

The logo for the High Museum of Art Atlanta, featuring the word "HIGH" in white capital letters on a red rectangular background.

HIGH MUSEUM OF ART ATLANTA



Young
Audiences
Arts for
Learning

The logo for Alliance Theatre at the Woodruff, featuring the word "Alliance" in a bold, black, sans-serif font, with "Theatre at the Woodruff" in a smaller font below it.

Theatre at the Woodruff



Atlanta
Symphony
Orchestra

THE WOODRUFF ARTS CENTER



Impact and Achievements of the Woodruff Arts Center Recognized during 50th Anniversary of the Orly Plane Crash that Killed Arts Patrons of Atlanta

Created in Response to the Tragedy, the Woodruff Arts Center Transformed Atlanta and the Southeast Arts and Business Community

April 17, 2012 (Atlanta) – Sunday June 3rd marks the 50th anniversary of the plane crash at Paris’s Orly Airport that took the lives of 122 arts patrons from Atlanta who were part of a European arts tour planned by the Atlanta Art Association. The tragedy stunned Atlanta’s citizens, galvanizing them to build a Memorial Arts Building now part of the Woodruff Arts Center, which celebrates multiple art forms in one location.

The Woodruff will commemorate the tragedy through a special Community Day of free activities at each of The Woodruff’s divisions, including an art installation from the musée du Louvre.

In the half a century since, the Woodruff became the largest visual and performing arts center in the Southeast with a transforming impact on the cultural and economic development of Atlanta. The Woodruff, which today is home to the Alliance Theatre, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the High Museum of Art, and Young Audiences, serves more than 1.4 million people annually and established Midtown as the cultural center of Atlanta.

On the anniversary, the public is invited to participate in Community Day at the Woodruff on June 3 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., during which the following free activities are planned:

- An Instrument Petting Zoo with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra
- A reading of Pearl Cleage’s “Wish You Were Here” – a poem written for the anniversary – at the Alliance Theatre, which will also host acting workshops and performances of “Waiting for Balloon”
- Admission to the High and family art workshops
- Hands-on activities such as storytelling, puppet shows, a community art project, multi-cultural music and more by Young Audiences, including a reading of “The Story of Orly” by Barry Stewart Mann

Visitors may also view the painting *Allegory of the State of France before the Return from Egypt* by Jean-Pierre Franque, on loan from the Louvre to commemorate the anniversary. The painting has never before been shown in the U.S. This gesture echoes the French government’s loan of famous paintings from the Louvre to Atlanta in 1963 to honor Orly crash victims.

Atlanta native Alfred Uhry, the Tony Award, Academy Award and Pulitzer Prize recipient and author of “Driving Miss Daisy,” will participate in a special Q&A during Community Day. His new play “Apples & Oranges,” based on the book by Marie Brenner, will premiere at the Alliance Theatre in October.

On the anniversary, the Woodruff will also host the Orly Commemoration Dinner at 6 p.m., a private, ticketed event in the Galleria of the Memorial Arts Building. The event will showcase the story of the Woodruff’s creation in response to the tragedy through video, performance and guest speakers.

The commemoration events are made possible by generous contributions from the following donors: Madeline and Howell Adams, Jr., the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, The Coca-Cola Company, R. Howard Dobbs Jr. Foundation, Thomas H. Lanier Foundation, Lanier-Goodman Foundation, Katherine John Murphy Foundation, Oxford Industries Inc., Olive and Roby Robinson Fund, Gertrude and William C. Wardlaw Fund and the Vasser Woolley Foundation.

About the Orly Tragedy and the Woodruff Arts Center Today

On June 3, 1962, 122 patrons and friends of the Atlanta Art Association perished at Paris's Orly Airport while returning from a three-week tour of the art capitals of Europe. This loss of many of the city's most dedicated arts supporters spurred Atlanta to create a memorial that would continue their passion for the cultural growth of the city.

Between 1962 and 1968, the Atlanta Art Association led the city of Atlanta in mobilizing major gifts from organizations and individuals as well as small donations garnered through a grass-roots campaign. The most significant gift was made by Atlanta's famously "anonymous donor," Robert W. Woodruff, the retired head of The Coca-Cola Company. The Atlanta Memorial Arts Center (renamed Woodruff Arts Center in 1982) opened to the public on October 5, 1968, in a ceremony that included the French government donating August Rodin's *Le Hombre (The Shade)* to the city of Atlanta in memoriam for those whose lives were lost at Orly.

"Today, the Woodruff has become one of the largest performing arts centers in the nation and our visual, dramatic, and musical organizations are internationally recognized," said Joe Bankoff, president and CEO of the Woodruff. "It is hard now to imagine the devastating impact of this tragedy on Atlanta. Yet the determined response of the city to build a memorial created a center that has nurtured amazing artistic and economic growth. Thus the 50th anniversary of the tragedy provides a moment to recall this loss – but more importantly to recognize and celebrate Atlanta's commitment to build and sustain a visual and performing arts center that has achieved national recognition and global stature."

"The fact that Atlanta's citizens mobilized to build a cultural center in honor of the Orly victims exemplifies why the phoenix is such a fitting symbol for our city," said Kasim Reed, Mayor of Atlanta. "With the support and dedication of our citizens, Atlanta's art scene literally rose from the ashes in the late 1960s. Since the opening of the Woodruff Arts Center, the city's arts organizations have grown tremendously. In the process Midtown Atlanta has been completely transformed, and the area has become the cultural center of the region attracting residents and tourists from across the world."

