

Sinfonia Makes Big Timpani Purchase

David Tarantino

percussion section leader

Due to the nature of percussion, its use is quite uneven in orchestral repertoire. While some pieces contain little to no percussion parts, in some pieces the percussion section can be the driving force of the whole orchestra and control the tempo and direction of the piece along with the conductor. If you listen to a Beethoven or Tchaikovsky symphony you will notice that in much of the piece the percussion is the driving rhythmic force. In these pieces and several others written in the same period, timpani are the only or the main percussion instrument.

Timpani are drums made of big metal bowls, usually copper and ranging anywhere from 20" to 32", with heads stretched over them. Unlike several other percussion instruments, they hold a definite pitch which is controlled by a foot pedal or clutch system. This means that a timpani player not only has to worry about staying in time and phrasing correctly with the orchestra but also has to make sure that the drums are in tune. In a sense, timpani are



Percussionists: left to right, Anthony Viscounte and David Tarantino

melodic instruments. When the timpani become the driving force in a piece such as Stravinsky's Firebird Suite (which is a part of Sinfonia's repertoire this season), it is absolutely essential, as with every other instrument in the orchestra, to be in tune. Timpani, even those at the top of the line, can easily go out of tune in the middle of a piece, making them very temperamental instruments. If you have ever wondered why timpanists drop an ear close to the drum and start flicking or lightly hitting it in the middle of a piece, it is either to

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Philadelphia Sinfonia Forms Artistic Advisory Board

Gary D. White

Music Director and Conductor

In addition to the job the audience and musicians see on the podium, there is a great deal that an orchestra conductor and music director does off the podium. One of my responsibilities as Conductor and Music Director of Philadelphia Sinfonia is artistic planning for the future of our orchestra. This includes picking repertoire for future

seasons, forging alliances with various soloists and arts groups in the city, creating projects that will inspire our musicians and entertain our audiences.

Perhaps the most challenging part of being the conductor of our talented group, artistic planning is a responsibility I truly

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Sinfonia at Historic Concert Venue

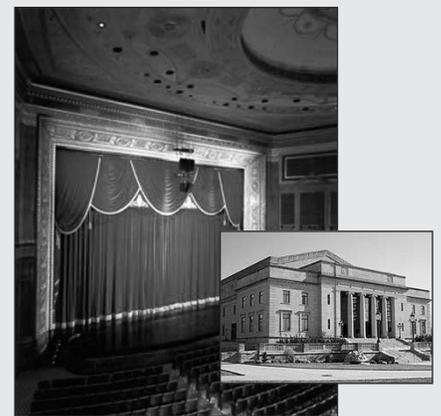
Judith Mendelsohn

Administrative Assistant

Historical significance and cultural awareness merge within the beautiful site of the Trenton War Memorial, originally dedicated to Trenton's fallen World War I soldiers. The Trenton War Memorial's founders were determined that as a living memorial, the monument should not only pay tribute to the soldiers it was built to honor, but also play an active and public role in the cultural life of Trenton. Their goal in 1932 of building a community center that combined "beauty, dignity, and civic utility" is still apparent today at the Trenton War Memorial.

The Trenton War Memorial's theater truly acts as a cultural hotspot, presenting over the years such diverse performers and speakers as jazz musician Louis Armstrong, opera singers Zinka Milanov and Marjorie

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Facade and Patriot's Theater of the Trenton War Memorial

President's Column

One of my greatest pleasures as President of Philadelphia Sinfonia is observing the many ways people support our orchestra. Accepting frequent, sometimes-incredible, support and gifts does reinforce my sense of the fundamental generosity of human beings. It is also very humbling because it reminds me that we cannot and do not run an orchestra in a vacuum. It takes a number of people to govern the organization, others to manage the day-to-day operations, engaged and enthusiastic musicians, sources of funds, professional gifts-in-kind, a cadre of volunteers, supportive teachers, parents, extended families, neighbors, and friends.

Much of our support coalesces in January. With the beginning of our concert season, our largest volunteer forces get put into place. Parents transport equipment to and from concerts, others provide concert hospitality, bringing water for musicians, ushering, selling T-shirts and CDs. Musicians arrive to the first concert warm-up on-time, many from some distance or through complicated arrangements, and work together to perform and sound their best. End of year financial contributions have appeared, several each day, in our mailbox. We are grateful.

This year has brought particular gifts. We have the largest membership we have ever had – 101 musicians. Our concerto competition generated 18 member contestants, almost twice the number ever competing before. We are buying new timpani, through the generosity of several donors and the practical help of our

musicians (see the new timpani article). We hired our first administrative assistant, which has provided enormous support for management and operations. We have a new Artistic Advisory Board, introduced in Gary White's article (see page 1). We brought three new dynamic members onto our governing board: Lisa Miller, Matt Kremer, Peter Klein, with the result that we struggle to get through a board meeting agenda, but only because everyone is so interested and invested – ideas, questions, energy abound. It has been fun.

