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VIRTUAL MASTERCLASSES AND INSTRUMENTAL COACHING BRIDGES THE GAP BETWEEN CLASSICAL AND MODERN

Students and teachers in harmony with new technology.

Williamsburg, VA – (June 1, 2020) The Williamsburg Symphony Orchestra has completed the first round of online Virtual Masterclasses and Instrumental Coaching Sessions attended by local and regional student musicians. With schools out of session and orchestra and band ensemble rehearsals impossible due to COVID-19, the Williamsburg Symphony has stepped in to encourage and inspire student musicians from across the region to participate in unique, virtual learning opportunities. With excitement, The WSO announces that this grand effort will continue throughout the summer and into the Fall of 2020 and is made possible with funding from The Huston Foundation, the WSO League and coupled with funds raised during the Give Local 757 event.

Students were enrolled in the classes this month through a partnership with The Williamsburg Youth Orchestras and Virginia homeschooling family networks. In the first session, the classes catered to middle school and intermediate level student musicians. The format of face to face instruction through Zoom technology allowed for WSO's professional musicians to meet with small groups of students to virtually work on technique and mastery of their instrument in real-time. When not affected by the pandemic closures, The WSO holds 25 in-person classes in area schools each season (Grades 5-12), impacting hundreds of students on the Peninsula.

Not only are these classes fulfilling an academic need, but the students are also finding a necessary emotional outlet. "Learning to play well- like painting, photography, and other arts - has always been a process that demands a practice of making focused alone time. Currently, our local student population is experiencing a challenge with balancing new online academic pressures and emotional well-being. Music gives our young people the space, and time to lean into what is familiar, their love of music, their passion for playing. Having the world-class musicians of The WSO coaching and offering support speaks volumes to these young people and encourages them to keep reaching for their instrument to help them navigate through emotionally difficult times," said JB Crowley, Marketing and Community Engagement Manager of The WSO.

The Williamsburg Symphony Orchestra is a professional orchestra based in Williamsburg, VA. It was founded in 1984 and each season offers a five-concert Masterworks series, Pops concerts and an array of educational offerings for area students. These educational offerings include Masterclasses with acclaimed guest artists, Instrumental Coaching sessions, Side-by-Side concerts, Instruments for Kids

(instrument loan program), and school performances. This school year, the orchestra gave 15 performances of “Peter and the Wolf” in all local elementary schools. The WSO’s educational programs are funded through grants and donations and are provided at no cost to the students. The WSO thanks Williamsburg Area Arts Commission, Virginia Commission for the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, The Williamsburg Community Foundation, The Huston Foundation, York County, Virginia Arts Commission, Newport News Arts Commission, the Williamsburg Symphony Orchestra League, Two Friends of Music, and our individual generous donors for their support. More information about the orchestra can be found at www.williamsburgsymphony.org.

To learn more about The WSO’s Virtual Masterclasses and Instrumental Coaching Sessions, email JB Crowley jb@williamsburgsymphony.org.

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