



LOOKING BACK,
MOVING FORWARD:
The Next Fifty Years



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THE WOODRUFF ARTS CENTER

Atlanta Memorial Arts Center opened
on October 5, 1968.



Coca-Cola president Robert W. Woodruff was the catalyst behind creating a unique Atlanta performing arts center in the early 1960s.



50 YEARS OF CREATING ART TOGETHER

The History of The Woodruff Arts Center



"L'Ombre" by Auguste Rodin was donated by the French government to commemorate 106 Atlanta Art Association members killed in a 1962 plane crash near Paris.

By F. Sheffield Hale

On the grounds of the Woodruff Arts Center located in what is now the bustling Midtown neighborhood stands a bronze cast of a statue called L'Ombre — "The Shade." A somber reminder of a tragedy little known by recent arrivals and younger generations, it was donated by the French government to commemorate the 130 passengers, including 106 Atlanta Art Association members, killed in a 1962 plane crash during takeoff at Orly airfield near Paris.

In that horrific crash, Atlanta lost many of its prominent citizens who were striving to enhance the standing of the arts. But although the Orly crash is often thought of as the catalyst for the creation of what became the Woodruff Arts Center, it was not the first attempt to create a new home for the arts in Atlanta.

The proposed arts center took wing as part of the same push to make Atlanta a "major league" city that brought the Braves here in 1966. If Atlanta was truly joining the ranks of older and bigger cities, civic and business leaders — even those who were not personally culture enthusiasts — knew that it needed an arts nexus to help solidify its rising rank.

Early Attempts: Mobilizing the Business Community

Although it is not known exactly when the idea began to germinate, Coca-Cola leader Robert W. Woodruff expressed interest in funding an Atlanta performing arts center sometime around 1960. Woodruff and others lined up the business community behind the idea, creating an arts center origin story with a unique Atlanta flair as the business, philanthropic, and art communities collaborated on the project.

After the election of Mayor Ivan Allen, an \$80 million bond referendum to build the proposed arts center in Piedmont Park was scheduled for August 1962. Then tragedy struck on June 3, 1962. The plane crash at Orly shook the foundation of the Arts Association, and the city as a whole.

Still, the referendum failed. Several factors contributed, including the proposed location, tense racial dynamics, and misinformation about the source of private funding, since Woodruff's charitable contributions were anonymous. But clearly the public did not grasp the benefits of a large arts cooperative and did not yet associate the Orly tragedy with broader support of arts in Atlanta.

50 YEARS continues on next page

World Events, by British artist Tony Cragg, sits on the Arts Center campus and was originally commissioned for Atlanta's Olympic Games in 1996.



The Stent Family Wing opened in 1983, tripling the High Museum's space.

50 YEARS continued from previous page

After Orly: The Atlanta Arts Alliance is Created

The resounding failure of the bond referendum forced consideration of a new approach, leading to the Orly tragedy becoming associated directly with creating the arts center. Members of the Art Association had traveled to Europe to gain fresh insights about cultivating and supporting the arts, so the arts center was positioned as a fitting memorial to these Atlanta citizens.

The original member organizations of the Art Association (established 1905) were the High Museum of Art and the Atlanta College of Art.

The High Museum derives its name from Hattie High, who donated her family's estate in 1926 as the first permanent home for the association. The predecessor of the Atlanta College of Art was established as an "advanced art school" in the High Museum.

The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO) hails from equally humble yet ambitious beginnings. The Atlanta Music Club, formed in 1915, established the In-and-Around High School Atlanta Symphony in 1939. The name was changed to the Atlanta Youth Symphony in 1945 and to the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra in 1947. The orchestra continued to grow and cultivate a national reputation, but could not find a permanent performance hall that was acoustically appropriate.

The idea to create a center encompassing the existing Arts Association along with the ASO was suggested in 1963. The physical space required for such a large building, which would include a theater space as well, was a challenge. The Hattie High house property in residential Midtown was selected as the location. Mrs. High's heirs agreed to host this new entity on the Peachtree parcel as long as the High Museum continued to carry her name.

The Atlanta Memorial Arts Center

The Atlanta Arts Alliance was formed in 1963 in response to the Orly crash and the defeat of the bond referendum, and a \$4 million grant request was brought to the Woodruff Foundation to sponsor the new facility. Intense fundraising began after Woodruff funding was secured, and by November 1964, \$7.1 million had been acquired from 751 private gifts, including Woodruff's. Due to higher construction costs, \$3.75 million in additional funding was raised before the groundbreaking on June 3, 1966 — the fourth anniversary of the Orly tragedy.

On October 5, 1968, the Atlanta Memorial Arts Center officially opened and featured the presentation of the bronze casting of *L'Ombre* to the people of Atlanta as a tribute to the victims of the Orly crash. A gift from the French government, the solemn statue was presented by the French ambassador.

"The High expanded into a bold new building in 1983 to 'Build a Museum Big Enough for Atlanta,' increasing exhibition space and enhancing its national reputation."

Expansion: 1970s-1990s

Shortly after the building opened, the Atlanta Municipal Theater, which had been renting the theater as an independent tenant, collapsed. The Alliance Resident Theatre, renamed Alliance Theatre Company in 1970, was initially established to fill in the programming gap.

