

# SONATA

Sinfonia Orchestra News  
Summer 2021

PHILADELPHIA  
SINFONIA  
*Educating Musicians. Creating Artists.*

## Talks with Music Pros, Creative Videos, Collaborations, Rehearsal in an Arboretum....



May 16, 2021: We meet in person in the stunning Awbury Arboretum!

No less than *sixteen* music professionals, including four Sinfonia alumni, joined us in our Zoom rehearsals this year for “Talks with the Music Pros.” Their careers ranged from orchestral musicians to soloists and chamber musicians to music professors and an orchestra librarian. Most of the professionals coached sectionals after their half hour “talk” with PS or PSP. A harp sectional, coached by our alum, Mia Venezia, rounded out the sectionals for the year.

concert videos were produced by PS and PSP, two of which involved collaborations with the Commonwealth Youthchoirs (CY). Other collaborations included a full afternoon workshop for both orchestras with Gwen Roberts, co-director of the incredible Baroque orchestra *Tempesta di Mare*, and a similar workshop for our chamber orchestra with musicians from the renowned East Coast Chamber Orchestra, a gift from the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society.

**D**espite a pandemic, our year ended a few weeks ago with a steady stream of unforgettable events! The entire year was spent on Zoom, except for one brilliant afternoon’s rehearsals, socially distanced, outside at an urban arboretum. Yet, throughout the season, student engagement was high; everyone kept learning and growing due to **countless** special opportunities through Zoom.

Perhaps best of all, was the Sunday afternoon in May at the Awbury Arboretum, where the strings and percussion from both PS and PSP finally held in-person rehearsals featuring Samuel Coleridge-Taylor’s *Novelletten, No. 1 - 4*. How great it felt to be back together again after more than a year. A promise of lovely things to come as we return to in-person next fall for our 25th Anniversary Season!

PHILADELPHIA  
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*Educating Musicians. Creating Artists.*

OUR  
**25<sup>th</sup>**  
SEASON

## Celebrating 25 Years!

**W**ith robust spring auditions and re-enrollment behind us, our 25th celebratory season is already underway.... Announcements about repertoire and anniversary events will be made over the next several weeks and months, but here is a sneak preview of one very special item: *Tempesta di Mare*, Philadelphia’s acclaimed Baroque Orchestra and Chamber Players, will be in residence with Philadelphia Sinfonia over the entire year, with opportunities for each of our three ensembles built into the collaboration and a performance featuring *Tempesta* violinist, Mandy Wolman. Their residency will be a unique opportunity for all Sinfonia students to learn about performing period music as we move from the Zoom online format of this past year back into exciting in-person rehearsals and concerts.

**SUMMER AND  
FALL AUDITION  
INFORMATION CAN BE  
FOUND ON PAGE 5.**

For musicians considering joining us for this 25th banner year, summer and fall audition information can be found on page 5. Our anniversary tagline invites all promising student musicians:  
**“25 Years! Our rich past;  
your musical future!”**

## From the Podium

Here at Sinfonia, as we emerge hopeful from the pandemic, we are simultaneously looking at the lessons learned from the last year and a half's experience *and* planning for an exciting future and our 25th anniversary celebration.

I must begin by reflecting on and pointing out how *remarkable* our student musicians were during our year or so of rehearsals on Zoom. The attention our gifted instrumentalists gave to these sessions resulted in several amazing videos (the most recent, a collaboration with Commonwealth Youthchoirs and soon to be released!) These videos are extremely difficult to make; every musician must be at his or her very best while producing their individual video, all of which are then combined with everyone else's. This requires near perfection on the part of every player who must play *as if* they were in a full orchestra but without the rest of the orchestra there for them to hear! I couldn't be prouder of our students' hard work and the results they achieved.

Our Zoom sessions built on Sinfonia's practice of exploring the history and theory behind each of our pieces and allowed us to do this in even greater detail! Maestra Garrett and I were constantly amazed by our students' rich insights as we engaged in

lively conversations about our composers and their works. These discussions continued also as we brought guests from Philadelphia and around the world to speak to our members about careers in music, performance anxiety, practice tips and so much more. And through it all our students were actively engaged, attentive and growing as musicians!

