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Grand Teton Music Festival Breaks Ground on Transformative Renovation of Walk Festival Hall

\$35 Million Renovation of the 50-Year-Old Performance Hall Will Preserve and Refine Acoustics, Upgrade Recording Infrastructure, Increase Accessibility and Year-Round Usability, and Modernize Audience Amenities

Project Is Part of GTMF's Historic \$61 Million *Setting the Stage* Campaign to Support Festival Musicians and Revitalize Walk Festival Hall

**Renovated Hall to Reopen in Summer 2027,
During GTMF's 66th Summer Season**



“One of America’s most impressive music festivals.” – *BBC Music Magazine*

“One of the best places in this country to hear classical music in summer lies in the shadow of the Tetons.” – *The Wall Street Journal*

www.gtmf.org

Jackson, WY (June 22, 2026) – The **Grand Teton Music Festival (GTMF)**, led by Music Director **Sir Donald Runnicles** and Executive Director **Emma Kail**, broke ground Thursday morning on the transformative renovation of **Walk Festival Hall**, the Festival's beloved 50-year-old performance home in Teton Village. The \$35 million renovation will preserve and refine the Hall's celebrated acoustics while upgrading accessibility, recording infrastructure, safety systems, audience amenities, and year-round usability. The groundbreaking marks a major milestone as GTMF prepares to launch its 65th anniversary summer season, taking place from July 2 to August 15, 2026.

"The Grand Teton Music Festival is a unique and beloved destination for musicians and audiences from our region and around the world," says GTMF Executive Director Emma Kail. "The renovation of Walk Festival Hall allows us to preserve what makes the hall so special while ensuring it continues to serve musicians, audiences, and our community for decades to come."

"Astonishingly simple and bold in its original design, Walk Festival Hall is one of the great acoustics in the world today," adds Music Director Sir Donald Runnicles. "Our musical home has enriched and inspired concertgoers for fifty years, and through this major renovation and transformation, will continue to do so for the next five decades."

The renovation of Walk Festival Hall is a central pillar of GTMF's historic \$61 million *Setting the Stage* campaign, the largest fundraising initiative in the organization's history. The campaign was created to secure GTMF's long-term artistic excellence through investments in musician housing, musician compensation, and the revitalization of Walk Festival Hall for future generations of artists, audiences, and the Jackson Hole community.

In just two years, GTMF has raised \$53.5 million toward the campaign goal. The campaign has already achieved major progress in support of Festival Musicians, including more than \$16 million in new endowment commitments to increase musician stipends and housing, and a landmark housing gift valued at \$10 million from the Jackson Hole Housing Fund, led by Margot and Cynthia Walk, providing GTMF with 50 years of rent-free access to 18 new bedrooms for musicians. The campaign has secured \$27.5 million toward the renovation of Walk Festival Hall, with \$7.5 million remaining to complete the project.

"The generosity of our supporters has already transformed housing and compensation for Festival Musicians. With construction now underway on Walk Festival Hall, we are seeing the full vision of the *Setting the Stage* campaign come to life. It is a vision we know will inspire others to give as we finish campaign fundraising," notes Susan Sutton, campaign chair.

Renovation plans for Walk Festival Hall focus on preserving what has long made the Hall distinctive – its intimacy, sightlines, and acoustic character – while making essential improvements to serve artists, audiences, and the community for decades to come. Planned upgrades include enhanced concert hall and backstage areas, improved recording infrastructure, a new amplification system, theatrical lighting, new seating, a relocated Box Office, additional restrooms, a new elevator, expanded lobby and deck spaces, and repairs to critical building systems, including fire suppression, seismic resilience, roof integrity, and electrical infrastructure. GTMF's construction partners for this project include architect **HGA**, from Minneapolis, construction company **DPR Construction**, and **David Kahn** at **Acoustic Distinctions**, who helped to preserve the acoustics. Other partners are **Theatre Projects**, **Nelson Engineering**, **Berning Project Management**, and **SJ Planning Solutions**. The renovated hall is expected to welcome audiences again in the summer of 2027.

