

“Voyagers”: a Sinfonia Concert with Intercultural Journeys

In the global world of the 21st century, people from every culture are connected to each other via the internet; but how can a world full of diverse cultures and peoples hope to communicate without first understanding each other? The organization Intercultural Journeys “seeks to promote understanding among peoples of diverse cultures through dialogue and the presentation of world-class performances in music, poetry, and other art forms.” Philadelphia Sinfonia also seeks to broaden its members’ experiences of a diverse range of cultures through international tours. Sinfonia’s year-end concert on May 4, a collaboration with the Intercultural Journeys ensemble, will further realize this goal of cross-cultural understanding here at home by giving Sinfonia members the chance to experience world-music styles as performed by some of the highest caliber musicians. Sinfonia’s conductor and music director Gary White stresses the importance of “getting to know the brilliant performers we will be working with... [and] learning to respect and appreciate differences, musical and cultural.”

The concert will feature Intercultural Journeys ensemble members Ohad Bar-David, cello, Margot Leverett, klezmer clarinet, R. Carlos Nakai, Native American flute, Angela Nelson, percussion, and Hanna Khoury, violin. These spectacular musicians will use improvisation as a musical bridge to connect the different

cultural styles presented on the program. Ohad Bar-David, President and Artistic Director of Intercultural Journeys, comments on the concert program: “The Arabian Nights of *Scheherazade* will meet the Jewish klezmer melodies of Eastern Europe, and the Native American spirit of Fourth World will join in the musical dialogue, all bridged by improvisations by Intercultural Journeys ensemble.”

Philadelphia Sinfonia has a history of adventurous programming and collaborations, at which the students always excel. As Gary White points out, “We pride ourselves on the ability to take on collaborations of this kind and do them well.” Sinfonia’s high level of accomplishment, coupled with its visibility in the community as a competitive and adventurous youth orchestra, allows the group to pursue programming and collaborations like this one with Intercultural Journeys.

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Scheherazade Sectionals

A Coach’s Perspective

In March, I coached a sectional rehearsal of Sinfonia that included the woodwinds and French horns. It’s always nice to have the horns in a woodwind sectional because, in orchestral music, they usually play as often with the woodwind instruments as they do with the other brasses. (They



also don’t have to play as loudly, so I think they like woodwind sectionals better.) This is certainly true in *Scheherazade*, the material we were rehearsing, so we dove right in and started to work.

Sectional rehearsals are really eye-opening, because the musicians can hear their whole woodwind group without someone banging on a timpani right behind them (sorry, percussionists...). We work on blending and ensemble, which means playing with

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Voyagers: A Native American & Middle Eastern Odyssey

Sunday, May 4, 2008, 3:00 pm
Irvine Auditorium, University of Pennsylvania
34th and Spruce Streets, Philadelphia, PA

Tickets: \$25 can be purchased at the door and at:
www.philadelphiasinfonia.com

President's Column

In one of the poorer countries in the world a musical phenomenon has been taking place in the last 30 years. A very large-scale system of music education has rescued many of the youngest, most-disadvantaged citizens of Venezuela, addressed issues of poverty, contributed to community development, and produced one of the most astonishing youth orchestras of the world, Simón Bolívar Orchestra. Rising in international prominence and recently on tour in the United States, Simón Bolívar, and El Sistema, the incredible, broad-based program that has generated it, have raised many questions about music education in the U.S.A. – questions about access, funding, priorities, methodologies, and cultural values. Adding to the buzz is the fact that Simón Bolívar's 27-year-old conductor, a product of this system, was recently named the new conductor and music director of the L.A. Philharmonic. The League of American Orchestras recently produced an entire issue of its *Symphony* magazine around this phenomenon of El Sistema and the questions it has generated in this country.

Without reviewing *Symphony* magazine or the dialogue, I refer to El Sistema to capture and lift up the life-affirming, transformative possibilities to be found in music. One of the hallmarks of Simón Bolívar and the other orchestras of El Sistema is the vitality of their performances. I am struck by a quotation from Jesse Rosen of the League of American Orchestras, "What impresses me most [about Simón Bolívar] is the exuberance and joyfulness of the orchestra." Its players laugh, smile, and *move*.

I am equally struck by one sentence in Madeline Gralish's article on Sinfonia's Chamber Orchestra (p.3). When she says of the Chamber Orchestra, "I get to experience the thrill of playing exciting music ranging from Mozart to Copland, and, best of all, I am able to work with people who mean a lot to me", I hear the kind of joy and human connection demonstrated by the musicians of El Sistema. I wish this wonderful sensibility for all of our musicians as they work together week after week.

