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2023-2024 CONCERT SEASON





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Dear ASO supporters, music lovers, people who took piano when young and have always regretted quitting, former high school band or ASYO members, and anyone who is out for a night of fun and relaxation,



I am pleased to welcome you here today to hear your Arkansas Symphony Orchestra perform with new Music Director Geoffrey Robson. I could not be more excited about the future. I am so thankful that Geoffrey was selected to lead the orchestra by a unanimous decision of the Search Committee, chaired by Dr. Denise Compton. Geoff cares deeply about the ASO, Little Rock, children, music education, and Arkansas. We could not be in better hands with our new leader. Deepest gratitude to the musicians, board members, and staff that served and gave hundreds of hours to this search.

Our next important work is building the ASO Stella Boyle Smith Music Center. One hundred years ago, Stella Boyle Smith invited a group of musicians to perform in her living room. In fall of 2024, ASO will finally have its first permanent home and be able to broadcast the music of ASO into every living room in Arkansas! Thank you to Brigita Gardner, Chair of the Crescendo Campaign, for leading us through an \$11.75M capital campaign to bring this project to a reality.

Thank you to all of you who contributed to make the new community music center a reality for our state. We envision the ASO Stella Boyle Smith Music Center being a “Radically-Welcoming Hub of Musical Activity for All Arkansans.” We want everyone who walks into the space to see themselves there. A committee of community leaders led by Susan Marsh contributed ideas for how they want to use the music center to further their missions and serve our children, seniors, and community members with music-making and education.

To ensure the future of current programs and to take full advantage of the possibilities of the new Music Center, the ASO is embarking on a \$3M endowment campaign, *Encore*. As you may be reading or hearing in the news, the performing arts are navigating new challenges in the aftermath of the pandemic. By adding \$3M to the current \$10M endowment, we will ensure that the ASO remains financially healthy and continues to consistently balance its budget. The ASO has balanced its budget for 14 years, which enabled us to continue serving the community with music during the pandemic. Sustaining a solid financial foundation enables ASO to employ musicians of impeccable artistry to live, teach, and play in Little Rock and the state of Arkansas.

Thank you all for being here today for your Arkansas Symphony Orchestra. If you are a subscriber or concert member, thank you for your commitment. If you would like to become a subscriber or concert member, or are interested in participating on the Board of Advisors or Directors, please reach out to me at clittlejohn@arkansassymphony.org. If you want to learn more about ASO, the programs of the E. Lee Ronnel Music Academy, or see more of the new logo designed by Cranford Co., please visit our website at www.ArkansasSymphony.org.

Thank you for your participation. I hope you enjoy yourself and come back again and again.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christina Littlejohn".

Christina Littlejohn

ASO

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Thank you



Stella
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MASTERWORKS Series

Dear Music Lover,

It is an honor to welcome you to the symphony as the Music Director of your Arkansas Symphony Orchestra! This is a historic year for ASO and the performing arts in central Arkansas, and I am so happy that you are taking part in it with us.

This is a season with something for everybody. If this is your first time attending, we welcome you and hope this will be the first of many world-class performances you enjoy! We would love to hear about your experience, and hope you'll reach out if you have any questions.

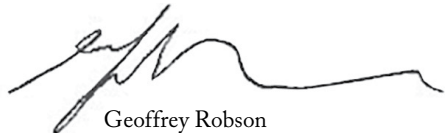
I have never been more optimistic about the future of orchestral music. In putting together concerts, I like to mix pieces of music that are historically famous with music composed by contemporary living talent, and music that history has improperly overlooked. There is more great music being written right now for orchestra than at any point I can remember. Composers you'll hear this year on our Masterworks series, such as Anna Clyne, Jonathan Bailey Holland, Chen Yi, and others, have such an extraordinary wealth of influences and styles in their music that it is inspiring, genre-bending greatness with every note. Older works get new life breathed into them each time the ASO takes them up: transcendent moments of beauty for us to enjoy together as an audience and performers.

