

SPRING AUDITIONS: May 25 & 26 and June 1 & 2. For details, see page 3.

Exceptional Performances; one after another!



Héloïse DeGrugillier, recorder soloist in Jamie Allen's *Nightingale Concerto*, March 10, 2024.

“Magnificent” was a word used after the most recent, the advanced orchestra’s second concert at TPAC this season.... As Maestro White said at the time, the program consisted of rarely or never heard works. Great pieces nonetheless, they formed a glorious, fascinating afternoon’s concert graced by extraordinary playing on the

orchestra’s part and two riveting soloists: Héloïse Degrugillier, recorder, and Philip O’Banion, percussion, in contemporary composer Jamie Allen’s *Nightingale Concerto*.

The stage set-up for the concerto, a live premiere, featured an array of percussion instruments, a table with various size

recorders, along with the PS string players, when the soloists and Maestro White emerged from backstage, and the recorder opened the concerto with the first few notes, representing the song of a nightingale. The incredible interplay between percussion, recorder and strings rendered the work — inspired by John Keats’ *Ode to a Nightingale*, a tale juxtaposing darkness and light, death and life, and the poet’s existential struggle — with insight and emotion.

Preceded by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor’s *Ballade in A minor*, and followed by Shostakovich’s *The Gadfly Suite*, a piece rich and similarly programmatic to the *Nightingale Concerto*, this concert was stunning, and one to remember.

The rapid procession of winter concerts began with our newest group, Philadelphia Sinfonia Strings, on January 20, in which this group of young musicians, new to ensemble playing, brought works of Henry Purcell, Mozart, and Bizet to fruition,

Continued on page 9.

Master Classes Augment *Nightingale!*

The afternoon of March 9 buzzed with activity at the Howard Center. Not only was PS holding its dress rehearsal for a concert the next day, but two master classes preceded the dress rehearsal, each engaging our guests (one instrumental soloist and the composer) for the next day’s performance of the *Nightingale Concerto*.

Recorder soloist, Héloïse DeGrugillier, shared technical aspects of Baroque

Performance Practice, demonstrating her expertise with several volunteering PS musicians, while the *Nightingale* composer, Jamie Allen, presented the inspiration and background to his piece and the process of its construction to a group of very interested students drawn from both orchestras.

Continued on page 9.



Composer Jamie Allen, leading his master class on “Composition and the *Nightingale Concerto*”

From the Podium

ANOTHER LOOK AT HOW WE DO WHAT WE DO: PICKING “STANDARD” VS “ADVENTUROUS” CONCERT REPERTOIRE

In the last issue of Sonata, I wrote about how carefully we pick the repertoire the orchestras are playing in order to align with our educational goals. I discussed picking rep from all the major periods of music beginning in the 1700s up to the current day and how important it is to balance that with the needs of each of the instrumental families within the orchestra — strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion and harp.

There is another component to our vital educational process and that is — carefully balancing the standard kind of repertoire a youth orchestra would be expected to play with more adventurous repertoire that may be brand new or not often heard.

Our conducting staff firmly believes in offering our students a chance to perform music from the classical canon in order to introduce the great masterpieces to our members and guide them in all the things that are both on the pages in front of them and those that are not (those orchestral customs passed down through the years by composers and influential conductors, etc.) For students continuing on to music conservatories, this preparation is vital and gives them a strong head start when entering their college years. For those who love music, but may not make it their career, this is their chance to play many “warhorses” with a top notch orchestra at

a very high level. Examples of this kind of programming are found in PSP’s rep which includes Tchaikovsky’s *March Slav*, Beethoven *Symphony No. 8*, Schubert “Rosamunde Overture” and in PS’s with Tchaikovsky’s *Symphony No. 4*, Copland’s “4 Dance Episodes” from *Rodeo* or Mendelssohn’s “Hebrides Overture.” Our newest group, Philadelphia Sinfonia Strings, is also very careful to balance programming with standards like Mozart’s “Ave Verum Corpus” or Bizet’s Selections from *Carmen*. But this is only one half of the repertoire “puzzle.”

