

THE SONGWRITER SYMPHONY

AUSTIN · TEXAS

Intimate stories,
orchestral
precision

Bridging the gap between "viral" modern energy and the timeless prestige of a symphony orchestra

THOROUGHLY ANALOG,
UTTERLY HUMAN

The Songwriter Symphony rescues the lost art of listening. Award winning singer-songwriters pair with student composers to compete in a 90-minute live broadcast.

Symphonic reinventions of original songs performed with an 80-piece orchestra. No backing tracks. No autotune. Just human music that moves people.

EXPLORE THE
PRODUCTION →

THE VISION

*Reclaiming artistry
from the algorithm*



Streaming has fragmented music into hooks and skips, while algorithms push lowest common denominators. The Songwriter Symphony pushes back: one voice, one orchestra — human musicians creating something internet servers can't replicate. Music that's live, visceral, and shared with a room full of people who came to feel something real.

THE SONGWRITER SYMPHONY

THE CONCEPT

An annual live television special

The Songwriter Symphony is a 90-minute live broadcast from Dell Hall at Austin's Long Center for the Performing Arts — one of the premier concert venues in America, seating 2,442.

The Songwriter Symphony will pair ten award-winning singer-songwriters with students and their faculty advisors at major schools of music. The singers and music schools will collaborate to create orchestral scores for each song. The effort will culminate with a live performance event, where each singer-songwriter will appear on stage to perform their own song amid the accompaniment of the full orchestra.

The live, in-person audience will decide which performance moved them the most.

THE CREATIVE PROCESS

PHASE ONE

The Matchmaking

Each songwriter is paired with a student orchestral arranger and faculty advisor based on musical sensibility, not genre. A country writer might work with a student drawn to minimalism. An R&B artist might work with an arranger who leans toward jazz. The friction is intentional — it's where the magic happens.

PHASE TWO

The Workshop

Over six months, the collaborations will decode the emotional core of each song and translate it to an orchestral experience. The goal will be an interactive, musical conversation between the lead vocal and the full orchestra.

PHASE THREE

Documenting The Process

Short, cinematic, behind-the-scenes clips are released on TikTok, Reels and YouTube -- capturing both mind-blowing moments when songwriters hear their compositions backed by strings for the first time and the series of edits that accompany any artistic collaboration.

THE SELECTION PROCESS

The human discovery

No open submissions. No online voting rounds. No algorithms picking favorites. Instead, a core group of Austin musicians will leverage the work of songwriting awards groups to select content the old fashioned way -- human-to-human.

The Songwriter Symphony will take advantage of the work of existing songwriter and singer awards as the basis for evaluating artist invitations. This approach has multiple advantages.

First, it forces a beautiful range of musical genres. Awards groups for blues, country, hip hop, rock and Americana musicians come to their selections with vastly different sensibilities that no one selection committee could replicate.

Second, it prevents The Songwriter Symphony from having to source thousands of song submissions from the public. Finally, it offers promotional advantages -- as the awards-granting organizations will help promote The Songwriter Symphony to their social media accounts for highlighting their honorees.

THE EVENT

LIVE BROADCAST · DELL HALL · MAY 15, 2027

Each Artist Moment

A 90-minute live broadcast from Dell Hall at Austin's Long Center. Ten artists. One full symphony orchestra. Each artist receives exactly eight minutes of airtime, structured for maximum emotional impact:

1 min *The Intro Film*

A cinematic backstory and journey from the living room guitar to an orchestral experience.

3 min *The Interview*

Host Bob Bowdon asks about the song's emotional core and the collaborative journey.

4 min *The Performance*

The artist sings with the full 80-piece orchestra. The live audience votes to determine the winner of "The Songwriter Symphony Award." The evening culminates with a grand finale medley featuring all ten artists.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

*Six segments.
Ninety minutes.*

Every moment of the broadcast is designed for emotional arc — building from the opening overture to the final collective performance. The structure ensures variety, pacing, and a natural crescendo throughout the evening.

01 *Opening Sequence*

A vivid introduction showcasing Austin's dynamic music culture while discussing the importance of genuine music artistry in a tech-oriented world.

02 *Artist Segments*

Ten consecutive artist segments, each exactly 8 minutes: intro film, interview, and full orchestral performance.

