

Waves

The Program Book of the MGCS

65th Season

October 17, 2026

MORGAN FREEMAN'S SYMPHONIC BLUES — EXPERIENCE —



MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST
SYMPHONY
COASTAL. CASUAL. CLASSICAL

Welcome

Welcome to the 65th Season of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Symphony!

We are proud to introduce WAVES, the magazine of the MGCS.

Along the Mississippi Gulf Coast the waves are constant. We live among the waves of water along the Gulf Coast every day, but they are not the only waves of community. Waves come in many forms, small as a ripple and large as a hurricane, but no matter the size, they are a constant that will never end.

As you read through our pages you will discover that we are so much more than music. We are waves of education and outreach. Our outreach into schools brings children exposure to the many guest artists that they would never be able to experience. The Gulf Coast Symphony Youth Orchestra is a training ground for new ears and fingers to learn and grow.

We thank our advertisers and patrons for their continued support. They are the source of waves to enable the music to be played tonight.

Please sit back and enjoy the waves . . .



409 Debuys Rd, Gulfport, MS 39507
Home of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Symphony

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A Wave of Leadership

A Message from the President

There are concerts, and then there are evenings an orchestra will still be talking about decades from now. Welcome to one of the latter.

Tonight the Mississippi Gulf Coast Symphony opens its 65th season with ***Morgan Freeman's Symphonic Blues Experience***. The evening brings two great American conversations into the same room. One began in the gilded concert halls of Europe; the other began on the porches and in the fields of the Mississippi Delta, just up the road. In his own note, Mr. Freeman asks whether these sounds could ever find a common harmony. We are delighted to report that the answer was never really in doubt. Mississippi has always known how to make the improbable sound inevitable.

I will resist the temptation to imagine this letter read aloud in a certain unmistakable voice. You, of course, are under no such obligation.

A night of this scale does not happen by accident. It happens because a Board of Directors decided that ambition was not a luxury but a responsibility. Our Board has spent the past several months doing the unglamorous work that makes glamorous evenings possible. They built partnerships, opened doors, and made the difficult call, and then the second call after that. Together with our Executive Director, Kolyn Wentzell, they have given this orchestra a momentum that is felt in every corner of the organization, and I am deeply grateful to each of them.

We are equally grateful to the sponsors and patrons whose generosity brought this evening to the IMPAC stage, beginning with Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, our Title Sponsor and the home of this orchestra, and Turan-Foley, our Classical Series Sponsor, along with the individuals who have chosen to invest in MGCS as Maestro, Concertmaster, Principal, and Patron Circle donors. We note, with considerable satisfaction, that tonight's program includes Albert King's ***Cadillac Assembly Line***. Our friends at Turan-Foley insist this is a coincidence. We have elected not to believe them.



Our thanks as well to JZ 94.5 (Rip Daniels), WLOX, and WXXV, who spread the word about this concert with such enthusiasm that it became difficult to find anyone on the Coast who had not heard about it. Thankfully, the news reached you, and we are glad it did.

To our season ticket holders: you are the steady pulse beneath everything we do. You made your commitment before the headlines, and that faith is the reason tonight is possible. To our musicians, who will share the stage with Delta royalty

and sound entirely at home doing so: you remain the heart of this institution and the reason all of us are here.

Tonight is more than a season opener. It is a bellwether. It tells our community, and anyone else who is listening, that the Mississippi Gulf Coast Symphony intends to be bold, intends to be welcoming, and intends to be heard.

And the season ahead keeps that promise. On November 29, ***Peppermint Pops*** returns with holiday favorites, audience sing-alongs, and the magic of ***The Polar Express***. On February 27, ***Symphonic Masterworks*** brings Rossini, Korngold, and Dvořák, including the ***William Tell Overture*** and the ***New World Symphony***. We can think of no better title for the season we are building. On March 13, ***Intimate Masterworks*** brings us close to Mozart, Mahler, Strauss, Sibelius, and Glière. On April 17, ***Beethoven & Blue Jeans: Celebrating America 250*** closes the season and proves once again that great music has never required a dress code. If you are not yet a season subscriber, please consider this your formal and enthusiastic invitation.

With apologies to B.B. King, the thrill is not gone. At the Mississippi Gulf Coast Symphony, it is only getting started.

