

SONATA

Sinfonia Orchestra News
Winter 2021

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Educating Musicians. Creating Artists.

SPRING AUDITIONS: video submissions deadline: June 6, 2021. **For details, see page 7.**

Winter Concert Videos: *Coronation March & Dance of the Tumblers*

The critical success of *Le Prophète*, with its agonizing narrative of love and betrayal, helped Meyerbeer become the celebrated name in opera and music he is today.

– Ray Hu, PS viola



Student-written program notes were featured in the opening scenes of the PS video performance of Giacomo Meyerbeer's *Coronation March*.

In lieu of concerts as we continue operations online, PS and PSP have each released polished video performances with gorgeous sound and lovely graphics. Students rehearsed their parts for the pieces with the conductors for several weeks in November and December and were taught to play them remotely, listening to a “click track” to keep in sync with the beat of the music.

Once their parts were well-prepared, each musician video-recorded him- or herself at home, in concert dress, listening with a headset or earbuds to the click track, and submitted their videos.

All videos were reviewed by the conductors to be sure they were pretty much perfect — for

Continued on page 3.

Sinfonia Enters 25th Celebratory Year

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OUR
25th
SEASON

Incorporated in May 1997, Philadelphia Sinfonia begins its 25th year in May 2021, and will mark its 25th Anniversary over the entire course of the 2021 – 2022 season.

Anniversary festivities really began on Saturday, February 13, when both PS and PSP students were invited to vote in rehearsals on a 25th anniversary logo. The staff and board leadership had whittled 6 options down to 3, which were presented to the students. Polling in both orchestras was

close, but in the end, both favored the same image which is now the official seal/logo/reminder of our 25th year of “Educating Musicians. Creating Artists!”

This process of inclusion, bringing musicians into a decision-making role, represents our commitment as an organization to encouraging community engagement and responsibility. We’ll be looking next season for ways to maximize musician engagement in everything we do as we also strive for high-level

performance with challenging repertoire amidst a variety of special opportunities and celebratory events.

What a grand year for musician participation we believe this will be! With return to in-person rehearsals and performance on the horizon and plans to celebrate, our spring auditions will get serious musicians in the door well ahead of the fall for a very special 25th season.

From the Podium

I remember beginning one of my columns years ago with how it felt to walk down the ornate metal staircase of St. Stephens and hear the orchestra warming up as I was about to enter the sanctuary and begin rehearsal. Even after all these years, that short journey down those stairs has always erased any of my external anxieties and worries. The sound of our students preparing for rehearsal to begin has always invigorated and inspired me.

For the past year, approaching rehearsal has been a slightly different journey and one that often begins with a different type of anxiety as I think about our dedicated students and the very best way to run a “rehearsal” in an online format. But, once I see their faces on the computer screen and we begin, I am inspired by our students’ courage and commitment to the music they love so much and our orchestral program.

How is “conducting” a program online different from rehearsing in person? What are some of the unique advantages to this format? In fact, Maestra Garrett and I have discovered there are many, and we do our best to exploit them in every way the Sinfonia staff can think of. Before the shift to being online, rehearsals were primarily focused on preparing the music we were about to perform - with a healthy sprinkle of music history and theory added *ad hoc* when we could while conducting. Online, we have been able to offer a much more in-depth study of the historical background and theoretical foundations of each piece we are rehearsing. Students have been guided

through — and in many cases discovered for themselves — the structural form of a piece, its harmonic progression and so much more that has informed many of the mature musical decisions they have learned to make. This ability to do a “deep dive” into our varied repertoire has produced many interesting and formative discussions.

Prominent music guests have become a part of our “Talking with the Music Pros” series, giving students the benefit of their musical knowledge on everything from how to practice effectively to tips on truly mastering orchestral repertoire. No longer limited to guests from only the Philadelphia area, speakers and coaches include prominent alums and professionals in the field from across the country and the world!

Maestra Garrett and I also believe our alternate approach to orchestral training in the time of COVID has helped our members develop special skill sets: of focus, retention, and taking responsibility for their individual parts - all in a way that seems more pronounced than in the past. We particularly noticed this unforeseen benefit as we prepared our just-released orchestra videos of Meyerbeer’s Coronation March and Rimsky-Korsakov’s Dance of the Tumblers. We are very proud of each of our students’ ability to learn their parts individually, apply what we were teaching them online, and record it for a virtual orchestra presentation. A daunting process for any professional and one that our students embraced and achieved with great success!



