



Antigua & Barbuda Youth Symphony Orchestra
c/o Government House
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ABYSO Prepares For 5th Anniversary Celebrations

Wednesday April 4, 2023 – Antigua & Barbuda: The Antigua & Barbuda Youth Symphony Orchestra (ABYSO) will kick start a year of celebrations in April 2023 to mark its 5th anniversary. The current orchestra was launched in 2018 under the distinguished patronage of His Excellency Sir Rodney Williams and Her Excellency Lady Williams in collaboration with the Kanneh-Mason family. The Kanneh-Masons, whose paternal grandparents were born in Antigua, are seven award winning brothers and sisters all of whom play either violin, piano or cello.

Over the past 5 years, the ABYSO has laid a strong foundation for its sustainability. It now supports two orchestras, the ABYSO and the Junior Orchestra, both of which meet weekly for instrument clinics, sectionals and full orchestra rehearsals. It also has developed a year round Train the Trainers programme which upskills local music educators in teaching orchestral instruments. Its Inspire Youth Choir is comprised of singers from across various schools, church and community groups and seeks to revive chorale singing among the young. The ABYSO also supports an instrument repair training programme, a composition programme, and outreach programmes at the Potters Primary School in Antigua and the Sir McChesney George Secondary and Holy Trinity Primary Schools on Barbuda.

The ABYSO 5th anniversary celebrations will formally begin with a public ***Service of Thanksgiving*** to be celebrated at the St. Johns Seventh-day Adventist Church on Nevis Street on Sunday 16th April 2023 at 5:00pm. The service will include music by the ABYSO, Junior ABYSO, the Kanneh-Masons and the Inspire Youth Choir under the directorship of guest conductor Tom Featherstonehaugh. Tom is the Assistant Conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and a graduate of Oxford University's Merton College with first class honours and the Royal Academy of Music with distinction. He will be making his second visit to Antigua and Barbuda as conductor for the celebratory events on the invitation of the Kanneh-Masons.

The celebrations will continue with the 5th edition of the ABYSO-Kanneh-Masons' ***Playing to Inspire*** concert on Saturday 22nd April at 7:00pm at the St. John's Pentecostal Church on Lauchland Benjamin Drive. The concert will include a wide range of music including Beethoven, Marley and Milhaud, bound to keep audiences electrified.

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The featured guest for this year is award winning saxophonist Jess Gillam. Jess shot to fame as the first saxophonist to reach the finals of BBC Young Musician and the youngest ever soloist to perform at the Last Night of the Proms. As well as performing around the world, Jess is a presenter on TV and Radio. She became the youngest ever presenter for BBC Radio 3 with the launch of her own weekly show, This Classical Life. Jess is the first ever saxophonist to be signed exclusively to Decca Classics and both of her albums reached No.1 in the UK Classical Music Charts.

For the first time, students from the Sir McChesney George Secondary School on Barbuda will sing on the Inspire Youth Choir. In addition, three young musicians playing flute, French Horn and tuba, from the Dominican Republic, will also join the ABYSO as part of the celebrations, with the kind assistance of Her Excellency Raquel Jacobo Jaar, Ambassador of the Dominican Republic to Antigua and Barbuda, and Mia Vidal Corominas, the ABRSM DR Representative, as the ABYSO commences a partnership with the Dominican Republic. Completing the list of special guests will be prize winning clarinetist Sophie Biddell who read music at Oxford University and is currently Director of Music at the Christchurch Cathedral School in Oxford.

The ABYSO's 5th anniversary week of celebrations is generously supported by the main sponsors: the Calvin Ayre Foundation, Hodges Bay Resort, Blue Waters Hotel, Curtain Bluff Hotel, Ocean Point Resort, Jumby Bay Fund, Mill Reef Fund, Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority, American University of Antigua, Lolita's, The Larder, Island Living, the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), RNSS Ltd., the Embassy of the Dominican Republic in Antigua, Government House and the Government of Antigua and Barbuda.

The ABYSO is a not-for profit, year-round after school music programme providing quality, accessible music education, instruments, performance and mentorship opportunities to young musicians and music educators across Antigua and Barbuda. It is led by a voluntary board of directors and is a 501(c) 3 registered charity.

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