With gratitude and great anticipation,

Jonathan Woodward, PhD

President

Mississippi Gulf Coast Symphony

Featured Artist

Morgan Freeman



Morgan Freeman, a proud son of the Mississippi Delta, is renowned not only as an Academy Award-winning actor and narrator of unforgettable gravitas, but also as a tireless champion of the music and culture that shaped his upbringing. Raised amid the soulful rhythms and storytelling traditions of the Delta, Freeman's lifelong love for the blues runs as deep as his iconic voice. Beyond his legendary film career, he has dedicated himself to preserving this musical heritage, most notably as co-founder of the Ground Zero Blues Club in Clarksdale, a lively sanctuary for authentic Delta blues and a launchpad for local talent.

As co-producer of Morgan Freeman's Symphonic Blues Experience, he brings his vision and unmistakable presence to the stage, blending cinematic flair with the heart of the blues.

A Note From Morgan Freeman

Hey y'all, welcome to our Symphonic Blues Experience, a unique combination of classic orchestral sounds blended with the emotion and authenticity of the Blues.

These two music genres couldn't be more different. One was born in the gilded concert halls of Europe, the other in the sweltering fields of the American South. So when my partners and I set out to work on this project, we asked ourselves, "could these divergent sounds come together? Could these talented musicians, from all walks of life, strike a resonant chord and find just the right harmony?"

The answer, we believe, is a resounding yes.

Born from struggle and shaped in the heart of the Mississippi Delta, the blues is more than a sound, it's proof of survival. It's the story of people who turned hardship into something powerful, who found beauty in their sorrow, and who sang out loud when the world tried to keep them quiet.

But the blues didn't stay put. It didn't just linger on the dusty roads or front porches of the Delta. It traveled up the river, across the country, and eventually around the world. With every stop, it left its mark, shaping jazz, rock & roll, R&B, and soul. The blues laid the foundation for so much of the music we know today, but somehow its roots are often forgotten, its storytellers left unsung.

This is their story: the sound of America's past and present, the heartbeat of a culture that refused to be forgotten.

So please, sit back, relax and enjoy the Symphonic Blues Experience.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Morgan Freeman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Morgan" and last name "Freeman" clearly distinguishable.

Featured Artists

George Mumford Jr.



George Mumford Jr. was born in Greenville, MS on February 8th, 1992. He is a carpenter/painter (GM² Painting and Repairs) and a musician (drummer/bassist) from the Mississippi Delta (Leland, MS, home of Kermit the Frog).

As the youngest of three, George's roots began deep in the church. He double majored in voice and percussion at Mississippi State University and participated in the choir. He also majored in Music Education and Entertainment Industry Studies at Delta State University.

George was introduced to the blues by his childhood acquaintance, Keith Johnson, in 2013. They played for various blues artists together, until branching out and creating their own platform, transforming their relationship from mere acquaintances to an inseparable brotherhood.

George's musical chapters are still being written as he continues to play blues all over the world.

Lee Williams



Lee Williams was born and raised in Clarksdale, Mississippi, right in the heart of a musical legacy. He got his start banging on buckets in the street at just 8 years old, until his cousin, Anthony Sherrod, brought him into Mr. Johnnie Billington's School of Blues. Over the years, Lee's played in bands like Razorblade & The Deep Cuts with Josh "Razorblade" Stewart, Dr. Mike and Big T, and The Family with Terry "Big T" Williams. He's been a regular at Ground Zero Blues Club since day one, sharing the stage with blues legends like Charlie Musselwhite and Bob Margolin. These days, Lee gives back by teaching drums at the Delta Blues Museum's Music Education Program and the Pinetop Perkins Foundation Workshop. He's also been a core part of *Heavy Suga' The SweetTones* for the past 18 years, contributing to songwriting, arrangements, and vocals. You can also catch him playing with Big A & The Allstars... and with anyone else who needs a drummer.

Featured Artists

Mark Yacovone



Mark Yacovone is a Mississippi-based keyboardist and recording artist best known for his soulful work on piano, organ, accordion and for a brief cameo on the reality series *Gene Simmons: Family Jewels*. A longtime member of the Thacker Mountain Radio Hour house band, he's shared stages and studios with artists like Mojo Nixon, Jody Williams, Joe Osborn, Buddy Cage, Maria Muldaur, and Jack Sonni of Dire Straits. Mark brings decades of groove, grit, and musical range to every performance.