Gary D. White, Music Director & Conductor

All of us hope that this current period is coming to an end in the foreseeable future and life will return to its “in-person” richness. While being online isn’t exactly optimal for an orchestra program, there have been many valuable lessons learned and techniques developed by students and conductors alike that will serve us well in the future!

Wishing you and your families good health and happiness,

Gary D. White
Music Director & Conductor

ORCHESTRA NEWS

Winter 2021 | Vol.19, No. 1

Published by: Philadelphia Sinfonia

Edited by: Carol Brown

Photos by: Steven Goldblatt
Tom Gralish

Design by: Hanna Manninen

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PSP strings and Ms. Garrett, Conductor; video screenshot from *Dance of the Tumblers*.

Philadelphia Sinfonia Tackles Strauss' *Don Juan*

Philadelphia Sinfonia Association's orchestras have a long history of working with adventurous and challenging repertoire. While online we have been able to build on this by developing a special program for our advanced orchestra, Philadelphia Sinfonia, on how to study, learn, and play Strauss tone poems — arguably some of the most demanding repertoire in the literature. Students have been carefully coached by Maestro Gary D. White and Maestra Garrett, as well as several outstanding professional musicians from the Philadelphia Orchestra.

This truly unique opportunity grew out of the advantages of working online, which have included access to classic video performances by the world's greatest orchestras, orchestral scores to study together, and the ability to work through Strauss' *Don Juan* in a careful and methodical way — a process our current online format favors. While this type of repertoire is most often tackled by top conservatory and professional orchestras, our talented students now understand how to approach the daunting task of preparing these difficult works for auditions and performance. It is our hope also that we have introduced them to and given them an appreciation for this astonishing and difficult rep.

REPERTOIRE HIGHLIGHTS WINTER/SPRING 2021

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

PSP:

Symphony No. 8 in G Major, Op. 88 by Antonin Dvorak
Finlandia, Op. 26 by Jean Sibelius
Noveletten No. 1, Op. 52 by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
Hungarian Dance No. 5 by Johannes Brahms
"This Little Light of Mine" — arr. by Robert A. Harris; orchestrated by Gary D. White (Special collaboration with Commonwealth Youthchoirs)

PSCO:

Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G Major, BWV 1048 by J.S. Bach
Octet for Strings in E-flat Major, Op. 20 by Felix Mendelssohn
Noveletten Nos. 2 7 4, Op. 52 by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
Melodia en La Menlor & Tres Minutos con la Realidad by Astor Piazzolla

PS:

Symphony No. 8 in F Major, Op. 93 by Ludwig van Beethoven
Five Variants of "Dives and Lazarus" for String Orchestra & Harp by Ralph Vaughan Williams
Scherzo (for Winds) from Symphony No. 8 in D minor by Ralph Vaughan Williams
Don Juan, Op. 20 by Richard Strauss
"The Heavens are Telling" from *The Creation* by F. J. Haydn (Special collaboration with Commonwealth Youthchoirs)

Winter Concert Videos: Coronation March & Dance of the Tumblers

Continued from page 1.

rhythm, intonation, pitch, etc. — and were re-recorded if corrections were needed. When all the videos for each ensemble were finally ready, the entire collection was sent to our audio engineers at George Blood, Audio, and to Meg Sarachan, a former Sinfonia student and professional videographer, who put the many parts together.

The result: PS's Coronation March from Meyerbeer's opera, *Le Prophète*, and Dance of the Tumblers, an orchestral episode drawn from Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *The Snow Maiden*, performed by PSP.

YOUTUBE VIDEOS:

<https://youtu.be/TzxIo7DYmQ0>
(Coronation March) and
<https://youtu.be/BtPnq9IEguA>
(Dance of the Tumblers).



PS video screenshot from Coronation March



the fierce Dance of the Tumblers in Act III depicts the unique talents and boundless energetic performance of the Russian *skomorokhi*, or street performers.

~ Noah Kouhoupt, PSP clarinet

Student-written program notes, featured in the opening scenes of PSP's video performance of Rimsky-Korsakov's Dance of the Tumblers.

Donors

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 June 1, 2020 and February 11, 2021.

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“Talk with the Music Pros” Series continues to Inspire

As we continue rehearsals online, we regularly invite articulate, insightful, candid professional musicians to rehearsals to talk with our students about multiple subjects related to being a musician. From tips for effective practice and working with very difficult repertoire, shifting one’s playing from one historical musical period to another in the middle of a concert, to launching a career, and even stretching oneself beyond a single-focused career, the “Pros” have shared their experience in generous ways, allowing our musicians to dream and imagine what they can do differently tomorrow... and might even consider doing five years’ from now.