In my conversations with Maestras Garrett and Dzwil, it is clear that all our conducting staff want to open our students’ eyes to new works and music on the fringes as well. In PS we have now performed several pieces by the English composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (not yet a staple of the standard rep., but quickly becoming so!), as well as adventurous new music written within the past few years — including Sinfonia’s rising composer Adah Kaplan’s “Waltz for a Hesitant Era” performed by PSCO or PS’s recent premiere of Jamie Allen’s *Nightingale Concerto* featuring solo recorder and percussion. These are good examples of this concept put into practice. Maestra Garrett points to her rep which includes the not-often heard Chabrier “Suite Pastorale,” Florence Price’s “Colonial Dance” (another composer quickly moving into the “standard” classical cannon) or Leyden’s “Serenade for Strings,” written in 1971.



Gary D. White, Music Director & Conductor

By choosing music from the two categories, “standard” and “adventurous,” we believe we are exposing our musicians to the music they need to know how to play, in addition to music that pushes the boundaries of their technique, rhythmic prowess, mental flexibility and musical expertise — all in an effort to help them become the best well-rounded, independent, and accomplished orchestral players they can be.

Gary D. White
Music Director & Conductor

ORCHESTRA NEWS

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Call for Spring Auditions

Going into its 28th season, the Philadelphia Sinfonia program includes several performance opportunities for each orchestra, varied and challenging repertoire, master classes and sectionals. We have four orchestras:

Philadelphia Sinfonia (PS):

advanced full symphonic orchestra for ages 14–23
Rehearsals: Saturdays, 2:50–5:30 PM

Philadelphia Sinfonia Players (PSP):

intermediate-advanced full symphonic orchestra for ages 11–18
Rehearsals: Saturdays, 9:50 AM–12:00 noon

Philadelphia Sinfonia Chamber Orchestra (PSCO):

advanced string orchestra | Open to any PS string player
Rehearsals: Saturdays, 12:20–2:00 PM

Philadelphia Sinfonia Strings (PSS):

new string ensemble to build orchestral skills for musicians age 10–16.
Rehearsals: Saturdays 9:20–11:00 AM

Auditions take place at:

The Howard Center for the Arts, 1212 Wood Street, Center City Philadelphia

SPRING DATES FOR AUDITIONS:

Saturday, May 25: 10:00 AM–6:00 PM

Sunday, May 26: 10:00 AM–6:00 PM

Saturday, June 1: 10:00 AM–6:00 PM

Sunday, June 2: 10:00 AM–6:00 PM

For PS And PSP: 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 (up to 3 octaves); sight read.

Percussion and harp: please check our website for specific requirements.

For PSS — Philadelphia Sinfonia Strings' Auditions: Perform 2-octave major scales up to 4 flats and 4 sharps; play a piece that demonstrates your technical ability; and sight-read music provided in the audition.

Openings available for all instruments!

Registration is available on our website: www.philadelphiasinfonia.com/auditions

Executive Director, Jon Hummel, and the League of American Orchestras

Sinfonia's ED, Jon Hummel, recently joined the Board of the League's Youth Orchestra Division, connecting us to EDs and Music Directors of youth orchestras across the country. The position entails curating content for the Youth Orchestra Division's meetings at two annual national conferences and advocating for youth orchestras in various contexts.

The League is the only national organization dedicated to orchestras and their communities.

Jon has attended League conferences regularly since 2009, made connections and friends with a number of administrators in both the youth orchestra division and broadly across the members of the full League, prompting his peers to suggest he join the Youth Orchestra Division Board. He was pleased to do so.

Prior to his board membership, Jon was a finalist for the League's Orchestra Management Fellowship Program and is a graduate of its Essentials of Orchestra Management seminar.

His presence on the League board brings Philadelphia Sinfonia to national attention; the networking involved is great for Sinfonia business; and moreover, he has opportunities at every meeting and conference and in informal discussions between meetings to discuss matters that pertain to all youth orchestra programs, like recruitment and marketing.