Now, as we make plans to emerge from this unusual time we will continue to be there, providing excellence in orchestral training and helping our members to grow as the finest musicians and individuals they can be. If ever there was a time when the world needed more music and strong community leaders, I believe this is it, and I look forward to seeing how our students rise to the challenges ahead.

This fall, we plan to return to live rehearsals in a safe environment, and it is our hope that we will begin giving concerts again in January of 2022! We are planning many exciting events to celebrate our 25th and we will take the best parts of what we learned this past year and build on them as well — all to give our members every opportunity we can. I hope you will continue to support our efforts. The path forward is an exciting one, but not necessarily an easy one as we emerge from this long period of isolation. I invite you, our readers, to stay in touch



Gary D. White, Music Director & Conductor

— check our website, Sinfonia emails and Facebook pages and see what we are up to, and when you feel comfortable, come to our concerts and events.

Wishing everyone a safe, healthy and *fun* summer ahead!

Gary D. White  
Music Director & Conductor

### ORCHESTRA NEWS

Summer 2021 | Vol.19, No. 2

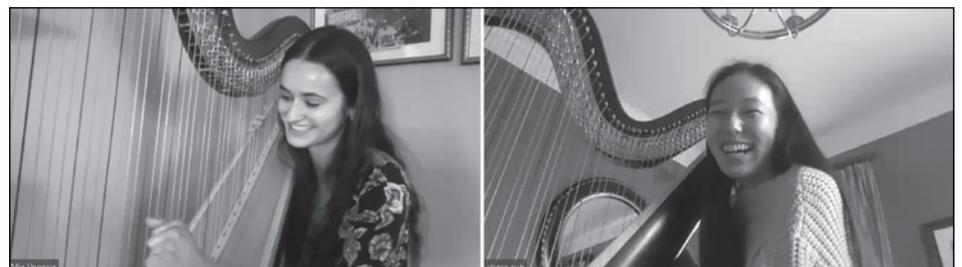
Published by: Philadelphia Sinfonia

Edited by: Carol Brown

Photos by: Steven Goldblatt, Ke Feng and Tom Gralish

Design by: Hanna Manninen

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Sinfonia alum and harp grad student, Mia Venezia (left), with Charis Suh, PS harpist (right), enjoying a harp sectional this spring

# Spring “Talks with the Music Pros”

Including four promising alumni, this year’s many professional guests have come from all over the U.S. (and as far as Korea). Their careers have ranged across a musical spectrum. Although one common thread, practice tips and techniques, has emerged from time to time, each guest has had something unique to share and discuss with our Sinfonia musicians.

This Spring’s rehearsals brought seven of those guests, representing a range of musical careers and experience that was particularly broad. We welcomed the Philadelphia Orchestra’s new Principal Librarian, Nicole Jordan; an alum, Martina Smith, horn and a Curtis grad student; several prominent string, wind, and brass orchestral musicians — some very seasoned and one who’s very young. One guest musician specializes in Early Music and one specializes in New Music. The breadth was incredible!

Some guests have also coached sectionals following their talks.

Nicole Jordan talked about her shift from a budding career as a violist to becoming an orchestra librarian and the demands, complexities, and challenges of her job. An African-American woman, raised in Philadelphia, she has scaled the ladder to the pinnacle of possibilities in a highly competitive field; her journey was a valuable eye-opener for the young musicians in PSP.

Hirono Oka, violin; Matt Vaughn, trombone; and Olivia Staton, flute, are

all Philadelphia Orchestra members. Ms. Oka and Mr. Vaughn have been with POA for years; Olivia Staton is POA’s new 24-year-old Second Flute, whose breathtaking journey from Juilliard student to her current position gave our students some *very immediate* insight into the audition process for major orchestra positions. Her strong emphasis on defining one’s musical goals in terms of mission and passion rather than external measures of success, was refreshing, given her obvious external success.

