

SONATA

Sinfonia Orchestra News
Summer 2015

PHILADELPHIA
SINFONIA
Educating Musicians. Creating Artists.

Big, Bold & Stunning: Opera Ends 2015 Sinfonia Season!



Hansel and Gretel dance and sing.

“Once upon a time, a poor broom-maker, Peter, and his wife, Gertrude, lived in the Harz Mountains near a legendary monument, the Ilsenstein....”

Thus began Philadelphia Sinfonia’s largest and most ambitious production to date, a concert version of Humperdinck’s beloved opera, *Hansel and Gretel*, performed on May 17,

2015 at the Temple Performing Arts Center.

According to some concert-attenders, it was also the *best* production to date! “How do you top *that*?” asked one professional musician in the audience....

Embracing close to 250 performers, including the

Philadelphia Boys Choir; the Philadelphia Girls Choir; four soloists from the Academy of Vocal Arts; WRTI radio host, Kile Smith, as narrator; and the full forces of the Philadelphia Sinfonia Association’s top full orchestra, this performance involved more moving parts than anything we have ever done before.

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Philadelphia Sinfonia Players: Vital Training and Experience

Including the pristine opening moments of Grieg’s very Nordic *Peer Gynt Suite No. 1*, the warmth and lushness of the *Andalucia Suite* by Cuban composer Ernesto Lecuona, and a sprinkling of gems from German composers Bach, Schubert, Mozart and Strauss (Johann), the Philadelphia Sinfonia Players’ Festival Concert of 2015 was a feather in the cap for this three-year old orchestra and a triumphant end to the past year for PSP. Everyone had grown — some musicians to an incredible extent.

Four years ago, the board and Music Director Gary White agreed to begin a new chapter in Philadelphia Sinfonia’s history, and the auditions for an intermediate-level full orchestra began. We had a break-even number of musicians we knew we had to enroll; we were astonished when we enrolled triple the break-even number! What astonished us even more, was the high level of auditioning students and the similarly high level the orchestra demonstrated when rehearsals began in September.

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Fall Auditions 2015–2016 to Follow Record Spring Auditions

To fill the remaining seats in both of our full orchestras, all musicians are invited to audition in late August/early September 2015.

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 14 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. Specific openings are available for violin, viola, bass, oboe, bassoon and low brass.

To schedule an audition in September, call Judith Mendelsohn after July 1, 2015 at: 215-351-0363 or email Mendelsohn@philadelphiasinfonia.com. The audition dates in September are:

**Saturday, August 29, 2015
noon–5:00 PM**

**Saturday, September 5, 2015
noon–5:00 PM**

**Sunday, September 6, 2015
1:30–5:00 PM**

Further audition information can be found on our website:
www.philadelphiasinfonia.com.

From the Podium

I recently read a statement made by the famed American conductor, Kent Nagano, that “classical music could be gone in a generation . . . because young people find it socially irrelevant, elitist and belonging to the past.” When I first read it, I was alarmed by such a strong statement, but after thinking about it, I decided I just didn’t completely agree. Don’t misunderstand me, classical music certainly needs its proponents and needs to find ways to reach contemporary audiences. These needs are always in our minds here at PSA. So, in addition to providing an outstanding musical education to our members, we feel that creating a viable future for classical music is one of our vital missions as well!

Each year we work with approximately 200 eager young musicians who all seem to develop a great love of classical music and to appreciate its importance in our culture and society. In addition to developing knowledge and enjoyment of orchestral music in our talented musicians, we also bring classical music and other kinds of great repertoire (Pops, Jazz, etc.) to the many people who make up our audiences. With seven or more concerts each season, we ultimately reach so *many* individuals who already have (or who develop) a love and appreciation for the music our students so beautifully perform. In other words, we are helping to develop an audience and create an environment in which classical music can thrive.

In addition to conducting Sinfonia, I had the pleasure a month ago of conducting a free concert at the Barnes Museum that featured 200+ excited young musicians from one of our colleague programs, Play On, Philly! For many of these students it was the beginning of an adventure into the world of classical music, and it couldn’t have been a more joyous and inspiring experience for all involved. It certainly seemed relevant and important to our community here in Philadelphia!

There are many great examples like these of students embracing classical music along with other genres of music. I see it throughout the City of Philadelphia. Literally *hundreds* of young musicians continue in great musical traditions started long ago. I believe these musicians *will* carry that message on and be both future performers — in orchestras, chamber music, operas, etc. — and/or be life long supporters making up the audiences in our concert halls.