The High expanded into a bold new building in 1983 designed by architect Richard Meier to "Build a Museum Big Enough for Atlanta," increasing exhibition space and enhancing its national reputation. In 1967, Robert Shaw became the conductor of the ASO, bringing innovative programming and establishing the Atlanta Symphony Chorus in 1970. His leadership throughout the 1970s-1980s resulted in 18 Grammy awards for recordings made under his direction. He led his final tour as ASO conductor in Europe in 1988. Meanwhile, the Atlanta College of Art had acquired accreditation in 1969 and enrollment grew substantially into the 1990s.

During this time of growth at the Robert W. Woodruff Arts Center (renamed in early 1983 to honor Woodruff's 93rd birthday) Midtown, too, began to transform. Although prosperous prior to World War II, the neighborhood had experienced an economic slump and became a counterculture center in the post-War era. After the establishment of the Memorial Arts Center, other cultural organizations were drawn to Midtown. Bolstered by the formation of the Midtown Alliance and other successful partnerships, Midtown has become an artistic and cultural center of Atlanta.

In 1996, Atlanta commanded the world stage as the Centennial Olympic Games came to the city. The Olympic exhibition *Rings: Five Passions In World Art* organized at the High achieved lasting recognition and helped to usher in a new era of "blockbuster" exhibitions of masterworks loaned by national and international institutions. The exhibition drew more than 200,000 visitors and led to huge membership growth. Branches of the ASO and Chorus performed in the Games' opening and closing ceremonies. Meanwhile, Alliance Theatre staged *Blues for an Alabama Sky* by Atlanta playwright Pearl Cleage.

Woodruff Arts Center in the 21st Century

The complex nature of the Woodruff Arts Center collaboration, including the unique needs of each member organization, and the growing demands of the evolving metro area, produce challenges at times. In the face of budgetary realities and following the recommendation of the Atlanta College of Art board, in 2006, the Woodruff Arts Center board decided that the Atlanta College of Art should become part of the Savannah College of Arts and Design, which was making a strong push into Atlanta.

In 2012, management of the Woodruff Arts Center focused specifically on putting the Woodruff on a more sustainable financial path. A Transformation Campaign was publicly launched in April 2015 and raised over \$110 million in less than two years for major improvements to all three member organizations.

Following a 2014 contract dispute, the Woodruff Arts Center launched the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Musicians' Endowment Campaign as a subset of the Transformation Campaign, with the goal of raising \$25 million to return the ensemble to its full complement and secure future funding. The goal was exceeded nearly two years before the 2018 target completion year, promoting a more sustainable business model.

The High recently underwent a major reinstallation of its 80,000 square feet of gallery space, highlighting the strengths of its collection, including photography and folk art. The Alliance Theatre, too, is currently entirely rebuilding its performance space. The redesigned auditorium and stage aim to connect the upper and lower galleries for the first time and move the audience physically closer to the stage, creating a more intimate performance setting.

Seeking to build on these achievements, the Woodruff Arts Center continues to enhance personal connections with Atlantans in order to maintain and enhance its central cultural role in the burgeoning metro area of the future. ■ ■ ■



F. Sheffield Hale is the President and CEO of the Atlanta History Center.

Driving Miss Daisy, 1988



Native Guard, 2017



A Midsummer Night's Dream, 2018

YOUR STORY, YOUR STAGE

The Alliance Theatre Celebrates its Next 50 Years

“What do we want to look like when we turn 50?” That was the question Susan V. Booth, Jennings Hertz Artistic Director of the Alliance Theatre, asked the Alliance’s Board of Directors four years ago. The Alliance was looking ahead toward its 50th Anniversary 2018/19 Season, considering how to celebrate its legacy, and reimagine its future.

In its first half-century, the Alliance has earned a national reputation as the premier producing theater in the southeast and become known as a leading exporter of original work – to Broadway and around the world. What does it mean to be a producing theater? It means that every aspect of the production – from casting to directing, from building the costumes and the sets – happens at the Alliance. It means the Alliance is employing and working with hundreds of local and national artists and craftspeople each season to bring the best of new theater to Atlanta audiences before it’s seen anywhere else.

The Alliance also won a Tony Award in 2007 – a distinct honor for a regional theater – in recognition of its excellence on stage and off, as a home for new work and emerging artists, for its work in the community, and as a pioneer in arts education programming.

More than 110 productions that got their start on Alliance stages have moved on to subsequent productions – from Broadway-bound musicals like *The Color Purple*, *Sister Act*, *Bring It On!*, *Tuck Everlasting* and *The Prom*, to plays by important voices – from August Wilson to Pearl Cleage, from Steve Martin to Janece Shaffer, and to plays that launched the careers of some of the country’s most exciting new voices, like Tarell Alvin McCraney, whose play *In the Red and Brown Water* won the Alliance’s prestigious Alliance/Kendeda National Graduate Playwriting Competition in 2006, 11 years before he would win the Academy Award for Best Picture for *Moonlight*.

In addition, the Alliance serves 95,000 people every year through its education programs, starting with newborns, through school, to life-long learners. The Alliance’s Kathy and Ken Bernhardt Theatre for the Very Young produces lively, interactive theater for the youngest audiences (ages

It is the stories that make the theatre a living place.

