

# SONATA

Sinfonia Orchestra News  
Summer 2014

PHILADELPHIA  
SINFONIA  
*Educating Musicians. Creating Artists.*

## Beethoven 9!



**B**RAVO! The last notes had barely died... The conductor turned to take a bow; on its feet, a throng of over a thousand strong stomped, clapped, shouted, whistled and cheered wildly: Bravo! Bravi! Bravissimo!

Led by Maestro Gary White, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, "*The Choral Symphony*," had been rendered with

magnificent proficiency, musicality and joy. In a season finale to top all finales, Beethoven's monumental ode to the human spirit and its embrace of all persons who walk the earth, filled Verizon Hall on June 8, 2014 with the integrated forces of Philadelphia Sinfonia's advanced instrumentalists, the renowned

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## Sinfonia Master Class and Performance with Composer John Harbison

**A**mong the many exceptional Sinfonia highlights of 2014, was a weekend with prominent American composer, John Harbison, produced in collaboration with Philadelphia's Network for New Music.

On Saturday, April 5, after weeks of preparation, the Philadelphia Sinfonia String Quartet and the composer presented Mr. Harbison's gem, *Thanks Victor*; in a

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## FALL AUDITIONS 2014 – 2015 TO FOLLOW RECORD SPRING AUDITIONS

To fill the remaining seats in both of our full orchestras, all musicians are invited to audition in September 2014.

Students who audition successfully and are offered seats in the fall will be joining a very strong set of musicians in *each* of our orchestras. Spring auditions brought us record-breaking long audition days, ensuring that the extraordinary levels of our advanced orchestra, Philadelphia Sinfonia (PS, for ages 13 through college), *and* of our intermediate orchestra, the Philadelphia Sinfonia Players (PSP, for ages 11 - 18), will continue to be very high. We extend a warm welcome and congratulations to all those who have enrolled to date and encourage other musicians to join them!

We will be hearing auditions for all instruments for the Philadelphia Sinfonia Players and for the few remaining openings in our most advanced group, Philadelphia Sinfonia – where we are particularly looking for viola, bass, and low brass.

To schedule an audition in September, call Jonathan Hummel after August 1, 2014 at: 215-351-0363 or email [jhummel@philadelphiasinfonia.com](mailto:jhummel@philadelphiasinfonia.com). The fall audition dates are:

**Saturday, August 30, 2014**  
noon – 5:30 PM

**Saturday, September 6, 2014**  
noon – 5:30 PM

**Sunday, September 7, 2014**  
1:30 – 5:30 PM

Further audition information can be found on our website: [www.philadelphiasinfonia.com](http://www.philadelphiasinfonia.com).

## From the Podium

Each year at this time I like to take a moment and think back on the closing season. For all the students in our program, we work to ensure that each year is filled with wonderful music and many special events. This astounding 2013-14 season has been filled with many such extraordinary events! We ended with PS and PSP's stunning year-end Festival Concert performing to an audience of well over 1000 in the Kimmel Center's beautiful Verizon Hall and featuring Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia. We also gave the Philadelphia premiere of a work by area composer Romeo Cascarino, worked with Enchantment Theatre to present the rarely performed complete version of Ravel's Mother Goose Ballet and held master classes and sectionals led by the area's finest professional musicians — including the prominent American composer John Harbison. All three of our orchestras and several ad hoc chamber ensembles have given numerous high level concerts to appreciative and excited audiences. We also made time to include a special performance for Peace Day Philly and participate in an annual food drive for Philabundance.

I think it's important to ask why do we do all of this? How does it benefit our students and the Philadelphia area community? I believe the answers are rich and fulfilling. Students come to us hoping for and expecting the most professional musical training experience we can provide. Our goal is always to do just that in a supportive and educationally sound environment. Through numerous collaborations, concerts and special events, our talented students are able to perform challenging repertoire, interact with experienced outstanding professional musicians, teachers and coaches, while learning to perform as a group at the highest level. Our musicians also contribute to Philadelphia's rich cultural life and give back to the community through student mentoring projects and other socially responsible activities. All of this encourages our members to grow and gain experiences that enrich their lives in enumerable ways. As many of our students tell us, their time in the Philadelphia Sinfonia Association helps them to grow into well-rounded and thoughtful individuals.