Martin Gellner



Martin Gellner is an acclaimed Austrian composer, conductor, and orchestrator whose work bridges classical precision with cinematic flair. Trained at the Mozarteum University in Salzburg and the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna, Gellner has collaborated with renowned ensembles including the Vienna Philharmonic and the Prague Philharmonic Orchestra. A creative force behind large-scale productions, he brings depth and dynamism to every score—most recently serving as arranger for *Hans Zimmer Live*. With *Symphonic Blues*, Gellner lends his mastery to reimagining Delta classics with sweeping orchestral power, creating a sound that's both rooted and revelatory.

Featured Artists

Anthony ‘Big A’ Sherrod



Anthony “Big A” Sherrod is a multi-instrumentalist and international touring artist who personifies the living legacy of Delta Blues. A native of Clarksdale, Mississippi, Sherrod’s journey began at just five years old when he picked up the bass under the guidance of his mentor, the legendary Mr. Johnnie Billington. As the godson of blues icon Big Jack Johnson and a proud graduate of the Delta Blues Museum’s educational program, Sherrod embodies a direct line to the greats who shaped the genre. His performances carry the soul of the Delta in every note, keeping the tradition alive while inspiring the next generation of blues artists.

Adrienne ‘Lady Adrena’ Ervin



Lady Adrena’s music is making waves across the U.S., France, and the U.K., blending life stories into powerful blues tunes. From 2015 to 2016, she lit up stages alongside legends like Anthony Hamilton, Betty Wright, The Bar-Kays, and Lakeside. In 2018, she took second place at the Vicksburg International Blues Challenge, which inspired her return to her gospel roots and a deeper dive into traditional blues. Her first blues single, *Good Girl Gone Bad*, was produced by Mr. Sipp, followed by the hit *Recipe for the Blues* with Sweet Success Records in 2021. That same year, she added the title “Lady” to her name, stepping boldly into the spotlight as a true blues artist. Her latest album, *Better Days*, recorded at Memphis’ iconic Royal Studios and produced by Boo Mitchell, reflects her mission to bring healing through music. You’ll hear the influence of greats like Koko Taylor and Aretha Franklin; soul and grit in perfect harmony.

Featured Artist

Keith Johnson



Keith is an accomplished guitarist, vocalist, harmonica player, and songwriter. He has amassed a songwriting catalog, with multiple songs released on his debut album, "Come to Mississippi." Keith is in the process of carrying on and upholding a family legacy in the entertainment industry as he is the great-nephew of blues icon Muddy Waters. He is also the grandson of the late Texcellar Fields, a gospel singer and radio host. He was born in Glen Allan, Mississippi, a small town in the heartland of the Mississippi Delta. Keith graduated from Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Audio Engineering and a Master of Business Administration in Human Resource Management.

The Morgan Freeman Symphonic Blues Team

Eric Meier
Executive Producer

Howard Stovall
Executive Producer

Alina Scalora
Producer

Nick Talbott
Producer

Tameal Edwards
Tour Manager

Steve Weeder
Front of House Engineer

Devi Reddy,
Park Avenue Artists
Booking Manager

Symphonic Blues

Morgan Freeman's Symphonic Blues Experience

Saturday, October 17, 2026 at 7:30pm

MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST SYMPHONY

Sean Mayes, Conductor

Morgan Freeman, Narrator and Symphonic Blues Ambassador (on film)

Anthony "Big A" Sherrod, Lead Guitar and Vocals

Adrienne "Lady Adrena" Ervin, Vocals

Keith Johnson, Guitar, Harmonica and Vocals

George Mumford Jr.