January and February brought Philadelphia Orchestra members, Rachel Ku (viola) and Jeffrey Lang (horn) to PS, and alumnus Danny Koo, with a multifaceted performance career based in Korea, to PSP. Each has had outstanding material to share with incredible specificity and detail.

As this issue goes to print, PSP will also be talking with the new Philadelphia Orchestra Head Librarian, Nicole Jordan.... Now there’s a fascinating, different musical career path!



Sinfonia alum, Danny Koo, Korean-based violinist, in a screenshot from his Zoom talk with PSP.

Violist Rachel Ku, addressed the challenges of shifting from one historic period to another, say from the Baroque to 20th Century repertoire, in the middle of a Philadelphia Orchestra concert and also spoke about finding the “music” in “middle voice” parts — those parts that do not carry the melody or dominant musical line in a symphony or concerto. (The viola is a prime candidate for “middle voice” parts.)

Jeffrey Lang, POA Assistant Principal horn, focused upon practicing and learning very difficult orchestral parts — a very relevant topic for our PS students who are learning Richard Strauss’ *Don Juan*, a notoriously difficult tone poem, and, like Rachel Ku, he discussed his approaches to playing repertoire from varied parts of the historical cannon. Mr. Lang could not stress enough the value of deep and uninterrupted listening to whole pieces of music when he addressed these two main areas of his conversation with PS.

Each of these pros was methodical in his or her explanations, articulate and detailed, and PS students now have accessible new tools for approaching their work. Each also ended their half hour “Talk with the Music Pros” with a sectional for our students. Ms. Ku went to a breakout “room” with the violas to work on Tchaikovsky’s *Symphony No. 4*, and Jeff Lang worked with the brass section and the same Tchaikovsky symphony following his full-orchestra talk.

Danny Koo, violin, shared his incredible track from Sinfonia student in 2009 to a broad and varied performance career. Following several years at the New England conservatory, where he received both an undergraduate and graduate degrees, Danny has embraced chamber work, community engagement with Boston’s “Music for Food,” and given TED talks all while growing a career as a violin soloist. Engaging and dynamic, Danny held the PSP musicians spellbound as he encouraged them to try new things, be unafraid of failure (if you, fall, fall forward!), and to surround themselves with people they admire and respect. His key suggestion for practicing: record yourself and listen to your recordings, then correct and move on.

Thank you Ms. Ku, Mr. Lang, and our own Mr. Daniel Koo!

Spring Concert Videos: PS & PSP Collaborations with the Commonwealth Youthchoirs!

This spring, both PS and PSP embark upon rather large, complex adventures in collaboration! The Commonwealth Youthchoirs teams up with PS in “The Heavens are Telling” from Joseph Haydn’s masterpiece, *The Creation*, and with PSP in the spiritual, “This Little Light of Mine.” Gary White has orchestrated the orchestra accompaniment for PSP’s performance, and the orchestras have begun rehearsing these pieces.

If the virtual orchestra videos were complicated projects, these two, with youth choir participation, will be more complex yet, with the integration of individual voices and individual instrumental parts quite a challenge! Look for the release of both videos early this summer.

Alum Profile: Eunice C. China

Beginning her journey with the violin at the age of four, Eunice soon realized that the violin would become a central part of her life. From the time she was a toddler, from playing in a group circle to performing in prominent venues like the Kimmel Center and Carnegie Hall, the violin has consistently been linked with Eunice's identity.

Eunice spent two years in Sinfonia and its Chamber Orchestra nearly ten years ago. All these years later, she fondly remembers Saturday rehearsals, excellent concert experiences, and performing incredible symphonies like *Mahler I*. She especially remembers participating in a "Side-By-Side" with The Philadelphia Orchestra.

After high school, Eunice earned a Bachelor of Music degree in Violin Performance at Temple University Boyer College of Music and Dance, where she studied with award-winning violinist Dr. Vladimir Dyo, and performed in the Grammy-nominated Temple University Symphony Orchestra under leaders like Maestro Luis Biava. While enjoying courses such as music theory, music history, orchestration, and many others, Eunice also had "unforgettable"

experiences studying historical performance and playing baroque violin, thanks to professors Dr. Joyce Lindorff and Dr. Steven Zohn.

Since graduating from Temple, Eunice has made music come alive for students of all ages, teaching violin at Ambler Music Academy, Philly Music Lessons, Maplewood Music Studio, and Gibson School of Music and Arts. She has also performed for countless personal occasions, community engagements, and for her church.