Jon has already brought elements of those conversations into Sinfonia board meeting discussions, and the board and Music Director Gary White have benefitted.

Donors: Annual list and Impact Statement

Philadelphia Sinfonia is truly grateful to its generous donors, supporters 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 for donor materials. Donors and supporters are listed annually in our winter newsletter. The current list includes donations received between March 4, 2023 and March 15, 2024.

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 The Sinfonia music directors and staff

AND IN MEMORY OF:

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PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA:

Impact Statement 2024

Music is a powerful medium. A language composed of wordless sound, music expresses emotion, speaks to emotion, transcends boundaries, and can bring people together. It speaks of joy, of sorrow, of love, of the infinite. . . . It is universal; from the dawn of time, human beings have made sounds with the voice and found materials to communicate what words could not, to celebrate, and to forge connection. Music can emotionally move hundreds of people at a time, and it can heal a solitary griever.

As our vision statement says, we believe that the endeavor to be creative and make meaning in our lives is central to human experience and that it is *our responsibility* to empower young musicians with the tools to do that in the context of classical music as a fundamental human art form.

Not only do we strive to train future musicians and foster the future of music, we also aspire through our programs to enrich society by nurturing students' problem-solving skills, their collaborative instincts, their empathy for others, and their artistic and social development, whether they pursue a career in music or not.

OUR IMPACT CAN BE DISCERNED IN THE WORDS OF OUR FORMER STUDENTS:

From a cellist in her first year at Peabody Conservatory:
"Musically I'm starting to realize just how much of an impact Sinfonia had on me, especially in my orchestral playing... Sinfonia really prepared me for the level of orchestral playing that is expected in conservatories...."

A Sinfonia flute player, who volunteered with under-resourced children in Honduras after college and with refugees and immigrants while in law school, is now an immigration lawyer:
"As a flute player in an orchestra, you are part of a small team that's part of a much larger team. The members of your section count on you to know your part, to be prepared and follow through; in turn, the larger orchestra depends on that too. This [interdependence] serves musicians well and definitely served me well in law school and beyond.... I am still seeing the ways that music has made me the person, the student, and the professional I am today."

A professional clarinet performer and teacher: *"I have always felt that my participation in Sinfonia was a turning point in my study of music.... Sinfonia opened me to the world of orchestral music, which completely changed the way I studied music. My ear started to change and I believe my taste in music became*

much more refined. Being able to play the music of Brahms, Mahler, Tchaikovsky, Mendelssohn, and others really moved me in a way I had not been moved before, and I am just so grateful I had the opportunity to be a part of something so incredibly larger than life before studying clarinet performance at a university."

A violinist who recently graduated from Sinfonia: *"As someone who has been a part of Philadelphia Sinfonia for five years and has been in all three ensembles, I can confidently say that every single moment was a chance for me to grow."*

An oboe player, who has served in many professional capacities internationally, from NGO's to the U.S. state department:
*"There are two ways in which music and Sinfonia have guided me.... The first is that playing in a group like Sinfonia, you learn how to **communicate**. You learn how to work together to build something. If you want to restore a synagogue in Ukraine, for example, it's like putting together a Mahler symphony from zero; you have no musicians, no conductor, no hall. You have the score: i.e. maybe a photograph of what the building originally looked like, and that's what you want in the end. But you must work backwards, **and together** to make it happen."*



ADAH KAPLAN'S "WALTZ FOR A HESITANT ERA"

Sinfonia Concertmaster Adah Kaplan's composition "Waltz for a Hesitant Era" was performed on a Network for New Music concert on January 27, 2024 at the Germantown Jewish Center. Conducted by Gary White, five musicians were drawn from our chamber orchestra and five from Network's professional string players for this piece. They are shown rehearsing at GJC before the concert. Adah Kaplan is at the far left and Sinfonia cellist Micah Abraham is on the right, seated next to Tom Kraines of the Network Ensemble. *Photo credit: Evan Kassof, Network for New Music.*

Winter Concerts

PSS KICKS OFF SINFONIA'S CONCERT SEASON

Philadelphia Sinfonia Strings (PSS), our newest orchestra for young students starting their orchestral training, kicked off the Sinfonia 2023–24 concert season on January 20 with a wonderful and classically diverse concert featuring music from the Baroque to Romantic periods. Led by their string pedagogue and conductor, Beth Dzwil, the students played selections from “Abdelazer” by Purcell, Mozart’s beautiful “Ave Verum Corpus” and movements from the Carmen Suite by Bizet — all played with wonderful stylistic integrity and youthful energy. The strong and effective rapport between conductor and orchestra were immediately apparent.

