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## **Arkansas Symphony Orchestra CEO Christina Littlejohn**

### **Featured on TRG Arts' 'Leading the Way' Podcast**

*Littlejohn Talks Audience Growth, Accessibility and What Drives Success*

**LITTLE ROCK, AR. (April 28, 2026)** — [Arkansas Symphony Orchestra \(ASO\)](#) CEO Christina Littlejohn is the latest guest on "Leading the Way," a podcast hosted by Jill Robinson of TRG Arts, for a conversation about audience growth, organizational resilience and ASO's continued momentum as it enters its 61st season.

Published April 22, the episode explores how Littlejohn and the ASO team have chosen accessibility, investment and growth as long-term strategies for serving more Arkansans through music. Listeners can hear the full episode [here](#).

During the interview, Littlejohn reflected on a pivotal decision early in her ASO tenure. Facing a \$500,000 structural gap on a roughly \$3 million budget, ASO considered eliminating a Sunday concert. Instead, the organization made Sunday concerts free for children, turning a financial challenge into an opportunity to grow audiences and welcome more families into the concert hall.

"We [used] that Sunday as an opportunity to see if we could actually grow our audience instead of shrink our audience," she said. "And it's been a great decision."

Littlejohn also discussed ASO's concert membership model, which began as a flexible, accessible monthly option and has grown to nearly 1,100 concert members. She said the program has helped fill the hall, attract younger and more diverse audiences and strengthen patrons' sense of belonging.

"One of our longtime patrons said, 'Christina, you've just done a great job of making sure that we all feel like we belong in the concert hall,'" Littlejohn said. "And shifting that demographic makes other people feel that they belong too."

Additional highlights from the episode include:

- ASO's belief that full concert halls create energy for musicians, audiences and donors alike.
- The importance of making concerts accessible through flexible pricing, memberships and free tickets for children.
- How ASO is using audience data and pricing strategy to improve the concert experience and fill more seats.

- The connection between frequent attendance, deeper engagement and future philanthropic support.
- ASO's investment in staff development, collaboration and professional coaching.
- The role of the [ASO Stella Boyle Smith Music Center](#) in expanding the orchestra's reach and strengthening its future.
- Littlejohn's focus on sustainable growth that allows ASO to serve more people and support more professional musicians in Arkansas.

The conversation reflects many of the priorities outlined in ASO's 2035 Vision and Strategy, including becoming a radically welcoming hub for all, cultivating a thriving network that enables professional musicians to call Arkansas home, and building a financially strong and flourishing organization.

**Episode link:** [tgart.com/leading-the-way/christina-littlejohn-arkansas-symphony-arts-leadership](https://tgart.com/leading-the-way/christina-littlejohn-arkansas-symphony-arts-leadership)

### **About The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra**

The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra is the leading employer of professional performing artists in Arkansas and is celebrating its 61st season in 2026-2027. 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, ASO Children's Choir, 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 14 full-time musicians, over 70 part-time musicians, and 16 administrative staff members with an annual operating budget of \$4.9 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](http://www.arkansassymphony.org).

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