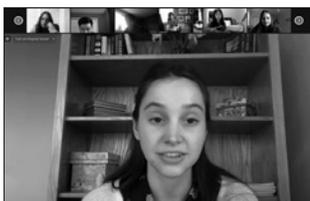
Hirono Oka’s discussions focused on working with difficult, little-known repertoire and her unexpected foray into New Music that over time has become a passion. Matt Vaughn had thoughts on fitting into an orchestral setting as a brass player, where the “big sound” that brass players love often needs to be modified, but he was particularly passionate talking about the role of *air* — breath — and body mechanics for all musicians, most notably brass and wind players.

Sisters, Martina Smith and Priscilla Herreid, talked with PS students together. Martina, a Sinfonia alum and Curtis grad student, shared her wise thoughts about managing the early stages of a performance career, while Priscilla, who is older, has a well-developed career as a Historic Woodwind performer. A graduate of Juilliard’s Historic Performance program, Priscilla plays all over the country and the world when someone is needed with her specialized skills. She took us on a tour by Zoom of the many

unusual period wind instruments she has collected and plays, and opened our students’ eyes to the world of Baroque and Renaissance period performance.

To this author, perhaps the most remarkable “Talk” came from William (Billy) Short, Principal Bassoon of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and bassoon professor at Juilliard, the Manhattan School, and Temple, whose focus was on developing confidence by “learning and growing from failure and disappointment.” His credentials might suggest that he has had little experience of either to draw upon. But to the contrary, he shared his “other” bio — the one that recorded the music festivals he did not get into, the orchestra auditions he took where he did not get called back, etc. His suggested steps for recovery were presented simply and directly, with personal and musical growth the primary objective. Who could not learn from his accessible, humble presentation?

All year, Sinfonia students have been talking with outstanding people in the field of music; however, the Zoom format along with the sincerity, directness, personal qualities and even vulnerabilities our guests have shared have given our students intimate views of the people behind the success stories. They have provided our musicians with very human models to learn from and emulate. It has been inspiring, one of the clear successes of our year on Zoom!



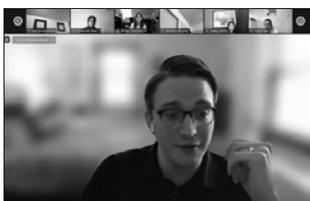
Music Pros guest; Olivia Staton, Philadelphia Orchestra, flute



Kokayi Jones, PSP Trumpet in sectional with Matt Vaughn, Philadelphia Orchestra, trombone



Music Pro guest; Martina Smith, horn, Sinfonia alum and Curtis grad student



Music Pro guest; Billy Short, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, bassoon



Marcus Shaw, PS horn in brass sectional with Martina Smith, Sinfonia alum and Curtis grad student



Music Pro guest; Priscilla Herreid, Historic Woodwinds, Piffaro Renaissance Wind Band

# Video Collaborations with the Commonwealth Youthchoirs!

Complex, but rewarding and beautifully rendered, PS and PSP's spring concert video projects were each built around a collaboration with the outstanding choral program, Commonwealth Youthchoirs.

While PSP worked with the singers on a contemporary arrangement of a traditional spiritual "This Little Light of Mine," PS and the older singers from CY performed "The Heavens are Telling," from the great, well-known oratorio *The Creation* by Franz Joseph Haydn.

Each of our ensembles met over Zoom for one rehearsal with members of the participating ensemble in the youth choirs, along with a special guest who could discuss the project in each case and provide some valuable background material for the pieces being performed.

Composer Dr. Robert Harris, the contemporary arranger of the spiritual

"This Little Light..." was on hand for PSP and CY's joint rehearsal. He discussed the history of spirituals and what he aimed to do in setting the piece for choir and piano. The melody, he said, was traditional; his contribution was to create the *counter* melody. So that PSP instrumentalists could perform this work with CY, Maestro White wrote an orchestral arrangement based on Dr. Harris' work.



Dr. Robert Harris speaking via Zoom with PSP and CY about his work and the spiritual "This Little Light of Mine."

Maestro Larry Hoenig was the PS rehearsal guest for their video production of "The Heavens are Telling," attended also by the participating singers from CY. Maestro Hoenig's lifetime of experience as a choral conductor enabled him to provide insight for each group into the piece from the choral perspective — something that was particularly valuable to our PS instrumentalists. In the process, he told the story of Haydn's writing of *The Creation*, placing the piece historically in the context of the developing Classical style.