In a similar vein, the life work of Udi Bar-David, Philadelphia Orchestra cellist and Sinfonia parent, has also been spawned by an instinct for the human connections and transformative possibilities of music. His organization, Intercultural Journeys, promotes understanding between people of differing (and sometimes conflicting) cultures through concerts by world-class musicians from diverse backgrounds. We, at Philadelphia Sinfonia, are incredibly fortunate to participate in the most recent of Udi Bar-David's intercultural journeys, in our year's final Festival Concert, titled "Voyagers", on May 4, 2008 at Irvine Auditorium on the University of Pennsylvania campus. Concert time: 3:00 PM.

Pairing the exuberance of a youth orchestra with premier soloists of Native American and Middle Eastern cultures is an unusual, exciting prospect. *Voyagers* will be eye-opening, fun, and perhaps transformative for musicians and audience alike.

Carol Brown

President, Board of Directors

Cookbook

An idea emerged while some of us were eating pierogies on tour in Krakow last year. Many people remembered their grandmothers' pierogies or cabbage soup or other imported recipes. Wouldn't it be fun, we thought, to put together a Sinfonia cookbook of recipes evoked by our international concert tours. One chaperone, Jeanne Goldberg-Leopold, volunteered to put it together. We are in the initial stages and would like your recipes. This is a first Sinfonia cookbook!

Musicians, parents, tour chaperones, tour guests:

We are seeking recipes for the first Sinfonia cookbook, to be published by December 2008, in time to purchase for the holidays. The book will include recipes for foods associated with our tours to Italy, Russia, Finland, the Czech Republic, Austria, Hungary, and Poland; ethnic and international recipes from the cultural backgrounds of our members (including many places we have not gone); and recipes for food associated with music.

Please send recipes (as many as you like) relating to any of these three categories, identifying the category, to: sinfoniarecipes@gmail.com. We would also be interested in evocative memories of foods or meals we have eaten on tour.

Call Jeanne Goldberg-Leopold at 610-667-6818 with any questions. Thank you!

Sonata

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Sinfonia's Chamber Orchestra: A Tightly-Knit Group

Being a musician and a member of any orchestra requires commitment, hard work, and a love of creating beautiful music with like-minded individuals. Playing in Sinfonia's all-strings Chamber Orchestra, therefore, is always both a delight and a



Madeline Gralish

challenge. I get to experience the thrill of playing exciting music ranging from Mozart to Copland, and, best of all, I am able to work with people who mean a lot to me. Due to its small size (around twenty-five musicians), the Chamber Orchestra is able to delve deeply into its repertoire and really work on the minute details of each piece. We experiment with dynamics, phrasing, and interpretations. Working with Maestro White is especially rewarding. He teaches us to always listen closely to each other and to constantly monitor the balance between our sections. It's not unusual for him to throw in an occasional theory lesson, as well, and I feel that learning to understand the piece at the harmonic level aids our overall performance.

As a chamber orchestra, our rehearsals are different from those of the full orchestra. We are able to devote more time to taking our pieces apart bit by bit and we can carefully analyze how we want to approach almost every note. It is easier to communicate with one another. We often take time to discuss technique, suggest bowings or fingerings, or debate

the composer's intentions. This personal exchange of ideas is more difficult in the larger setting of a full orchestra rehearsal. Despite the differences between the two orchestras, however, both groups share the desire to play and perform at the highest level possible.

The Chamber Orchestra is remarkably strong this year. We are composed of full orchestra members and several chamber associates, and everyone brings a high level of musicianship to each rehearsal. Our diverse repertoire is challenging and exhilarating and includes works by Vivaldi, Geminiani, Mozart,

Saint-Saëns, Arensky, Joplin, Copland, and Britten. As young musicians, it is essential that we play different types of music to become more sophisticated and experienced performers. We perform at most of the full orchestra concerts, but we have several concerts of our own throughout the year. It is always very special to be able to share the fruits of our hard work, and I really enjoy the Chamber Orchestra concerts.

The benefits of being a member of the Chamber Orchestra are numerous. I have enjoyed working with and getting to know the other members, and Maestro White is a wealth of wisdom and advice. Rehearsals are always an adventure, and we work extremely hard to make sure we play our best. Whether we are analyzing chord structure to understand how different parts fit together or sight-reading new material, we approach each rehearsal with the goal of improving our skills as musicians, colleagues, and friends.

Madeline Gralish
Concertmaster

Call for Spring Auditions

Please pass along our spring audition dates to any interested musicians you may know. We are offering auditions on all instruments. May auditions nearly fill many of our sections, with the remaining spaces filled in September. Spring is the primary audition period for our orchestra.