The development of the Woodruff spurred the transformation and revitalization of an entire section of the city. Today, Midtown is Atlanta's cultural hub and one of the city's most vibrant areas, serving thousands of residents and visitors with hotels, residences, restaurants, and parks. Atlanta's Midtown is home to many other arts and culture organizations, such as the Atlanta Ballet, the Atlanta Botanical Garden, the Center for Puppetry Arts, the Fox Theatre, and the Museum of Design Atlanta. Midtown is easily accessible from the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport by MARTA (Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority), including the Arts Center station west of the Woodruff complex.

History of the Woodruff Arts Center and its Divisions

The Woodruff was initially founded as the Atlanta Arts Alliance, Inc. in 1968, composed of the Atlanta College of Art, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and the High Museum of Art in a single 501(c)(3) corporation. The Alliance Theatre was created as an additional division in 1969. The Center was renamed the Woodruff Arts Center in 1982 to honor Robert W. Woodruff, one of the center's major benefactors. (The Memorial Arts Building, which today houses the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the Alliance Theatre, and Young Audiences, has not been renamed.) Young Audiences became a new division of the Woodruff in 2005 and, in 2006, the Atlanta College of Art merged with the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) and moved to another location in Midtown.

Today, the four divisions of the Woodruff are the Alliance Theatre, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the High Museum of Art, and Young Audiences. The Woodruff spends more on arts education for students than any other institution in Georgia.

The Alliance Theatre was founded in 1968, and joined the Woodruff Arts Center as a division in 1969. In the years since then, the Alliance has premiered more than 60 new works on the Alliance Stage. In 2000, the Alliance Theatre expanded, adding the 200-seat Hertz Stage. The Alliance has originated numerous productions which later transferred to Broadway, three of which became Tony Award-winning hits: Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, Elton John and Tim Rice's *Aida*, and Alfred Uhry's *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*. In 2007, under the leadership of current artistic director Susan V. Booth, the Alliance Theatre won the Regional Theatre Tony Award in recognition of its sustained excellence in programming, education, and community engagement. The Alliance now serves over 200,000 patrons and 46,000 students with its programming each year.

The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1945 as a Youth Orchestra under the direction of Henry Sopkin. With the arrival of acclaimed Music Director Robert Shaw (1967-1988), the Orchestra also opened a new home in Atlanta Symphony Hall at the Woodruff (1968). The Orchestra's move to the Memorial Arts Building enabled it, for the first time, to have a permanent home in a proper concert hall. During Mr. Shaw's tenure, the Orchestra launched the legendary Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chorus (1970), gave its debut performance at Carnegie Hall (1971), performed its first concert at Chastain Park Amphitheater (1974), and became the first American orchestra to commercially release a digital recording (1978). Music Director Yoel Levi (1988-2000) led the Orchestra on its first European Tour in 1988, and was part of an ongoing recording legacy — to date, the Orchestra and Chorus have recorded more than 100 albums, and its recordings won 27 GRAMMY® Awards in categories including Best Classical Album, Best Orchestral Performance, Best Choral Performance, and Best Opera Performance. Currently under the leadership of Music Director Robert Spano, the Atlanta Symphony consistently affirms its position as one of America's leading Orchestras by performing great music, presenting great artists, nurturing young talent, and engaging with its community. The Orchestra performs more than 200 concerts annually for more than a half million concertgoers in performances which also feature educational and community concerts. The cornerstone of Mr. Spano's tenure is his renowned Atlanta School of Composers, his exploration of Theater of Concert presentations, and his artistic partnership with Principal Guest Conductor Donald Runnicles. In 2008, the ASO opened its 12,000-seat Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre at Encore Park, becoming the first U.S. orchestra to perform and present in its own concert hall as well as in two amphitheatres.

The High Museum of Art, now the leading art museum in the southeastern U.S., was founded in 1905 as the Atlanta Art Association. The High has grown from a small collection displayed in a suburban mansion to a renowned collection of classic and contemporary art housed in award-winning buildings by Richard Meier (opened in 1983) and Renzo Piano (opened in 2005) on the Woodruff's campus. During the past 50 years, the High's membership has grown from around 2,000 to 45,000 households, and since its opening, yearly attendance has increased from 16,000 to more than 312,000. Under the leadership of Director Michael Shapiro, the High currently partners with renowned museums around the world, such as the Louvre and the National Galleries of Scotland, to develop exhibitions, promote research, and bring major artistic masterpieces to audiences in the Southeast.

Young Audiences, founded in 1983, became a new division of the Woodruff in 2005. Currently under the leadership of President Charisse M. Williams, Young Audiences' mission is to transform the lives and learning of Georgia's young people through the arts. The organization does this by bringing curriculum-based arts experiences in music, dance, theatre, literary, and visual arts to pre-school through high school students in more than 65 counties in Georgia. Working with a roster of over 75 professional artists who help create and deliver programs that impact literacy and inspire education through the arts, Young Audiences programming reaches over 500,000 students every year. Young Audiences, Woodruff Art Center, is one of 30 nationwide affiliates that make up the national Young Audiences, the country's first and largest arts-in-education network.

###

Media Contacts:

For media requests outside the southeastern United States, please contact Resnicow Schroeder Associates:

Aga Sablinska

212-671-5177

asablinska@resnicowschroeder.com

Ilana Simon

720-746-9552

isimon@resnicowschroeder.com

For media requests within the southeastern United States, please contact Jackson Spalding:

Traci Buch

404-214-3596

tbuch@jacksonspalding.com