VIRGINIA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Eric Jacobsen, Music Director

FOR RELEASE ON AUGUST 19, 2025
August 15, 2025
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CommUNITY: PLAY-IN & SING ALONG INVITES ALL TO COME TOGETHER THROUGH MUSIC

This free event embraces the community of Hampton Roads' cultural richness and diversity, uniting people of all ages, faiths and backgrounds.

HAMPTON ROADS, VA [August 19, 2025] The Virginia Symphony Orchestra will be hosting the 8th annual CommUNITY: Play-In & Sing Along this October. This year's concert is partnered with The City of Norfolk, Norfolk Public Schools, The Academy of Music, The Governor's School for the Arts, The Norfolk Street Choir Project, Teens with a Purpose, and Music & Arts.

In line with their dedication to creating extraordinary musical experiences with and for their entire community, the VSO's partnership with Music & Arts this year offers instrument rentals at affordable rates for those seeking to perform who no longer have an instrument of their own. "The VSO CommUNITY event celebrates music's power to inspire and unite, inviting children, adults, beginners, and seasoned musicians to perform alongside the Virginia Symphony and be immersed in its brilliant sound," says Director of Education Helen Martell. "Through our new partnership with Music & Arts, we hope all who want to can join us and celebrate with one another."

Created in 2017 in the wake of the violence in Charlottesville by former Norfolk City Councilwoman and former VSO Board Member, Andria McClellan, the CommUNITY: Play-In & Sing Along has been a staple in the Norfolk community as a symbol of hope, unity, and peace. Hosted each year in Norfolk, the concert invites all to explore the heart and cultural center of the Tidewater area.

"CommUNITY Play-In & Sing Along is one of the most unifying and collaborative events within the City of Norfolk," says Norfolk Deputy City Manager LaVoris Pace. "The partnership between the City of Norfolk and the Virginia Symphony Orchestra to provide this level of virtuosity and entertainment to our citizens and visitors alike–at no cost–is immeasurable. At a time when the country seems divided, this concert propels you to a place of peace and togetherness. This is a time to come out, play, sing, listen, and bask in the greatness of humanity, musicality, and tranquility."

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Previous concerts have had over 600 attendees annually and featured local talent, such as the Amandla Quartet, Desmond Harrison, Elbert Watson, Norfolk State University Spartan Legion, and Barbara Hamm Lee.

Learn more about the concert and how to register as a musician or audience member at https://virginiasymphony.org/community/

COMMUNITY PLAY-IN & SING ALONG SCHEDULE
Performance:

- Sunday, October 19, 4:30pm at Booker T. Washington High School, Norfolk – **FREE and Open to the public!**

Rehearsals:

- Chorus Only: Tuesday, October 14, 7:30pm-10:00pm, Blessed Sacrament Church, Norfolk (6400 Newport Ave, Norfolk, VA 23505)
- Friday, October 17, 7:00pm-9:30pm Taste-n-See at Murray Center (455 E Brambleton Ave, Norfolk, VA 23510)
- Sunday, October 19, 2:30pm-4pm at Booker T. Washington High School, Norfolk.

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As the region's most celebrated musical, educational, and entrepreneurial arts organization, the Virginia Symphony Orchestra continues to challenge expectations and push the boundaries of what an American orchestra can be. Innovation and excellence are at the heart of the VSO's narrative. The VSO has received national attention for its unique mission serving a home area of 1.7 million across the diverse communities of southeastern Virginia. Through appearances at the Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall and its commitment to adventurous programming, the VSO and its musicians have been highlighted in the media including The New York Times, The Washington Post, National Public Radio, and BBC Worldwide News.

As the largest performing arts organization in southeastern Virginia, the VSO and VSO Chorus present more than 150 concerts and events annually for more than 100,000 residents and visitors. Since 2019, the VSO has been recognized nationally for striving to reflect the region's ethnic and racial diversity in its members, programming, and leadership. The Virginia Symphony Orchestra's Fellowship Program for up to 4 early-career,

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underrepresented orchestral musicians work to advance the goal of increased diversity of orchestral musicians nationwide. This initiative is a continuation of the VSO's commitment to creating extraordinary musical experiences with and for our entire community.

Celebrating his fifth year, Music Director Eric Jacobsen, The Macon and Joan Brock Chair, continues to expand the VSO's vision to attract wider and larger audiences with engaging concert experiences and creative and relevant programming. Rounding out the artistic leadership team is Connie and Marc Jacobson Music Director Laureate JoAnn Falletta and Norfolk native Thomas Wilkins in the role of Principal Guest Conductor, reflecting the VSO's commitment to tell its community's stories and advance the important conversations that will promote understanding and belonging among all residents.