



**Atlanta
Symphony**
Orchestra

news

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**ATLANTA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ANNOUNCES CREATION OF
THE FLORENCE KOPLEFF CHORAL ADMINISTRATOR CHAIR**

CHAIR NAMED IN MEMORIAM OF GREAT AMERICAN CONTRALTO FLORENCE KOPLEFF

The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra has announced the creation of **The Florence Kopleff Choral Administrator Chair** in perpetuity as a tribute to American Contralto Florence Kopleff who died on July 24, 2012. The impact of Miss Kopleff — once called the “greatest living alto” by *Time* magazine — on American music and the Atlanta Symphony will be felt for generations to come. Jeffrey Baxter, current Choral Administrator for the Atlanta Symphony, longtime member of the ASO Chorus, and a friend of Miss Kopleff, will be the first holder of the chair.

Miss Kopleff had always acknowledged the deep influence former Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Music Director Robert Shaw had on her life. She first met him in 1941, and was a mainstay of the Robert Shaw Chorale, having performed on every recording made by the group. It was Mr. Shaw who encouraged her to take private voice lessons, and fostered her love of literature, philosophy, poetry, and religion. “He made me the human being that I am,” she said. At the urging of Mr. Shaw, Miss Kopleff came to Atlanta in 1968 to become Professor of Voice at Georgia State University, and also became the school’s first Artist-in-Residence, a position she held for 30 years

Miss Kopleff also had an active solo career, having performed and recorded with renowned conductors such as George Szell, Charles Munch, Fritz Reinger, and Eugene Ormandy, and was soloist in multiple Grammy Award-winning recordings with the Robert Shaw Chorale. After moving to Atlanta, she began a long-lasting relationship with the Atlanta Symphony, with which she gave many memorable performances as soloist. During her long association with Mr. Shaw and the ASO Choruses, she gave innumerable group voice classes and also prepared transliterations of foreign-language texts.

“The passing of Florence Kopleff is especially poignant for me as someone who also sang under the baton of Robert Shaw,” said Atlanta Symphony Orchestra President Stanley E. Romanstein. “The spirit and energy she embodied a singer and teacher was contagious, and her dedication to our ASO Chorus is particularly special to the Orchestra. By naming this Chair in her honor, we are ensuring her legacy will live on for generations to come.”

“Florence Kopleff was a supreme artist, a gifted educator, and a remarkable human being. She gave so much of herself and her talent to others. Her singing and teaching changed lives,” said Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Director of Choruses Norman Mackenzie. “Florence loved and nurtured the

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chorus, and our members returned that love and devotion. I find it particularly fitting that we are creating The Florence Kopleff Choral Administrator Chair, and I am thrilled my dear friend and colleague, Jeff Baxter, a close associate of both Florence and Robert Shaw, will be the first holder of this chair.”

Miss Kopleff taught hundreds of singers in her 30 years at Georgia State University, where she was honored with the Alumni Distinguished Professor Award in 1982. “Music is my religion,” she said. “I don’t have a family or a business to leave to the world, so my music, which is my life’s work, will be my testament.”

About the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, currently in its 68th season, consistently affirms its position as one of America’s leading Orchestras by performing great music, presenting great artists, educating, and engaging.

The Orchestra is known for the excellence of its live performances, presentations, renowned choruses, and its impressive list of GRAMMY® Award-winning recordings. As the leading cultural organization in the Southeast, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra serves as the cornerstone for artistic development and music education in the region. Since September 2001, the Orchestra and its audiences have together explored a creative mix of programming, including Theater of a Concert performances, which explore different formats, settings, and enhancements for the musical performance experience. Another example is the Atlanta School of Composers, which reflects Mr. Spano and the Orchestra’s commitment to nurturing and championing music through multi-year partnerships defining a new generation of American composers. Since the beginning of his tenure (to date), Mr. Spano and the Orchestra have performed more than 100 concerts containing contemporary works (composed since 1950), and 15 Orchestra-commissioned world premieres.

During its 32-year relationship with Telarc, the Orchestra and Chorus recorded more than 100 albums and their recordings have won 27 GRAMMY® Awards in categories including Best Classical Album, Best Orchestral Performance, Best Choral Performance, and Best Opera Performance. The Orchestra continues to record regularly on its new in-house label, ASO Media, which demonstrates the Orchestra’s commitment to celebrating classical masterworks while continuing to perform commission, premiere, and record with some of today’s leading composers.

The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra performs more than 200 concerts each year for a combined audience of more than a half million in a full schedule of performances, including educational and community concerts. A recognized leader and supporter of contemporary American music, the Orchestra recently received the 2007 award for Strongest Commitment to New American Music from the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers. In addition, Music Director Robert Spano was named *Musical America* 2008 Conductor of the Year. With the opening of the 12,000-seat Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre at Encore Park (vzwamp.com) in May 2008, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra became the first U.S. orchestra to annually perform and present in its concert hall, and in two amphitheatres. In Summer 2008, the Orchestra celebrated 35 years at legendary Chastain Park Amphitheater, the award-winning 6,500 seat venue in Atlanta, during the Orchestra’s annual Delta Classic Chastain concert series (deltaclassicchastain.com).

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