *Piano*

One of the most sought-after soloists and chamber music collaborators today, Orion Weiss is a “brilliant pianist” (*The New York Times*) with “powerful technique and exceptional insight” (*The Washington Post*). He has dazzled audiences worldwide with his “head-spinning range of colors” (*Chicago Tribune*) and has performed with all of the major orchestras of North America, including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and New York Philharmonic.

In 2024, Weiss will release *Arc III*, the final album in his *Arc* recital trilogy (First Hand Records). His live performance schedule includes engagements with violinist James Ehnes, who joins Weiss for his return to London’s Wigmore Hall, as well as for performances in Tokyo, Seoul, Hong Kong, Seattle, Bloomington, Indiana, and Bergen, Norway. Among numerous engagements with U.S. orchestras, Weiss makes his David Geffen Hall debut with the American Symphony Orchestra. He is featured in recitals at the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Italy’s Teatro Marrucino Biglietteria, and Washington University in St. Louis, as well as on a tour with Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and an appearance at LaMusica Chamber Music Festival in Sarasota, Florida. Over the last year, he made his return to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, led by Michael Tilson Thomas; debuted with the National Symphony; gave multiple performances in the United States, Canada and Asia with violinist Augustin Hadelich; and appeared at the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, and Carnegie Hall’s Zankel Hall.

Known for his affinity for chamber music, Weiss performs at venues and festivals around the United States with such artists as violinists Augustin Hadelich, William Hagen, and James Ehnes; pianists Michael Brown and Shai Wosner; cellist Julie Albers; and the Ariel, Parker, and Pacifica Quartets.



MARCO-ADRIÁN RAMOS, *Composer*

Marco-Adrián Ramos is a Mexican-American composer whose potent and eclectic music spans a variety of media, including works for voice, instrumental, and electroacoustic ensembles, and dance.

His work has been sought and performed by various institutions and ensembles, including the MATA Festival, FLUX Quartet, the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, 45th Parallel, the Juilliard Orchestra, the Yale Philharmonia, the New York Youth Symphony, the Houston Symphony, ZOFO Piano Duo, the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, Emmanuel Music, the Aspen Music Festival, the Next Festival of Emerging Artists, and the Gamper Festival of Contemporary Music.

Recognitions include three ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Awards, an artist grant from the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures, the Arthur Friedman Prize (Juilliard), the Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the William Schuman Prize from the BMI Foundation.

He is currently an instructor at the University of Arkansas, teaching classes on music theory and composition. Since the beginning of 2024, he has also worked as an administrator at the Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music (GLFCAM).

Marco-Adrián holds degrees from The Juilliard School and Yale University’s School of Music. Cherished mentors have included artists like Mari Kimura, Melinda Wagner, Aaron Jay Kernis, Derek Bermel, Gabriela Lena Frank, and David Lang.



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SUITE FROM “LA NOCHE DE LOS MAYAS” / *Silvestre Revueltas (arr. Hindemith)*

b. Santiago Papasquiaro, Mexico / December 31, 1899 – October 5, 1940

Silvestre Revueltas’ music brims with rhythm, color, and the heartbeat of his native Mexico. A composer, violinist, and political activist, Revueltas was known for blending modernist techniques with indigenous and folk influences, creating music that was both experimental and deeply rooted in place.

Originally composed as a film score for the 1939 film *La noche de los Mayas*, Silvestre Revueltas’ music evokes a vivid picture of an ancient Mayan civilization, living in total seclusion, before the arrival of outsiders disrupts their world. German composer Paul Hindemith later arranged the music into a two-movement suite, drawing from José Ives Limantour’s own suite of the same source material but paring down the orchestration to a more intimate chamber ensemble, closer in scale to Revueltas’ original vision.

The music is vibrant and visceral. It opens with unrelenting strings—unified in rhythm, insistent in tone—before giving way to a more tranquil middle section. The final movement erupts in percussive, rhythmically complex writing, showcasing Revueltas’ signature style: earthy, intense, and alive with ritualistic power. The result is a journey through sound that feels at once ancient and modern, grounded and otherworldly.

GUADALUPE O RETABLO / *Marco-Adrián Ramos*

b. Springdale, Arkansas / 1995

The following program notes are directly from the composer:

Guadalupe (or *Altarpiece*) is a work that emerged from my love of the architecture of Mexican Catholic churches and the syncretic nature of Catholicism in Mexico, a vibrant and ambiguous cultural overlay of Old World colonial imposition and the resistant presence of Indigenous American beliefs and symbols. Indeed, the symbol of the Virgin of Guadalupe is itself a crystallization of this phenomenon; the Old World’s Virgin Mary, cast in the body of an Indigenous Mexican woman. By no coincidence, her alleged appearance in 1531 happened on the top of the hill of Tepeyac in what is now Mexico City, a site known for the worship of the Aztec mother-goddess Tonantzin, who bears a striking similarity to the Virgin Mary from Christianity. Like many aspects of Mexican culture, the cultural lines between the Old and New Worlds are faded and tenuous.

My work flows in four connected parts (or spaces, as I tend to think of them)—first, an opening that slowly unfolds with twinkling metallic sounds, perhaps evoking the way light strikes the surfaces of a church’s interior, or the bells and chimes one can hear around the time of Mass.