And for fifty years, this space has been the campfire where we gathered to turn our faces toward the light and see ourselves.

50 years of love and loss, faith and forgiveness, rage and redemption, right here in this room. All the messy, mesmerizing details of our fragile, fabulous human lives...

— Excerpt from *Ritual*

A reflection on the first 50 years of the Alliance Theatre

by Pearl Cleage, Mellon Playwright in Residence



Pearl Cleage, left, with Jennings Hertz Artistic Director of the Alliance Theatre Susan V. Booth.

newborn – 5 year olds), while programs like Alliance@Work attract Fortune 500 Companies to be trained using theater-based techniques to teach employees 21st Century skills like strategic storytelling and customer experience design.

So, how did the Alliance answer the question, “What do we want to look like at 50?”

The answer was this:

If the Alliance’s legacy reflects 50 years of inclusion, humanity, nationally-celebrated artistic production and exceptional storytelling — the next 50 would be all of that, on a grander stage.

With the extraordinary support of foundations, individuals and corporations, the Alliance raised \$40 million for an entirely new theater at the Woodruff Arts Center, one worthy of its art and audience.

“We had an opportunity to build a theater that celebrates not just the art, but our audience,” says Booth. “Every aspect of the design process considered how to make the relationship between the audience and the art the best anywhere.”

The vision for the new space was captured by the Alliance’s Mellon Playwright in Residence, Pearl Cleage, in a reflection she read at the groundbreaking of the new theater in the spring of 2017:

So we are gathered here to give thanks for the last 50 years; and to celebrate the next fifty, and the next fifty and the fifty after that. Because the house that we are building; the house that we will shape together, we will be building right from the start to be a welcoming place; a wide and wonderful place, that looks like us, and sounds like us, and sings like us and never for one second considers anything but the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Forever and ever...Amen.

The 18-month renovation gutted the entire theater “from dirt and roots to rafters,” says Mike Schleifer, the Alliance’s Managing Director. “The word ‘renovation’ doesn’t do this project justice. It’s essentially a brand new house that’s been built inside an existing structure.”

YOUR STORY, YOUR STAGE continues on page 11

They dreamed big back in 1968, hoping the new center they had built would become a home for great arts. They succeeded, far beyond their most ambitious expectations.

Now it's a new day, a new time. And it's our turn to dream big.

When the Woodruff Arts Center opened 50 years ago, Atlanta was in the midst of a decades-long effort to be seen as a distinguished national city. The population of the Atlanta region was only about 1.7 million by 1970 and the dream of hosting an Olympics, a Final Four and a Super Bowl was yet to be born. Atlanta needed a new major arts campus to compete with other established and emerging cities of the era. The idea of one campus to house the visual arts, orchestral music and theater and to serve as a major educational hub was ambitious for both the era and the city. The successful opening 50 years ago, a memorial to the Atlanta Arts Patrons who perished in a plane crash in France required the efforts of business, political, cultural and philanthropic leaders. Their hope was that Atlanta would be a cultural hub for the region and the country.

Today, a realization of that hope, the Woodruff Arts Center is the third-largest arts center in the United States and the largest one with a visual arts museum alongside the performing arts. On this campus, over the years, stars have been born, Broadway-bound shows premiered, artists discovered, new music composed, and millions of patrons entertained and engaged. Even more importantly, generations of Atlanta's kids have grown up dancing, singing, drawing and playing around world-class art and artists in ways that have enriched their lives and development. Serving 154 counties across Georgia last year and over 800,000 patrons directly, the Arts Center touches lives every day.

During the recent past, Atlanta has grown and evolved in significant ways. The city has experienced rapid growth in the urban core with empty nesters and millennials alike moving closer to downtown. New technology, financial, consumer and service companies have been founded across the city. Major corporations have moved their headquarters and operations from distant cities to our new and repurposed buildings. The film and TV industry has risen to make Georgia second only to the entire country of Canada for production. The Midtown area of Atlanta where the Arts Center resides has become a dense and exciting home for residents, shows, eateries and high rises. Across the region new venues for performance and engagement have been built including the Beltline, Spivey Hall, City Springs Performing Arts Center and great venues at several universities. The unique momentum of our city can be felt in so many ways.

However, Atlanta also faces new and chronic challenges that include unyielding poverty, geographic and racial inequality, and continuing homelessness. The aspirations of our vision often encounter the entrenched challenges we face in making sure that every child has the opportunities and support needed to thrive and every person has the chance to build the life they want. Our nonprofit sector generally has been asked to play a larger role in the areas of education, direct service, training and overall support while also receiving little, and often decreasing, levels of government-funded support. We have much to do in order to fulfill Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s vision for a Beloved Community in our region.

In order to envision how the Arts Center can best contribute to our community for the next few generations, we must embrace several trends that are impacting the way people experience cultural institutions and Atlanta overall. These trends give us both the opportunity and the obligation to think in new and different ways about our interactions with patrons.