Yes, it's been a busy year, but also a truly fulfilling and exciting one. Bravo to all of



Gary D. White, Music Director & Conductor

our members for their many successes and their willingness to embrace challenges and grow from their experiences.

Gary D. White  
Music Director and Conductor

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“*Thanks Victor*, a medley of Victor Young songs arranged by Harbison for string quartet, was offered by young members of the Philadelphia Sinfonia — Stephanie Bonk, Benjamin She, Jamie Ye and Max Song — who played with stylish lilt.”

~James Primosch, composer and professor, University of Pennsylvania

### ORCHESTRA NEWS

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## Sinfonia Master Class and Performance with Composer John Harbison

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master class at St. Stephen's Church and followed this the next day with a second, very polished performance on a Network for New Music concert at the Curtis Institute. *Thanks Victor* is a medley of Victor Young tunes, written in tribute to the late composer, arranger, violinist and conductor, Victor Young.

What a privilege it was for our string quartet and for all PS and PSP musicians, their

parents and the public, to participate in a master class with Mr. Harbison, who found himself quite impressed by the quartet's level of musical sophistication. In no hurry to leave after the master class, Mr. Harbison remained at St. Stephen's for part of the PS dress rehearsal in preparation for its April 10 concert with Enchantment Theatre. He was as enthusiastic about the quality of the rehearsal he attended as the string quartet performance, and commented favorably

also on the depth of diversity in our concert programming and what he observed overall of our orchestral training program.

We are grateful to Network for New Music for inviting us to collaborate during Mr. Harbison's weekend in Philadelphia and grateful to the composer himself for his thoughtful, generous attention and comments during his visit with Philadelphia Sinfonia.



Composer John Harbison shakes hands with Stephanie Bonk, first violin, Philadelphia Sinfonia String Quartet, at the conclusion of the April 5 master class.



Key partners in the John Harbison master class: (left to right) Mr. Harbison; string quartet members Max Song, Stephanie Bonk, Ben She, Jamie Ye; Sinfonia's Gary White and Jon Hummel; Network for New Music Artistic Director, Linda Reichert and Executive Director, Lisa Miller.

## Beethoven 9!

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Mendelssohn Club chorus and four powerful soloists from Philadelphia's Academy of Vocal Arts.

"Life imitates Art" is an apt description of the process that led to this profound performance. All three elements — the orchestra, the chorus and the soloists — came to this endeavor with eagerness, artistic excellence and a genuine collaborative spirit; in other words, living out the words and human values that originally inspired Beethoven to compose the work.

It takes a remarkable conductor to produce such a fine performance that allies the mature talent of Mendelssohn Club singers and AVA soloists with youth orchestra musicians, but the conductor had meticulously prepared the orchestra, and the instrumentalists rose beautifully to the challenge, capping Maestro Gary White's fifteenth season with Philadelphia Sinfonia in a truly magical way.

Luis Biava, former Conductor in Residence of the Philadelphia Orchestra

and in the audience for this performance, praised the orchestra for its discipline, mature sound, consistency of intonation, and pronounced the Beethoven "tempo... wonderful."

Philadelphia Sinfonia is honored to have shared the stage for this performance with Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia. We are deeply grateful to Mendelssohn Club's Music Director Alan Harler,

Board President Ellie Elkinton, and Executive Director, Janelle McCoy, for their generous enthusiasm and investment in the project. We also thank the four remarkable AVA soloists: Melinda Whittington, soprano; Margaret Mezzacappa, mezzo-soprano; William Davenport, tenor; André Courville, bass-baritone.

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"I could not ask for a better way to end my last season with Sinfonia... I cannot put into words how amazing it was to watch [Maestro Gary White] conduct this magnificent piece of music."