03 *Audience Voting*

Voting opens via the companion app. The audience selects their favorite performance based on emotional impact, artistry, and the orchestral collaboration.

04 *Acknowledgments*

Recognition of the student composers, faculty advisors, orchestra members, and the Austin Symphony leadership who made the evening possible.

05 *The Award*

The CLARION, the night's top performance, will be chosen by audience vote.

06 *Grand Finale*

All ten artists return to the stage for a collective medley — a breathtaking blend of their unique musical styles backed by the full 80-piece orchestra.

THE AWARD

THE SONGWRITER SYMPHONY

Humanity in Harmony.

A physical baton or sculpture kept at the Long Center — home of the Austin Symphony Orchestra — with the winner's name engraved annually. It remains on permanent display, with each year's winner alongside those who came before.

Audience-Voted. At the end of the 10 performances, the live audience votes via a dedicated app or QR code during a 10-minute intermission/finale piece. No judges panel. No industry politics. The people who came to feel something decide who moved them most.

The Prize. Beyond the trophy, the winning artist receives a professional studio recording of their orchestral version, a cash "Commissioning Grant" for their next project, and a featured spot in next year's season.

The Legacy. "Humanity in Harmony" is more than a title — it's a statement. In an era where AI can generate a symphony in seconds, this award celebrates the irreplaceable value of human collaboration, vulnerability, and artistic risk.

THE PRODUCERS

HOST & EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Bob Bowdon

Broadcast journalist and executive producer with credits spanning local television news, Bloomberg Television, and American Public Television. Also a former comedic performer with the Onion News Network, Bowdon brings a unique blend of journalistic credibility and genuine warmth.

His interview style is conversational rather than performative — designed to draw out the real stories behind the songs and make both artists and audience feel like they're part of an intimate conversation, even in a 2,442-seat hall. He's the connective tissue between the ten disparate artists, the orchestra, and the audience at home.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

John Bertholon

Emmy Award-winning producer with over 25 years in television and nearly 2,000 hours of programming across Discovery Channel, HGTV, and other leading networks. Bertholon's credits span unscripted entertainment, live events, and documentary programming.

His production philosophy centers on authentic storytelling — capturing genuine emotional moments rather than manufacturing drama. For The Songwriter Symphony, Bertholon oversees the complete production pipeline: from the docu-series content to the live broadcast, ensuring every element meets the highest standards of broadcast-quality entertainment while preserving the raw, human energy that makes the concept work.

WHY THIS WORKS

Broad appeal.

Any genre. Any voice. Country, folk, Americana, hip hop, blues, R&B, experimental — the format transcends genre boundaries because the emotional core is universal. A parent in the suburbs and a college student in a dorm room will both feel something when a songwriter's quiet ballad meets 80 instruments.

A fun live show.

This isn't a stuffy classical concert or a chaotic talent show. The pacing is tight — eight minutes per artist keeps the energy moving. The interviews and interstitials add personality and story. The audience voting adds stakes. The grand finale medley delivers a collective emotional payoff.

Never been done.

There is no existing format that pairs independent singer-songwriters with student composers from major universities and a full professional symphony orchestra for a live, audience-voted broadcast event. This is genuinely new territory — and that novelty is a marketing asset in an industry that recycles the same formats endlessly.

Community engagement.

Six universities. Ten artists with their own followings. The Austin Symphony's institutional audience. Local music critics and media. The Long Center's patron base. Every participant in the ecosystem brings their own community — and the docu-series content gives each community a reason to tune in before, during, and after the event.

Built-in content engine.

The creative process itself generates months of compelling content: pairing announcements, workshop footage, "first time hearing strings" reaction moments, artist profiles, composer spotlights, faculty interviews, and rehearsal clips. By the time the live event airs, the audience already knows and cares about the artists and their journeys.

MARKETING STRATEGY

*Leverage
every following.*

The Songwriter Symphony doesn't need a massive marketing budget because the ecosystem *is* the marketing engine. Every participant — artist, university, venue, orchestra — brings an existing audience that can be activated through authentic, shareable content.

Artist Audiences. Each selected songwriter has a built-in following. When they share their journey — pairing announcements, workshop clips, rehearsal moments — their fans become invested in the outcome. Ten artists means ten distinct audience pipelines.