Mark Yacovone, Keyboards

Lee Williams, Drums

Part I

BLIND WILLIE JOHNSON

Dark Was the Night, Cold Was the Ground

Orch. Martin Gellner

Keith Johnson, guitar and vocals

ROBERT JOHNSON

Crossroads

Orch. David O'Rourke, Martin Gellner

Anthony "Big A" Sherrod, guitar and vocals

TRADITIONAL

You Gotta Move

As recorded by Mississippi Fred McDowell (1965)

Orch. Martin Gellner

Keith Johnson and Lady Adrena, vocals, with full ensemble

SON HOUSE

Death Letter Blues

Orch. Martin Gellner

Keith Johnson, guitar and vocals

Symphonic Blues

ROBERT JOHNSON AND ELMORE JAMES

Dust My Broom

As recorded by Elmore James (1951)

Orch. David O'Rourke, Martin Gellner

Anthony "Big A" Sherrod, guitar and vocals

ROY HAWKINS AND RICK DARNELL

The Thrill Is Gone

As recorded by B.B. King (1969)

Orch. David O'Rourke, Martin Gellner

Anthony "Big A" Sherrod, guitar and vocals

MACK RICE

Cadillac Assembly Line

As recorded by Albert King (1976)

Orch. Martin Gellner

Anthony "Big A" Sherrod, guitar and vocals

BOOKER T. JONES AND WILLIAM BELL

Born Under a Bad Sign

As recorded by Albert King (1967)

Orch. David O'Rourke, Martin Gellner

Anthony "Big A" Sherrod, guitar and vocals

RAY CHARLES

Hard Times

Orch. David O'Rourke, Martin Gellner

Lady Adrena, vocals

Mark Yacovone, keyboards

INTERMISSION

Symphonic Blues

Part II

J.J. CALE

Somebody's Knockin' on My Door

As recorded by Eric Clapton (2014)

Orch. Martin Gellner

Anthony "Big A" Sherrod, guitar and vocals

Mark Yacovone, piano and organ

ROBERT JOHNSON

Travelling Riverside Blues

As recorded by Led Zeppelin (1990)

Orch. Martin Gellner

Lady Adrena, vocals

Keith Johnson, guitar and harmonica

AL BELL

I'll Take You There

As recorded by The Staple Singers (1972)

Orch. Martin Gellner

Lady Adrena, vocals

Mark Yacovone, Anthony "Big A" Sherrod, and George Mumford Jr, soloists

GARY VINCENT AND D. SCOTT MILLER

Tried and Tried

As recorded by Anthony "Big A" Sherrod (2016)

Orch. David O'Rourke, Martin Gellner

Anthony "Big A" Sherrod, guitar and vocals

ANTHONY "BIG A" SHERROD

Someday

Orch. David O'Rourke, Martin Gellner

Anthony "Big A" Sherrod, guitar and vocals

Mark Yacovone, keyboards

Symphonic Blues

RAPHAEL SAADIQ AND LUDWIG GÖRANSSON

I Lied to You

From the film *Sinners* (2025)

Orch. Martin Gellner

Keith Johnson and George Mumford Jr., vocals

SAM COOKE

Bring It On Home to Me

Orch. Martin Gellner

Morgan Freeman and Danny Abraham (on film)

Anthony “Big A” Sherrod and Lady Adrena, vocals

Mark Yacovone, keyboards



**FLY
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Fly Llama is the
official beer sponsor
for tonight's
performance!

Executive Director

Kolyn Wentzell



Kolyn Wentzell is the Executive Director of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Symphony Orchestra and Founder and Conductor of the Biloxi Civic Orchestra. A Biloxi native, Kolyn is an arts leader, conductor, and music educator dedicated to expanding access to high-quality orchestral performance and strengthening arts education across the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

He holds both a Bachelor of Music Education and Master of Music Education. Through his leadership, Kolyn's work focuses on organizational growth, community engagement, expanding educational outreach, and building sustainable orchestral organizations for the region.

In addition to his administrative leadership, Kolyn remains active as a conductor and advocate for symphonic repertoire, committed to presenting meaningful musical experiences that connect people to the power of orchestral music and inspire the next generation of musicians. His work reflects a long-term vision of elevating the artistic and cultural landscape of the Gulf Coast through collaboration, education, and excellence in performance.

**Thank you for
your support!**



Waves of Thanks

It takes a village to put together a concert like you are enjoying tonight. The MGCS would like to thank some people that have stepped up to help make this night possible.