Ms. Beth had this to say about her group’s progress so far this year:

“PSS has made tremendous progress in its first five months together... It wasn’t long before the PSS musicians learned to listen more intently and tune to each other. In the beginning, we had a monotone dynamic palette. They have since developed a greater dynamic range and began Mozart’s “Ave Verum” with a beautifully warm and gentle pianissimo. I look forward to preparing our spring concert and nurturing their further growth as orchestral musicians.”

We look forward to their next concert as well on Saturday, May 4. Be sure to mark it on your calendars!

~ Gary White
Music Director & Conductor



PSS Violins in Concert



PSS Cellos in Concert

PSP AT TRINITY CENTER FOR URBAN LIFE

PSP brought a standing room-only crowd to the beautiful setting at the Trinity Center on February 18, 2024. Each piece, from their opening *Rosamunde Overture* (Schubert) to the Vaughan Williams’ *English Folk Song Suite*, sang with accomplishment and energy, delighting audience and their usual Conductor alike, for Maestra Garrett,

on maternity leave, was watching it livestreamed as Music Director Gary White led the orchestra through her repertoire. The alignment between Maestro White and the Players was perfect, and their strong rehearsals beforehand led to a lovely afternoon concert.

PSS was invited to add Purcell’s “Abdelazer,” to the program, which they rendered beautifully, and as is our frequent practice, PSP was augmented by a few members of the advanced orchestra (PS), placed to bolster a section and/or mentor the less experienced musicians.



PSP violins



PSP winds



(left to right) David Schwager, PS trombone in a mentor role and Jahnelle Bey, PSP trombone.



PS AT TPAC IN MARCH

Curtain call on March 10, 2024; after the *Ballade*, the *Nightingale Concerto*, and *The Gadfly Suite* were all played, PS and Maestro White respond to wild applause from the audience.

Program Notes: The Research & Writing Skills of our Musicians

Each year we call for student volunteers to write program notes for all our concert programs, and every year several musicians volunteer. This year saw an impressive number: fourteen volunteered; seven each in PS and PSP, so we even had to assign some collaborative projects – which have gone extremely well!

The example below, shows the breadth and depth of what we expect, formatted exactly as it appears in a concert program. Coleridge-Taylor's Ballade was on our PS concert in March.

~ Editor

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor: *Ballade in A Minor*

The beginnings of English composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's legacy, eventually leading him to be revered in the United States as the "African Mahler," can be traced back to the arguably accidental commission of his composition *Ballade in A Minor*.

Coleridge-Taylor was born in August of 1875 to an English mother, Alice Martin, and Sierra Leonean father, Daniel Taylor. Racial discrimination was a hindrance to Taylor's pursuit of a medical career in London, so he eventually returned to Sierra Leone before the birth of his son.

Raised in a musically inclined family, Coleridge-Taylor began his musical journey at a young age, learning the violin and singing in local church choirs.

His brilliance was soon recognized, and at age 15 he was invited to enroll at the Royal College of Music in London. There, he studied composition under Charles Stanford; Gustav Holst and Vaughn Williams were among some of Stanford's other prolific protégés.

During his years in conservatory, Coleridge-Taylor was introduced to Edward Elgar, another prominent composer of the 20th century.