1. The experience visiting certain venues has vastly improved with the building of Sun Trust Park, Mercedes-Benz Stadium and venues including Buckhead Theatre and Verizon Amphitheatre. When people think about venturing out for the evening — good food, architectural design, pricing, short lines and emotional connection — have become the expectation across our city. The Woodruff Arts Center must rethink the way we meet the public's expectations with both the kind of physical spaces and guest experience we provide.
2. Atlanta has awakened to embrace the outdoors, including for arts. As our outdoor venues have improved — includ-



“A NEW KIND of

URBAN DESIGN

Woodruff Arts Center President and CEO L

ing Centennial Olympic Park, Piedmont Park, the Beltline and Old Fourth Ward Park — people are expecting arts and culture to be presented outdoors. The Arts Center's beautiful midtown campus can provide a magnificent backdrop for both outdoor and indoor experiences.

3. Experiences are the primary decision criteria for engaging out of home. People want a great experience in every way when they venture out for an afternoon or evening. It's not enough just to have a “great performance,” we need to provide an incredible emotional engagement and a fabulous memory.
4. Demographics continue to shift to new and more diverse populations. The core of the city is changing with new residents of all types —singles, families, empty nesters. New residents are moving in from the suburbs and from other cities. We also continue to see new and diverse backgrounds represented in our residents including increasing racial, ethnic, religious and international diversity. The Center's patrons — and not-yet patrons — are more varied than ever before.
5. The economy is demanding more creative thinking from workers. The idea that arts education and training are only for artists no longer aligns with economic development. Technology, marketing, media and corporate leaders have all recently shared their desire for employees with well-developed creative skills. Many companies are looking for young employees with backgrounds in design, art, music and theater given the flexibility and creativity these disciplines develop in an individual. The arts are no longer just a “nice to have” — they are becoming the requirement for a successful professional future.

AS WE PONDER THE ARTS CENTER'S NEXT 50 YEARS,

we are taking bold and innovative steps to be relevant and impactful to this new Atlanta — to the important opportunities and challenges of our times. These are the first and most important steps to developing and delivering a 21st-Century Arts Center worthy of our children and grandchildren. Our work over the next few years will allow us to reach **OUR AMBITIOUS VISION FOR THE FUTURE:** ▶



“Any person can find someone like themselves sitting beside them and engaging artists like them on a daily basis. This intentional work is making national headlines and local impacts and it is work we are committed to continuing and sharing.”

environment in friendly and engaging ways that will both set the stage for engagement with the arts and be experiences unto themselves.

◆ **We aspire to bring arts education to every student in Georgia before they graduate.**

We will do this for our 1.6 million kids through a combination of hosting, training and curriculum development. We will continue to serve as the largest arts education organization in our state and be a producer of materials and approaches that can be delivered by our staff, other teacher artists and trained staff teachers. Studies we have commissioned have shown that literacy, language acquisition, and overall engagement is significantly improved through arts activities. Our arts educational efforts are not only intended to produce the next generation of artists, but also to enable students to develop their creative capacities no matter the professional and personal interests they pursue later in life.

◆ **Through the High Museum, the Atlanta Symphony and the Alliance Theatre, the Arts Center will contribute to the much-needed diversifying of our fields.**

Our location in Atlanta presents a special opportunity to the Arts Center to accelerate the careers of future arts leaders with a special emphasis on women and people of color who have been underrepresented for too long in these disciplines. Over several decades, new musicians through the ASO’s Talent Development Program have gone from Atlanta to major conservatories, young curators have learned their craft in the High Museum’s galleries via the Mellon Curator’s program, and new actors, directors, writers and administrators have started or grown their careers at the Alliance Theatre through programs like the Spelman Fellowship Program and the Yale Directing Fellowship. The Woodruff Arts Center and Atlanta should be the country’s leading source of new leaders.

◆ **We will continue to demonstrate artistic excellence and to generate new and distinctive work across our disciplines.**

As a leading national arts center, we will continue to embody and showcase the artistic voices that are distinct in Atlanta and to bring the world’s leading artists to engage our community through both performance and education. We take our role of “arts convener” for the entire community into account as we plan our seasons, guest artists and exhibitions. The Atlanta Symphony has championed new composers for decades. The Alliance Theatre has world premiered many shows that have gone on to Broadway. The High Museum has showcased cutting-edge new artists across disciplines and has brought many of the world’s great artworks to Atlanta for exhibition.

Over the next few months we will work with our stakeholders, donors, volunteers and staff to develop a comprehensive plan for our future activities and the resources needed to bring this future vision for the Arts Center to life. We can’t be bold alone — we will need an incredible team, a broad base of partnership and collaboration from across the amazing Atlanta arts ecosystem, a deep and generous donor base who will fund ideas ahead of their creation and execution and most of all, a patron and audience base that will attend our presentations, give us ideas and critique our innovations as we try and try again.

The visionaries who created the Woodruff Arts Center in 1968 dreamed big and succeeded dramatically.

Now we have the chance to build on that dream and make the Woodruff Arts Center and the entire arts arena vital to the growth and success of our great city. ■ ■ ■ ■

TINATION”

Doug Shipman on the next 50 years

◆ **We aim to be the leading cultural institution for attracting and retaining the most diverse audience in America.**

Enormous strides have been made over the past few years to engage all of Atlanta’s residents and visitors. Innovative programming including ASO movies in concert, Theater for the Very Young, Family Fun days, First Fridays and Second Sundays at the High have all created attractive offerings for all ages and all people. Additionally — the artists and works showcased continue to reflect broad diversity with women, people of color, and LGBTQ artists being showcased on the walls and stages. Any person can find someone like themselves sitting beside them and engaging artists like them on a daily basis. This intentional work is making national headlines and local impacts and it is work we are committed to continuing and sharing. We intend to be known for these innovations.