*~Lillian Swee, violin*

"Performing Beethoven's 9th Symphony in Verizon Hall ... was an exhilarating experience... Rehearsing, studying, and absorbing this massive creation has been an immense luxury."

*~ Simon Housner, cello*



Sinfonia Music Director, Gary White (*left*) and Mendelssohn Club Music Director Alan Harler (*right*) flanking former Conductor in Residence of the Philadelphia Orchestra, Luis Biava, and his wife, Clara.



Celebrating after the performance (*left to right*): Sinfonia Music Director, Gary White; Sinfonia Board President, Carol Brown; Mendelssohn Club Board President, Ellie Elkinton; Mendelssohn Club Music Director, Alan Harler.

## Cascarino and PSP Grace Sinfonia's Festival Concert

By all evaluations, Philadelphia Sinfonia's season-ending concert in Verizon Hall on June 8 was stunning from start to finish. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony closed it out with a cast of over two hundred musicians — a hundred of Philadelphia Sinfonia's advanced instrumentalists and over a hundred chorus members and soloists. Yet the first half of the concert complemented the weighty Beethoven performance with tender grace and beauty.

Conductor Gary White was introduced last year to the work of the late Romeo Cascarino (1922 - 2002), a Philadelphia-based composer of wide-ranging scope. Entranced by Cascarino's mature orchestration for strings of an early piano piece, *Meditation and Elegy*, Maestro White decided to program the Philadelphia premiere of this later work on our June concert. Dolores Cascarino, the composer's widow, met several times with the conductor, graciously attended a

PS rehearsal to introduce our musicians to her husband and his work, and honored us with her presence in Verizon Hall when the piece was performed.

Inspired by the poetry of Edgar Allen Poe, particularly his poem *Annabel Lee*, Cascarino wrote the original piano work in his youth — between 1935 and 1937 — during a period when he made many visits to the Poe House in Philadelphia. With the subtitle “(On Hearing Poe's Annabel Lee)” — a poem about the death of a beautiful young woman, *Meditation and Elegy* is a delicate and haunting work that elicited the nuance and subtlety in the Sinfonia strings that this piece requires.

Equally nuanced and delicate, Sibelius' *Spring Song* followed Cascarino to end the first half of this concert. The Philadelphia Sinfonia Players demonstrated an extraordinary level of performance and extraordinary musical sensitivity in their rendition of this similarly haunting work.

A connection may exist between the two composers and these two pieces: Cascarino, the younger of the two 20<sup>th</sup> century composers, may have been consciously or unconsciously influenced by Sibelius, whose unwavering appreciation for tonality and its infinite possibilities appealed to him. Hints of Sibelius' approach to pushing the boundaries of tonality can be found in Cascarino's work, tying these two gorgeous pieces together.

Guest performers on this PS Festival Concert, the PSP musicians have garnered critical praise throughout the year, and their performance in Verizon Hall demonstrated why. Evoking the fragility of a Finnish spring, their exquisite, distilled interpretation proved a deeply moving example of musical maturity and of accomplishment beyond expectation. Congratulations, PSP!



Mrs. Dolores Cascarino with Maestro Gary White.



2013 - 2014 PSP Oboes in performance.

## More Spectacular Highlights in a Season Full of Highlights....

### SOIREE: 2014 BENEFIT RECITAL IN CHESTNUT HILL, MARCH 9, 2014



Kelly Davis warming up with George Enescu's *Cantabile et Presto*



The Philadelphia Sinfonia String Quartet opened and closed the recital with pieces by Tchaikovsky and Harbison; left to right, Stephanie Bonk, Benjamin She, Max Song, Jamie Ye.



Matt Eng's stellar performance included works of Rachmaninoff, Prokofiev and Kapustin.



Mia Venezia and Olivia Castor charmed the audience with *Le Jardin des Paons pour deux harpes* by contemporary French composer, Bernard Andres.



A warm audience response greeted the performers at the end of a beautiful and highly successful recital.

