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Public media leader WGBH to acquire WCRB Radio

Will preserve and strengthen classical music service for region

Boston, MA – Public service broadcaster WGBH today announced plans to acquire New England’s leading all-classical music station WCRB 99.5fm from Nassau Broadcasting Partners of New Jersey. The terms of the agreement have not been disclosed pending filing with the FCC.

WCRB is a 27,000-watt station, deeply rooted in the Boston region, serving audiences for more than 60 years with a broad reach in New England, drawing some 340,000 loyal listeners each week. WGBH is uniquely poised to operate WCRB, with its extensive classical music programming experience, its state-of-the-art Fraser Performance Studio, and its strong alliance with Boston’s premier classical performing organizations, artists and audiences. With WCRB added to WGBH’s radio services -- 89.7FM in Boston, and WCAI and WNCK on the Cape and Islands -- WGBH will serve listeners from Cape Cod to New Hampshire, adding renewed vigor to the cultural economy of the region.

“An opportunity like this comes along once in a lifetime. The acquisition of WCRB by WGBH signals a new era for the Boston broadcast landscape, and for our city’s renowned classical music tradition,” said WGBH Board Chair Amos Hostetter. “WGBH’s depth of experience, demonstrated leadership in radio, and commitment to excellence will bring a new level of service to this market.”

“From its very first broadcast, WGBH radio has provided audiences with the best in classical music and performance. Today we are excited to reinvest in this tradition for a new generation of listeners,” said WGBH President and CEO Jonathan Abbott. “The acquisition of WCRB will allow WGBH to sustain the vibrant classical music tradition of the Boston area.”

WGBH will finance the purchase with a special capital campaign, *Keep Classical Alive*, inviting both major donors and grassroots supporters to participate and become founding members of its all-classical service. Although WCRB is licensed as a commercial frequency, WGBH plans to operate the station as a non-commercial service in keeping with its mission to provide public media service for audiences in the greater Boston area. Over the coming months WGBH will fine-tune the formats of both WGBH 89.7 and WCRB 99.5 to create lineups that are complementary.

“Preserving WCRB’s heritage as one of the country’s premiere classical radio stations was an important objective for Nassau. We are extremely pleased that WGBH will be continuing this heritage and are confident in their future stewardship of such an important Boston tradition,” said Lou Mercatanti, Chairman and President of Nassau. “This is a win for everyone – most especially our loyal listeners.”

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Since the 1950s WGBH has taken advantage of Boston's vital classical music tradition. From its debut broadcast from Symphony Hall in 1951, classical music and performance have been a hallmark of WGBH's service, featuring the region's world-class orchestras, artists and conservatories. It has partnered with music organizations both large and small, from the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Handel & Haydn Society, to the New England String Ensemble and the Boston Children's Chorus. It has nurtured young musicians with school enrichment programs, and helped launch emerging artists.

"This is a truly exciting development. Classical music is part of our common world heritage, and as such it is in the public interest for an institution like WGBH to make sure our voices are sustained and celebrated," said cellist Yo-Yo Ma. "As both a performer and a listener I applaud WGBH for making this significant investment in our community to ensure that the classical music genre will remain alive and well on Boston radio."

"This is great news for music and arts education," said Linda Nathan, co-headmaster of the Boston Arts Academy. "Keeping classical music vibrant is an extremely important resource to enhance learning. WGBH's new service will further enrich the educational experience for students of all ages."

"For more than 50 years WGBH and the Boston Symphony Orchestra have partnered to further the cause of classical music in Boston and beyond," said BSO managing director Mark Volpe. "With facilities that provide unmatched technical excellence for recording and broadcasting live performance, WGBH is uniquely positioned to bring heightened awareness of the beauty and power of classical music. All of us at the BSO are excited by the possibilities resulting from WGBH's acquisition of WCRB."

In addition to live radio broadcasts, WGBH has been a pioneer in moving classical music onto new platforms, with live streaming, an all-classical HD channel, podcasts and mobile applications. The acquisition of WCRB will greatly enhance these efforts to serve new audiences on a broad array of distribution platforms in New England and beyond.

WGBH was represented in the transaction by Public Radio Capital.

About WGBH

WGBH Boston is America's preeminent public broadcaster, producing such award-winning PBS series as *Masterpiece*, *Antiques Roadshow*, *Frontline*, *Nova*, *American Experience*, *Arthur*, *Curious George*, and more than a dozen other prime-time, lifestyle, and children's series. Local TV productions that focus on the region's diverse community include *Greater Boston*, *Basic Black*, and *María Hinojosa: One-on-One*. WGBH 89.7 is Boston's NPR Arts & Culture station, offering classical, jazz, blues, and news programming. WGBH also produces the national radio news programs *The World* and *The Takeaway*. It operates WCAI for the Cape and Islands, WNCK on Nantucket, and the All-Classical WGBH HD channel. WGBH is a leading producer of online content and a pioneer in developing educational multimedia and new technologies that make media accessible for people with disabilities. Find more information at www.wgbh.org.