



NEWS RELEASE

Wichita Symphony Orchestra

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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WICHITA SYMPHONY PERFORMS TRIBUTE TO ARETHA FRANKLIN

Winter Pops Features Vocalist Capathia Jenkins and Wichita's Gospel Choir A.R.I.S.E.

(Wichita, KS) The Wichita Symphony, with guest vocalists Capathia Jenkins and Darryl Jovan Williams, and Wichita's gospel choir A.R.I.S.E. perform a concert honoring the legacy of the Queen of Soul, Aretha Franklin, hailed by *Rolling Stone Magazine* as "the greatest singer of all time." The concert takes place at Century II Concert Hall on Saturday, February 18, at 7:30 PM.

Concertgoers will enjoy iconic hits like *Respect*, *A Natural Woman*, *Chain of Fools*, and much more. The Wichita Symphony musicians will take their turn in the spotlight with several works featuring the orchestra alone in the music of Ray Charles, Stevie Wonder, and Paul Simon. Guest conductor Eckart Preu conducts this evening of greatest hits.

Tickets starting at \$35 are available at the Symphony's website, www.wichitasymphony.org, by calling the Symphony's Box Office at (316) 267-7658, or to walk-ins at the Symphony's second-floor office in the Century II Concert Hall between the hours of 10 AM and 4 PM, Monday through Friday.

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The Brooklyn-born and raised singer/actor **Capathia Jenkins** premiered her new show, *She's Got Soul*, with the Houston Symphony in October 2022. Ms. Jenkins starred as "Medda" in the hit Disney production of *Newsies* on Broadway. She made her Broadway debut in *The Civil War*, where she created the role of Harriet Jackson. Starring in the Off-Broadway 2000 revival of *Godspell*, Ms. Jenkins wowed audiences with her stirring rendition of "Turn Back, O Man." She returned to Broadway in *The Look of Love* and was critically acclaimed for her performances of the Bacharach/David hits.

An active concert artist, Ms. Jenkins has appeared with numerous orchestras around the world, including the Cleveland Orchestra, Houston Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony (with Marvin Hamlisch), National Symphony, Cincinnati Pops (with John Morris Russell), Philly Pops, San Francisco Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Utah Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Toronto Symphony, San Diego Symphony, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, and many others.

Her Television credits include *30 Rock*, *the Practice*, *Law & Order SVU*, *the Sopranos*, *Law & Order*. She earned critical acclaim for the CD *Phenomenal Woman* with Louis Rosen and her most recent single, "I am Strong." She appears in the film *Musical Chairs*, directed by Susan Seidelman, and in *The Wiz* in a live

performance on NBC. She is heard on the following film soundtracks: *Nine*, *Chicago*, and *Legally Blonde 2*.

Darryl Jovan Williams is the Gold Medalist of the Americans Traditions Savannah Onstage International Soloist Competition. Darryl is a celebrated artist around the world, winning rave reviews. Mr. Williams has toured extensively in the Broadway hit *Smokey Joe's Cafe* with the legendary Gladys Knight and was a fixture at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. Darryl has also created vocals and sung background for artists such as Gladys Knight, Leslie Gore, Ann Nesby, Louis St. Louis, Emmy Award winner Dave Pierce and most recently, Michael Bubl . A frequent soloist with symphony orchestras, Darryl's recent engagements include performances with Houston Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Utah Symphony, Chicago Philharmonic, Louisville Orchestra, Allentown Symphony, and Chautauqua Symphony, among others. Darryl has recently been the co-music arranger and vocal arranger for Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber. He was also the vocal arranger for the much-anticipated hit *Jesus Christ Superstar Gospel*, which won him rave reviews for his portrayal of Judas.

Eckart Preu is the Music Director of the Long Beach Symphony (CA), the Portland Symphony (ME), and the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra (OH). Previously, he held the positions of Music Director of the Spokane Symphony and Stamford Symphony, Associate Conductor of the Richmond Symphony, and Resident Conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra. In Europe, Mr. Preu served as Music Director of the Orchestre International de Paris. Career highlights include performances at Carnegie Hall, the Sorbonne in Paris, and his first commercial recording of the world premiere of "Letters from Lincoln," a work commissioned by the Spokane Symphony from Michael Daugherty, featuring baritone soloist Thomas Hampson.

ABOUT A.R.I.S.E.

In 1988, The Kansas Committee for the Humanities (KCH) awarded a grant to the Urban League of Kansas to educate the public on the history and significance of the Negro Spiritual (Also known as African-American Spiritual). Prentice Lewis, Urban League's Program Director, enlisted the veteran Educator/Musician, Mrs. Josephine Pace Brown, to recruit a group of scholars who would team up to develop a curriculum and travel throughout Kansas, sharing with audiences the rich heritage and impact of spirituals. The scholars were Drs. Evies, Sharon Cranford, Dr. John Gaston, Dr. John Poe, Cherrie Baldon, and Rachel Norwood. A comprehensive anthology on Spirituals entitled *The Negro Spiritual: The Message and the Music* was also completed through this initiative.

After a year of successful teaching tours throughout Kansas, the grant ended. However, Mrs. Brown continued receiving requests from people from all cultures to learn about and sing more spirituals. A series of meetings with the scholars ensued, and a new determination to educate and cultivate continued interest in Spirituals emerged. Dr. Sharon Cranford advanced the acronym **A.R.I.S.E.** (African-Americans Renewing Interest in Spirituals Ensemble) to honor the African-American forefathers and mothers who created spirituals and to shine a light on how spirituals can continue to unify and uplift. Twenty charter members were added to present concerts throughout the state. In 2009, ARISE became a 501c3 arts education organization, enabling it to reach more audiences, especially children and youth.

From 1988 to 2010, Mrs. Brown led ARISE to great acclaim before retiring as president/director

emeritus. For one year, Huron Breaux was Interim Director. In 2011, Mr. Shawn Chastain, Director of Fine Arts for the Wichita Public Schools, took the helm as Choral Director, ensuring that ARISE continues its mission and vision. June Faucette-Huff is the chartering accompanist. Consisting of a culturally diverse, non-partisan board of directors and an ensemble of thirty-five plus members, ARISE continues to arise and illuminate the power of spirituals to touch people's lives, inspire hope, and promote freedom as they were created to do.

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