Two of our students wrote brief program notes to accompany the videos. Their work is an excellent example of some of the leadership roles Sinfonia students assume throughout each season and add further substance to this article. Check them out below!

Both videos will be released before the end of June; go to our website for links.

## DR. ROBERT HARRIS: "THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE"

This collaboration between the Commonwealth Youth Choirs (CY) and Philadelphia Sinfonia Players began when Dr. Elizabeth Parker, the co-artistic director of CY and Maestra Garrett, chose the spiritual "This Little Light of Mine." The two ensembles worked together over the spring to bring Dr. Robert Harris's stunning arrangement, orchestrated by Maestro Gary White, to life for its premiere. Through its moving lyrics and tonality, "This Little Light of Mine" conveys an unrelenting optimism which remains as important as it was during a similar time in the 1950s and 60s, especially in the context of the battles against anti-Black violence currently being waged throughout the nation. As we continue to face these and other historic challenges, "This Little Light of Mine" reminds us that there is always hope in the darkness. Dr. Harris himself put it best — "regardless of what may happen, this light of mine will always be there to help me as a protector."

~ Jordan Rosh, PSP violin

## FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN: "THE HEAVENS ARE TELLING" FROM THE CREATION

*The Creation*, composed by Franz Joseph Haydn between 1797 and 1798, is an oratorio in three parts that describes God's creation of the world as told in the Book of Genesis. "*Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes*," or "The Heavens are Telling," depicts the conclusion of the fourth day and completes the oratorio's first part. "The Heavens are Telling" is based on Psalms 19:1-3. Like the rest of part one, the soloists — soprano, tenor, and bass, represent the archangels Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael, respectively. Part one begins in the key of C minor, so Haydn's transition to the brighter C Major during "The Heavens are Telling" denotes the triumph of light over darkness.

~ Raphael Englander, PS percussion

# Auditions for 2021 – 2022, our 25th Anniversary Season!

## PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA ACCEPTS MUSICIANS BY AUDITION.

Placement in our orchestras is determined by the audition.

### Philadelphia Sinfonia (PS)

advanced orchestra, conducted by Gary D. White

### Philadelphia Sinfonia Players (PSP)

advanced-intermediate orchestra, conducted by Danielle Garrett

### Philadelphia Sinfonia Chamber Orchestra (PSCO)

advanced string orchestra, conducted by Gary D. White

*Due to on-going public health concerns and government policies, we will be conducting rolling auditions by video this summer and will conclude with two in-person audition days in the fall.*

Video audition submission deadline: Sunday, September 5, 2021, by the end of the day

In-person auditions: Saturday, September 4  
Sunday, September 5

Openings remain in all sections and all instruments are welcome to audition.

## Our programs offer:

- Full symphonic orchestra concerts (advanced and intermediate level)
- Chamber orchestra concerts
- Performances with professional soloists
- Artistic and community partnership opportunities
- Sectionals and master classes with Philadelphia Orchestra musicians and other top professionals
- Internal concerto competition in alternate years
- Varied and challenging musical repertoire
- Exceptional orchestral training process

To find the audition requirements, a complete description of the process for video submissions, and to sign up for an audition, please visit our website: [www.philadelphiasinfonia.com](http://www.philadelphiasinfonia.com).

## Senior Lunch

Sinfonia's now-traditional senior lunch was held, like almost everything else this year, on Zoom. Nevertheless, several of our departing seniors joined us online to share their plans for next year and their favorite memories of Sinfonia, and to say goodbye.

Each year, this is a sad moment for our conductors and staff, perhaps even more so this year. We feel we lost so much of what our seniors had to say and contribute in this year of extreme social distance. We invited them to visit *any* time we are at St. Stephen's and encouraged them to stay connected to us in one way or another as alumni.

For example, some of our alumni are actively engaged with us as volunteers; one has recently interned with us; some outstanding alumni musicians have returned to participate in the program (for example, in a "Talk with the Music Pros"); others are making financial donations as they move into careers — and some even contribute small amounts as college students. One alum is on our board, and we are certain she will not be the last!