- Season Ticket Patrons – Without you there would be no MGCS
- Turan-Foley as the Sponsor for MGCS's Classical Series
- All of our 65th Season Sponsors and Advertisers
- Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, our title sponsor
- Peggy Sprabery and Avonna Cain, whose leadership and vision were instrumental in establishing our annual gala event, Symphony in Bloom.
- All the volunteers — from feeding the musicians to pouring wine in the lobby. Tonight wouldn't be possible without you, with a special thanks to Muriel Everton for leading this effort.
- The many individuals that have stepped in for donor calls, fundraiser, and connections to help get ready for tonight.
- The Long Beach Inn, one of our valued sponsors, for their hospitality and generous support for the Mississippi Gulf Coast Symphony concerts.

Our fabulous musicians — The stars of the night!

Editors

This issue of WAVES and the graphics for the 2026-2027 season are being created with the assistance of the Graphic Design Technology students of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College. MGCCC thanks the Gulf Coast Symphony for this **wave of opportunity!**



STARRING

Mari Takayama

Sugar Plum Fairy

Louis DeFelice

Cavalier

WITH

Olivia Townsend

Clara

Pace Liton

The Nutcracker

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Lisa Hendrickson

NOVEMBER 28
2PM & 7PM

info@southernartsalliance.org
www.southernartsalliance.org



MGCS Musicians

Violin 1

Jorge Gonzalez,
Concertmaster
LaTannia Ellerbe
Victor Correa-Cruz
Federico Franco
Jessica Dykes
Jonathan Chen
Carlos Argueta
Ty Maisel
Miranda Buras
Emilio Robledo

Violin 2

Gosia Leska, *Principal*
Cesia Pupo
Andrea Olvera
Osvin Urbina
Alexis Rooks
Harold Avelar
Gladys Gonzalez
Cecilia Escobedo

Viola

Courtney Grant, *Principal*
Ana Suarez
Patrick Prejean
Jackson Howard
Zuriel Jimenez
Perry Combs
Ismael Bervena

Violoncello

Daniel Martinez, *Principal*
Sofia Fortin
Cristian Sanchez
Eva Rouse
Brian Loret
Ian Gonzalez