◆ **The Arts Center will be a direct and significant contributor to the development of the next generation workforce.**

Creative thinking as a skillset developed through engagement with the arts is an increasingly vital part of what employers are looking for and depend on for success. Our efforts will directly support the cultivation, recruitment and retention of the talent needed to build our economy. We will not only be a contributor to the quality of life in our community, we will also directly train and engage the employees driving our economic success. We intend to continue to build on our programs, like Alliance@Work,

that use theatre techniques to engage corporate trainees. The High Museum will continue to build programs for guests to interact with makers, artists and curators to understand how visual artists think and create and to provide opportunities for individuals to develop their own visual artmaking skills. The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra will expand programming for kids that uses the science of music and brain development as inspiration for impactful offerings. The entire Arts Center will continue to work with our stakeholders to create unique training, meeting and educational opportunities for executives and workers alike to use the arts as a pathway to skills. We see ourselves directly playing a vital role in the future economic success of our region.

◆ **The Woodruff Arts Center will become a new kind of urban destination — We intend to invest in changes that will make us more visually compelling, open, outdoor and experiential.**

We should have patron experiences that match the world-class presentations happening on our stages and in our galleries. We’re on our way with the new Alliance Theatre and re-installed High Museum and next, we need to reimagine Symphony Hall and our additional performance and event spaces. Our neighborhood around us has seen significant growth over the past few years with new residents, workers and visitors nearby. We must reshape the way our campus integrates with Midtown by reimagining key interior and outdoor spaces and rethinking how our patrons move through our spaces. We have the opportunity and the obligation to physically interact with our urban

Robert Spano has been the Music Director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra since 2001.



THE POWER of MUSIC

When the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra welcomed new music director Robert Shaw, right before the doors opened on the new Symphony Hall 50 years ago, he saw change on the horizon.

But Mr. Shaw could never have imagined all the future would hold for the Orchestra and the City of Atlanta, from presidential inaugurations to the Centennial Olympic Games to GRAMMY® Awards. Nor could he imagine all that the Orchestra would be doing and planning today to reach out to broader audiences in the 21st century.

“This was a chance to help create a musical and performing institution that could help shape its environment,” Shaw said. “I came to Atlanta partly because Martin Luther King was here, and because Ralph McGill, the conscience of the South, was in Atlanta. I respected what was about to happen in the United States, and particularly in Atlanta. I sincerely hoped that music might be able to heal wounds.”

The power of bringing people together through the beauty of music was an important goal to Shaw those decades ago, at a time of turmoil and change in Atlanta and the country. Today, the healing power of music feels just as necessary and relevant as it did in 1968.

That power was ever present during the very first concert in Symphony Hall on October 19, 1968, when the Orchestra performed an all-French program created in memory of the 106 Atlantans who lost their lives in the Orly plane crash. In 1977, the ASO and Chorus garnered national attention when they were invited to perform at the inaugural festivities for Jimmy Carter in Washington, D.C. Paul Hume, the city’s most respected critic called the inaugural concert at the Kennedy Center, which featured the music of Gershwin, Ives, and Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony finale, “the greatest inaugural concert in history.”

As the ASO grew, both in size and reputation, Shaw led the orchestra on its first European performing tour, with 340 members of the Orchestra and Chorus representing the

“I came to Atlanta partly because Martin Luther King was here, and because Ralph McGill, the conscience of the South, was in Atlanta. I respected what was about to happen in the United States, and particularly in Atlanta. I sincerely hoped that music might be able to heal wounds.”

— Robert Shaw

What does the future hold for the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra?

- **Advancing the Art** – thanks to the generous support of the community, there are many fresh faces in today’s Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, who together bring a new level of energy, talent and musicality to the stage.
- **75th Anniversary** – Nothing brings people together like the power of music and the ASO has big plans for the 75th Anniversary Season (2019/20), with an incredible line-up of guest artists and performances, while bringing the music and the musicians of the ASO into the community in surprising new ways.
- **The End of an Era** – The 2020/21 season will mark Robert Spano’s 20th year at the ASO’s helm, making him one of the longest-tenured music directors of a major U.S. Orchestra, and one of only four music directors to lead the ASO. The ASO will celebrate Maestro Spano’s indelible impact on Atlanta and the entire classical music community.
- **What About Symphony Hall?** – Look for Symphony Hall news soon!

largest performing arts ensemble ever to travel from the United States to Europe at that time. When the eyes of the world were on Atlanta for the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games, the ASO was there, performing at the Opening Ceremonies.

Shaw also helped shape the future of the Symphony by advocating for the performance of music by contemporary composers. Today, the ASO has an international reputation for prolifically commissioning, performing, touring and recording new works. Thanks to the tireless efforts of current music director Robert Spano, the ASO has helped shape the careers of several celebrated American composers, including Jennifer Higdon, Michael Gandolfi and Christopher Theofanidis, who are all part of the ASO’s Atlanta School of Composers.