Orchestras can now play entire film scores live while the movie plays on a big screen above the orchestra. This technological feat, and the resulting performance from your ASO, gives new meaning to the term high-definition! Capathia Jenkins, who brought the house DOWN when she performed *Tribute to Aretha Franklin* with us, returned this spring in *She's Got Soul*, which was equally memorable as we celebrate the great American genre of soul music. We celebrated the total solar eclipse in April 2024, with a performance of *The Planets*, a celestial musical journey through the heavens and its accompanying astrology.

Lastly, there is such an astounding array of musical talent in our city and across the community; it is one of my great joys that we can seek out and feature local artists, support emerging careers, and uplift us all. We have never been more dedicated to making live music performance one of the great connectors in our community. This is why we embarked on a first-of-its-kind project for an orchestra with this month's *Arkansas Talent* performances. Six finalists will sing with the symphony, competing for the chance to be our headlining vocalist for next season's *Home for the Holidays* concerts.

Your ASO is more accessible than ever. The \$9/month concert membership allows one to enjoy any of our concerts for a consistent low monthly rate. It makes a perfect gift for someone you think will enjoy our music! Are you an amateur orchestral musician? Our Community Orchestra, directed by our new Associate Conductor—Valery Saul—is a fabulous opportunity to get back into the music-making community! Our youth orchestras are an incredible opportunity for students to grow musically, learn leadership skills, and have a lot of fun doing it. Beginner child or adult lessons, volunteer opportunities, social gatherings with music as the common denominator... Visit www.arkansassymphony.org to get started.

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Geoffrey Robson

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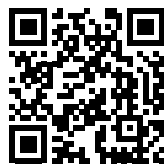
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STELLA BOYLE SMITH MASTERWORKS SERIES

Brahms Symphony No. 4

Geoffrey Robson, *conductor*

Michelle Cann, *piano*

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|-----|
| RICHARD WAGNER
<i>(1813-1883)</i> | Prelude and Isolde's Love Death
from <i>Tristan and Isolde</i> | 19' |
| CLARA SCHUMANN
<i>(1819-1896)</i> | Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 7
I. Allegro maestoso
II. Romanze: Andante non troppo
con grazia
III. Finale: Allegro non troppo –
Allegro molto | 21' |
| <i>Michelle Cann, piano</i> | | |

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

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|-----|
| JOHANNES BRAHMS
<i>(1819-1896)</i> | Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98
I. Allegro non troppo
II. Andante moderato
III. Allegro giocoso
IV. Allegro energico e passionato | 33' |
|---------------------------------------|---|-----|

Michelle Cann appears by arrangement with Curtis Institute of Music.

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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.



PHOTO: JOE MAZZA

GEOFFREY ROBSON, *Music Director*

Geoffrey Robson, violinist and conductor, has recently been named the Music Director of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra. He has also served as the Artistic Director of the Faulkner Chamber Music Festival since 2017 and has served on the faculty since the festival's inception in 2006. In this role, he curates a summer concert series and serves as director of a chamber music camp for students of all ages. With his background in violin performance, Robson is in frequent demand as a chamber musician, studio musician, and instrumental arranger. His violin teachers have included Erick Friedman and Alexander Kerr.

As conductor of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, 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.

Robson regularly conducts opera and ballet, as well as symphonic and chamber music. His conducting teachers have included David Hayes, John Farrer, and Larry Rachleff. He loves to collaborate with creative individuals, and to make music outside of the 'classical' genre, especially improvised music.



VALERY SAUL, *Associate Conductor*

Described as a "powerful presence on the podium" by Marin Alsop, Valery Saul is recognized for her dynamic leadership and musicality. She was recently appointed the Associate Conductor of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra and also serves as a cover conductor for the Minnesota Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Charlotte Symphony, and Oregon Symphony.

In summer 2023, Valery was invited by Cristian Măcelaru (Orchestre National de France and WDR Symphony Orchestra) to participate in the Romanian Chamber Orchestra Masterclass and at the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music. During the 2021/22 season, Valery won 2nd place at the Denver Philharmonic International Conducting Competition with a captivating performance of *Chopin Piano Concerto No. 2*. Valery was also invited to the Domaine Forget Conducting Academy to work with Yannick Nézet-Séguin and Bramwell Tovey where she was awarded the Excellence Scholarship. She was also selected by Marin Alsop to participate in the AT&T She's Connected commercial that highlights visibility of women in the arts and entertainment industry and was chosen as the 2022 winner for the Gena Branscombe Conducting Scholarship.