## An Evening with Enchantment Theatre Company

**A**pril 10, 2014: In a thematic performance titled "Myths and Fairy Tales," Philadelphia Sinfonia collaborated for the first time with Enchantment Theatre Company. As Philadelphia Sinfonia performed the music of Ravel's ballet *Ma Mère l'Oye* (*Mother Goose*), a rather dark and haunting tale of Mother Goose was evocatively depicted by the actor/dancers of Enchantment Theatre. The Episcopal Cathedral in West Philadelphia was a gorgeous backdrop to this concert — visually jewel-like, it fit perfectly the "Waltz" from Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella* but stood in sharp contrast to the sad tale of Mother Goose, as if an actor in the drama, making the story all the more austere. Kudos to Enchantment Theatre Company and to the musicians of Philadelphia Sinfonia for a very special event!



Ravel's *Ma Mère l'Oye* performed against the backdrop of The Episcopal Cathedral.

## Our Growing Engagement with Sinfonia Alums

In a new and exciting way, Sinfonia alums have been showing up unexpectedly: to volunteer, to financially support, as teachers of auditioning students. A few have returned as professional musicians to sub or to expand a section of the orchestra for a performance (i.e. Beethoven 9 required extra forces!).

We have been in business now for seventeen years, and many of our graduates are adults with careers, marriages, even a few with children. They seem ready to reconnect and support an appreciated part of their younger lives. To date, college-age alums have often returned to visit a rehearsal or attend our annual alumni reunion, held after rehearsals on the first Saturday in January. But the re-emergence of older graduates with an interest in volunteering, financial support and — in the case of music school grads — sending us their students, has become a treasured new experience.

Alumni have helped us with mailings, auditions, snack bar, minding the St. Stephen's front desk during rehearsals. They have joined us to prepare the reception for our annual benefit recital and helped backstage at the Kimmel Center. We are confident that there are additional, more substantive roles alumni can play and we expect to develop a program in the next year or two that addresses that.

To celebrate Gary White's 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, we launched the Gary White Scholarship Fund and during the first phase of this drive, alumni giving increased significantly — for which we are very, very grateful. This scholarship fund and the "drive" to support it will continue indefinitely; we encourage anyone — anytime — to lend their support.

Among the more intriguing alumni connections this year came in the form of an email from Leslie Steinberg. Never a Sinfonia member herself, but with fond memories of her family's involvement when her twin brother, Mitch, was a

Sinfonia cellist (2003 – 2007), Leslie is now working in the area and living near St. Stephen's. Having noticed Sinfonia musicians coming and going on Saturdays, their activity struck a chord (no pun intended!). Her email offer to help us out was serious, and we have found multiple ways to use her assistance. Thank you, Leslie!

Equally intriguing and truly exciting is the imminent election of our first alum to the Sinfonia Board of Directors. . . . While our "community" is ever-expanding and embracing new musicians, new connections, new collaborations and new networks, the enrichment we receive from those who have loved it in the past and return with maturity and the skills to help us grow and prosper is priceless, and we appreciate every bit of it.

*Diane Edelman, whose regular column, "Alum Profiles," is working abroad this summer. Her column will return with our fall issue of Sonata.*

## Philadelphia Sinfonia Association 2015 Concert Season

### PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA PLAYERS

Sunday, February 22, 2015 at 4:00 PM  
St. Stephen's Episcopal Church – Philadelphia, PA

Sunday, May 10, 2015 at 3:00 PM  
First Presbyterian Church in Germantown – Philadelphia, PA

### PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA

Sunday, February 1, 2015 at 3:00 PM  
First Presbyterian Church in Germantown – Philadelphia, PA

Sunday, March 8, 2015 at 4:00 PM  
St. Stephen's Episcopal Church – Philadelphia, PA

Sunday, May 17, 2015 at 4:00 PM  
Temple Performing Arts Center – Philadelphia, PA

# PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA

Gary D. White  
*Music Director and Conductor*

Jonathan Hummel  
*Executive Director*

Danielle Garrett  
*Orchestra Manager*

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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.



*'14 - '15 Fall Auditions & Concert Season Inside!*

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