The second space is a series of orchestral tuttis (everyone playing together) alternating with solos and duets. We can think of them like call-and-responses (common during the reciting of psalms), or chorus and verse (like most songs we hear in church): the bassoon and bass clarinet, and piccolo and the ocarina, and finally the trumpet and trombone. To me, the feeling of walking through a new church and looking at the sculptures and images of the saints is present, with each one telling a different story or embodying different gradations of “Old World” and “New World” aesthetics. The marimba (an

instrument whose journey from Africa to Latin America is a story unto itself) sneaks in at the end of this space, and there's a short transition into the third section.

A radiant, energetic piano solo signals our entrance into the third space, with driving rhythms rising to a peak of exaltation—anyone who has witnessed a procession on nights before Church festivals or feast days in Latin America will understand the feeling of wonder and community. After a tense climactic point, there is a marimba solo that leads us into the final section.

The last space is somber, contemplative—an evocation of eternal cycles, with echoes of melodic figures circling back on themselves over and over. There's a slow build to another unsettling climax—maybe recognition that all this spiritual beauty came by way of unmeasured death and destruction. The music slowly peels all its layers off, but with the feeling that these cycles will spin forth long after the music stops. I am very thankful to Geoffrey Robson and the ASO for helping me share this work with you.

PIANO CONCERTO NO. 4 / *Ludwig van Beethoven*

b. Bonn, Germany / December 1770 – March 26, 1827

Ludwig van Beethoven is cemented in music history as both a virtuosic pianist and a revolutionary composer. He expanded the size and emotional scope of symphonies and concertos, paving the way for the lush and intensely expressive music of the Romantic era. He was also the first to incorporate choral forces into a symphony, blurring the lines between instrumental and vocal music and redefining what a symphony could be.

Premiered alongside his Fifth and Sixth symphonies, Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto was his first that truly demonstrated his mature compositional voice as both a pianist and a visionary. The legendary December 1808 premieres of these colossal pieces covered a concert lasting almost five hours in a Viennese theatre that had no central heating. This also marked one of the last times Beethoven played piano in public, as his hearing was rapidly deteriorating.

What marks this concerto apart from Beethoven's others is the constant dialogue between orchestra and soloist. Here, the composer gives both forces equal value, establishing a conversation between the two that was far from standard at the time. Though many listeners may not know the standard format for a solo concerto, it is clear from the first notes of this concerto that Beethoven was breaking a mold. Instead of hearing the entire orchestra make a dramatic flourish to announce the soloist, as was customary, the soloist begins the entire work by themselves, immediately establishing a new feeling to the entire work. As the soloist places each note perfectly in space, a spell is cast, weaving a tale one cannot help but see in their mind's eye, though no such tale was intended in the writing of this movement. The rest of the movement unfolds in a new direction, now beginning the “real” introduction of the thematic material. One may notice the similarities between this theme and that of Beethoven's famous “short-short-short-long” theme of his Fifth Symphony!

The second movement opens with an ominous announcement in the strings using a limping rhythm before the soloist enters in a mismatched, tender mood. The strings have none of it and try once more to bring the soloist down to their level, but eventually the two find middle ground, and the agitation of the second movement softly dissolves into quiet acquiescence.

continued next page

PROGRAM NOTES continued

The finale is a jubilant conversation between piano and orchestra, allowing the two to intertwine in an energetic yet slightly reserved dance before the final race to the finish line. The theme presented in the strings is a melody that the piano cannot copy. The quickly repeating notes that are natural for strings to execute are not comfortably executed on piano, and so the only course for the soloist is to turn the theme into its own version. Then, for a moment, we hear the soft theme of the second movement before a dance-like rush to the finale, vivacious and cheery in lovely E-flat major chords all throughout the orchestra.

DANZÓN NO. 2 / *Arturo Márquez*

b. Alamos, Mexico / b. December 20, 1950

Blazing hot and wistfully nostalgic, Arturo Márquez unleashes the full force of the orchestra in his celebrated Danzón No. 2.

Widely recognized as one of Mexico's leading classical composers, Márquez was born in Alamos, Sonora, and raised in a household steeped in Mexican folk and mariachi musical traditions by his father and grandfather. His danzones, 9 in total, are his most well-known works. A danzón is an old salon dance originating in Cuba, like the Argentine tango, but slower and more refined. The second of Márquez's danzones has an irresistible groove that has earned him international praise.

The piece begins in classic danzón style: soft, sensual, and smooth, led by a graceful clarinet solo that intertwines with the oboe. Before long, heat begins to build in the orchestra. Suddenly, color blooms and bursts in the score, with fiery syncopations and dazzling melody. Then, a breath of warm air as the texture thins and the strings whisk us into a siesta, where the mood begins to simmer and cool once more. Bringing about the finale, a trumpet solo rouses the orchestra and the party begins once more, finishing riotously with a single, unstoppable note. Arturo Márquez's expert orchestration and irresistible character in his Danzón No. 2 will be sure to sweep audience members off their feet!

Program Notes by Kami Curtis 2025



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Distributions from the Foundation **allow ASO to hire professional musicians to make a living and choose to call Arkansas home, be a radically welcoming hub of musical activity for all, and remain a financially strong and flourishing organization.**

ASO has served Arkansas through music for 60 years, and **endowment gifts to the Foundation either in present or through legacy gifts make it possible for ASO to keep serving the community for the next 60 years and beyond.**

ASO's endowment is a source of long-term funding to support ASO's mission to serve Arkansas through music.

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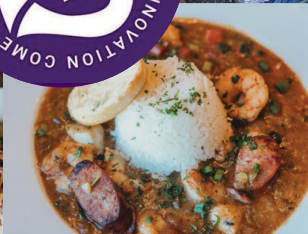
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