

# SONATA

Sinfonia Orchestra News  
Winter 2014

PHILADELPHIA  
SINFONIA  
*Educating Musicians. Creating Artists.*

## The Year of the Collaboration

**W**hat do Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia, Network for New Music, composer John Harbison and Enchantment Theatre Company have in common? Collectively they involve dozens of remarkable people with whom we will yet work, rehearse, perform — *collaborate* — this season. Representing a range of genres: choral, dance, theater and contemporary instrumental, they present an extraordinary palate of opportunity and experience for Sinfonia musicians in a very short space of time.

This list of collaborators does not even mention the collaborations we have *already* undertaken this year with our

chamber orchestra: an engagement with the Keystone State Boychoir for Peace Day Philly last September and *Messiah* with the Germantown Oratorio Choir in December.

“Collaborations,” says Maestro Gary White, “allow us to go beyond the scope of what we can do alone. They expose our musicians to repertoire we aren’t typically able to do, enhancing our student’s experience artistically and educationally.” All of the remaining collaborations involve working with performers at a very high level — for the most part professional — challenging our students to meet some particularly high standards and expectations.

We begin this series of collaborations April 5, 2014 with a public master-class at St. Stephen’s, a co-presentation of Philadelphia Sinfonia and Network for New Music, featuring prominent contemporary composer John Harbison and his string quartet, *Thanks Victor*. In this master-class, Mr. Harbison will work

*Continued on page 3.*

**AUDITIONS FOR ALL  
ENSEMBLES WILL BE HELD  
ON MAY 24, 25, 31 AND  
JUNE 1.**

*Please see page 2 for more information.*

## Winter Highlight: Thrilling PS/PSP Side-by-Side



The combined PS/PSP orchestras

**T**he sound was rich and generous; the musicians were focused; the playing was tight, and the conductor was having the greatest time.... It was the afternoon of February 1, 2104. The combined PS/PSP orchestra of 170 musicians opened a side-by-side rehearsal reading Sebelius’ *Fruhlingslied, Op. 16* (*Spring Song*). Eventually, they moved into Offenbach’s familiar *Orpheus in the Underworld Overture*, infusing the space with a totally different sound and emotional quality. Both pieces drew both orchestras together. Stand partners shared names, insights, whispered suggestions, pride and many moments of pleasure, captured in a few selected images from Steven Goldblatt, photographer.

*Photos continued on page 4.*

## From the Podium

**M**usical excellence, community, collaboration: these have long been buzz words to describe the Philadelphia Sinfonia Association experience. But now in the second year of our newest orchestra, Philadelphia Sinfonia Players, and in continued association and partnership with colleagues in the music community — The Philadelphia Orchestra, the Philadelphia Festival of Young Musicians, Play On, Philly!, Musicopia, and many others — a new buzz word is emerging: *mentorship*. Mentorship is defined as a developmental relationship in which a more experienced person helps to guide a less experienced person.

Most recently I saw this term play out when our more experienced orchestral musicians had the chance, illustrated below, to share their knowledge, talents and “secrets they’ve learned along the way” with the up-and-coming newest crop of musicians in our program. In my view, this relationship actually benefits both the older and newer players equally.

On February 1<sup>st</sup>, all 170 of our musicians, from 6<sup>th</sup> grade to college level, came together (see photos on page 1 and 4) to play in our second annual side-by-side event, held between the new PSP and the

established PS orchestras. The visual image of so many dedicated musicians eager to come together and play music as one group was quite amazing to see (and I must say even more amazing to conduct. It isn’t just the students who have all the fun!) As I worked through our reading selections, I was ever aware of the musical and social interactions happening throughout this huge orchestra. The older players seemed to light up as they gave pointers to the less experienced players *and* they also learned a trick or two from those less experienced as well. The PSP musicians could clearly see the path that lies ahead of them as they pursue their love of music. There was also a wonderful sense of camaraderie — of coming together, sharing an experience and being part of each other’s lives that only this kind of mentorship activity creates. Quite frankly, as I look back on my musical life, it was just this kind of experience that was truly life changing and helped me to understand how to love music, always be open to working with and learning from others, and to know I was not alone in my interests - that I was in good company.