Memorable conducting highlights include invitations to participate in masterclasses with the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center and with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. Additionally, she was appointed conductor for the OperaBox Company in Vancouver, Canada where she led virtual programs of Puccini's *La Bohème* and Handel's *Messiah*. She also served as the assistant conductor for the Baltimore Symphony Youth Orchestra and the Hillsboro Symphony Orchestra.

Valery is a graduate of Peabody Conservatory (M.M. 2022). She has been mentored by Marin Alsop, Cristian Măcelaru, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Miguel Harth-Bedoya, David Danzmayr, and George Manahan. In addition to conducting, Valery is a professional opera singer.



MICHELLE CANN, Piano

Lauded as “exquisite” by *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and “a pianist of sterling artistry” by *Gramophone*, Michelle Cann has become one of the most sought-after pianists of her generation. She made her debut in 2021 with The Philadelphia Orchestra and has recently performed concertos with The Cleveland Orchestra, the National Symphony Orchestra, the Orquestra Sinfônica Municipal de São Paulo, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the symphony orchestras of Atlanta, Baltimore, and Cincinnati. Highlights of Cann’s 2023-24 season include appearances with the Charlotte, Hawaii, Indianapolis, Québec, Sarasota, and Winnipeg symphony orchestras, and recitals in New York City, Portland, Berkeley, Beverly Hills, and Denver.

Recognized as a leading interpreter of the piano music of Florence Price, Cann performed the New York City premiere of Price’s *Piano Concerto in One Movement* with The Dream Unfinished Orchestra in July 2016. Her recording of the concerto with the New York Youth Symphony won a Grammy Award in 2023. Her acclaimed debut solo album *Revival*, featuring music by Price and Margaret Bonds, was released in May 2023.

Cann was the recipient of the 2022 Sphinx Medal of Excellence, the highest honor bestowed by the Sphinx Organization. She holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees in piano performance from the Cleveland Institute of Music and an Artist’s Diploma from the Curtis Institute of Music. Cann joined the Curtis piano faculty in 2020 as the inaugural Eleanor Sokoloff Chair in Piano Studies, and she joined the piano faculty of the Manhattan School of Music in 2023.

Listen now to Michelle Cann’s solo album *Revival*, Music of Price and Bonds, by scanning the QR code at the right using the camera on your mobile phone. More information at Curtis.edu/revival.

Follow Michelle Cann on Instagram: [@michelleacann](https://www.instagram.com/michelleacann)



Brahms Symphony No. 4

GEOFFREY ROBSON, Music Director & Conductor, *Pamela Diane Stephens Conductor's Chair*MICHELLE CANN, *Piano***VIOLIN**

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Kiril Laskarov

Concertmaster

Katherine Williamson

Assistant Concertmaster

*†Meredith Maddox Hicks

*Principal Second Violin**Eric M. Hayward**Memorial Chair*

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‡Linnæa Brophy

†Charlotte Crosmer

Leanne Day-Simpson

‡Trisha McGovern Freeney

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Karen Jarboe

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Beth Massa

Sandra McDonald

Tom McDonald

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Tarah Reynolds

Magdalena Ryszkowski

Algimantas Staskevicius

Leigh Wing

VIOLA

‡Katherine Reynolds

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Joe Joyner

Tatiana Kotcherquina

†Timothy MacDuff

Thomas McDonald

Ryan Mooney

Julian Pranata

Beth Robison

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David Gerstein

*Principal**Linda Garner Riggs Chair*

Casey Buck

Stephen Feldman

Joanna Klett

Rafael León

†Travis Scharer

Kristin Smith

‡Jacob Wunsch

BASS

Russell Thompson

Principal

Ian Collins

Joshua Gebhard

Patrick McKerlie

Sara Neilson

Sam Shreves

FLUTE

Carolyn Brown

Principal

Gabriel Vega

Carlos Feller

PICCOLO

Gabriel Vega

Carlos Feller

OBOE

Leanna Renfro

*Principal**Rachel Fuller**Memorial Chair*

Lorraine Duso Kitts

Beth Wheeler

ENGLISH HORN

Beth Wheeler

*Principal***CLARINET**

Jorge Diez

Karla Fournier

BASS CLARINET

Mason Sangster

BASSOON

Susan Bell León

Principal

Marissa Takaki

Miles Mateus

CONTRABASSOON

Miles Mateus

HORN

David Renfro

Principal

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PRELUDE AND ISOLDE'S LOVE DEATH FROM TRISTAN AND ISOLDE*Richard Wagner*