In 1898, Elgar, one of Coleridge-Taylor's many admirers, was offered a commission from the Three Choirs Festivals to write an orchestral work for their 1898 concert series. At the time, Elgar was preparing to write the soon to be legendary *Enigma Variations*, so he referred them to Coleridge-Taylor, who was only a year out of conservatory. Elgar responded to the offer in a letter saying "I am sorry I am too

busy to do so. I wish, wish, wish you would ask Coleridge-Taylor to do it. He still wants recognition, and he is far and away the cleverest fellow going amongst the young men."

This referral led to the composition of Coleridge-Taylor's *Ballade*.

The *Ballade* begins with an energetic trill in the woodwinds and a perfect 5th in the timpani. The strings soon make an aggressive and fiery chromatic entrance, and the piece holds this upbeat character, until the second section, which possesses an entirely contrasting, romantic and tender theme sung by the strings. Eventually the piece returns to its initial lively and spirited feel, and ends with an even more dramatic and brilliant final chord.

Sir Arthur Sullivan, who attended the premier, described Coleridge-Taylor as a "genius" and a "composer, not a music-maker."

His first commissioned piece, the *Ballade* kick-started Coleridge Taylor's career as a composer, leading him to not only establish a legacy in Britain, but even making a name for himself in the United States.

Coleridge-Taylor toured the United states on several occasions, even visiting the White House in 1904, where he met former President Theodore Roosevelt. Needless to say, Coleridge Taylor was a trailblazer and pioneer of his time.

Despite the success of his *Ballade* and future compositions, Coleridge-Taylor did not reap much of the financial reward of his success. In need of immediate income, he often had to sell the rights to his works to pay publishers, leaving him and his family

ineligible for future royalties.

Coleridge-Taylor's legacy leaves us wondering what could have been, for he tragically died at the young age of 37 in 1912 due to pneumonia.

Coleridge-Taylor, although a prominent composer of his time, is now gaining renewed popularity. Although he is not here to bask in the glory, Coleridge-Taylor's music is making a return, with the sounds of his *Ballade in A Minor*, *Petite Suite*, *Othello*, and countless other works filling up concert halls across London, the United States, and beyond.

~ Ryannah Blackman, violin

Sound Post

McKayla Hwang, PS principal second violin, also an accomplished violist, was recently named one of six finalists in this year's American Viola Society Competition, sending her to the 2024 AVS Festival at L.A.'s Colburn School this June.

Congratulations, McKayla!

AND FROM OUR STAFF:

Danielle Garrett, PSP Conductor and Program Manager, gave birth to a baby boy, Jayden Dwight Palmer, on January 15, 2024. Jayden is a healthy, beautiful baby, and his mother, Ms. Garrett, has returned from maternity leave to conduct PSP again.

Maestro White led PSP in rehearsals and one concert in her absence

On the Board

We welcomed four strong new members to the Philadelphia Sinfonia Board this year.

Please meet them:

Amanda Ciktor brings a passion for and significant background in Marketing to our board, an area of expertise that is currently especially valuable to us. Throughout her career, Amanda has worked across a variety of channels and verticals and on a multitude of campaigns for several companies helping each of their brands/businesses reach their goals.

Currently the Associate Director of Omnichannel Strategy Marketing at AstraZeneca, Amanda says she is “always open to new opportunities to make an impact and expand my experience,” and she looks forward to using her expertise in a fascinating new direction for her, to help Sinfonia reach growth and retention goals with fresh ideas and new ways of thinking.

Frances Han is a Senior Compliance Director at Vanguard, the financial services firm. For twenty years, she held various other roles at Vanguard, mostly as a practicing lawyer in the Office of the General Counsel, before moving to the Fund and Advisor Compliance team.

Frances is a current Philadelphia Sinfonia parent, with a deep appreciation for the way

Sinfonia students “develop from simply a [you name it instrumentalist] to a member of an organization with increased awareness and understanding of what it means to be part of something bigger.” She is eager to help further the Sinfonia mission... “so that more students can benefit from the camaraderie and musical transformation that [her son] is experiencing.” And we on the board appreciate the legal background and experience that Frances brings to that sense of mission.