So, another word is added to the list of PSA experiences for musicians. And as the board and staff are currently working on a



Gary D. White, Music Director & Conductor

new strategic plan, I will be excited to see what valuable and important additional words emerge that will help shape our bright future.

Gary D. White  
Music Director and Conductor

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## Call for Spring Auditions

Please pass along our spring audition dates and times to any interested musicians you know. We are offering auditions for all three of our orchestras on all instruments. Many of our sections are nearly filled in May, with the remaining spaces filled in September. Spring is the primary audition period for our orchestra. Spring auditions are offered this year on:

May 24, 2014: noon to 6:00 PM

May 25, 2014: 1:30 to 6:00 PM

May 31, 2014: 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM

June 1, 2014: 1:30 to 6:00 PM

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

Audition flyers will be available at rehearsals by March 22, 2014 and further information can be found on our website: [www.philadelphiasinfonia.com](http://www.philadelphiasinfonia.com). To schedule an audition, contact Jon Hummel after April 1, 2014 at [info@philadelphiasinfonia.com](mailto:info@philadelphiasinfonia.com) or call 215-351-0363.

### ORCHESTRA NEWS

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## The Year of the Collaboration

*Continued from page 1.*

with our musicians (the Philadelphia Sinfonia String Quartet) to refine and perform his medley of Victor Young tunes originally arranged for the professional Lydian String Quartet. All Sinfonia Association musicians (and parents) are urged to attend the master-class at 2:00 PM on April 5. The final performance by our students of *Thanks Victor* will take place in a Network for New Music concert the next day, again with John Harbison present.

Only a few days later, on April 10, Philadelphia Sinfonia co-presents a concert with Enchantment Theatre Company titled “Myths and Fairytales.” In addition to Offenbach’s *Orpheus in the Underworld* and Rodgers and Hammerstein’s “Waltz” from *Cinderella*, this thematic evening will include our musical performance of *Ma Mère l’Oye (Mother Goose)*, accompanied by Enchantment Theatre’s actors/dancers. A rather dark and haunting tale, this work by Maurice Ravel will be performed in its entirety, not the shorter, more-commonly performed suite that Ravel later drew from his original piece. Several eyes lit up among our musicians when Maestro Gary White first mentioned this event to the orchestra! It will certainly take us well outside the box of purely sonic classical music performance with imaginative and dramatic visuals from our theater collaborators.

Our big, final, season-closing collaboration — with Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia in Beethoven’s monumental *Symphony No. 9* — will bring *all* of our musicians to Verizon Hall for an extraordinary afternoon. As the afternoon’s finale, Beethoven’s massive symphony will engage the power of a full orchestra of over 90 musicians with a chorus that is currently 140 voices strong.

The performance of this work is a first for Philadelphia Sinfonia, but not for Mendelssohn Club’s chorus members, who have sung it numerous times. (Mendelssohn Club first performed “*The*

*Choral Symphony*” with The Philadelphia Orchestra 111 years ago!) Curious to know the experience of singers who know it well and have performed it multiple times, I found, upon asking a couple of them, that it remains an inspiring and incredibly moving experience each and every time they perform it. “Physically demanding, but emotionally thrilling,” was how they described it. Contributing to that “emotional thrill,” apparently, is the anticipation that chorus members feel, sitting in place silently and listening intently throughout the first three orchestral movements. Finally they rise, as one, and bring their full forces into play with the full forces of the instruments.

In their description of two singers’ experience of this great symphony, I heard the opportunities inherent for *them* in collaborating with a full orchestra — not necessarily a typical performance practice for this chorus. And *herein lies the magic of collaboration: two or more parties can experience something together that neither can do alone.*

Organizationally, it is an honor — and we are very grateful — to be sought out for collaborations by performance groups of such distinction. We also appreciate the opportunity to expand our audience, our repertoire, our knowledge, our friendships and — in the case of our final collaboration — to close out a season and celebrate fifteen years of Maestro Gary White’s artistic leadership with a musical masterpiece and in a realm that is truly profound.