b. Leipzig, Germany / May 22, 1813; d. Venice, Italy / February 13, 1883

By 1857, Wagner had become totally exhausted by his intensive labors on the quartet of operas known as *The Ring of the Nibelungs* for which, following his standard practice, he was creating both music and text. He took a break after completing the second act of *Siegfried*, the third opera in the cycle. He intended to refresh himself by composing one or two brief, easily-produced operas whose anticipated success would help prop up his perpetually shaky finances. Instead, his "rest period" gave birth to two of his grandest works: the searing love-drama *Tristan and Isolde*, and the mammoth comic opera, *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*.

He composed *Tristan* from 1856 to 1859. The first performance was given at the Court Opera in Munich, Germany on June 10, 1865. With its morbid storyline and lengthy periods of unresolved emotional and musical tension, it is a seminal work for one direction that music would take, the one followed by Mahler, Schoenberg, and Weill, among many others.

Wagner based the plot on a medieval English legend. It tells of the all-consuming passion that develops, as the result of a love potion, between Tristan, a Cornish knight, and Isolde, an Irish princess who is betrothed to Tristan's uncle, King Mark. Their circumstances make it impossible for them to have a normal romantic relationship. It is only in death, with the cares and restrictions of earthly life behind them, that they can know true peace and fulfillment. The prelude is filled with restless romantic yearning and a tremendous sense of foreboding.

PIANO CONCERTO IN A MINOR, OP. 7 / Clara Schumann

b. Leipzig, Germany / September 13, 1819; d. Frankfurt am Mein, Germany / May 20, 1896

Clara was one of those talented female composers whose music suffered neglect primarily due to her gender. Her compositions are undergoing a revival, bringing her the acclaim which she has always deserved. The Schumanns' friend Johannes Brahms loved her passionately but her loyalty to Robert, even after his death, meant their affair was never consummated.

The daughter of gifted musicians, Clara Wieck received a superb musical education in the major musical centers of Germany. She made her public debut as a pianist at age nine and won the admiration of prominent musicians such as Chopin and Spohr while she was still a teenager. She and Robert Schumann had known each other since childhood. They overcame her father's opposition and were married in 1840. Robert died 16 years later. Clara helped maintain his reputation as a composer, performing his music faithfully and brilliantly throughout the remainder of her distinguished international career. She supported many musicians, Felix Mendelssohn, Johannes Brahms, and Joseph Joachim among them.

She was active as a composer from early on. Her principal areas of interest were songs and piano solos, which she regularly included in her recitals. Apart from a march composed for a friend's anniversary in 1879, she ceased composing after Robert's death.

Her sole surviving work involving the orchestra was the *Concerto in A Minor*. She composed it between 1833 and 1836, that is between the ages of 14 and 17. She wrote the Finale first, which was then orchestrated by Robert. She went on to add the remaining two movements, which she scored herself. The premiere of the complete Concerto took place in Leipzig on November 9, 1835, with the composer as soloist and Mendelssohn conducting. The second movement is a tender Romanze during which the orchestra remains silent. It opens with the piano playing solo, then a cello enters for an expressive duet.

SYMPHONY NO. 4 IN E MINOR, OP. 98 / Johannes Brahms

b. Hamburg, Germany / May 7, 1833; d. Vienna, Austria / April 3, 1897

"I shall never write a symphony," Brahms told his friend, conductor Hermann Levi. "You have no idea how the likes of us feel when we hear the tramp of a giant like him behind us." The "him" was Beethoven, and Brahms was far from being alone in feeling intimidated by Beethoven's nine unsurpassable examples of symphonic creation. Once Brahms felt secure in his own gifts, he took up the challenge, composing four exceptional symphonies that have carved out their own enduring and revered corner of the symphonic pantheon.