Contrabass

Taylor Hollyer, *Principal*
Samuel Dahmer
Justin Leonard
David Pellow

Flute

Danilo Mezzadri, *Principal*
Rachel Ciraldo

Oboe

Amy Selkirk, *Principal*
Josh Strobel

Clarinet

Melissa Turner, *Principal*
Jorge Diez

Bassoon

Kristina Nelson, *Principal*
Osvaldo Redondo

Saxophone

Lyndon Bobo, *tenor*
Juan Oviedo, *baritone*

Horn

Josiah Bullach, *Principal*
Rob Detjen
Joey Troia
Selena Boyda

Trumpet

Davan Sagara, *Principal*
Mike Bass
Logan Place
Sebastian Martinez, *jazz*

Trombone

William Hess, *Principal*
Jonathan McNeer
Spencer Hudson
Kyle Dykes, *jazz*

Timpani

Matt Greenwood

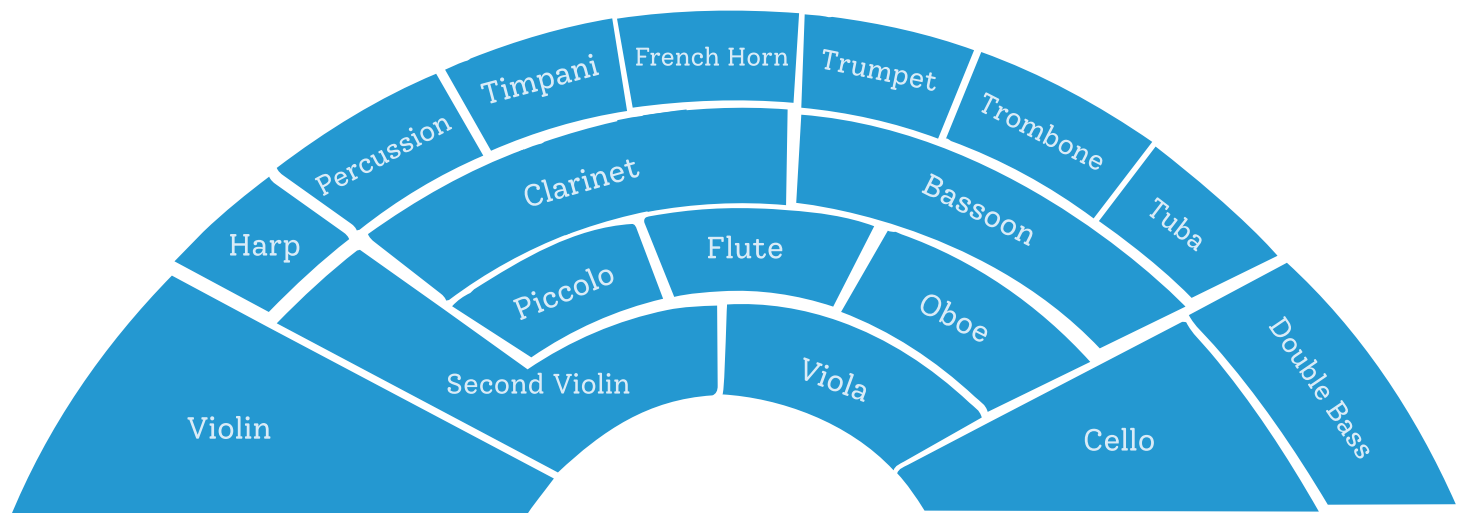
Percussion

Zach Webb, *Principal*
Cam Roberts
Andrew Hunckler
Nathan Sanders

Harp

Leah Panos

Seating Chart



2026–2027 SEASON ANNOUNCEMENT

A New Season. A Bold Sound. An Invitation.

The Mississippi Gulf Coast

Symphony proudly presents a vibrant and visionary 2026–2027 season, blending symphonic classics, American voices, intimate chamber music, and genre-defying experiences designed to inspire, surprise, and bring our community together.

Whether you are a longtime patron or discovering MGCS for the first time, this season offers extraordinary artistry, unforgettable moments, and remarkable value through season subscriptions.

WHY CHOOSE A SEASON SUBSCRIPTION?

Best seats at the best value

Priority access to our most anticipated concerts

Flexible exchanges if plans change

Exclusive subscriber perks and savings

Support the Gulf Coast's premier orchestra

Season subscriptions offer the most rewarding way to experience MGCS—artistically, financially, and consistently.

JOIN US FOR AN EXCITING NEW CHAPTER

This season reflects MGCS's commitment to artistic excellence, community connection, and a bold future. We invite you to be part of what's next.

2026–2027 SEASON CONCERTS

Peppermint Pops

November 29, 2026

A beloved holiday tradition filled with festive favorites, classical gems, audience sing-alongs, and the magic of The Polar Express. Perfect for families and friends.

Symphonic Masterworks

February 27, 2027

Rossini • Korngold • Dvořák

Experience the power of the great symphonic tradition with iconic works including William Tell and Dvořák's New World Symphony.

Intimate Masterworks

March 13, 2027

An elegant chamber-scale concert featuring Mozart, Mahler, Strauss, Sibelius, and Glière—offering rare closeness and expressive beauty.

Beethoven & Blue Jeans: Celebrating America 250

April 17, 2027

A high-energy celebration of American sounds and symphonic exhilaration, featuring Beethoven, jazz influences, and rhythmic brilliance—performed in a relaxed, come-as-you-are atmosphere.

Scan the QR code to subscribe today



Waves of Giving

Thanks Y'all!

2026-2027 SEASON DONORS

The music you hear tonight is made possible by neighbors who believe the Gulf Coast deserves a great orchestra. We are grateful to every one of them.

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Muriel Everton
The Family of George Schloegel

Concertmaster Circle

Sue Rokaw

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Join the Wave

Scan to make your gift, or visit msgulfcoastsymphony.net .
Gifts of every size make a difference.

Listing reflects gifts received through October 8, 2026. If we have misspelled or omitted your name, please accept our apologies and call 228.896.4276 so we can correct our records.



Sponsorship OPPORTUNITIES

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fine music and florals*

PRESENTING SPONSOR

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Premium Seating

Enjoy seating for 10.