University Networks. Six major Texas schools of music, each with alumni networks, student bodies, and social media channels. Student composers become campus ambassadors. Faculty advisors lend institutional credibility. Parents and families of participating students are a guaranteed engaged audience.

Venue & Orchestra. The Long Center and Austin Symphony each bring their patron bases, email lists, and social channels. Cross-promotion with their existing concert seasons creates natural touchpoints.

Documenting The Process. Short-form content released across TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube creates a content flywheel. Each clip is designed to be shareable, emotional, and to drive viewers toward the live event. The "first time hearing strings" reaction videos alone are a viral format waiting to happen.

ENDORSEMENTS

*Backed by
the
institutions.*

The Songwriter Symphony has earned support from leaders across Austin's music, academic, and performing arts communities — the people who understand orchestral composition, live production, and what it takes to stage something this ambitious.



*Justus
Zimmerman*
CEO, AUSTIN
SYMPHONY



Matt Ott
DIRECTOR OF
SALES, THE
LONG CENTER



*Michael
Ippolito*
ASSOC.
PROFESSOR
OF
COMPOSITION,
TEXAS STATE
UNIVERSITY



*Stephen
Lias*
ENDOWED
PROFESSOR
OF
COMPOSITION,
STEPHEN F.
AUSTIN STATE
UNIVERSITY



*Scott
McAllister*
PROFESSOR
OF
COMPOSITION,
BAYLOR
UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF
MUSIC



Rob Smith
PROFESSOR
OF
COMPOSITION,
MOORES
SCHOOL OF
MUSIC,
UNIVERSITY
OF HOUSTON



*Ethan
Wickman*
PROFESSOR
OF
COMPOSITION,
UNIVERSITY
OF TEXAS AT
SAN ANTONIO

AUDIENCE TARGET

Who watches.

The Songwriter Symphony is designed to appeal across demographics — uniting the classical music patron, the indie music fan, the university community, and the general live entertainment audience under one roof.

Primary: Live Music Enthusiasts (25–54). Austin locals and Texas music fans who attend live shows, support independent artists, and are drawn to authentic, genre-defying experiences. They're already in the clubs where our artists perform.

Secondary: Classical & Performing Arts Patrons (40–65+). Austin Symphony subscribers, Long Center members, and performing arts donors. They value orchestral excellence and are excited by a format that brings new audiences into the concert hall.

Tertiary: University Communities (18–30). Students, faculty, alumni, and families connected to the six participating schools of music. The student composer angle gives this demographic a personal stake in the outcome.

Broadcast Audience. Viewers of PBS, public television, and music programming who are drawn to high-quality, feel-good entertainment with substance. The docu-series serves as a content funnel driving viewership to the live broadcast.

QUICK FACTS

ARTISTS

10

Singer-songwriters selected from Austin's live music scene and Texas music programs

ORCHESTRA

80 Pieces

Full professional symphony orchestra performing custom arrangements

UNIVERSITIES

6 Schools

UT Austin, Texas State, Baylor, University of Houston, SFA, UTSA

VENUE

Dell Hall

Austin's Long Center for the Performing Arts — 2,442 seats

RUNTIME

90 Minutes

Live broadcast with companion app voting

AWARD

Humanity in Harmony

Perpetual trophy, audience-voted, crescendo moment of the event

SEASON ONE TIMELINE

APRIL – AUGUST 2026

Artist Selection

Ten singer-songwriters selected based on songwriting craft, vocal authenticity, and orchestral potential.

SEPTEMBER 2026

Composer Pairing

Songwriters matched with student composers and faculty advisors from five universities. Docu-series filming begins.

SEPTEMBER – DECEMBER 2026

Workshop & Rehearsal

In-person collaboration, musical arrangements. Docu-series content released weekly across social platforms.

MAY 15, 2027

Performance

Live at Dell Hall, Long Center. 90-minute broadcast. Ten performances. Audience votes. "CLARION Award" winner crowned. Grand finale medley.

GET IN TOUCH

Let's build
something
extraordinary.

For partnership inquiries, sponsorship opportunities, network discussions, press, or production questions — reach out to our team.

NAME

Full name

EMAIL ADDRESS

you@example.com

INQUIRY TYPE

Select one

ORGANIZATION

Company or affiliatic

MESSAGE

How can we help?

SEND MESSAGE