Classical music is an essential expression of our culture and society. Bernstein, Copland, Higdon and many other recent and contemporary composers here and abroad represent so much of what is great about our national and international communities. Making music is a valuable way for humanity to come together, put aside differences and rejoice as we work together to further a great art form. Over and over



Gary D. White, Music Director & Conductor

again I hear how music has changed the lives of our students and audience members. I don’t think the future of classical music is an assured or easy one, but I think there is renewed energy coming from our emerging young artists, and it is my hope and belief that this vital form of artistic expression is in good hands.

Gary D. White
Music Director & Conductor

ORCHESTRA NEWS

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2015 Seniors: Gift to Sinfonia Scholarship Fund

At the top of rehearsal on April 26, 2015, the 2015 senior class presented a very thoughtful gift to Gary White and the Philadelphia Sinfonia Association. Representing the seniors in a classy presentation, Mia Venezia and Dylan Reckner handed Gary White a generous contribution to the Gary D. White Scholarship Fund.

Maestro White, the Sinfonia Board of Directors, and the orchestra’s administration are incredibly grateful to the students and parents of the 2015 senior class. Nothing pleases Maestro White and his board more than the nurture of young musicians; a strong scholarship fund insures that financial need never stands in the way of a student who is qualified to participate in our programs. Thank you, Seniors of 2015!

Big, Bold & Stunning: Opera Ends 2015 Sinfonia Season!

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Add to the performers: the props (some humorous); supertitles; character changes, e.g. a mother (Gertrude) who turns into a cackling witch — and steals the conductor's baton for her magic wand; a narration that explains the story between musical sections — all ideas of a Music Director with a good sense of theater... and we had a performance that was not *just* a concert opera!

Elements in the score as well as the general theme of this opera were strongly influenced by Wagner and other German Romanticists. Similar to the works of Wagner, Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* is a very difficult opera for musicians to play and is not commonly performed by youth orchestras. It challenged our student instrumentalists, but they pulled it off with remarkable professionalism.

Maestro White's response when it was over: "One of the three highlights of my career!" And what are the other two? Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* (Verizon Hall, June 2014) and Ferde Grofé's *Café Society* (a "lost" ballet that we resurrected and performed in a multimedia event in May 2010).

Philadelphia Sinfonia wishes to thank the many partners in this production: the

Philadelphia Boys Choir; the Philadelphia Girls Choir; the spectacular soloists from AVA: Hunter Enoch, Hannah Ludwig, Alexandra Nowakowski, and Alexandra Schenck; AVA Vocal Coach, Luke Housner; and Kile Smith, narrator.

Kudos to the PS orchestra of 2015! It was a banner year!

Philadelphia Sinfonia's 2014 — 15 season CD, including the complete live performance of Hansel and Gretel, can be ordered online through our website: www.philadelphiasinfonia.com.



Father is horrified to find the children have been sent into the woods in the direction of the wicked witch.

Maestro White Conducts at the Barnes



Gary White leads POP in *Pictures at an Exhibition* at the Barnes.
Photo: Steven Krull

Our friends and colleagues at Play On, Philly! presented an afternoon concert at the Barnes Museum featuring three movements of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, on Saturday, June 7, 2015, Maestro Gary White conducting! The 200+ young performers were drawn from both of Play On, Philly's programs: about 100 from St. Francis De Sales School and the other 100 or so from Freiere Charter Middle School, where Sinfonia's Orchestra Manager and Assistant Conductor, Danielle Garrett, is the staff conductor who prepared the students from that school for this event.

The students at POP range in age from 6 years through middle school-age; it was a truly moving experience to witness so many very young musicians performing this difficult repertoire describing great works of art in one of Philadelphia's premiere art museums.

Many POP students have entered the Philadelphia Sinfonia Association program, and this event furthers the strong bond our two groups have formed over the past five years.

Program Notes: Our Writer-Scholars

For as long as we can remember, Sinfonia students have written our concert program notes. Knowing this, students sometimes volunteer themselves for this role; other times we have a hunch that a particular musician might do a good job and we ask; and occasionally we make an announcement in rehearsal, calling for volunteers. We have discovered excellent writers and good musicological researchers; not surprisingly, these two attributes frequently coalesce in the same student.