Carol Brown  
*President, Board of Directors*

## “Orchestras Feeding America” National Food Drive

This March, Philadelphia Sinfonia is proud to take part in the sixth annual “Orchestras Feeding America” food drive. We are joining musicians all over the country in what the League of American Orchestras calls “the single largest orchestra project serving communities nationwide.”

The League, of which Sinfonia is a member, first collaborated with Feeding America to create the food drive in March 2009, inspired by the movie *The Soloist*. We have participated every year, and our drives have been both student-led and highly successful. Assisted by our local food bank, Philabundance, and a spring string jam in the Methacton school district, Sinfonia has donated over 3 tons of food to Philabundance in the first five years of the drive!

We will collect non-perishable food at all rehearsals throughout March 2014; please bring canned goods (no glass please!) each Saturday. With your help, we will again make a significant impact on the community.

## Trivia Quiz

Drawn from current PSP repertoire, this issue’s trivia quiz question is: Why did it take Alexander Borodin over 18 years to complete his opera *Prince Igor* from which the “Polovetsian Dances” are drawn?

*The first musician to email Carol Brown (info@philadelphiasinfonia.com) with the correct two-part answer will win a small prize.*

The fall issue’s trivia question was won by Martina Smith, PS horn. The question (with a three-part answer) was: Name two composers who are said to have greatly influenced the Belgian composer César Franck. Though inspired by them, how does Franck’s *Symphony in D minor* differ from their compositions? Martina correctly answered, “I think that Wagner and Liszt both inspired Franck. [But] Franck wrote in symphonic form and not operatic like Wagner or tone-poem like Liszt.”

## Winter Highlight: Thrilling PS/PSP Side-by-Side

*Continued from page 1.*



PS/PSP violins



PS/PSP horns



PS/PSP cellos



PS/PSP oboes



PS/PSP bassoons



PS/PSP basses

## Sinfonia Mentors Volunteer: Philadelphia Festival of Young Musicians

**F**ebruary 18, 2014: For a second consecutive year, several Sinfonia musicians volunteered to be mentors for a President's Day festival for younger music students in the City of Philadelphia. Drawing together eleven youth music programs in the region, the Philadelphia Festival of Young Musicians presents a day-long program for musicians from 4<sup>th</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> grade of choral and instrumental rehearsals, sectionals, lunch and a concert. Mentors used a precious school holiday to share their expertise and love of music with others; for their service, the Sinfonia volunteers received rave reviews from the instructors and professionals involved.

Feedback from Sinfonia percussionist Justin Seenarine and cellists Rachel Rice and Lucy Silbaugh described a personally rewarding day. Justin valued the opportunity to have an impact on very young musicians; Rachel loved the chance to teach; Lucy noted the way making music drew even the shyest kids together over the course of the day, reflecting the power of shared experience and the magic of music as a universal human enterprise.



Sinfonia mentor volunteers.

# Sponsors/Supporters

Philadelphia Sinfonia is truly grateful to its generous sponsors and friends, whose gifts nurture the growth of many young musicians, further develop our organization and contribute to a vital artistic community in the Philadelphia region. Gifts can be made online through our website, or by contacting us at [info@philadelphiasinfonia.com](mailto:info@philadelphiasinfonia.com) for donor materials. Sponsors are listed annually in our winter newsletter. The current list includes donations received between March 1, 2013 and February 28, 2014:

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PS Concert in Germantown: musicians enjoy a break back-stage

## Sinfonia at Home: St. Stephen's Church

Among the most significant sources of our support, St. Stephen's Church has graciously housed Philadelphia Sinfonia's rehearsals, auditions, office, equipment, and at least a couple of concerts each year since 2000.

We would be hard-pressed to find another Center City space as lovely, large and accommodating as this historic church parish and building. First-time visitors to Sinfonia fairly gawk at the splendor that greets them when they walk in the door, prompting frequent questions about the spectacular architectural appointments, its current urban presence and, of course, the long history behind St. Stephen's Episcopal Church.