He created *Symphony No. 4* during the summers of 1884 and 1885. Composing it gave him a great deal of trouble, and he harbored strong misgivings about its value. Most of the friends he played it for shared those reservations—but not the eminent conductor Hans von Bülow, who praised its "incomparable strength from start to finish." Still, the premiere, which Brahms conducted himself in Meiningen on October 25, 1885, met a cool reception. Audiences found the symphony's reserved grandeur and fatalistic power too difficult to deal with on first acquaintance.

It is one of Brahms' most successful reconciliations between the opposing demands of Classical form and Romantic expressiveness. The first movement presents a mixture of nostalgia and defiance. For all its relaxed pace, it bears an underlying sense of unease. The next section continues the melancholy mood, with several disturbing climaxes rising up from the general mood of meditation. In marked contrast, the third movement (the last to be written) is a hearty scherzo, reminiscent of Beethoven's grand symphonic jests. It is driven by an immense fund of energy, and Brahms gives its texture extra sparkle by including the silvery tinkling of the triangle.

The finale introduces the dark, forceful sound of trombones for the first time in this work. It resumes the symphony's overall mood of tragedy. Brahms gave it the form of a passacaglia. This type of piece, favored by many composers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, consists of a set of continuous variations over an unchanging ground bass. Brahms' passacaglia plays a direct tribute to the Baroque era as well, based as it is on the melody of the final chorus from Johann Sebastian Bach's *Cantata No. 150*, a piece which had not been published at the time but which Brahms knew from a copyist's manuscript given to him by an eminent Bach scholar, Philipp Spitta.

continued next page

PROGRAM NOTES continued

Conductor Siegfried Ochs recalled a conversation he witnessed (in about 1880), between Brahms and Bülow. “In order to demonstrate what a work of art (this Bach cantata) was, Brahms went to the piano and played part of the passacaglia which forms its climax and conclusion. He first played the bass, upon which the whole piece is built, then proceeded to the passacaglia itself. Bülow listened to all this with only cold admiration and made the objection that the great climax, which was clearly Bach’s intellectual conception of it, could hardly be brought out with the desired force by singing voices. ‘That has occurred to me, too,’ said Brahms. ‘What would you think of a symphonic movement written on this theme someday? But it is too heavy, too straightforward. It would have to be altered in some way.’” From this theme, Brahms constructed a starker and weightier passacaglia than any written before. It builds an inexorable sense of tragic momentum right up to its uncompromisingly stern conclusion.

PROGRAM NOTES BY DON ANDERSON © 2024



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Arkansas Symphony Orchestra broke ground on August 10, 2023 on its new \$11.75 million Stella Boyle Smith Music Center in Little Rock's East Village, creating a first-of-its-kind music-focused headquarters for the state. The new 20,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility, slated to open in September 2024, is the Symphony's first permanent home in its 58-year history.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT

CRESCENDO: FOR THE FUTURE

Arkansas Symphony Capital Campaign



The new music center will be a **radically-welcoming hub** of musical activity for all Arkansans, serving youth and adults of all ages with an array of musical offerings. The building will provide access to music education, music performances, and music-making to residents of all corners of the state through new spaces and a broadcast and recording studio.

ArkansasSymphony.org/crescendo

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The ASO would like to thank and recognize these leaders for their support in making the ASO Stella Boyle Smith Music Center a reality for our community.

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 arr. Crosmer *Kris Allen, vocalist*

FINALIST 1 (SATURDAY)

CELINE DION It's All Coming Back To Me
 arr. Xenophanes *Rachel Kamphausen, vocalist*

FINALIST 1 (SUNDAY)

PERSSON & SVENSSON Lovefool
 arr. Wendelboe *Yni Bernalte, vocalist*

HENRY MANCINI Strings on Fire

continued next page

Arkansas Talent *continued*

FINALIST 2 (SATURDAY)

HAROLD ARLEN Somewhere Over the Rainbow
arr. Holcombe *Marcus Murphy, vocalist*

FINALIST 2 (SUNDAY)

GIACOMO PUCCINI O Mio Babbino Caro
Kyndal Collins, vocalist

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BONNIE MONTGOMERY River
arr. Abraham *Bonnie Montgomery, vocalist*