Our orchestral training program emphasizes three areas of student growth and development (sometimes referred to as the “three ‘ships’”): musicianship, scholarship and leadership. Scholarship (intellectual inquiry, perception and understanding) is embedded in the rehearsal process for all our students. Believing that knowledge and understanding are key components of musical artistry, Music Director and Conductor Gary White insures that rehearsals include a thorough excavation of a composition and its composer’s background, providing theoretical and historical context for each piece.

However, we also suspect that individual musicians’ personal research and further study can add tremendously to a student’s understanding of our repertoire.

This past year, three students in our program wrote program notes: Harry Hoy (PSP, PSCO and PS); Emma Flickinger (PS), and Simon Housner (PS and PSCO). They were all exemplary researchers and writers, and, given the high level of their work, we wondered what resources they

used and how their research and writing influenced their understanding of the repertoire they wrote about and also how it ultimately influenced their performance of a work. Did their research and understanding of a work, in fact, contribute to its artistry?

The internet is an incredible source for research, although there is little guidance on its quality and accuracy. Emma figured out that some of the most reliable internet sources included websites for the foundations and museums devoted to individual composers. For example, when she wrote program notes for our January performance of Liszt’s *Les Preludes*, one of her best sources proved to be the Liszt Museum in Budapest. Simon’s parents are musicians; he found a lot of useful print material in his parents’ book collection. All three students had discovered program notes from major orchestras’ concert programs on the internet and felt these were useful documents — as were IMSLP scores and analyses. (IMSLP is a website that posts public domain orchestra music scores and their parts in entirety.)

The most surprising (but not so surprising!) source, however, cited by our three program note writers, was *listening to the works themselves!* This proved critical to Simon, in particular, who listened countless times to the material he wrote about. Perhaps he topped the group for the number of times he heard a piece, but the value in listening to the musical material itself was noted by all three writers. Listening to recordings of the pieces helped them hear each work in its entirety, so they could detect the shape or “architecture” of a piece and both hear all the parts playing at once and place their own part within them.

Did researching and writing their program notes influence their understanding of the repertoire? Absolutely! And did it influence their performances? The consensus of these three musicians was that seeing a composer’s notes and comments on a score (when they could find a score with these markings) made a piece of music easier to play. All three felt that careful listening to a work as well as knowing the context of a work did have significant bearing on their performance. Harry and Simon were both principals of their sections (cello). If the principal is working or playing at a higher level due to depth of knowledge about the work, the section will also.

Of our “three ships,” it is not only student scholarship, that is developed through the writing of program notes but the critical area of leadership is as well. Leaders come in many forms, and our definition is not limited to musical leadership as obviously demonstrated by principals and section leaders. We also value the orchestra leaders who care about and foster Sinfonia-sponsored community service; recruit for the orchestra and encourage other musicians to audition; mentor younger music students within our program as well as beyond it; and *of course*, those musicians who learn about and contribute to our knowledge of current repertoire.

We welcome any PS or PSP student who would like to write program notes to let us know. Please speak with Executive Director, Judith Mendelsohn, or Carol Brown, Board President, or either of our two conductors when we return to rehearsals this fall.

Benefit Recital in Chestnut Hill: March 2015



First violins Stephanie Bonk and Cheyenne King-Bails in Mendelssohn’s glorious string Octet in E-flat Major.



Matthew Eng performing Shostakovich’s *Prelude and Fugue No. 15*.



Kevin Vu, *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano*, by Paul Hindemith.

Philadelphia Sinfonia Players: Vital Training and Experience

Continued from page 1.

The Philadelphia Sinfonia Players was conceived to accommodate students who were talented but did not have quite the level of skill or experience required for our advanced orchestra. We were sadly turning away capable musicians because we had no place for them, and we had no pipeline of students trained in the musical techniques, skills and collaborative approach we feel to be most useful to performing in a large ensemble.

PSP serves various ends for the students who enroll. For some, it is an opportunity to perform in a group that is a level above their school orchestra or an opportunity to share their love for music in a social setting (lessons and practice are very solitary experiences!). It may be one of many interests or loves that a student may have in middle school or high school, in which case, students are content to see PSP as a destination, a wonderful experience that is an end in itself.

For some students — and this is many of our PSP members — our intermediate orchestra is perceived as a route to the very advanced orchestra, Philadelphia Sinfonia (PS), and they take full advantage of the training they find in PSP. Between ten and fifteen students have auditioned into PS from PSP each year. Some do this within a year of joining PSP and others may take a few years.