Is this really the site where Ben Franklin flew his famous kite? Are we walking on graves when we traverse the passageway at the bottom of the staircase to the second floor? How were the original pews arranged, what is the origin of the 36 square foot pool of water in the sanctuary, and where did those gorgeous stained glass windows come from? Who was the architect? What is the relationship between the St. Stephen's Church and the St. Stephen's Theater? Whom did the church originally serve and how has the church's mission changed as it evolved from a local parish in a gracious residential neighborhood to a nationally registered historic building on a bustling city street, its façade flush and almost blending into the most profane of urban structures — a McDonald's — at the corner of Tenth and Market?

If you look up and really take in the entire front of the building, you will be seeing a building rendered 190 years ago by William Strickland, America's premier colonial architect, who designed this church building with a façade reminiscent of Mozart's St. Stephen's in Vienna. (What a remarkable connection for a youth orchestra!) Philadelphia's first stained glass windows were made in England and installed in this church, and eventually St. Stephen's assembled a superb art collection created by masters including Tiffany, Steinhäuser, D'Ascenzo and Frank Furness.

Within this space, services have been held continuously since February 1823. Various rectors have made their mark, all open to the opportunities for spiritual and community service afforded by proximity to a city population and its visitors, to Jefferson University and Hospital two blocks south, and eventually to a Convention Center a few blocks northwest. For instance, nineteenth century trade unions were founded in the church; during both World Wars, servicemen found entertainment and fellowship in the St. Stephen's Community House located behind the church on Ludlow Street — now the St. Stephen's Theater and home to its resident company, the Lantern Theater Company. Post World War II, the St. Stephen's eminent rector, Dr. Alfred Price, developed a healing ministry that aimed to address the emotional and spiritual needs of ill and ailing persons. Throughout its history, in multiple ways, the church has been a place for both outreach to the city and for rest, renewal and inspiration within for all who seek it.

As stunning acoustically as it is visually, the sanctuary of St. Stephen's is a perfect site for musical presentations, and from its inception the church became a special venue for the performing arts. In the 1820's the Musical Fund Society held its first performances in St. Stephen's Church. Later in that century, Dr. David Wood, a famous blind composer of sacred music and the resident organist, drew large audiences for his Sunday afternoon performances. Today, the original pews have been replaced with minimal and movable seating, and with its open nave and chancel, St. Stephen's can accommodate a full orchestra rehearsal or performance, as happens each week from September to June, when the Philadelphia Sinfonia program is in session.

The current rector of St. Stephen's Church, Dr. Charles Flood, counts the performing arts among the important missions of his tenancy.

Along with his 9/11 ministry at the medical examiner's office in New York and missions witnessing to victims of the 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka and Indonesia, partnering at home with two resident arts organizations is an important outreach of his parish, one that uses the building wisely and has a powerful human component to it as well. "There's a very spiritual side to the arts," he says. "They affect the soul."

In 2011, Philadelphia Sinfonia presented Dr. Flood with its rarely conferred "Conductor's Circle Award" for his support for the arts through St. Stephen's unique relationship to two resident arts companies. The Lantern Theater Company joined Sinfonia in the presentation, and all three partners — a church, a theater company and a youth orchestra — interact throughout each year with grace, practical support and appreciation for each other's presence and mission.

What of Ben Franklin's kite, the graves beneath our feet and other mysteries of the St. Stephen's Church? It's fun to leave a few of these mysteries unsolved... but you might ask one of the church personnel who are a font of knowledge on the history of their building and its enduring relationship to the City of Philadelphia.



The facade of St. Stephen's Church, Philadelphia.

## Alumna Profile: Composer Eliza Brown

**H**ow would you describe your “musical identity?” Are you a performer...or a composer ... or both?

Sinfonia alumna Eliza Brown is actually both. Now primarily a composer, Eliza plays several instruments, all of which she considers important elements of *her* musical identity as a composer, instrumentalist, teacher and scholar. A Sinfonia cellist from 2000 to 2003, Eliza began cello studies at age 7. Her next instrument was voice; she took voice lessons in high school and has sung in many choirs since then. Later, she added the piano, the viola da gamba (a Renaissance/Baroque string instrument that she first saw at a musical instrument museum in Paris), and the musical saw, a folk music instrument which “[a]nyone can learn in about a week with the help of the internet.”

