

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Jacksonville Symphony Receives Competitive Grant Award from Jessie Ball duPont Fund to Further DEI Efforts

Jacksonville, Fla – The Jacksonville Symphony has received a two-year, \$200,000 competitive grant award from the Jessie Ball duPont Fund in support of its efforts to increase racial diversity within the orchestra.

“We applaud the Jacksonville Symphony for undertaking this important work to provide opportunities for Black and Latinx musicians, lowering the barrier to entry for new voices to join the incredibly high caliber group of musicians we’re fortunate to have in Jacksonville,” said Mari Kuraishi, President of the Jessie Ball duPont Fund. “We’re proud to support this work to make our Symphony more reflective of the diverse backgrounds and experiences of all of Jacksonville.”

In support of this initiative, the Jacksonville Symphony is proud to partner with the Sphinx Organization, a national non-profit organization in Detroit dedicated to transforming the lives of young Black and Latinx musicians through the power of diversity in the arts. Founded in 1997, Sphinx is working to change the landscape of classical music by offering musicians a customized combination of mentoring, audition preparation, financial support, and audition previews.

As part of the partnership, the Jacksonville Symphony participates in the Sphinx Orchestral Partners Auditions program (SOPA), which provides Sphinx musicians the opportunity to audition for a panel of orchestra representatives who seek to identify musicians for placement on substitute/contract player lists.

The Symphony hosted six Sphinx musicians in the 2022/23 Season. Two musicians were part of the orchestra for the entire season, and four substitute musicians were brought on for four different classical concert weeks. Two full season contract musicians have been hired for the upcoming 2023/24 Season with plans to hire 10 substitute musicians for open positions week to week once they become known.

The Sphinx musicians rehearse and perform with current Symphony musicians, conductors and guest artists, receiving important professional experience necessary to achieve their full potential and advance their classical music careers. Just as importantly, during their time with the Symphony these musicians will be able to connect with members of our orchestra, meet possible mentors, and experience a sense of belonging among an elite group of professional, classically-trained musicians.

“The inclusion of more musicians of color in our orchestra will reflect the diversity of our community onstage, creating an opportunity for residents see themselves represented and connect more fully with the Jacksonville Symphony,” said Marianne Rice, Lory Doolittle

Endowed Vice President of Music Education & DEI Initiatives. “We want our community to feel welcome inside Jacoby Symphony Hall and become inspired by the performances we provide.”

About the Jessie Ball duPont Fund

The Jessie Ball duPont Fund is a private foundation that works to expand access to opportunity and create inclusive growth for the people, organizations and communities that Jessie Ball duPont knew and loved. We envision a world in which every member of those communities feels they belong and is engaged in shaping the future of their community. We use our grantmaking, investments, research and partnerships to increase equitable access to opportunities and resources for members of society who have historically been excluded, and placemaking to build stronger communities where all voices are heard and valued. Learn more at www.dupontfund.org.

About the Jacksonville Symphony

The Jacksonville Symphony is North Florida’s leading music nonprofit offering live performances at Jacoby Symphony Hall in the Jacksonville Center for the Performing Arts and other venues throughout the area. In addition, the Symphony provides music instruction for youth and operates the Jacksonville Symphony Youth Orchestras. For more information about the Symphony, visit JaxSymphony.org.

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