What do students in PSP need to do or to learn to make the leap to PS? Two students who “moved up” during May auditions shared their wisdom and experiences post-audition.

Both students cited “listening “ and “listening to other players” as the quintessential skill they needed to learn (and did). Etienne (horn) astutely noted that learning to listen and to listen to other players was not only the most important skill he developed in PSP but also the most complex. In PSP he had to not only pay attention to his own intonation, pitch, expression and dynamics, he also had to notice and match his playing to that of the other horns, and at the same time notice

how well the horns were integrating with the other sections of the orchestra. Very complex, indeed!

Akili (violin) noted the range of pieces and composers she was exposed to in PSP and cited her new-found appreciation for the unique style that each composer brings to his or her work and for the way each composition has its own special story and meaning. Her heightened awareness of style and expression reflects the belief of Maestro White and Assistant Conductor, Danielle Garrett, that musicians must understand the theory and the history behind the work that they play to perform it with intelligence and to collaborate meaningfully in its artistic expression.

Etienne mentioned multiple technical and musical improvements he made — in his facility with his instrument and in his sight-reading skills. He also mentioned the emotion and excitement Maestro White brought to the material that was infectious and pushed the group to propel music making to new heights. *Wanting* to do well and produce with excellence is clearly paramount to *achieving* excellence.

Both students were eloquent in their understanding of the place they occupied within the group (i.e. one of many) and the *responsibility* each had to take for his or her part and for his or her development. Etienne knew that even the “supporting” horn parts he had to play were important and that everyone else was depending upon him to do these parts incredibly well — so he worked at that and understood that humble role of — for example — “being the oom-pahs” and keeping a steady beat. This is a very mature understanding of the work of orchestral performance and recognizes its inherently communal process.

For our part, while we delight in the moments when students reach developmental levels that place them in the advanced orchestra, we love and value the joy and the adventure that is the PSP experience. Whether it is an end or a beginning for a young musician, PSP generates a fabulous group process that teaches teamwork, increases social skills and awareness, improves instrumental technique, and breathes life and emotion into dynamic, powerful and beautiful pieces of music — all this making it the great orchestra it has become.

Repertoire Highlights for 2015 – 2016

(A partial listing for all three orchestras; repertoire subject to change)

PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA:

L'Oiseau de feu (Firebird Suite) by Igor Stravinsky (1882 – 1971)

The Sorcerer's Apprentice by Paul Dukas (1865 – 1935)

Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74 “Pathétique” by P.I. Tchaikovsky (1840 – 1893)

PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA CHAMBER ORCHESTRA:

Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G Major, BWV 1048 by J.S. Bach (1685 – 1750)

Holberg Suite, Op. 40 by Edvard Grieg (1843 – 1907)

PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA PLAYERS:

Overture to Nabucco by Giuseppe Verdi (1813 – 1901)

Symphony No. 5 in D Major, Op. 107 “Reformation” by Felix Mendelssohn (1809 – 1847)

Symphony No. 5 in B-flat Major, D.485 by Franz Schubert (1797 – 1828)

Everyone Should See this Video!

Everyone should see this video: <http://youtu.be/dCIJXrIR3U8!>

Written, performed and produced by Eamon Kelly last April, it is a snappy, funny, gently promotional work inviting viewers to attend our concert opera, *Hansel and Gretel*, performed on May 17, 2015 by Philadelphia Sinfonia.

Eamon Kelly is a student at Science Leadership Academy in Philadelphia, an award-winning young filmmaker, and a Philadelphia Sinfonia bassist. Explaining the origin and production process of this startlingly good video, he says,

“I was surprised when Mr. White called me and said that he [had] watched one of

my web videos. I actually have to thank my friend, Simon Housner, principal cello at Sinfonia, because he found the video, then shared it [with] our Sinfonia group on Facebook, leading Mr. White to finding it.

“For the Sinfonia video, Mr. White wanted the “style” of it to be similar to the style of my web videos. My web videos include me in front of the camera, telling funny stories about my life through jump cuts and jokes. I wanted to make the video short and funny so it would draw the audience in and become interested in the *Hansel and Gretel* concert. Eventually, I decided to talk about three reasons why people should attend

the concert. I wrote down some reasons, wrote my script... and exchanged a few emails with Mr. White regarding the filming schedule. I had to show up to rehearsal very early to get the shots I wanted for the video and still be ready for the actual rehearsal. After everything was filmed, it took me about 5 hours to edit the video. Mr. White loved it and I gave the file to him so he could put it on the Sinfonia website and YouTube channel.”