Jerrell Jackson, a Philadelphia Sinfonia alum, holds a degree in string bass performance and is an experienced performer having played with various ensembles – in Philadelphia and around the world. His career has led him multiple directions from performance and teaching to writing, lecturing, and – also — to marketing and communications for various entities and brands.

Jerrell has been the Digital Content and Audience Engagement Manager for the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society and Marlboro Music, a contributing writer for WQXR, Marketing and Communications Manager for Chineke! Orchestra, Europe’s first majority Black and Ethnically diverse professional orchestra. He is currently the Administrative Director for Imani Winds Media (IWM), a new record label and

media company founded by the Grammy-winning wind quintet, Imani Winds.

As a student, Jerrell says, “Sinfonia offered me a vision of my future.... I look forward to serving as a board member of this vital organization and offer to other young people the same opportunities that were gifted to me.”

Jason Ward is a non-profit administrator and higher education and performing arts fundraiser. With a long record of fundraising for both Philadelphia and national organizations (Curtis Institute of Music, Philly Pops, WHYY, League of American Orchestras) he is currently the Director of Institutional Advancement at the Academy of Vocal Arts.

A trained French Horn player, Jason participated in youth orchestras, bands and choirs from middle school through high school graduation, whereupon he went on to study Horn performance at the undergraduate and graduate levels. While he has pursued arts administrative positions rather than performance since, Jason is “deeply grateful for the personal and professional lessons and foundations [his] youth orchestras gave [him].” With that in mind, he is not only ready to help Sinfonia support its many musicians, but he is already fully engaged with various pieces of our fundraising endeavors this year.

Sinfonia’s Successful Clothing Drive

Philadelphia Sinfonia has a strong track record of addressing community and world needs.

Our students have led many month-long food drives to support Philabundance, collected financial contributions for World Central Kitchen in Ukraine and musical supplies for a hurricane-damaged music school in Puerto Rico. We have mounted benefit concerts for earthquake victims and mentored younger groups of music students.

This past fall we did something new: our orchestra students, across all ensembles,

collected gently used clothing to contribute to the clothing cupboard for the homeless at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church on South 10th Street, our former home of many years. As the photo attests, a very impressive collection was taken to the church in December. Surely men, women, and even children without much to call their own have been warmed and well-dressed this winter with the clothing culled from our families’ closets. Thank you to everyone who supported this endeavor. It was a valuable service and a great Sinfonia community project.



Exceptional Performances; one after another!

Continued from page 1.

“with wonderful stylistic integrity and youthful energy,” according to Maestro White (more on page 6).

PSS was followed a week later by a Saturday evening performance of our Concertmaster, Adah Kaplan’s “Waltz for a Hesitant Era”, played jointly by a quintet drawn from our chamber orchestra and an equal number of professional players on a Network for New Music concert (see p.6). And *that* was followed the very next day by PS’s first performance of the season, with PSCO on stage for one piece. Whew!

A rapid progression of events in one very short week!

A three week break brought us to PSP at Trinity Center for Urban Life. Their first performance of the season, featuring works of Schubert, Dvorak, Beethoven, and ending with Vaughan Williams’ rousing *English Folk Song Suite*, was conducted by Maestro White, stepping in for Maestra Danielle Garrett, on maternity leave. In a charming addition to the program, PSS brought one piece, Henry Purcell’s *Abdelazer Suite*, to the stage.

Then, in the first week of March, PSCO performed multiple serenades along with two Baroque concertos and Adah Kaplan’s *Waltz* at Foulkeways’ retirement community, and a few short days later, we were on stage at Temple Performing Arts Center again with the *Nightingale Concerto*.

While this was a rapid progression of performances, each was a striking example of the accomplished, passionate music-making Sinfonia musicians are known for. Bravo, Everyone!