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arr. Babyface *Kris Allen and Bonnie Montgomery, vocalists*
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FINALIST 3 (SATURDAY)

WHITNEY HOUSTON I Have Nothing
arr. Mahler *Mya Little, vocalist*

FINALIST 3 (SUNDAY)

SAM SMITH The Writing's On The Wall
arr. Podd *Kim Qualls, vocalist*

BEYONCÉ Crazy in Love
arr. Wendelboe

PAUL SIMON Bridge Over Troubled Water
arr. Holcombe

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VALERY SAUL, Associate Conductor

KRIS ALLEN, RODNEY BLOCK & BONNIE MONTGOMERY, Celebrity Judges

THE RODNEY BLOCK COLLECTIVE: *Rodney Block, Trumpet William Kendrick, Keys Jonathan Burks, Drums Corey Harris, Bass Roosevelt Deshawn Harris & Bijoux Pigbee, Vocals*

YNI BERNALTE, KYNDAL COLLINS, RACHEL KAMPHAUSEN,

MYA LITTLE, MARCUS MURPHY & KIM QUALLS, Vocalists

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KRIS ALLEN

In 2019, Kris celebrated the 10th anniversary of his *American Idol* win by releasing *10*, an album of reimagined acoustic versions of some of his most beloved songs of the previous decade, including fan-favorite *Waves*, and his platinum-selling single *Live Like We're Dying*. Kris followed this up with the release of *Don't Stop Dancing*, launching a new era of music for the Arkansas-born musician and paving the way for his upcoming 2024 album, *Pole Vaulter*. His newest single, *Guinevere*, features the imaginative songwriting and stunning vocals that put Kris on the map while setting the tone for his most introspective work. From a song about the joys

of long-term love to the antidote for intrusive thoughts, *Pole Vaulter* covers a spectrum of emotion and experience from the seasoned storyteller Kris has become. When not making music and playing it live across the world, Kris lives in Nashville with his wife Katy and three kids.

RODNEY BLOCK

A native of Dumas, Arkansas, trumpeter Rodney has been thriving in the regional music scene for the past ten years. Block has been featured and performed in various festivals and venues across the globe ranging from corporate to social, and has built a niche in the genres of jazz and hip hop. Notable artists he has shared the stage with include The Temptations; Earth, Wind, and Fire; Joe; Tank; Mary Wilson (of The Supremes); Sugar Ray; Chrissette Michelle; Migos; Eric Benet; Whoodini; Conya Doss; Johnny Gill; Dwele; Jonathan Butler; Dave Hollister; Ellis and Delfayo Marsalis; Kirk Whalum; Layla Hathaway; Eric Roberson; Anthony David; Lenny Williams; Angela Winbush; Howard Hewett; R.L. (of the R&B group Next); Marsha Ambrosius; Gucci Mane; Diane Reeves; Anthony Hamilton; Carl Thomas; Toney Terry; and The Yellowjackets. Block has been a frequent guest artist with hip-hop legend and icon Doug E. Fresh. In 2007, Block's televised jazz feature, *AETN Presents: Front Row with Rodney Block*, was nominated for a regional Emmy. In 2014, the band was honored with the Aurora Award and Telly Award for its concert feature on the AETN television network. Currently, fans can listen to the Rodney Block jazz station on iTunes, Pandora Radio, Spotify, and other digital music platforms.



BONNIE MONTGOMERY

Bonnie, a force in outlaw country, boasts a rich musical upbringing spanning southern gospel, Spaghetti Western, Delta blues, and Ozark bluegrass. Her eclectic influences, coupled with classical training as an opera singer, fuel her acclaimed career. With *Paste Magazine* hailing her “timeless songwriting” and Dale Watson dubbing her “a



sophisticated badass born to sing.” Montgomery’s talent shines on her electrifying album *River*. Before the pandemic, she toured extensively, refining her craft onstage and off, even earning praise for her original opera, *Billy Blythe*. Despite the challenges of 2020, Montgomery’s resilience and creativity persisted, resulting in *River*, a deeply personal and genre-defying album. Recorded

in a rustic studio with collaborators like Kevin Skrla and classical violinist Geoffrey Robson, *River* showcases Montgomery’s ability to seamlessly blend soulful vocals with operatic flair, marking a compelling evolution in her musical journey.