Eamon has generously offered to produce more advertising videos for Philadelphia Sinfonia. Look for another gem next year — we won't let an offer like this get away!

Images from Spring 2015 Events



PSCO Concert at Keneseth Israel: Mia Venezia and Olivia Castor, harp soloists



PSCO Concert at Keneseth Israel



PS/PSP Side by Side Rehearsal 2015: Jacob Lynn-Palevsky and Karl Eckert.



PS/PSP Side by Side Rehearsal 2015: Samir Robinson (left) and Khaia Smith.



PS/PSP Side by Side Rehearsal 2015: Pearl Ramke, percussion, and Maestro Gary White.

Alumni Profile: Flutist and Entrepreneur Andrew Foley

It's hard to imagine that flutist Andrew Foley could ever think of himself as a "late bloomer." An accomplished flutist and entrepreneur, Andrew began to study flute when he was 15 — and he bloomed immediately.

Starting flute studies as a teenager with international performer and founder of the Flute Society of Greater Philadelphia Beverly Pugh-Corry, Andrew was thrilled to learn that one could have a career as a full-time classical musician and threw himself into rigorous practice, putting in 5 to 7 hours a day for the next three years. It was during his sophomore year of high school — just a year after he began to study the flute — that Andrew joined Sinfonia and began a marvelous and fulfilling musical relationship. Among his fondest memories was a special solo — the piccolo part of Prokofiev's *Lieutenant Kije Suite*. Then, shares Andrew, "there was that one occasion on which a photographer caught me, and a few others, as I was hurrying to [a] concert, arriving barely on time." Many of us have seen, and smiled sympathetically, at that memorable photo of rushing musicians that has appeared on various Sinfonia materials.

Since high school, Andrew's career has taken him on a fascinating and varied path. He attended Oberlin College, where he earned both a Bachelor of Arts degree in French and a Bachelor of Music degree in Flute Performance. He studied with professor and former principal flutist of the Orchestre de Paris Michel Debost,



Andrew leads the group of musicians running to a Sinfonia concert call: Spring 2006.

and studied both music and francophone literature while abroad in Paris and Nice. Not surprisingly, Andrew then received a full-tuition scholarship to the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University, where he studied with international flute soloist Marina Piccinini, and won First Prize in the Baltimore Music Club's Young Artist Competition.

It was shortly thereafter that Andrew's career moved in and around — but never out — of the world of music. After completing his Master's Degree at Peabody, he began a doctoral degree in music, but left to work in an entirely different field — as a consultant at a growing boutique strategy firm in New Orleans, as a Venture for America Fellow.

It wasn't too long, though, that musical performance found its way back into Andrew's life, when it was "entirely unexpected." It started when Andrew — who had not practiced or even seen a classical concert for a year — had a fortuitous meeting that set him on a new musical path. On a random weekend in New Orleans, Andrew came upon a string duo performing background music in a farmer's market. According to Andrew, he "sheepishly" approached the musicians and asked them to contact him if they ever wanted to perform with a flutist.

And what happened next?

The violist who took Andrew's card turned out to be the principal violist for the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra ... which happened to be looking for a long-term substitute flutist. Having not practiced in so long, Andrew approached his LPO audition by memorizing his entire audition list — and left his audition with a six-month engagement with the Orchestra. Now, on a performance hiatus, Andrew has joined the strategic planning committee of CompleatStage, a local



Flutist Andrew Foley.

performing arts and arts education non-profit.

With his accomplished and diverse experience with performance and the business end of the arts, Andrew plans to pursue an MBA, and "in some way, become part of the movement that is seeking a more sustainable model for the performing arts in our modern world."

And what advice can this versatile fellow share with us? Andrew recommends that any student considering a musical career should be "diligent, patient, and well-rounded." Had he not put in so many years of diligent practice, he says, he would not have been able to audition successfully. He also believes that "aspiring performing arts professionals should be able to navigate this world as nimble entrepreneurs, as well [as] accomplished artists. ... [M]usicians in today's world need to have broad exposure to experiences outside of [playing] their instruments at an astronomical level, as well as a finely-tuned ability to think critically." Great advice, indeed.

We wish Andrew well on what is sure to be a fascinating career.

Please feel free to contact Andrew at afoleyflute89@gmail.com.

— Diane Penneys Edelman

PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA

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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.



Fall Audition Dates Inside!