

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and
Washington Performing Arts announce**

SHIFT: A Festival of American Orchestras

**Three-year Festival Provides North American Orchestras with a
National Platform to Celebrate Creativity and Build Community**

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Awards \$900,000 Seed Funding

(WASHINGTON)—The Kennedy Center and Washington Performing Arts announce *SHIFT: A Festival of American Orchestras*, a three-year festival celebrating North American orchestras which will begin in the spring of 2017. The project is a reimagining of the innovative *Spring for Music* festival in New York that concluded its four-year run in May 2014. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has awarded a \$900,000 grant for the collaboration, of which \$700,000 will be leveraged as matching funds for new gifts to support the program. The festival will focus on three principal areas: performances, community events, and symposia and workshops. Additionally, there will be a community outreach component for each participating orchestra.

“We are pleased to collaborate with Washington Performing Arts and celebrate the vibrancy and potency of American orchestras in a festival setting, here in the nation’s capital,” said Kennedy Center President Deborah F. Rutter. “We are grateful to The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for their generous commitment to this exciting program.”

The unique institutional collaboration between the two organizations reflects a common intent to showcase the vitality and innovative spirit of American orchestras, and the further goal of sharing the celebration with the Washington, D.C. community at large.

The annual six-day music festival will present four to five orchestras per year, bringing national attention to the exemplary work of these organizations, who will be selected not only for their artistic excellence but for their relationships with their communities. The residency program will incorporate full orchestral and smaller-ensemble performances, symposia, workshops, and other events at the Kennedy Center and in smaller venues and schools throughout the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, reflecting each orchestra's unique identity and strengths on a national platform.

“The title of the festival, *SHIFT*, recognizes the dynamic, evolving work and role of orchestras in the 21st century and underscores our mission to play a role in shifting pre-conceived notions about orchestras,” said President and CEO of Washington Performing Arts Jenny Bilfield. “The Kennedy Center and Washington Performing Arts share an abiding belief that the nation's capital is the ideal place to showcase and honor the high-impact, imaginative work—on and off the stage—that our orchestras are developing for and with their audiences. How exciting for D.C. to showcase this creativity and leadership in spaces around the city!”

Spring for Music was a highly lauded annual orchestra festival that was held at Carnegie Hall in 2011 and concluded in 2014. The four-year program featured 23 orchestras performing in more than 25 concerts and was founded by arts industry leaders Mary Lou Falcone, David Foster, and Thomas W. Morris. Morris was an early proponent of the *SHIFT* festival in Washington.

“*Spring for Music* provided an incredible opportunity to focus attention on the extraordinary breadth of North American orchestras and to unleash their creative energies on building excitement around creative programming,” Morris said. “When Deborah and Jenny informed me and my fellow co-founders of their idea of reconceiving the project in the nation's capital, we were thrilled. We firmly believe that D.C. provides the perfect locale for creating a truly national focus upon America's orchestras and the vital role they play in our society.”

More information for orchestras interested in participating in *SHIFT*, including a Request for Proposals, will be available in late January on the Washington Performing Arts [website](#). Proposals are due Monday, March 2, 2015 by 5 p.m. Eastern time.

ABOUT THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is America's living memorial to President Kennedy. Under the leadership of Chairman David M. Rubenstein, President Deborah F. Rutter, the nine theaters and stages of the nation's busiest performing arts facility attract audiences and visitors totaling 3 million people annually; Center-related touring productions, television, and radio broadcasts welcome 40 million more.

Opening its doors on September 8, 1971, the Center presents the greatest performances of music, dance, and theater; supports artists in the creation of new work; and serves the nation as a leader in arts education. With its artistic affiliates, the National Symphony Orchestra and Washington National Opera, the Center's achievements as a commissioner, producer, and nurturer of developing artists have resulted in more than 300 theatrical productions, and dozens of new ballets, operas, and musical works.

Each year, millions of people nationwide take part in innovative, inclusive, and effective education programs initiated by the Center, including school- and community-based residencies and consultancies; age-appropriate performances and events for young people; career development for young actors, dancers, singers, and instrumentalists; and professional learning opportunities for teachers, teaching artists, and school administrators. These programs have become models for communities across the country. The Center's *Ensuring the Arts for Any Given Child* program works with selected local school districts and seeks to provide a comprehensive arts education to children K-8. The Center also has been at the forefront of making the performing arts accessible to persons with disabilities, highlighted by the work accomplished with its affiliate, VSA.

As part of the Kennedy Center's Performing Arts for Everyone outreach program, the Center stages more than 400 free performances of music, dance, and theater by artists from throughout the world each year on the Center's main stages, and every evening at 6 p.m. on the Millennium Stage. The *Rubenstein Arts Access Program* expands the Center's efforts to make the arts accessible to children, young adults, and to people who have little or limited ability to attend and enjoy the performing arts, enabling audiences to engage in more ways, at more times, and in more places than ever before.

ABOUT WASHINGTON PERFORMING ARTS

Since 1965, Washington Performing Arts has had a foundational role in the arts in our nation's capital, creating profound opportunities that connect community and artists, in both education and performance. Through live events in 11 venues that criss-cross the D.C. metropolitan area, the careers of emerging artists are launched and nurtured, and established artists return to develop closer relationships with Washington Performing Arts' audiences and creative partners.

As one of the leading presenters in the nation, Washington Performing Arts embraces a broad spectrum of the performing arts, including classical music, jazz, gospel, contemporary dance and music, international music and art forms, and new work. Dynamic education programs in the public schools and beyond, are hallmarks of Washington Performing Arts, as are the Embassy Adoption Program and two resident gospel choirs.

In the 2012–13 season, Washington Performing Arts was twice honored for its work at the intersection of arts presenting and education: by President Barack Obama with a National Medal of Arts (becoming only the fourth D.C.-based arts group and the first arts presenter of its kind to be so honored), and the Mayor's Arts Award for Excellence in Service to the Arts.

FUNDING CREDITS

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**For more information about the Kennedy Center
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