Recognition in Symphony Program

TABLE SPONSORSHIP

GARDENIA TABLE

\$5000

Premium Seating

Enjoy premier seating for 10

AZALEA TABLE

\$3000

Standard Seating

Enjoy seating for 8

GLADIOLA SPONSOR

\$500

Reserved seating for 2

SINGLE RESERVED SEATING

\$250

OPEN SEATING

\$125



MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST
SYMPHONY
COASTAL. CASUAL. CLASSICAL.

Waves of History

Excerpted from ***The Gulf Coast Symphony Orchestra at 60 Years: Recollections of a Music Lover***
by Ronald C. Schmidtling, Ph.D.

The Beginning

The formation of the orchestra was largely precipitated through the efforts of Dr. J.A. Graves, a prominent physician and his son, Dr. Tom Graves, who was a talented young clarinet player in the Biloxi High School Band. When Tom let his father know that Biloxi High School musicians were not invited to audition for the All-State Orchestra because the school had no strings program, Dr. J.A. Graves successfully lobbied the school board for a strings program.

The senior Dr. Graves did not have far to go to find a candidate for strings teacher. James Shannon, who came to the coast at the end of WWII, had a solid educational background in strings and in conducting, and had been the band director at Biloxi High School for a number of years.

In 1962, a group of interested community leaders headed by the senior Dr. Graves formed the Gulf Coast Symphony Orchestra, with Maestro Shannon as the conductor. The original orchestra started performing in 1963 with 35 musicians. Only four of the musicians were professional. The orchestra grew to 50 musicians the next year, and acquired a major concert master, Howard Weiss.

The Gulf Coast Symphony Guild was founded in 1967 as a support group for the Symphony. The Guild now provides a significant amount of funding for the Orchestra.

A New Director — 1988

James Shannon retired at the end of the 1987-88 season. He was replaced by Dr. Andrew Harper, who founded the Mobile Symphony Orchestra. With the change in conductor came a change in strategy. Dr. Harper wanted to recruit more widely to raise the musical competence of the orchestra. He also insisted that all of the musicians be paid.

Dr. Harper also had the objective of including one contemporary piece in each concert. As a result of his efforts, the orchestra made a great deal of progress towards a truly professional orchestra.

The Symphony Barbecue — 1989

The first Barbecue Under the Oaks was hosted by Dr. Don and Peggy Sprabery in 1989. The barbecues became an annual event and the major fundraiser for the Symphony for 26 years.

A Change in the Management Paradigm — 1996

1996-1998 was a time of transition for the Symphony. Board Member, Natalie Robohm, led the charge to mold the Symphony into a more professional organization. This included hiring a part-time Executive Director to manage the day-to-day operations. Several long-time board members resigned over this change. Robohm was hired for the position. Conductor/Director Dr. Andrew Harper resigned over the changes.

Our Third Conductor —1998

Dr. John Strickler was hired as Conductor and Music Director in 1998. His leadership lasted until 2014.

Dr. Harper had planned to organize a youth orchestra for the coast but left before that could be realized. After the search committee chose Dr. John Strickler, One of the other applicants Dr. Tim Bergman, expressed a desire to start a Youth Orchestra, along the outlines of Dr. Harper. Dr. Bergman was hired as director of the Youth Orchestra.

Musical Education and the Gulf Coast Symphony Orchestra

The Gulf Coast Symphony Youth Orchestra was established in 1998 by Tim Bergman. Music education has always been an important part of the Gulf Coast Symphony Orchestra, dating back to the formation of the strings program at Biloxi High School. The Youth Orchestra progressed very well under Dr. Bergman's



Waves of History

direction. The young musicians were primarily from Gulfport and Biloxi High Schools, but also included a number of students from other schools (including homeschool students) on the coast.

In addition to directing the Youth Orchestra, in 2007 Dr. Bergman also assumed the position of Executive Director when Natalie Robohm resigned. The Youth Orchestra prospered from 1998 to 2013. When Dr. Bergman left the Orchestra, Dr. Strickler took on the additional task of directing the Youth Orchestra until 2014, when he left the orchestra.

Since 2014, the Youth have been under the baton of Daniel Martinez. Mr. Martinez is also director of the strings program at Gulfport High School strings program and plays cello in the Symphony Orchestra. Under Maestro Martinez' tenure, the Youth Orchestra grew to some of its highest numbers.

The Youth Symphony performs two concerts each year, Fall and Spring. They perform in the Gulfport High School Auditorium.