Spring auditions are offered this year on:

May 17, 2008; noon to 5:30 PM

May 24, 2008, noon to 5:30 PM

Auditioning musicians are expected to: perform two different movements from a concerto or sonata – one technical movement and one slower, more musical movement – without accompaniment; perform major scales up to four flats and four sharps; sight-read.

Audition flyers are available at rehearsals.

Further information can be found on our website. Direct any questions and/or make appointments by contacting Carol Brown at info@philadelphiasinfonia.com or 215-248-5814.



Trivia Quiz

The great Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi composed *Aida* for a premiere that took place on Christmas Eve, 1871. What was unusual about the premiere, and for what historic event was Verdi originally commissioned to write *Aida* (hint: initially he declined and the event went on without *Aida* being performed)?

(This is a two-part question with a two-part answer.)

The first musician to email Carol Brown (info@philadelphiasinfonia.com) with the correct answer will receive a small prize.

From the Podium

The New York Philharmonic's recent historic performance in politically isolated North Korea was a moving example of the way music can be a bridge between cultures and politically diverse communities. Musicians have often used the musical arena successfully to work across all types of cultural boundaries. Concerts between performers of diverse backgrounds lead to participants becoming familiar with different kinds of music and to simply getting to know people as individuals without the political or cultural labels that can sometimes mask their humanity.

This year Sinfonia continues this important tradition in a unique collaboration with Philadelphia's Intercultural Journeys led by Philadelphia Orchestra cellist, Udi Bar-David (father of our own Erika Bar-David, second violin). We will perform music across various cultures – Native American, Jewish, Russian and more.

Actually, performing music that is culturally diverse to audiences that are also diverse has always been a part of Sinfonia's history. I have been proud of our musicians as they have skillfully presented concerts here in America and in various countries throughout Europe, Scandinavia and Russia. Abroad, we bring our audiences the music of legendary and newly emerging American composers while embracing the music of each country we visit with lively and passionate performances.

It is often said that our musicians are cultural ambassadors from the United States to the world. It is a very important role we play, and though we are in no way a political organization, our performances and wonderful interactions help us to simply know our world neighbors and help them to know us as well.

Gary D. White
Music Director & Conductor



R. Carlos Nakai Brings Native American Flute to Sinfonia

Internationally respected Native American flute player R. Carlos Nakai will join Philadelphia Sinfonia along with the Intercultural Journeys ensemble for a spectacular last concert of the season on May 4. A many-time Grammy nominee, Nakai has been instrumental in creating a popular niche for the previously little-known music of the Native American flute. He has brought his unique interpretations to multi-cultural collaborations all over the world, and has recorded over thirty albums with Canyon Records, a generous sponsor of the upcoming May 4 concert, including the only two gold records (over 500,000 copies sold) of Native American music.

Having originally studied the trumpet, Nakai enthusiastically took up the challenge proposed by a friend who gifted him with a Native American flute. Not only mastering the traditional solo styles of the instrument, Nakai also began to explore new combinations of musical fusion. He brought

the Native American flute to the classical music stage by performing with major symphony orchestras around the world, and he founded and is a member of several chamber music groups dedicated to cross-cultural music without boundaries. In 2007, Nakai worked with cellist Ohad Bar-David of the Intercultural Journeys ensemble to create a CD that explores and joins Middle Eastern styles (Jewish, Turkic, and Arabic sounds) and Native American styles, the first album of its kind.

On his website, www.rcarlosnakai.com, Nakai describes one of his goals as a musician: "Our primary importance as musicians is trying to tell people that history can't be changed, but the future can be. Personally, I feel I should try to contribute something that would encourage people to change, to become more positive about our situation, to reorganize and reorient ourselves together instead of continuing to build walls." By effectively combining the traditional style of Native American flute

music with not only the western classical genre but many other types of music, Nakai has successfully drawn in new concert audiences, transformed both Native American and western musical styles, and changed the way we think about music.



Sinfonia is thrilled to have this opportunity to perform with R. Carlos Nakai! Join us on Sunday, May 4 for a special performance as R. Carlos Nakai performs his own composition "Fourth World" for Native American flute soloist and symphony orchestra.

Scheherazade Sectionals

Continued from cover.

A Coach's Perspective

the same dynamics, rhythm, articulation and length of notes as one another. Since this was the third coaching I've done with this group, they're pretty good at all of that, so we just did some tweaking here and there. Playing in tune was a given; their intonation was fine, we didn't need to work on it at all.