This focus has been recognized by the music world. Over the course of its history, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Chorus has not only been recognized for the type of music performed, but the quality of those performances and recordings, receiving 28 GRAMMY® Awards.

The qualities that drew Shaw to Atlanta still guide the Orchestra to this day. Inspired by Shaw’s efforts, the ASO actively works to improve its connections with minority communities, including seeking African-American instrumentalists to fill vacancies in the Orchestra. In addition, the Orchestra benefits from an ongoing partnership with the Spelman and Morehouse College Glee Clubs that continues to this day. The Morehouse partnership took center stage in 1972, when the ASO performed the world-premiere of the first surviving opera by a black composer, Scott Joplin’s *Treemonisha*. T. J. Anderson was the ASO’s Composer in Residence for the 1969/70 season, and works by African-American composers including Anderson, Ulysses Kay and George Walker were performed. Fast-forward to 2018 and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra’s presentation of Verdi’s *Otello*, featuring famed American tenor and Atlanta native, Russell Thomas, who is one of the first African-Americans to perform in the title role.

This year, 25 years after its inception, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra is being recognized for its ground-breaking Talent Development Program, which identifies, mentors and develops middle and high school student musicians of African-American and Latino heritage for careers as professional classical musicians. The program was started by a visionary group of volunteers led by Mrs. Azira G. Hill, who set out to change the face of classical music in Atlanta and ultimately across the country. The ASO is celebrating this milestone with a special TDP Anniversary Concert on February 9, 2019, led by Music Director Robert Spano, and featuring talented TDP alumni.

These efforts are just a part of how the ASO is building new connections and audiences for the future.

New Audience Connections – Movies in Concert with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra is a notable example of how we’re doing just that. Movie and music lovers of every age enjoy their favorite films on the big screen with the Orchestra performing the score live. From *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets in Concert* to *Jaws* and *Love Actually in Concert*, to name but a few.

Under the Atlanta Symphony Hall LIVE umbrella, many of the country’s favorite artists perform at Symphony Hall, some with the Orchestra and some without, providing a wide array of music and artistry. And for those looking to connect over a shared interest in music and the arts, there’s BRAVO, a concert and cocktail series, designed especially for Atlanta’s young professionals.

Stepping Out. The September concert featuring Lang Lang with the ASO sold out immediately. To give more people in Atlanta and around the world the chance to experience the beauty of this performance, the ASO extended the reach via a live simulcast on Sifyl Piazza and via live stream on aso.org. For those who are unable to attend a concert, but need a little ASO in their lives, the ASO now airs all pre-concert chamber recitals on Facebook Live. The ASO also performs free community concerts, including the annual Performance in Piedmont Park, presented by Bank of America. This Atlanta tradition, which began during the Shaw era, continues to this day. ■■■



Question... Besides shopping malls and sports teams, name those organizations that can routinely, reliably bring all of Atlanta together?

This shouldn't be a difficult question to answer, but experience has shown that it is. In fact, most will unfortunately struggle to name one, let alone create a list of any consequence.

Hopefully if we're doing the right work, and our reputation evolves with impact, then the High Museum of Art ultimately will be an easy addition to that list.

Our focus on growth, inclusivity, collaboration, and connectivity is more than strategic emphasis.

These core values have become the mantra of our DNA. At every step, we strive to combine these values with a commitment to presenting the finest examples of artistic achievement available to leverage change, measure progress, and secure financial sustainability.

To that end, nearly three years ago, we dramatically changed our focus from "who we are" to "what we do." We challenged ourselves to be more compelling, relevant, and engaged in the life and direction of our city. We retooled our education department, reallocated our budget, and committed ourselves to becoming essential within our community. We championed innovation and revitalized an array of traditional programmatic offerings. Then, we embraced invention and rallied around new initiatives aimed at the broadest possible public engagement.

Why? Because our nation is in flux. Our cities and our neighborhoods are experiencing substantial, often dramatic, instability. The impact of economic and demographic shifts along with advancing technology are generating inevitable challenges. The High Museum, with its unique capacity to bring art, people and ideas together has a vital role to play.

We know that engagement with visual culture has the capacity to stimulate cognitive growth, to spur innovation, engender empathy, ignite invention, and enhance our ability to communicate in meaningful ways. Engagement with artworks of the highest quality and diverse character can and should frame constructive dialogue. That engagement should create gateways for multiple perspectives and voices to be heard. It should remove barriers. And, it should provide a platform for bringing people together.

Because of this, we are consciously raising our trajectory — to shift arts engagement in Atlanta from the episodic to everyday. Building on our foundation and with measurable growth, we are dedicated to remaining financially secure, creating a culture and community of empowered connectivity, and developing our capacity to act responsibly with the community's interest in mind.

In other words, we're creating a new platform of engagement that will effectively extend our reach and deepen our relationships. We're committed to be the place where all of Atlanta comes together — a place where no matter what you do, or who you are, you feel welcome and part of something larger than yourself.

As we evolve, this platform will also allow us to dynamically mine, activate, and present our collection of extraordinary works of art as the inspiration for all that we do. It will challenge us to become more accessible — physically, digitally,

It's Not "Who We Are." IT'S "WHAT WE DO."