Remaining 2023 – 24 Concert Schedule

PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA

Sunday, May 19, 2024 8 PM

Verizon Hall, The Kimmel Center with Meichen Liao-Barnes, violin, Derek Barnes, cello and Philadelphia Sinfonia Players

PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA PLAYERS

Sunday, May 12, 2024; 3 PM

Temple Performing Arts Center with Ernesto Tovar, French horn

Sunday, May 19, 2024; 8 PM

Verizon Hall, The Kimmel Center

PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Sunday, April 28, 2024; 3 PM

Shannondell at Valley Forge

PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA STRINGS

Saturday, May 4, 2024; 7 PM

Howard Center for the Arts

Master Classes Augment *Nightingale!*

Continued from page 1.

The huge takeaway from Jamie Allen’s master class, besides a far greater understanding of the relationship between John Keats’ “Ode to a Nightingale” and Allen’s concerto, was the fact that a surprising number of our students are seriously composing music or beginning to take an interest in composition and are trying to get started. To this end, Mr. Allen was very helpful responding to individual student’s technical questions, sometimes using his own piece that our students now know for explanations.

As for Ms. Degrugillier’s class, Tony Tong, one of the PS violinists she worked with in

the class was effusive and enthusiastic about the experience:

“Héloïse was an absolute joy to have as a teacher in our masterclass. Her expertise in the Baroque and Classical pieces was evident in every suggestion she made — I particularly liked the choice of spacings she suggested we do in our Vivaldi violin trio, with great musical effects. A great thank you to her and my appreciation for her spending time with us!”

Tony’s “thank you” speaks for everyone; we truly appreciate Ms. Degrugillier’s and Mr. Allen’s insightful and fascinating classes that afternoon.



Héloïse DeGrugillier working with the Vivaldi violin trio musicians, left to right: Adah Kaplan, Emily Fischbach, and Tony Tong.

Alum Profile: Max Reese

With dedication to his craft and to multiple opportunities, the career of clarinetist Max Reese has taken off with a flash!

Max got his start in music in 4th grade by playing the saxophone in his school band. He did not even try the clarinet until he was about 14, but when he began lessons, he “realized that this was the instrument [that he] really loved to play and listen to.” He recalls listening to his parents’ DVD of *Fantasia 2000* over and over as he became more involved with the clarinet.

Max spent his senior year of high school in Sinfonia (2015 – 2016), and fondly remembers performing Tchaikovsky’s 6th Symphony in Verizon Hall. “It’s such an important and emotionally heavy piece of music that I was so lucky to experience at such a young age. I also remember the pre-rehearsal coffee runs with my friends, some of whom I’m still close with,” he shares.

Following that year, Max continued his musical studies, first as an undergraduate at Oberlin, and then as a graduate student at DePaul in Chicago. Because there were no graduate music students at Oberlin, he and his colleagues were constantly performing, and there, in addition to the traditional canon, two of Oberlin’s contemporary ensembles introduced him to sounds and techniques “that I probably never would have gotten to experience anywhere else. It really gave me a deep appreciation for contemporary music and I still love to

perform it today.” Max also toured Carnegie Hall, was in a wind quintet that won many competitions, performed on radio, and was a woodwind coach for a youth orchestra.

Teaching has been a consistent part of Max’s journey. He still teaches in Virtu.academy, which he began during his freshman year of undergrad, providing high quality remote lessons to people in areas where they were unavailable. He was a graduate teaching artist at the DePaul community school division that engaged with students in the Chicago public schools, and he also taught at the Ravinia Festival’s Reach, Teach, Play education program in Chicago.

While at DePaul, Max performed many times with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, the Chicago Symphony’s training orchestra, and he has performed with the Akron Symphony; Rhythm is Image, a Chicago-based new music initiative; the Southeastern Young Artists, where he will be performing Mozart’s Clarinet Quintet in May – and substituted with the Milwaukee Symphony, which has brought him this season to the extraordinary full-time position of assistant principal clarinet!

Max plans to always teach and audition. His dream? To start a chamber music festival in an area where this is not readily available. How consistent this is with his commitment since 2016 to the mission of Virtu.academy, bringing music to those otherwise beyond its reach.



Max Reese, Assistant Principal Clarinet, Milwaukee Symphony

And Max’s advice to Sinfonia members? “Enjoy it while it lasts and have fun! It goes by fast.”