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RACHEL KAMPHAUSEN

Rachel graduated from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock with an associate's degree in vocal performance. She currently lives in Sherwood, Arkansas, with her husband and three boys. She grew up in a family of professional musicians and is grateful for its beautiful influence on her life ever since. Rachel took voice and violin lessons throughout her high school and college years and has applied each of those lessons to her everyday music endeavors. She had her singing debut with the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra as a high schooler back in 2010. Rachel performed again for the Arkansas Symphony's Holiday Pops concert in 2017 with the local and professional performing arts company Praeclara. Since then, the mezzo-soprano has enjoyed the versatility of performing several different genres of music. Some of those genres and performances include "alto quartet soloist" for Mozart's *Requiem*, "Hansel" in Engelbert Humperdinck's Opera, *Hansel and Gretel*, "Sour Kangaroo" in *Seussical the Musical*, and "The Witch" in Stephen Sondheim's *Into the Woods*. Rachel is always up for a good challenge, and recently enjoyed auditioning and performing for *Talent INC. USA*, making it through to the finals. She loves leading worship and playing violin with her local church body in North Little Rock. She thanks her incredible family and friends for their continued love and support throughout her pursuit of the arts.

YNI BERNALTE

Yni is 13 years old and an eighth grader at Lisa Academy. She also loves to draw, dance, and write stories. Yni plays various musical instruments and started singing at the age of four. She loves jazz and Broadway music, and is an avid fan of Hailey Reinhart, Mitski, and Lea Salonga.



MARCUS MURPHY



This "young" man, 52, is a living testimony that your gifts will make room for you. His musical journey is filled with notable achievements, including being featured in a nationally syndicated BET Stars commercial and performing on Broadway in productions such as the *Lion King* kick-off tour. Marcus has collaborated with a variety of musical groups, sharing stages with legends like Diane Reeves, Kenny Loggins, and Phillip Bailey, as well as numerous

gospel artists. Now settled in Little Rock, Marcus, affectionately known as "the big man with the big voice," continues to inspire others with his undeniable talent and unwavering determination.

KYNDAL COLLINS

Kyndal currently attends the University of Arkansas at Little Rock as a senior vocal music performance major. Her hobbies include composing music, playing piano, participating in various forms of visual arts, and creative writing, all of which have helped her in developing her musical skills. In recent years, she has also had stage performing opportunities in various forms which consist of solo stage performance, choral performance, and musical theater. These opportunities have helped her develop a true soul connection with music. Kyndal is looking forward to the opportunities and exposure that will be given to provide her with growth in her musical career.



MYA LITTLE

An accomplished after-school coordinator at Jacksonville Lighthouse Charter School, Mya not only manages attendance data, but, supported by administrators and teachers, co-founded a newly established after-school program just a month ago. Her dedication extends beyond data management, actively contributing to schedules for a well-rounded, after-school experience. In addition to her role in education, Mya is a versatile artist from Little Rock,

Arkansas, excelling in singing, modeling, and acting. She is currently studying music and exploring genres like R&B, pop, and classical with remarkable skill. At 23, Mya has made significant strides in her singing career and effortlessly embodies different styles in modeling. As an educator and mentor, she is committed to sharing knowledge and inspiring the next generation of artists, including transformative experiences in acting, from starring in *The Threepenny Opera* to securing a place in the opera *Lo Frate 'Nnamorato* in Urbana, Italy.

KIM QUALLS

Kim started singing at two years old and recording at the age of six. With her family, she grew up singing in churches across the country. Kim has spent the last 23 years as a professional vocalist here in Central Arkansas. Her work includes fundraisers, ASO concerts, various ministry events around the state, as well as recording music for local churches and multiple artists. She has been a vocal coach to students of the SMTI program at The Rep, as well as a private vocal coach for 13 years. With a degree in vocal performance, she has won first place awards from NATS in both classical and musical theater. She currently serves as a part-time worship leader at South City Church in Little Rock. Kim is also a stay-at-home mother of two and enjoys playing music with her husband and painting.



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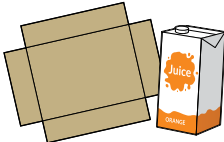
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