I wanted to spend some time on the more complex and subtle aspects of phrasing and playing soloistically. In *Scheherazade*, there are plenty of woodwind solos, as well as sections where all the winds are playing expressively, particularly in what I call the "harem music". To play this music well, wind players have to be able to control the air they project through their instruments. I've been talking a lot with them about diaphragm support, and I gave them an anatomy lesson (don't laugh; do YOU know where YOUR diaphragm is?) and some breathing exercises to practice. Even in the short time we spent on this during the sectional, I could hear an improvement in their sound and their phrasing, particularly their diaphragm accents (your favorite Sinfonia woodwind player will be able to explain what these are in great detail). This carried over into their solos, and I could see that the musicians were amazed at how much better they sounded, both individually and together as a group. It was a wonderful feeling for them to hear such mature, polished playing coming out of their instruments! The looks on their faces said it all: Wow, listen to us!! They were really excited by the end of the session, and I left them with this idea: play the same way in Sinfonia rehearsal, and you'll knock Gary right off the podium. I hope they did.

Allison Herz, *clarinet*
Orchestra 2001; Opera Company of
Philadelphia

A Musician's Perspective

When I heard that we (the cello and bass sections) were going to have a sectional with Mr. Udi Bar-David of the Philadelphia Orchestra, I thought back to the excellent sectionals that we had with him last year and knew that I could expect the same again.

The cellos and basses worked on Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* the entire time, concentrating on the sections that Maestro Gary White had asked Mr. Bar-David to review. I hoped we would go into the kind of detail we would never have the time for in the full orchestra rehearsal, and I was not disappointed there.

Mr. Bar-David had us play each section once over to listen for problems. Then, he picked the section apart, often note-by-note, and showed us what we were doing. Next he played it for us, and had us do it exactly the way he had. Eventually, we put it all together, and one could hear the difference right away. During this entire process, Mr. Bar-David told us *how* we were going to tackle the problem, so we not only learned how to play this piece correctly, but also how to practice difficult passages such as these in the future.

I was correct in my assumption that the session would be a great experience for the cello and bass sections, and the full orchestra rehearsals over the next few weeks have sounded wonderful. A big thank you to Mr. Bar-David for taking the time and energy to work with us, and for making the sectional a memorable experience for all! The sectional with Mr. Udi Bar-David was a most helpful practice, both in the short and long term. My only regret afterwards was that it was only seventy-five minutes, just half as long as the usual rehearsal.

Colin Hartwick,
cello

Udi Bar-David leads the
Sinfonia cellos.
Photo by: Bob Cardona



"Voyagers": a Sinfonia Concert with Intercultural Journeys

Continued from cover.

As explained on their website www.interculturaljourneys.org, Intercultural Journeys was founded on "a dream of breaking barriers between cultures in conflict" through musical dialogue. The virtuoso ensemble has collaborated with world-class musicians from many different cultural backgrounds. Ohad Bar-David explains how the process of cross-cultural communication and compromise can be achieved through musical means: "Music as a universal language provides opportunities for listening and expressing. It creates a safe environment where cultures can express their deepest yearnings, and allow for others to listen, absorb, and understand... Once we achieve that [understanding], any dialogue becomes more possible and hopeful."

This concert collaboration will encourage Sinfonia members and audience members to discover and explore musical styles outside the traditional western repertoire, and to experience both the commonalities and the distinguishing aspects of these styles as they are linked together in performance. Bar-David expresses Intercultural Journeys' excitement to "experience our mission through the eyes and ears of the young generation, the generation that will lead us into the future." Sinfonia looks forward to the tremendous opportunity to work with and learn from the incredible musicians of Intercultural Journeys. Join us to hear the fruits of their labor on Sunday May 4 at 3:00 pm, in the Irvine Auditorium at the University of Pennsylvania!

Judith Mendelsohn
Administrative Assistant



Gary D. White
Music Director and Conductor
Danielle Garrett
Orchestra Manager
Judith Mendelsohn
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Mission Statement

Philadelphia Sinfonia supports the artistic growth of young musicians in the Delaware Valley by providing high-level ensemble experience in a supportive educational environment.

We believe that the pursuit of excellence requires performers with integrity, working together toward a common goal. Thus our mission is three-fold: to provide ensemble opportunities for young musicians, to achieve the highest level of artistic advancement, and to educate young people broadly to be strong citizens and leaders as well as responsible musicians.

We recruit from a demographically diverse student population to provide an opportunity to anyone who musically qualifies and to enrich the experience of all members of the organization.



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Season Finale -
Voyagers: A Native American & Middle Eastern Odyssey