When she joined Sinfonia, Eliza was “genuinely terrified” at the first rehearsal — which started off with challenging sight-reading carried out at a daunting performance tempo. However, quickly acclimated, she developed musicianship and made great friends in Sinfonia: “[T]he center of my experience in the orchestra was the music-making[.] In an orchestra, you have to risk personal failure — put yourself out there, musically speaking — to ensure the success of the group. So there’s a lot of intense, focused, high-stakes, purpose-driven activity, and I think the friendships I had with members of the group would not have been so strong without the time we spent investing ourselves in that.”

Eliza first composed music at age 7, soon after she began to play the cello. Her musical life tipped more toward composition in high school when she attended the Walden School, a summer music program with an emphasis on composition and improvisation. Sinfonia and Walden fully prepared Eliza to study both composition and performance at college, a combination that she highly recommends. She earned a bachelor’s

degree in composition *summa cum laude* from the University of Michigan, and is currently a doctoral candidate in composition at Northwestern University. With a goal of obtaining a tenure-track position at a university, Eliza teaches music theory at Northwestern’s Bienen School of Music as part of her graduate work, teaches composition as an adjunct faculty member at Columbia College Chicago and has served on the Walden School faculty. As Eliza points out, juggling different types of work is a common step along the way to having an academic career in music.

As one might suspect, Eliza’s musical journey to successful composition has been challenging, and she cautions that a career in music “almost inevitably will involve uncomfortable amounts of self-doubt, criticism, rejection, career uncertainty, and financial instability along the way.” However, she also advises, “a career in music can mean many things, and you have to find and define success on your own terms. *Be open to a future that you haven’t imagined yet.*” Anssi Karttunen, a Finnish cellist, once said to me something along the lines of, ‘enjoy making music with your friends, and allow those relationships to grow, and eventually you may look back and realize you’ve had a career.’ I think that’s incredibly wise.” To Eliza, “the rewards of this life are huge — music will never stop challenging you (in a good way!); it will always give you new things to think about and work toward and opportunities to stretch yourself beyond what you think your limits are. It may lead you to travel the world, to live in places you never imagined living, to develop new skills. It will be the basis for incredible relationships[.] Music will lead you into all of these opportunities for discovery if you’re willing to go to the unexpected places it takes you.”

As Eliza moves along in her very productive career, composing both instrumental and operatic music, she realizes that she should follow her own advice — “to be open to a future that I haven’t imagined yet. Nothing is pre-

ordained in a life in music, and that’s both its greatest challenge and its greatest blessing.” Sounds like great advice, from a great composer and musician!



Eliza Brown

*Please feel free to contact Eliza at [brown.eliza@gmail.com](mailto:brown.eliza@gmail.com) and visit her website, [www.elizabrown.net](http://www.elizabrown.net).*

— Diane Penneys Edelman

### Future Concerts

#### PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA:

**Thursday, April 10, 2014, 7:30 PM**  
**Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral**  
 3723 Chestnut Street  
 Philadelphia, PA 19104

**Sunday, June 8, 2014, 4:00 PM**  
**Verizon Hall at The Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts**  
 Broad and Spruce Streets  
 Philadelphia, PA 19102

#### PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA PLAYERS:

**Sunday, May 18, 2014, 3:00 PM**  
**First Presbyterian Church in Germantown**  
 35 West Cheltenham Avenue  
 Philadelphia, PA 19144

**Sunday, June 8, 2014, 4:00 PM**  
**Verizon Hall at The Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts**  
 Broad and Spruce Streets  
 Philadelphia, PA 19102

#### PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA CHAMBER ORCHESTRA:

**Sunday, March 16, 2014, 2:00 PM**  
**Foulkeways at Gwynedd**  
 1120 Meetinghouse Road  
 Gwynedd, PA 19436

**Thursday, April 24, 2014, 7:45 PM**  
**Keneseth Israel**  
 8339 Old York Road  
 Elkins Park, PA 19027

# PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA

Gary D. White  
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PO Box 996  
Philadelphia, PA 19105-0996  
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Website: [www.philadelphiasinfonia.com](http://www.philadelphiasinfonia.com)  
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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.



*Our Whirlwind of Collaborations!*