James E. Rogers has pledged $1.8 million to The University of Arizona College of Fine Arts to benefit the School of Music’s orchestral and opera conducting program. Rogers’ gift will transform the conducting program and have a far-reaching impact on the entire School of Music. The gift will establish a comprehensive leadership institute to train a new generation of conductors and prepare them for the evolving challenges of the profession.

Rogers, a successful lawyer and businessman, has been named one of the country’s top twelve philanthropists by Time magazine, and in 2006, he earned the Paschal Murray Award for Outstanding Philanthropist. He has both a bachelor’s degree in accounting and a law degree from the UA, and has made substantial gifts to the UA in addition to other universities. Thanks to another generous gift, the UA James E. Rogers College of Law bears his name. In choosing to give to the School of Music, Rogers explains, “Of all the things I’ve ever wanted to do in my life, I hold conducting most dear to my heart.” He finds the proposed plans to be an exciting and creative use of funds. “Jim Rogers has told me of his abiding passion for orchestral conducting and his desire to support it,” says Maurice J. Sevigny, dean of the College of Fine Arts. “We are proud to be able to make his dream a reality and to create a visionary conducting program through his generosity.”

Peter McAllister, director of the School of Music, adds, “We are honored by Mr. Rogers’ commitment. His gift will enable us to attract talented national and international applicants, expand our musical training, and fund a visiting professionals program.” McAllister is certain the entire School of Music and College of Fine Arts community will benefit from having inspiring professional musicians on campus will enhance the school’s prestige and visibility locally, regionally and nationally.

“The Rogers gift will create a bridge from graduate study into the conducting profession,” says Thomas Cockrell, director of orchestral activities. “In addition to enhanced support for the orchestral program, it will enable students to attend important summer conducting programs, establish apprenticeships, travel to major conferences and create alliances with professional orchestras internationally. With Mr. Rogers’ gift to the orchestral and opera conducting program, the School of Music is poised to create a dynamic leadership program—one that serves as a model for others in the development of a bold new generation of leaders in classical music.”

The Arizona Symphony and UA Philharmonic orchestras are vital to the educational and artistic mission of the School of Music. The University of Arizona orchestral program is dedicated to training the nation’s future performers and teachers by studying and performing a cross-section of the rich orchestral repertoire. The innovative Concerts in Context series of interdisciplinary concert presentations broadens musical understanding as it relates to the sister arts of dance, theater, visual art and literature. In addition, Arizona Symphony members undertake specialized work with contemporary and chamber ensembles and opera theater productions each season, expanding their horizons and preparing them for the diverse opportunities and challenges facing today’s musicians.

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