But music is not the only vocation that Eunice has pursued. She helps others in an entirely different way as well — as a caseworker in Montgomery County for the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, working daily with families of modest means, empathizing with their life-long struggles and dire needs. Not surprisingly, this has been "an eye-opening experience" for Eunice, who shares: "I am motivated to consistently uplift and encourage others, while fostering a level of excellence in the communities I serve... My purpose in life is to do everything in my capabilities to glorify God and to inspire others to fulfill their dreams."



Eunice C. China

What's next for Eunice?

Now, with many performances being recorded or livestreamed, Eunice hopes to inspire others by creating performance recordings, which can be shared easily with modern technology. And she will continue to do work that serves the underserved.

What advice does Eunice have for Sinfonia musicians? Keep in mind that "there is no perfect time to accomplish anything. When you feel it in your heart, go for it with full commitment... Life is not a linear pathway and things may not always pan out as expected; however, as long as one works hard and diligently endures whatever is thrown at them, they will accomplish their goals." This clearly aligns with her goal "to inspire, encourage, and motivate others in fulfilling their dreams," through music and other professional paths.

We wish Eunice the best in pursuing her important goals — and in helping others to do so.

Please feel free to contact Eunice at eunice.c.china@gmail.com

Diane Penneys Edelman

Future Events:

A sampling of spring virtual events (more to come...):

March 20: 10 AM & 3 PM:

Music Educator Day; school and private music teachers invited to Zoom rehearsals.

March 27: 3 PM:

Philadelphia Orchestra violinist, Hirono Oka, joins PS for a "Talk with the Music Pros."

April 10: 10 AM & 3 PM:

PMAY Play-In; PMAY Artists invited to join PSP and PS rehearsals.

April 24: 10 AM & 3 PM:

Music Educator Day; school and private music teachers invited to Zoom rehearsals.

Alum Profile: Kevin Levy, Esq.

Kevin Levy's Sinfonia story begins with what is surely a sweet and fond memory. Way back in second grade, Kevin decided to play the viola because he saw a lone violist play in the elementary school orchestra and wanted to be her friend. Although Kevin's young friend moved away just before he joined the orchestra, she later became his Sinfonia viola section leader and good friend, Alex LaMonaca. Certainly a great beginning in Sinfonia, and lucky for the viola section!

In addition to this enduring friendship, Kevin fondly recalls performing Handel's *Messiah* at the First Presbyterian Church in Germantown with the Church choir: "The acoustics were amazing, the singers were gracious to us, and the *Messiah* is just a great piece of music which is remarkably fun to play during the holiday season." Kevin also loved the "physical workout" of performing the intense and lengthy *First Symphony of Mahler*, and the careful attention with which Maestro White would guide Sinfonia's musicians.

Kevin's love for Sinfonia stayed with him as he followed a professional path to law practice. As a real estate attorney at Saul Ewing Arnstein & Lehr LLP, Kevin enjoys working on exciting projects that "are quite literally changing the skyline, and many

of which have a huge economic impact on the City of Philadelphia," and particularly relishes drafting articles, blogs, client alerts, and scholarly work as well. At present, he is not surprisingly busy with guiding his clients regarding COVID-19 regulatory compliance and keeping busy with pro bono work for more than a half dozen local organizations.

The passion for music nurtured by Kevin's years in Sinfonia remains important to him. Music provides "a good calming break from high-stress and high-demand legal work." He always ends his work weeks by tuning into virtual Shabbat services that offer "a very impactful transition from a hectic work week into a religious celebration filled with lyrical and musical tradition." Kevin hopes to join Sinfonia for a serious "play-in" at his next opportunity, and perhaps play with an adult string ensemble.

What is perhaps most moving is Kevin's perspective on the value of Sinfonia for members like him who don't become professional musicians: "Many of the friends I made in Sinfonia didn't choose to make a career out of music, but it still remains a large part of our lives. I think that it's just as important to enjoy and experience the now as it is to prepare for the future, and that not everything you do needs



Kevin Levy

to be part of a larger plan. Sometimes you can just dedicate yourself to something for the sheer joy of participating."

Thank you, Kevin, for reminding us about this joy — and we wish you that same joy in your legal career and with your love of music.

Please feel free to contact Kevin at kevin.levy@saul.com.

Diane Penneys Edelman

Audition for 2021 – 2022: 25 Years! Our rich past; your musical future!

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 auditions by video this spring (*no in-person auditions*).

Early Bird submission deadline: Monday, May 31, 2021 • Priority consideration and discounted tuition if accepted

Final audition deadline: Sunday, June 6, 2021

We have openings in all sections and encourage all instruments 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/auditions

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.



Concert videos, Talk with the Music Pros, 25th Anniversary Season 2021 - 2022...

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