



Kansas City Symphony announces new headquarters at Webster School building in Crossroads Arts District, Downtown KC

KANSAS CITY, Mo. | March 5, 2021 — The Kansas City Symphony announced today that it will be creating new headquarters at the Webster School building at 1644 Wyandotte Street in downtown Kansas City's Crossroads Arts District. The Symphony, which currently has administrative offices across the street at 1703 Wyandotte, expects to centralize administrative, musical and creative operations in the new headquarters this summer.

"The Webster School building will be the front door to the Kansas City Symphony, where we will provide new ways for the community to interact with us through recitals, educational programs, events and opportunities to meet our musicians," says Danny Beckley, Kansas City Symphony executive director. "This will be a perfect complement to our mainstage performances just next door in Helzberg Hall at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. This historic space will help us provide context to the art of symphonic music, which will deepen engagement with our community."

Beckley continues, "We are deeply grateful to Shirley Bush Helzberg and her family for making this incredible opportunity available to the Symphony. This facility will become a new cultural asset for the people of Kansas City, promoting the advancement of the symphonic arts. Our musicians will gain individual and small group practice space accessible 365 days a year. Having the energy of our musicians in this space is an evolution of our culture of creativity and open-armed service to the community. We are excited by the opportunities for new relationships made possible by the nature of the building."



“The Kansas City Symphony is a leader among American orchestras, with its culture of transparency, respect and trust and its partnership with its musicians,” says Shirley Bush Helzberg, local entrepreneur, philanthropist and past Symphony board chair. “This move will enable the Symphony to continue to build on these strengths. It will also further the Symphony’s role in the community, guaranteeing sustainability and vitality for years to come. My family and I can think of no better purpose for the Webster School building. We are delighted that our Symphony will have a new home, and will be able to welcome the people of Kansas City back to a space they know and love.”

Kansas City Symphony Music Director Michael Stern also shares a passion for the project. “For me, the historic Webster School building and the Kansas City Symphony have been closely intertwined since I began my tenure with the orchestra here in 2005. Webster House was always a labor of love for Shirley Bush Helzberg, and she remains at the heart of our Symphony family. But the building itself is more than just an elegant and iconic landmark in the Crossroads. It has been the place for countless musical gatherings, celebrations and events in which the Symphony and the community could come together. That bond was only strengthened after 2011 when the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts opened right up the hill. It therefore seems so right that Webster School will be the home to our Kansas City Symphony. Aside from the possibilities that it will afford us for our day-to-day operations, it will be a home for our musicians, and it will allow us not only to present performances and other events but also to interact with all of our constituencies in new ways. I think this is wonderful for the Symphony, and wonderful for Kansas City.”

One of the lead funders of the project is The Sunderland Foundation, led by Chairman and Symphony board member Kent Sunderland. “The Sunderland Foundation has a long history of supporting brick-and-mortar projects for Kansas City-based nonprofits. The availability of the Webster School property presents a unique opportunity to once again transform this special building, this time into a hub of artistic activity for our outstanding Symphony,” says Sunderland. “We are pleased to fund the creation of a vibrant space for the Kansas City Symphony to operate, grow, dream and reimagine the role of a symphony orchestra in our beautiful city for decades to come.”

“All of us at the Kansas City Symphony are so grateful to Shirley Bush Helzberg for the opportunity to call the historic Webster School our new home,” says Pat McCown, Kansas City Symphony board chair. “Webster School’s adjacency to the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, the opportunity for musicians to have practice, rehearsal and performance spaces, and the increased accessibility for our patrons, guests, musicians and supporters is truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

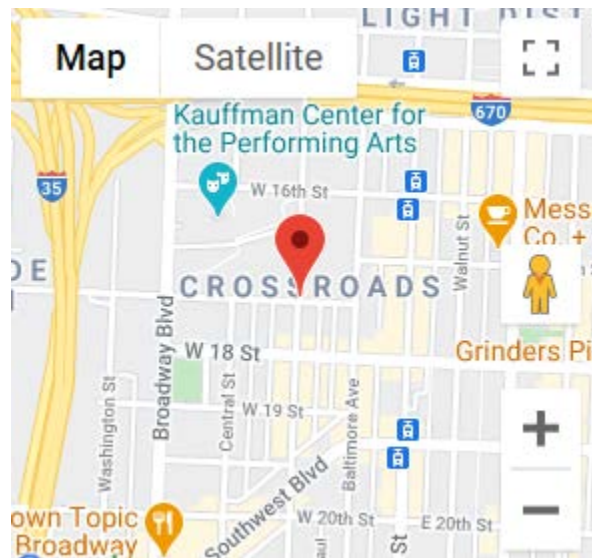
The Symphony is working with Helix Design and Straub Construction to create a modern space while preserving the character of this storied building, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. All work to be done is completely in harmony with that designation. The outdoor courtyard and first floor will be configured to host public gatherings that may include musician recitals, music classes and events, as well as art and historical displays. Entertaining areas, including the restaurant, kitchen and bar areas, will be preserved for hosting special Symphony events.

Alissa Wehmuller, Principal at Helix Architecture + Design, adds, “Helix worked on the original Webster House restoration almost 20 years ago. Whenever we have the opportunity to work in a historic building that has as much depth and ornate detail as Webster House, we are very intentional in how we can approach the project with a light touch and amplify those existing features. The exposed brick, wood accents and glass

windows served as a great foundation for a few key interventions. The process will be a collaborative effort with our engineers, Avant Acoustics and Lankford Fendler, to carefully address the acoustics of the building. Whether it's isolating noise between practice rooms or transforming a dining room into a recital space, we want every musician, Symphony employee and community member to appreciate the beauty of the building and truly enjoy their experience."

Webster School opened in 1886 and served the Kansas City School District for 45 years, closing in 1932. A variety of agencies and businesses occupied Webster School until 2002, when Helzberg painstakingly restored the building and opened Webster House. Now, the landmark's new purpose as headquarters to a major American orchestra will further solidify its iconic stature on Kansas City's skyline.

The Symphony will name its new home in the coming months.



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About the Kansas City Symphony

Founded in 1982, the Kansas City Symphony has established itself as a major force in the cultural life of the community. Praised for performances of uncompromising standard, the orchestra is the largest in the region and enjoys a national reputation under the artistic leadership of Music Director Michael Stern. The Symphony performs more than 130 concerts each year, welcomes guests of international acclaim as part of its Classical and Pops series, and serves as the orchestra for the Kansas City Ballet and Lyric Opera of Kansas City.

Complementing its full schedule of concerts, the Symphony enriches the lives of Kansas City residents by providing music education opportunities for children and adults, such as KinderKonzerts, Young People's Concerts, an instrument petting zoo and concert comments. Highlights each season include a range of free master classes, events and concerts reaching more than 250,000 community members.

The Symphony has released eight highly praised CDs to date with Reference Recordings. The latest release features Jonathan Leshnoff's Symphony No. 3 and his piano concerto performed by Joyce Yang. The Symphony and Michael Stern also have recorded for the Naxos label. Kansas City's new classical music radio station, ClassicalKC 91.9 FM, broadcasts Kansas City Symphony performances each week. For more information on the Symphony, please visit kcsymphony.org.