Please feel free to contact Max at maxreese98@gmail.com. You can also learn more about his work with Virtu.academy at <https://www.virtu.academy/teacher/maxreese>.

Diane Penneys Edelman

Alumni Updates

Sarah Boxmeyer, horn, Sinfonia ’08 and a Curtis grad is playing horn for Sondheim’s *Sweeney Todd* on Broadway, and we could not be more proud!

You can check out her performance and the other stellar performers in their NPR Tiny Desk Concert at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dj5Y5VwhfHs>.

Alana Youssefian, violin, Sinfonia ’10, and a Juilliard Historic Performance grad is performing as a soloist all around the country. She was recently the featured soloist for the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia’s Baroque program in the Perelman Theater on February 16 and 18, 2024. Alana performed Jean-Marie LeClair’s *Violin Concerto No. 6 in G minor* and Vivaldi’s *Violin Concerto in D major*, where she shone brilliantly, engaging sensitively with the orchestra musicians and thrilling, among others, Sinfonia’s Music Director, former Board President, and her fellow Sinfonia alum, Colin Hartwick, in the audience.

Alum Profile: Benjamin She

Can you imagine spending your days planning transportation throughout all of Philadelphia – from developing systems of mobility and access, and safe, reliable, and enjoyable bus routes — and at the same time keeping up your deep love of playing the violin? Well, that incredible combination of skills is demonstrated daily by Sinfonia alum Ben She, who has shared with us his adventures in music, science, and public policy.

It started with music. Ben took up the violin at age 5. He loved playing in his school’s orchestra and found his way to Settlement Music School when he was in middle school, where lessons, chamber ensembles, and student competitions “really opened [him] to a whole world of classical music.” “Looking back,” Ben shares, “it was really that joy of playing chamber pieces with fellow musicians each week that really brought me into the world of music.”

With time, Ben dove deeper into music – joining Sinfonia for all four years of high school. In fact, joining Sinfonia “was really the first time I was encountering a full symphony orchestra with all of its parts and musicians close-up, and I was instantly hooked.” Ben loved not only performing, but Sinfonia rehearsals as well. He recalls: “My favorite memories begin with how much fun it was to see my orchestra friends every week. . . . I will also forever remember Maestro White’s endless energy and enthusiasm for all of us, and I can definitely say he was integral in helping us grow as individual musicians and an ensemble.” In Ben’s final year with Sinfonia, performing in a few special string quartet concerts and performing Beethoven’s 9th Symphony at the Kimmel Center was an incredibly satisfying and poignant cap to Ben’s musician experience.

After high school, Ben continued his musical adventures while studying subjects vastly different from music — neuroscience and urban planning! Ben concentrated in



Ben She, first violin (on the left) rehearsing with his piano quintet.

neuroscience at Vanderbilt University, where he performed with chamber music groups at weddings and recitals and participated in the Vanderbilt Commodore Orchestra. He performed major orchestral pieces, was involved with a student-run music club, and performed at countryside retreats. Pretty amazing for a neuroscience major!

Ben continued with music when he went on to earn a Master’s degree in Urban Spatial Analytics at Penn’s Graduate School of Design. Between studying public policy, urban planning, and data analytics, Ben found time to stay rooted in music – from starting a string quartet to performing in chamber groups and the Penn Symphony Orchestra. Now immersed in a career of urban planning, Ben is grateful for having the opportunity to “improve lives for people I live in the city with, as well as have a reasonable work-life balance where I can still have time for music.”

Ben is a great example of a Sinfonia alum who has fit passion for musical performance into a significant place in his non-musical career. And he has great advice for Sinfonians: “Don’t stop playing after Sinfonia! There are almost always opportunities in colleges and communities wherever you end up to continue playing with others, from a duet all the way to a symphony orchestra. You’ll be surprised at how many fellow musicians there are anywhere you look.”

Thanks for being such a great example, Ben!

Please feel free to contact Ben at benjaminshe@gmail.com.

Diane Penneys Edelman



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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.



Inside: concerto premiere; performance highlights; impact statement and more.....

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