So, we hope that this goodbye is not permanent. And in the meantime, we wish every single one of the 2021 seniors who are leaving us the very best in his or her next adventure.

## News of our Musicians

**Kokayi Jones, PSP trumpet**, was selected to participate in the National Trumpet Competition High School Division semi-final round. For the competition, he recorded Sergei Rachmaninoff's "Vocalise" with Anna Kitlitsyna on the piano. Congratulations, Kokayi!

**Divine Epps, PSP cello**, was chosen by the eminent Philadelphia new music ensemble, Network for New Music, in an educational partnership with the Mann Center, to have a composition performed on a streaming NNM concert in March. Divine wrote *The Sunflower Warrior* (for solo cello), inspired by the Kyoshi Warriors from the *Avatar: The Last Airbender* series. Her piece was performed by professional cellist, John Koen, of The Philadelphia Orchestra. Congratulations to you, too, Divine!

## Alumni Profile: Danny Koo

Imagine yourself sitting at your computer . . . and watching a Sinfonia alum perform halfway around the world. In fact, as you read this profile, you *can* watch alum Danny Koo do this — perform in Seoul, Korea — on your screen.

Danny started to play the violin at age 6. In high school, he “loved every second of [Sinfonia]. The warm community, the incredible leadership. . . . I always found Sinfonia to be a safe place to explore my musicality and find my own identity as a human being.” Then, during a summer at Pennsylvania’s Governor’s School for the Arts, Danny felt “the tangible magic and effect the arts [have] and how [they have] the power to change the world.” After high school, Danny studied at the New England Conservatory for eight years, earning undergraduate and graduate degrees. He loved his many teachers and the sense of community at NEC.

Danny’s musical adventures since his years at NEC are manifold — from his TEDxBeaconStreetSalon performance and talk at Fenway Park, to projects like Music for Food, and others. Among his favorite memories was a 12-concert tour playing

Bach’s A Minor Concerto. Later, Danny began a project in Korea called “Pinkfong Classic Land,” a classical musical with an orchestra, conductor, baritone, soprano, and . . . two penguins, Baby Shark and Pinkfong, and Danny! He reports: “The whole purpose behind this project was to fill big classical concert halls with kids. This project is still ongoing and has been a huge success.” Danny also performed with the National Orchestra of Korea, which features traditional Korean instruments. This felt like a “true collaboration of West & East, and as a Korean American, it felt extra special to hear my violin sound with the orchestra of folk instruments.”

What’s next? Danny will soon release his first album in Korea and hopes for a solo recital tour this winter. His dream is to run a conservatory in the U.S. and eventually establish a music high school in Korea.

For Sinfonia students considering a career in music, Danny advises, “If you feel like you can’t live without it, you have to go for it. . . . You all are fortunate to be exposed to a beautiful community of high level music making. Music will already be



Danny Koo, consummate violinist

in your lives forever” — it’s up to you to decide whether it’s your top priority.

Danny, we wish all your dreams to come true!

Please feel free to contact Danny at [dkoo823@gmail.com](mailto:dkoo823@gmail.com).

You can watch him perform at <https://youtu.be/2oOLRX3uNsg> and [https://youtu.be/Ubog\\_jScLc8](https://youtu.be/Ubog_jScLc8), and by searching online for “Danny Koo Violin.”

*Diane Penneys Edelman*

## Chamber Orchestra Highlight: East Coast Chamber Orchestra Visits PSCO



Annaliesa Place, upper left, leads the Zoom violin sectional with PSCO.

In a remarkable gift from the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, three of the astonishingly accomplished members of the East Coast Chamber Orchestra (ECCO) spent an entire rehearsal over Zoom with our own string chamber orchestra — PSCO. Occurring on May 1, the final rehearsal of the PSCO season, this was a very special encounter.

ECCO is comprised of colleagues and

friends, who in 2001 joined together from leading conservatories and music festivals to create a democratically-run, self-conducted

chamber orchestra that now performs all over the country with top orchestras and soloists, as well as on their own. They thrive on their incredible energy, musicianship, and passion for the work they do.