"...We are consciously raising our trajectory — to shift arts engagement in Atlanta from the episodic to everyday. ... We're committed to be the place where all of Atlanta comes together — a place where no matter what you do, or who you are, you feel welcome and part of something larger than yourself."

and programmatically — asking us to listen actively and to better dovetail our strengths with community needs and interests. Equally important, this new engagement will help others develop their own creative and critical thinking capacities, thereby enhancing understanding and communication across varied life experiences.

To make this work, we'll continue to use and deliver experiences that leverage the unique power of the visual arts to introduce new ideas; support, inspire, and demonstrate creativity; provide authentic ways for our stakeholders to advocate on behalf of the museum; and help members of the community better connect with each other across the multiplicity

of demographics that make Atlanta the vibrant, remarkable city that it is.

This isn't easy. But we're committed to changing Atlanta and fulfilling our mission to be a creative beacon. That's why, beyond redoubling our efforts to change programmatically, we've also made multimillion-dollar investments to vastly change the physical experience of your museum. Two current projects highlight this commitment.

After three years of planning and execution, the Museum recently unveiled a complete reinstallation of our permanent collection galleries. This is more than a new look or set of style choices. This, in fact, is an opportunity to highlight our strengths, place multiple voices in dialogue, share new perspectives on our world, and better preserve the works of art in our care.

We also introduced a completely re-visioned Greene Family Learning Gallery. For fifty years the High Museum of Art has been a leader in the field at providing an interactive gallery for families. We've now doubled the gallery's space and created an extraordinary new launching pad for creative play.

These two initiatives in tandem underscore our steadfast pursuit of relevance and sustainability. And they're only the beginning. We know we're a continuous project. We know there is much work to be done. But we're excited about Atlanta's future. And we're excited about our role in defining what's next. ■ ■ ■



High Museum Summer Arts Campers show off their printmaking results.



Virginia Shearer of the High Museum of Art, from left, Hollis Hudak of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Chris Moses of the Alliance Theatre.

KEEPING ATLANTA CURIOUS

When community leaders began the effort to create a new center for the arts in Atlanta 50 years ago, the fundraising appeal had this to say:

'Atlanta . . . lacks the strong warp-and-woof of a cultural fabric. Therefore, we must provide a place where its artistically talented youth can be nurtured, inspired and educated.'

Across 50 years and literally millions of Atlantans, the Woodruff Arts Center has done just that.

Today, with more than 200,000 students taking part in the Arts Center's programs annually, arts education is expanding into new directions while staying true to its core mission. Education leaders Chris Moses of the Alliance Theatre, Hollis Shearer of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Virginia Shearer of the High Museum of Art gave us their views about where things go from here.

Why is Arts Education important?

Moses: Arts education — and theater specifically — is important because when people learn about this art form, they're forced to wonder what life looks like from a different set of circumstances. That's arguably the most essential tool we need right now — the ability to look across differences and respect different points of view.

We also think that, as one of the largest arts organizations in the city, it's our responsibility to help Atlanta become a more compassionate and curious city.

If there's one thing that ties our various education programs together it's the fact that everyone who participates in them leaves more curious about the world and other people. That is paramount. Curiosity is the crucial first step to building empathy and to leading people to wonder about someone else. So, we're always asking, "How can we keep Atlanta curious?"

Shearer: When we experience art — whether we are looking or listening or touching or feeling or being immersed in

"Arts education matters, almost more than anything. The arts bring diverse people together and ultimately help us become better humans."

— Virginia Shearer



symphonic music or theater or art installations, it's really a time where we can come together in this kind of collective, interpersonal way. It's a chance to feel empathy, to step into someone else's story, to really experience the greatest in human potential. Arts education matters, almost more than anything. The arts bring diverse people together and ultimately help us become better humans.

What's different about your approach to arts education?

Moses: We're committed to producing professional work for all age groups. But what really differentiates us is that we're always looking for a deeper impact with our programs. Yes, you'll come out of an acting class more proficient in our art form. Yes, you'll leave the theatre entertained. But that's never our primary goal. It's something much more ambitious, something that can make you interested and curious and connected. We use the rehearsal process as a sort of a metaphor for our work. We ask people what it's like to test new ideas, to try different things, to fail, to try again. The end game is not churning out a great actor. It seems counterintuitive, but that's almost accidental. We're teaching this art form, but what's fueling and motivating the work is the commitment to expanding hearts and minds in the process.

We believe what we do is different. You can produce an excellent show, but that should never be the end of the story. It's about what conversation you're starting.

Shearer: Other museums and theaters around the country have great education programs, but what we are doing by pairing children's picture book art, original works of art hanging in our galleries at eye level for children, with original works of theater, is truly unique. This project, Read, See, Play, brings to life the content of the exhibition and the book. I am so proud of all the things that we do here at the High Museum and across the Arts Center, but the project I am particularly proud of is Read, See, Play.

