



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - ANNOUNCEMENT

Wednesday, July 29, 2020

Richmond Symphony announces a new digital music school - Richmond Symphony School of Music - a community music school

Spurred in part by challenges and disruptions of service resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Richmond Symphony is working to continue its music education programs by shifting them to a digital format, housed under the new Richmond Symphony School of Music (RSSoM).

The Richmond Symphony School of Music (RSSoM) will launch as a virtual music school open to the public in October, its summer pilot is underway. This community music school will provide a broad range of programming to Central Virginia, the Commonwealth, and beyond, and will establish the foundation upon which a brick-and-mortar community music school will be established in the heart of Richmond.

RSSoM will serve all who love music from birth to adulthood: Pre-K students, K-12 students, and adults. As a virtual music school, we will utilize video conferencing software and an array of both digital and traditional resources to supplement instruction and exploration, and to facilitate real-time lessons and classes. **Registration begins August 31 and classes start the week of October 5.**

A diverse and dedicated team of musicians, students, teachers, parents, administrators, and music education professionals representing our region's leaders in the field have been hard at work researching and practicing with these technologies and developing the school throughout the spring and summer of 2020.

Our sincere hope and dream is that RSSoM will grow to take its place among Richmond's many fine institutions as the hub of a universal spectrum of activities, where music education is accessible to all and where all styles and traditions of music are valued, respected, and pursued with dedication, passion, and love.

In year one, the fall semester of online offerings will serve not only our Youth Orchestra Program students, but a variety of vocal and instrumental instruction, music theory and history classes, and jazz classes for preschool students and parents, K-12 students, and adults. Additionally, the Symphony's well-established Musical Ambassadors Program (MAPS), which traditionally consists of small ensembles of Symphony musicians visiting 100+ schools to perform for a total of 45,000 students, is being adapted to be delivered as digital content.

Walter Bitner, Director of Education and Community Engagement

RSSoM is led by Walter Bitner, Director of Education and Community Engagement for the Richmond Symphony. Walter Bitner joined the Symphony in August 2019. He has led a multi-faceted career as a teacher and performer. His teaching career 1991-2014 spans public and private schools - from Kindergarten through 12th grade - and included a broad array of music education formats including general music, choir, strings, piano, and music theory. He is Conductor Emeritus of Music City Youth Orchestra, which he founded and directed from 2007 – 2012. From 2014-2019 he served as Director of Education & Community Engagement for the Nashville Symphony, where he established the award-winning Accelerando program designed to prepare gifted young students of diverse backgrounds for pursuing music at the collegiate level and beyond. Walter speaks regularly about music, education, and DEI at regional and national conferences, and he writes extensively on these topics for national magazines and professional associations, and on his website Off The Podium at walterbitner.com. Bitner will be responsible for integrating diversity curricula into the existing RSSoM program.

Website and promotional video

A one minute video about RSSoM can be found here <https://youtu.be/6IRkuv5TsKU>
Please note RSSoM has its own website which is <https://richmondsymphonySOM.com/>

Sponsors

The Richmond Symphony School of Music gratefully acknowledges the support of the following sponsors: Margarete and Siegfried Eckhaus Charitable Trust and The Community Foundation for a Greater Richmond - Mr. and Mrs. Thomas F. Garner, Jr. and Dr. and Mrs. William V. Garner.

The Richmond Symphony is partially funded by the Virginia Commission for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts; CultureWorks & the Arts and Cultural Funding Consortium -- supported by the City of Richmond and the Counties of Hanover and Henrico.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

High res images and interviews with Walter Bitner are available.

For all enquiries please contact:

Frances Sterling, Director of Advancement and Patron Communications

fsterling@richmondsymphony.com

804 508 2369