Ahead of construction, GTMF commissioned an economic impact report from BBC Research & Consulting, which found that the Festival's existing operations generate \$12.7 million in annual economic output in Teton County, support 117 local jobs, and generate approximately \$382,000 in annual local tax revenue. With more than 22,000 annual attendees – 56% of whom come from outside Teton County – GTMF brings substantial new visitor spending into the local economy.

The renovated Walk Festival Hall is projected to expand that impact by adding 35 off-season event days, drawing an estimated 7,000 new out-of-county visitors and generating approximately \$3.5 million in additional

annual visitor spending during the shoulder and winter months. Beyond its concert activity, GTMF's privately funded work provides significant civic value, including affordable & workforce housing and educational programming that together represent approximately \$500,000 in annual public-good value for the community.

While Walk Festival Hall is under renovation, GTMF will present a full 2026 summer season at venues throughout Jackson Hole, including the Jackson Hole High School (JHHS) Auditorium, the Center for the Arts, Teton Village Commons, and other community locations. GTMF is grateful for its partnership with the **Teton County School District No. 1** and **Jackson Hole High School**, which extends into the full school year, with weekly visits from Festival Musicians through GTMF's **Tune Up** program and weeklong musician residencies in the spring and fall. GTMF will host Festival Orchestra and chamber music concerts at JHHS this season and is commissioning lighting upgrades and custom acoustic towers to be installed in the auditorium to enhance sound quality this summer. The lighting & towers are customized to the high school and will be left behind as a gift for future JHHS students. The 2026 GTMF season will feature Festival Orchestra concerts, chamber music, guest artists, free community events, and family programming as GTMF "camps out" across the region during this milestone anniversary year. The full 2026 season calendar is available at gtmf.org/season65.

About the Grand Teton Music Festival (GTMF)

Each summer, the **Grand Teton Music Festival** unites over 260 celebrated orchestral musicians led by Music Director Sir Donald Runnicles. These musicians represent 84 orchestras and 72 institutions of higher learning across the world. In addition to orchestral concerts on Friday and Saturday nights, the summer season also features visiting guest artists and chamber music on weekdays.

The Grand Teton Music Festival is one of America's leading summer classical music festivals. Recognized by *The New York Times* as one of the top 10 music festivals in the U.S. and chosen by *BBC Music Magazine* as their 2020 "Festival Choice," it is the most prominent arts organization in the state of Wyoming and a national treasure. GTMF has released two acclaimed recordings on Reference Recordings: *The Complete Beethoven Piano Concertos* with GRAMMY®-winning pianist Garrick Ohlsson, and most recently, *Mahler: Symphony No. 5*, which *Limelight Magazine* called "one of the most impressive Mahler Fives I've ever heard."

GTMF's mission is to engage, entertain, educate, and inspire our resident and seasonal communities through exhilarating musical experiences. We feature orchestral, chamber, and solo performances of primarily classical music by world-class artists, and we foster a culture that draws outstanding musicians to Jackson Hole in support of this mission. For more information, visit gtmf.org.

Photo Credit: Bradly J. Boner

Download photos [here](#).

Group photo captions:

275: From left to right: John Seal, John Costello, Tyler Gohr, David Donovan, Nick Vestergaard, Don Larson, Lynn Larson, Emma Kail, Nicholas J. Sutton, Susan Jane Sutton, Allan Tessler, Frances Tessler, Jason Berning, and Ryan Kelly.

260: From left to right: John Costello, former Board Chair; David Donovan, former Board Chair; Lynn & Don Larson, Board Chairman; Emma Kail, Executive Director; Nicholas J. & Susan Jane Sutton, Setting the Stage Campaign Chair; and Allan & Frances Tessler, honorary Campaign Co-Chairs.

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