We know literacy is a problem here in Georgia, but if young people aren't engaged with what they're reading, if they can't get excited about what's on the page, then they're not going to be inspired to continue to read along. For many children, book illustrations are their first introduction to art and these exhibitions at the High help to foster a lifelong love of art for thousands of our young visitors. By working on projects like this and partnering with the Atlanta Fulton Library system, with the Mayor's Summer Reading Club, we're jump-starting from the book and creating a world where the power of the imagination means anything is possible.

Hudak: We stir the interest and imagination of the young and the young at heart through the beauty of the ASO's music. From our rigorous Talent Development Program to the Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra to Concerts for Young People

CURIOUS continues on next page

and Music for the Very Young, we are changing lives through music, while building the foundation for the next generation of classical music lovers. If you join us on a Family Sunday, you'll find children making music together with movement, instruments, singing and more.

Our work in schools is at the heart of our education initiatives, as we work to continually bring new opportunities and resources to classrooms and teachers. This year, we are introducing a new program for high school students featuring female composers, a segment of the population who have been historically under-represented in American orchestras. Today, we are seeing a new infusion of female composers, and the ASO will feature their stories and their works in an innovative new program.

Where do you see the future of Arts Education?

Shearer: Well, it's really an integrated approach that provides a learning continuum for people of all ages and stages, stepping stones from cradle to the grave.

I think that we have done a disservice to our children by eliminating the arts from many of our schools. When we decided to underfund or de-fund the arts in the 1980's, we eliminated opportunities for people to grow, to expand their horizons, to opt into what might have been a wonderful career or a lifelong hobby. So here we are, we have adults visiting us in their 30s and 40s who've had no arts education.

As we look to the future, we need to start at the beginning with families and early learners as well as really be integrated hand-in-glove with the schools. Engaging teenagers and college students when they're out of school and working hard to make sure we don't leave anyone out or let potential arts patrons age out of our programs. Lifelong learning and creative aging are central to us as we envision the future of arts education.

Hudak: We are in a critical time with all arts education funding and the programs and services we offer are more important than ever. I think we have seen a shift in support for the arts at the city level that is encouraging, and we must work together as a community to provide access to the arts for all. From our annual free Performance at Piedmont Park



Actors in the Palefsky Collision Project, where Atlanta teens explore a classic play under the guidance of a professional playwright and director.

presented by Bank of America to the more than 45,000 students who are introduced to live symphonic music through our Concerts for Young People to the thousands of families who join us for our Family Concert Series and Family Fun Days, we are continually looking for new ways to garner support to extend our reach and engagement.

Moses: The appreciation and understanding of the importance

of arts education seems to be so different than it was even just 10 years ago. The corporate sector is realizing that skills inherent in our art form are valuable to a community. That is a much more widely held belief right now. There is a greater understanding that art is more than just a luxury and rather it is an essential part of a vibrant and civil community. And arts education must be a part of that. ■ ■ ■



Candide, 2018

YOUR STORY, YOUR STAGE continued from page 5

Schleifer adds, "There is a lot of work the audience may never see, but that will make an enormous difference in the experience of live theater."

Engineering like whisper-sensitive acoustics, state-of-the-art lighting and stage rigging, and sophisticated production technology overhead and below stage level will be largely invisible to the audience but make the magic on stage possible.

When the Coca-Cola Stage at Alliance Theatre opens in January 2019, the audience will have plenty to look at – on stage, with the Atlanta premiere of the Broadway-scale musical *Ever After*, and around them in a theatre space that is equal parts architecture and sculpture.

Bent oak woodwork specially designed for the Alliance project will not only invite Atlanta's famous "green city" inside, but reflect the world's great theaters and opera houses, where wood interiors created unparalleled acoustics.

Almost every seat in the house will be closer to the stage

than it was before, and the old auditorium-style seating configuration has been replaced with a balcony that is fully accessible from the orchestra level and includes tiered seating that arcs around the audience from the stage itself.

The effect, Booth hopes, is a theater space that invites community and conversation – just like the Alliance itself.

Booth says, "We wanted the theater to be welcoming and inviting, where you feel part of the community around you, and where there is no separation between audience and actor, where what is happening in the room is truly a shared experience.

The focus on community was at the core of what the Alliance called its "on the road" season – its 49th – while the Coca-Cola Stage was under construction. During 2017/18, the Alliance performed its full season of 12 productions in 12 venues around Atlanta while its home at the Woodruff Arts Center underwent a \$40 million renovation.

"No other theater of this size has done anything like it," says Alliance Board Co-Chair Hala Moddelmog, President and CEO of Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. "Most

theaters pick one spot, hunker down and stay put. The Alliance took the show to the audience."

The on-the-road season included stops at Atlanta venues like the Marcus Jewish Community Center in Sandy Springs, the Southwest Arts Center in College Park and the Porter Sanford Performing Arts Center in Decatur, as well as non-traditional intown venues like the Atlanta History Center and the Atlanta Botanical Garden.

Alliance Board Co-Chair Anne Kaiser, Vice President of Community and Economic Development for Georgia Power, adds, "That is what I love about the Alliance – and Atlanta. It's a 'let's do this thing no one has done before' spirit that this theatre and this community get excited about."

Earlier this fall, as the Theatre wrapped up its on the road season with sold-out performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Atlanta Botanical Garden, Booth began the first board meeting of its 2018/19 Season by asking a new question.

"What if..." ■ ■ ■



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