Sounds by the Sea

Sounds by the Sea, a free Symphony performance held Memorial Day weekend, was added to the performance schedule in 1999. The music is "pops" with a patriotic theme and is followed by fireworks. These concerts are supported by donations and bring much-needed recognition to the Symphony.



Our Fourth Conductor/Director Dr. Peter Rubardt

Dr. Peter Rubardt is the 4th and current director of the Gulf Coast Symphony. Appointed as an interim Music Director in 2014, he became the permanent Music Director in 2015. This was also the year that the Barbecue fundraiser was moved to its new location at the Centennial Plaza on the beach in Gulfport.

In April, 2018, just before the last concert of the 2017-18 season, the Symphony was informed that the Saenger Theater was closing for renovations. Projections about when it would re-open were vague. The Symphony was without a concert venue.

In August 2018 the Symphony began performing in the First United Methodist Church in Gulfport. One drawback was the stage area could only accommodate 35 musicians. The Symphony performed two seasons in that space. The COVID-19 pandemic and vandalization of the church combined to cancel the 2020-21 season.

A New Beginning — Andante Allegro

For several years (in the background) negotiations were underway between the Symphony Board of Directors and the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College for a new concert venue. The college is central, right on the border between Gulfport and Biloxi, and they wanted to host our Orchestra.

The new Immersive Media Performing Arts Center (iMPAC) at the Harrison County Campus was completed for the 2021-22 season. This orchestra hall promised to be the best on the coast, but did not have a concert grand piano. The desired nine-foot Steinway cost \$170,000, which the state would not provide. The Symphony Board agreed to provide the piano in return for several years' free rent and other considerations. George and Peggy Schloegel headed up the fund-raising.

The Symphony Board and the college administration decided in early 2021 to go ahead with a new season of concerts. The new piano and performance hall were inaugurated on April 17, 2021. This concert demonstrated so well the marvelous acoustics of this hall and the beautiful sound of the new piano.

After 60 years, the Symphony lives!

Waves of Giving

Patron Giving Levels

2026-2027 SEASON

Your gift sustains world-class music on the Gulf Coast, funding our concerts, the Youth Orchestra, education programs, and free community performances. Join one of our patron circles and enjoy a season of music up close.

Maestro Circle

Includes all Concertmaster and Principal Circle benefits, plus:

- Twelve (12) complimentary tickets, or a reserved premium box, to ALL concerts in the season
- Private backstage tour and VIP seating at a season working rehearsal
- Underwrite a concert, guest artist, or musician, with naming recognition and acknowledgment from the stage
- Premier recognition: name or business logo in the season program, on the website, and on the lobby donor wall
- Year-round VIP concierge for tickets, exchanges, and special requests

Concertmaster Circle

Includes all Principal Circle benefits, plus:

- Six (6) complimentary tickets to ALL concerts in the season
- Private Meet-the-Artist reception for two with featured guest soloists
- Two passes to a working rehearsal with the orchestra
- Reserved premium seating and complimentary preferred parking at iMPAC
- Featured recognition in the season program and on the lobby donor display

Principal Circle

- Four (4) complimentary tickets to ALL concerts in the season
- Invitation for two to a season Donor Reception
- Priority seating selection and complimentary ticket exchanges (fees waived)
- Advance access to single-ticket sales before the public
- Donor concierge line for personalized ticketing assistance
- Recognition in the season program book and on the MGCS website

Patron Circle

- Invitation for two to a season Donor Reception
- Two (2) complimentary tickets to the concert of your choice
- Donor concierge line for personalized ticketing assistance
- Recognition in the season program book and on the MGCS website



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Questions about which circle is right for you? Call **228.896.4276**. We would love to talk with you.

The Mississippi Gulf Coast Symphony (Gulf Coast Symphony Orchestra, Inc.) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization; gifts are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. EIN 64-0600840.

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2026-2027 SEASON

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Where Education, Arts, and the Community Come Together

Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College is proud to present tonight's performance and to welcome you to the Immersive Media Performing Arts Center, home of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Symphony, on our Harrison County Campus. As we celebrate 65 seasons of music on the Coast, we are especially proud that students in our Graphic Design Technology program helped design the program booklet you're holding tonight.



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