Our last concert of the season, on May 4, is a collaborative project with Intercultural Journeys. Portions of this collaboration are gifts to Sinfonia in themselves, but Intercultural Journeys represents an incredible idea that by sharing music across political and cultural boundaries, people find bonds of commonality and transcend their differences. It is an idea, at once simple and powerful, that suggests that music is itself a gift of and to the human spirit.

From the most mundane to the most esoteric, the gifts generated within our small piece of the universe, Philadelphia Sinfonia, are quite incredible. From where I sit, far from bleak and gloomy, mid-winter feels rich and promising. I thank all of you who are a part of our adventure for your trust, your energy, your gifts, and your support.

Carol Brown
President, Board of Directors

Trivia Quiz

This year the Chamber Orchestra will perform Mozart's Divertimento in B-Flat Major, K. 137. It is thought that this piece was originally written not for the larger chamber orchestra but for what instrumentation (be very specific)?

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

And the Winner Is....

Hannah Peralta, Principal Second Violin, correctly answered our last trivia question, "What are the connections between Rimsky Korsakov, Stravinsky, and his Firebird Suite?" The answer was, "Rimsky-Korsakov was one of Stravinsky's teachers, and in the first edition of his Firebird Suite, Stravinsky dedicated the piece to his former teacher."

Stump the Conductor!

Do you think you can come up with a trivia quiz question that will send our conductor running to the library for the answer? Try it!

Send us your own musical trivia question about this year's repertoire and we will choose one to publish in our next newsletter.

Just make sure you know the answer!

Send your question to:
garyw@philadelphiasinfonia.com



Sonata

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Philadelphia Sinfonia Forms Artistic Advisory Board

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enjoy. As our orchestra has grown, we have attracted the attention of many professional artists in Philadelphia and throughout the region. Increasingly, we are asked to collaborate with the city's finest musical organizations (The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Philadelphia Boys Choir, Intercultural Journeys – just to name a few!).

As a result of the great interest and support of the artists with whom we have worked, I am pleased to announce that Sinfonia's Board of Directors and I have decided to form an artistic advisory board. This is the first time in Sinfonia's history that we have formalized such a group. The distinguished new board of musicians and educators will help me with the artistic planning of Sinfonia's future by forging new connections both in and out of the region, providing new recruitment ideas, suggesting new repertoire and much more. The members of this group have already contributed significantly to the success of our past seasons and they have very kindly agreed to continue to do so as we move into our next decade of excellence.

The new advisory board includes Udi Bar-David, cello, The Philadelphia Orchestra; Luis Biava, former Principal Second and Conductor in Residence of The Philadelphia Orchestra; Allison Herz, clarinet, Opera Company of Philadelphia and Orchestra 2001; Linda Reichert, piano, Artistic Director, Network for New Music; Booker Rowe, violin, The Philadelphia Orchestra; Linda Segal, Music Educator; and John Thyhsen, trumpet, Professor Emeritus, Rowan University, Philly Pops, and Festive Brass.

I look forward to working with every one of these outstanding musicians and thank them for all of their past and future contributions and support.



From the Podium

As I reflect upon our eleventh year as an established youth orchestra and strong musical presence in Philadelphia, I often think about the historical context of “The Orchestra” and specifically “The Youth Orchestra”. What is our place in this tradition?

On a recent vacation I discovered a small, privately owned bookstore with several informative out-of-print books which discuss this very subject.

In fact, the orchestra in its current incarnation is relatively new. Before the 1900’s a large ensemble of musicians might be led simultaneously by a composer-conductor, the concertmaster, and in earlier times a harpsichord player. This multi-faceted leadership led to wild variations in musical interpretation and quality from country to country. Composers expected that their works might be changed, rearranged, even re-orchestrated. It was not until composer-conductors like Mendelssohn and Wagner took the podium that the orchestra began to think as one unit, creating a unified interpretation of the masterpieces placed before them. The conductor’s job became one of leading the musicians through the rehearsal process, unifying musical ideas, rhythms, etc., to create a concert-worthy product. Conductors like Mendelssohn did this with great care for his players, while some like Wagner ruled his orchestra with an iron fist.

In the early 1900’s, legendary conductor, Leopold Stokowski, and his contemporaries continued the evolution of the orchestra, developing the concept we currently know. Stokowski also became one of the first prominent conductors in America to

encourage young players as well. Following his tenure with The Philadelphia Orchestra, he created and led the All American Youth orchestra. Under his leadership, which

encouraged their youthful energy and passion for playing, this group of not-yet-professional musicians performed at a level comparable to many orchestras of that time. I have recently listened to several of his recordings with this amazing ensemble (CD-857, Music and Arts Programs of America, Inc.). After hearing these recordings I realized, with great pride, how close Philadelphia Sinfonia is to the wonderful tradition Stokowski, and many others, so carefully nurtured. Each member of Sinfonia is an integral part of a quality musical community dedicated to the musical and social development of instrumentalists. This environment brings out the best in our players as they live, breathe, and eventually pass on to others the distinguished legacy of “The Orchestra” and “The Youth Orchestra”.

Gary D. White
Music Director & Conductor



Sinfonia’s Mission Expanded

Our mission statement always appears on the back of our newsletter. It was revised this past fall with the addition of one word. Who would have thought that one word could change a mission statement! But it is a word about a strong idea, one that we have thought about and acted on for quite some time.

