



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**ATLANTA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA HOSTS INAUGURAL HBCU ACCESSFEST PRESENTED BY DELTA AIR LINES AND INVESCO QQQ**

**FREE COMMUNITY EVENT CONNECTS LOCAL YOUTH WITH COLLEGE AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES**

**ATLANTA** – The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO) is pleased to announce the lineup of events for its first annual HBCU AccessFest, taking place on Saturday, September 16, 12 noon to 6pm, at the Woodruff Arts Center. Students from all over the Atlanta metropolitan area and beyond are welcome to attend this free event, which will provide career and college-related resources, including an HBCU college fair, career fair, panel discussions and a community festival highlighting black-owned businesses.

“In the realm of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, action is the heartbeat of our commitment at ASO. This event embodies our principles and ideals,” asserted Jennifer Barlament, the Executive Director of the ASO. “We firmly believe that culture and community are symbiotic, and we hope that this festival will cultivate seeds of potential, as well as honor our vibrant community.”

“As advocates of diversity, equity, and inclusion, we are elated to introduce this pioneering program,” remarked Brandi Hoyos, the ASO's Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. “By establishing an inclusive environment for young individuals to explore prospective academic and career journeys, we aspire to embolden the forthcoming generation of leaders and foster a more resilient and diverse community. We've meticulously cultivated an environment where young minds can explore the kaleidoscope of educational prospects, delve into the boundless array of careers, and find inspiration within the rich tapestry of our community. This fest is more than an event; it's a catalyst for transformation, a testament to unity, and a bridge to brighter horizons.”

The four access zones at the HBCU AccessFest are:

- **College Access Zone:** Recruiters from Historically Black Colleges and Universities across the country offer a comprehensive platform for students to explore higher education options and gain insights into their academic futures.
- **Career Access Zone:** Internships and career options may be explored in a wide array of industries including healthcare, finance, supply chain and logistics, STEM, and more. Students will have the unique opportunity to interact with industry professionals and gain insights into various careers.

- Family Access Zone: Providing resources and insights for families and communities to thrive. This zone will offer guidance on supporting students' academic and career journeys, emphasizing the importance of collective growth.
- Community Access Zone: Connect with Black-owned businesses and community organizations, fostering local partnerships and collaborations. This zone serves as a vibrant marketplace, highlighting the value of supporting local enterprises and community initiatives.

The ASO's HBCU AccessFest was conceptualized with the intention of unlocking opportunities for Atlanta's youth, many of whom are trailblazing their way as first-generation college students. In tandem with facilitating connections between students and HBCU recruiters, as well as companies offering internships, the event will encompass enlightening panel discussions with accomplished Black professionals and visionary entrepreneurs.

One of the highlights of the HBCU AccessFest is a panel discussion titled "The Shift from Engagement to Empowerment: Community Investment in Pathways & Pipelines." This discussion will feature a panel of trailblazers who will share their experiences and insights on how their organizations have actively invested in the pipeline of the Black community. Moderated by Chris Webber, NBA Hall of Fame and Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Board Member, this discussion aims to shed light on the strategies and initiatives employed by these leaders to foster growth and opportunities within the Black community.

"It is exciting to see the effort and commitment the ASO is demonstrating in promoting and hosting HBCUs," said Dan Ford, President of the Atlanta HBCU Alumni Alliance. "The level of energy and enthusiasm throughout the local HBCU community around this event is incredible considering this is an inaugural year. With this momentum, I am confident, this event will become one of the premier HBCU recruitment and celebration events of the year connecting students and supporters to the rich legacy of HBCUs."

Within the tapestry of the HBCU AccessFest, the presence of Black-owned vendors at the Community Access Zone stands as a testament to the economic empowerment they seek to foster. Many of these remarkable businesses, a significant portion facilitated by the Russell Innovation Center for Entrepreneurs (RICE), embody the spirit of innovation and determination that is a cornerstone of Black culture, such as Atlanta Influences Everything.

During their panel discussion, members of Atlanta Influences Everything, a dynamic brand and creative consultancy, will come together to explore Atlanta's unique narrative. They'll discuss how civic engagement, corporate responsibility, and cultural heritage collaborate to shape the city's impactful story. Gain insights into their initiatives, projects, and partnerships that empower communities and contribute to Atlanta's narrative.

"As leaders in Atlanta's vibrant cultural landscape, we at Atlanta Influences Everything are thrilled to participate in the upcoming HBCU AccessFest as a partner. Events like this are critical because they empower the next generation of Black talent with exposure, networking, and career opportunities. This strongly aligns with our mission as an organization seeking to harness Atlanta's influence to open doors for underrepresented communities."

Invesco QQQ is proud to sponsor and host a candid and inspiring conversation about personal finance, which is titled, "How Not to Suck at Money: A Financial Education Conversation." Held at 3pm in the Rich Theater, moderator Taylor Rooks will facilitate a conversation about experiences with money and financial literacy with HBCU alumni and Atlanta-area industry leaders.

AspireTV will host a panel called, “See and Be Seen: Black in Media.” It features several multi-industry leaders & entrepreneurs from film, tv, tech, and more. The discussion will focus on the challenges and opportunities of being Black in tech and content, and how each of our panelists are leveraging their platforms to secure representation for Black audiences, moderated by *HBCU 101* host & executive producer, Jahliel Thurman.

The HBCU AccessFest has garnered steadfast support from prominent sponsors, including Delta Air Lines and Invesco QQQ. Additionally, the inaugural event has forged alliances with esteemed partners such as Mayor Andre Dickens’ ATL Year of the Youth initiative, ASPIRE TV, Atlanta Influences Everything, 100 Black Men of Atlanta, Collegiate 100 ATL, Emerging 100 of Atlanta, Davis Broadcasting, Fulton County Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, HBCU Alumni Alliance, National Society of Black Engineers, Next Gen Men & Women, NFL Alumni Georgia Chapter, Protect the Vote GA, Rho Zeta Omega and Pi Alpha Omega Chapters of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Russell, Innovation Center for Entrepreneurs (RICE), Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCF), United Negro College Fund (UNCF), United States Reserved Office Training Corps (ROTC)

To learn more about HBCU AccessFest, including the full listing of events, visit [aso.org/hbcu](http://aso.org/hbcu)

### **About the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra**

Under the leadership of Music Director Nathalie Stutzmann, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO) offers live performances, media initiatives, and learning programs that unite, educate and enrich our community through the engaging and transformative power of orchestral music experiences. The ASO engages the diverse international community of our city, bringing people together in harmony—including our youngest citizens, with extensive opportunities for youth and families to fall in love with music. Two of the hallmark education programs celebrate anniversaries this season: the Atlanta Youth Symphony Orchestra celebrates 50 years and the Talent Development Program turns 30.

The Orchestra’s range and depth are featured in more than 150 concerts each year, including the flagship Delta Classical Series, Movies in Concert, Family Concerts, Coca-Cola Holiday series, and many community and education concerts. In addition, the ASO presents many vibrant, wide-ranging events and artists through its Delta Atlanta Symphony Hall Live presentations. The ASO also performs with the ASO Chorus, originally founded by Robert Shaw, and currently under the direction of Norman Mackenzie. The Chorus is featured on nine of the ASO’s 27 Grammy® Award-winning recordings.

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