Annaliesa Place, violin; Na-Young Baek, cello; and Jessica Thompson, viola, spent the first half hour of rehearsal discussing and fielding many, many questions from our musicians about how ECCO

started, how they work together, and their dynamic, playing “self-conducted.” It was an intense and exciting exploration of the process in which out-of-the box thinking leads to creative ways to organize, play music, and manage artistic careers.

Although PSCO has worked in person with multiple members of ECCO before, this was a special opportunity to discuss and understand their unique organization and its brand.

The remainder of rehearsal moved all the musicians into sectionals with our guests, working together on Edward Elgars’ *Serenade for String Orchestra, Op. 20*. There was no better way to end the PSCO season than with this glorious visit from our friends at ECCO!

## Alumni Profile: Daniel Christensen, D.O.

**H**ave you ever thought about the connection between music and medicine? Or about Sinfonians performing the music of... *Metallica*?

Sinfonia alumnus Daniel Christensen has done exactly that!

Daniel began to study cello at age 7. He also played piano, baritone horn, bass guitar, and later sang in high school. He joined Sinfonia at the tender age of 12, and was “constantly inspired to be a part of a group that made truly beautiful music week after week.” He loved Sinfonia’s trip to Poland and the Czech Republic — especially performing Dvořák’s 8th symphony... in Dvořák’s hometown!

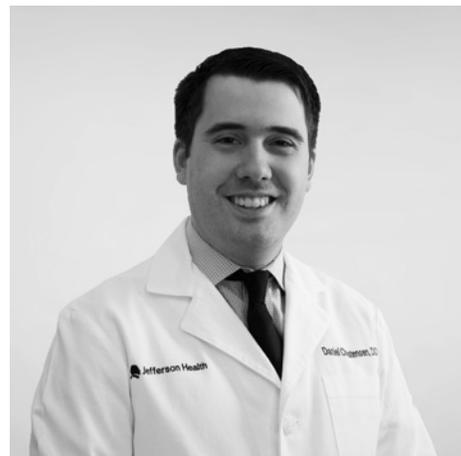
But Daniel was not exclusively a classicist. In high school, he enjoyed the work of the Finnish “symphonic metal band” Apocalyptica — cellists who performed the music of heavy metal band Metallica. Daniel enlisted fellow Sinfonia cellists to perform Apocalyptica’s music after rehearsals, and then was surprised when Maestro White invited them to perform at a Sinfonia Soirée. Observes Daniel, “I expect it was probably the first and last

Soirée where the metal band’s music made an appearance!” Daniel also loved playing with fellow alums last year at a *Star Wars* alumni rehearsal.

And the medical connection? Daniel enjoyed studying science, and, observing his father’s love of practicing medicine, chose that course too.

Now a Pathology resident at Jefferson, Daniel finds his field rewarding, allowing him to “provide critical information that directs the clinical team’s decision-making in caring for their patients.” Further, “There is no doubt that the discipline it took to get to where I am as a physician all started with my training as a classical cellist.”

Daniel’s advice: “Keep an open mind when deciding on a career... Anything that is worth doing requires hard work and dedication... Seek out experienced and knowledgeable people who are good at what they do, because some of the most valuable advice you’ll ever get comes from people who’ve been there before you... Pursue something that you love and can pour yourself into.”



Daniel Christensen, physician, 2021

Music remains important to Daniel. He plays bass guitar in his church’s worship band and still plays his cello. His wife plays the piano, and they look forward to sharing their love of music with their young son and his future siblings.

We wish Daniel success and joy in his medical career — and in the music he finds in everything he does!

Please feel free to contact Daniel at [in2cello@gmail.com](mailto:in2cello@gmail.com)

*Diane Penneys Edelman*



Daniel’s cello quartet plays Metallica; Sinfonia recital February 2011: (left to right) Cameron Clarke, Daniel Christensen, Max Song, Colin Hartwick

# PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA

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Judith Mendelsohn, *Executive Director*

Danielle Garrett, *PSP Conductor and 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.



*The Incredible Concluding Events of 2020 - 21; a preview of our 2021 - 22 Anniversary Year!*

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