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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**PROJECT HARMONY OFFERS FREE AFTER-SCHOOL ORCHESTRA IMMERSION
TO UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES**

June 14, 2017 | CHARLOTTE, NC – The Charlotte Symphony and Community School of the Arts are combining forces to launch a bold new public music program aimed at building pathways to success for Charlotte-area youth. By engaging children in orchestra programs that foster skill development and personal empowerment, Project Harmony is social transformation through music.

This new community collaboration offers an intensive youth music program focused primarily on communities with the fewest resources and greatest need. It builds off of Community School of the Arts' long-running Orchestra in Schools program and expands the Charlotte Symphony's Winterfield Youth Orchestra elementary school program to a number of new community-based sites.

To kick off the community collaboration, the Charlotte Symphony will perform a patriotic-themed program at St. Andrew's United Methodist Church, 1901 Archdale Dr., on Wednesday, June 28 at 6:45 p.m. The whole Montclair community is encouraged to come hear the Symphony and talk with Symphony, Community School of the Arts, and other community leaders about the new program.

Shifting the focus of the program from individual schools to broader communities extends this valuable opportunity to a larger number of students in Charlotte's underserved east, west, and southwest neighborhoods. The project comes on the heels of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Opportunity Task Force Report.

"The Charlotte Symphony is committed to solutions," says Charlotte Symphony President and Chief Executive Officer Mary A. Deissler. "Project Harmony addresses the challenges of social capital and, in turn, upward mobility that our youth faces. Music and, specifically, ensemble-based learning offers students a powerful way to broaden their ideas of what's possible in their lives."

Through its Winterfield Youth Orchestra, the Symphony has served east Charlotte since 2010, engaging an average of 58 students per year. Over the past three years, Winterfield has seen 18 students accepted into Northwest School of the Arts, an audition-based arts magnet school in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School district.

Through its Orchestra in Schools program, Community School of the Arts has served nearly 1,000 students, providing violin instruction to 3rd through 5th graders at three Title I schools. Participants in

the program have gone on to play in orchestras in a number of CMS schools, as well as the Symphony's Junior Youth Orchestra and Charlotte Symphony Youth Orchestra. Graduates have been seated as section leaders and concertmasters, won merit-based music scholarships, and been accepted into middle and high school honors, Western Regional, and North Carolina All-State orchestras.

"Community School of the Arts is excited to partner with the Charlotte Symphony, combining two strong programs to reach more of Charlotte's youth with an exceptional music experience," says Devlin McNeil, President and Executive Director of Community School of the Arts. "Community School of the Arts already has a strong presence in two of Project Harmony's program sites. We look forward to deepening our reach within each community."

Project Harmony will serve Charlotte's Oaklawn and Montclaire neighborhoods in the 2017-18 season.

Driven by values of access, inclusion, and excellence, Project Harmony offers students the opportunity to train in after-school orchestras free of charge. The learning in Project Harmony is based in group learning, performance, and individualized attention. The project will nurture musical techniques, as well as ambitious work ethic, commitment, and excellence. This builds to a belief in each child that he or she can take on difficult challenges and succeed.

Inspired by the renowned El Sistema youth and community development program of Venezuela, Project Harmony aims to serve 500 children by 2020.

Project Harmony's Montclaire location, hosted at St. Andrew's United Methodist Church, is sponsored by Culture Blocks, a community partnership between the Arts & Science Council, the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, and Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation, to bring arts and cultural experiences close to where people live. Culture Blocks is funded by Mecklenburg County.

About the Charlotte Symphony

Founded in 1932, the Charlotte Symphony is a longstanding nonprofit organization committed to delivering exceptional musical experiences that build a strong Charlotte community. Led by internationally renowned Music Director Christopher Warren-Green, the Symphony upholds the belief that music not only entertains but can educate our children and enrich the human spirit. We employ professional full-time orchestra musicians, support two youth orchestras and a volunteer chorus. We perform in the area's top concert halls and everywhere from parks and pubs to schools and jails. The Charlotte Symphony is serving the Charlotte community through music that connects and inspires.

www.charlottesymphony.org

About Community School of the Arts

Community School of the Arts, founded in 1969, seeks to transform lives and inspire community through outstanding and accessible arts education. CSA instructs 4,000 students a year in music and visual arts through private lessons, group classes, workshops, the Charlotte Children's Choir, summer camps, and outreach programs. Through the School's financial aid program, outreach programs and community partnerships, nearly half of CSA's students receive their programs at a free or reduced rate.

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