The word is “leaders”. The new sentence reads, “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.”

For several years we have had processes in place to encourage leadership among our musicians and we anticipate expanding this idea further in coming seasons. We are very proud of the ways our musicians accept and act on their leadership responsibilities; it was time to codify our expectations in our mission statement.

Carol Brown
President, Board of Directors



Mariana Cottier-Bucco Wins Concerto Competition

With 18 strong contestants, the 2008 Sinfonia Concerto Competition was unusually tough. The winner, Mariana Cottier-Bucco, will perform the 1st movement of Edouard Lalo’s *Symphonie espagnole* with the orchestra in our concert on April 13, 2008 at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church. Concert time: 4:00 PM.

Ms. Cottier-Bucco, 15, is a first-year member of Sinfonia’s Second Violin section and a 9th grade honors student at Norristown Area

High School, where her favorite subject is Math. She has been playing the violin for eight years and is a student of Lee Snyder.

Asked what she likes about playing this five-movement violin concerto, written in 1874, Cottier-Bucco said that it has passion and is also fun, and she likes the fact that it demonstrates both the technique and the musicality of the performing musician.

Congratulations Mariana! We look forward to your performance in April.

Sinfonia Makes Big Timpani Purchase

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change the note of the drum or to fix the pitch of the drum quietly enough to not be heard by the audience. High-quality, well-maintained timpani make the process of setting the pitches easier. In addition, a higher quality instrument will not so easily go out of tune.

The timpani that Sinfonia currently owns and uses are over thirty years old. It has become very difficult to tune the drums and produce the type of sound expected from the percussion section. Many notes that should be in each drum's range no longer exist, and the drums go out of tune almost immediately after setting the pedal to a note. This can compromise not only the sound of the percussion section, but the sound of the whole orchestra. Besides not holding the correct pitch, the general tone of these drums is hindered. After several years of upgrading our other percussion equipment, it is time to address the needs of the timpani.

There is a big difference in both price and ownership between quality timpani and any other suitable-quality instrument in the orchestra. At the bottom of the line, a set of four timpani costs \$5,000. To get a set good enough for an orchestra to play, the price is anywhere from \$10,000 up to \$30,000 for professional orchestras. Also the timpani that an orchestra uses for rehearsals and concerts belong to the orchestra organization, not to an individual player.

This is a very large purchase for the orchestra. Sinfonia needs help from all of its supporters. These new drums are a long-term investment that will vastly improve the sound of the percussion section now and will take the orchestra another 30 or 40 years. Small individual investments made by several people can make a big impact on the overall sound of the group. We hope to have the new timpani before the last concert of this season. Please donate

as soon as possible if you are considering doing so. The bright future ahead of the Philadelphia Sinfonia has endless potential, and new timpani will move us forward tremendously.

The Philadelphia Orchestra percussionist, Angela Zator Nelson, working with Sinfonia's David Tarantino, Ron Kolla, and Anthony Viscounte



Fund the Drums!

Replacing our timpani has been one of the most exciting projects of the season. We have ordered a set of 4 custom-made Yamaha Symphonic Series Hammered Copper Timpani. The cost is close to \$11,000. With covers to protect them, the price will top \$12,000.

Our small capital campaign selling \$1,000 timpani shares has been quite successful. There are only 3 ½ shares remaining to be sold. For the success of this project, we thank our percussion section, our loyal funders, and particularly Dr. Andrew Greenstein, the force behind many of our percussion purchases, and Dave Tarantino, percussion section leader, whose practical help was invaluable. Bravo!

Donations to the timpani fund will be gratefully accepted. Checks, made out to Philadelphia Sinfonia Association, can be brought to rehearsal or mailed to Philadelphia Sinfonia, P.O. Box 996, Philadelphia, PA 19105.

Carol Brown

President, Board of Directors

Sinfonia at Historic Concert Venue

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Lawrence, comedian Bill Cosby, composer and pianist Sergei Rachmaninoff, President Bill Clinton, Frank Sinatra, Bruce Springsteen, the Kirov Ballet, and many others.

Recently renamed the Patriot's Theater, the performance space now boasts state-of-the-art lighting and sound systems and an enlarged orchestra pit to compliment its proscenium stage and historic pipe organ.

This modernization accompanied a recent renovation project that restored the Trenton War Memorial to its original "Italian renaissance revival" architectural style. Along with the renovation project in 1999, Trenton expanded the original dedication of the War Memorial to honor all New Jersey residents who have served in the armed forces throughout US history, and reinforced the monument's mission to serve the public as a cultural and community center.

Philadelphia Sinfonia looks forward to its performance at this richly historic site and to the opportunity to contribute to its remarkable cultural voice.

Our concert, *An Afternoon of Russian Delights*, is Sunday, February 17, 2008 at 3:00 PM.

Tickets for the Trenton concert range from \$5 to \$25 at the door. \$15 tickets will be sold at rehearsals at St. Stephen's Church beginning February 2, 2008. Major sponsors will receive complimentary tickets by mail.



Gary D. White
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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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