

SONATA

PHILADELPHIA SINFONIA

Sinfonia Orchestra News
Summer 2026

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Epic! PS Festival Concert with The Philly Pops!



The PS and Philly Pops America 250 Festival Concert at the Kimmel Center, May 22, 2026.

Magnificently rendered, **America 250**, the PS Festival Concert collaboration with The Philly Pops on May 22, was by turns truly moving... and loads of fun!

In a tribute to the nation's 250th birthday, the repertoire leaned heavily on 20th Century iconic American composers: Leonard Bernstein; Leroy Anderson, Aaron Copland, John Williams along with classic national tributes: *The Star Spangled Banner* and *The Stars and Stripes Forever*.

But the repertoire cannot by itself explain the incredible power this performance at the Kimmel Center had over its audience, which was generated certainly by the energy and talent of the musicians, but even more by intentional engagement with the audience, clapping, for instance, in rhythm at appropriate moments, and the humor, character, and panache that Conductor Linus Ip and The Philly Pops' soloists brought to the stage....

Imagine for a moment you are in a darkened theater ahead of the *Star Wars*

Suite, when, in a cloud of smoke, onto the stage emerges Obi-Wan Kenobi (aka Mr. Linus) in a brown-hooded robe, purple light saber in hand, striding to the podium to conduct in costume, light saber in lieu of baton!

And in another moment, having thrilled the audience with "Escapades" from *Catch Me If You Can*, the truly virtuosic Pops saxophone soloist, Ron Kerber, and the conductor signal silently but obviously to one another: "one more number" (clearly off-program), whereupon Kerber turns to the audience and launches into a profound, stirring, passionate *America the Beautiful*. Backed by the orchestra, this emotional rendition brought the audience wildly to its feet!

Both an occasion to bid a sad farewell to our seniors and a season-ending performance for the ages, the 2026 PS & Philly Pops Festival Concert will be remembered for a long time to come. This wildly successful collaboration, though, reflects an entire season of special, unusual performances and events, many noted in

more depth throughout this issue....

From the first PS concert in November, featuring two rarely heard works by women composers; to an engaging side-by-side rehearsal in February with The Philadelphia Orchestra and an equally exciting side-by-side for our chamber orchestra with the exceptional new Ensemble 132 (thank you Philadelphia Chamber Music Society!); to the final PSS concert featuring a student-requested piece from Japanese anime; to the most unusual PSP performance of Serge Koussevitsky's *Concerto for Double Bass* with bassist Michael Franz of The Philadelphia Orchestra, this was, indeed, a wonderful season of unusual, exceptional, and highly successful endeavors.

PSP Debuts Sinfonia's First Double Bass Soloist, Michael Franz

It was a first, and a very special first in several respects: PSP's Festival Concert at TPAC on Sunday, May 17, featured double bass player, Michael Franz, a Philadelphia Orchestra bassist, in a rarely heard work: *Concerto for Double Bass in F sharp minor* by Serge Koussevitsky.

Maestra Garrett, PSP's long time conductor was the mastermind behind this unusual but successful event:

"I select soloists who will collaborate and engage with PSP. Michael did this in a brilliant manner, providing my musicians with insights and techniques on accompanying a double bass, a first for the Sinfonia Association.

Continued on page 3.

FROM THE PODIUM

Music-Making: Shared Humanity and Lifelong Connection

As my first year as Music Director of Philadelphia Sinfonia comes to a close, I am feeling deeply grateful that I have the privilege to work with talented young musicians, dedicated families, supportive colleagues, and an entire community that believes in the power of music.

We performed music from different cultures, traditions, and genres; We explored new ways of listening, thinking, understanding, and connecting through music. Every piece and every concert brought a different perspective and reminded us that there is no single way to tell a story through art.

Some of the most memorable moments came through our collaborations with professional musicians with The Philadelphia Orchestra and our season-ending concert with The Philly Pops. These experiences demonstrated just how much young musicians are capable of achieving when given the opportunity to perform at a high level. They also reinforced something I believe deeply: when we make music together, the labels of “young musician,” “professional musician,” and even “conductor” begin to matter less. We are simply musicians sharing a common purpose and passion. We learn from one another, challenge one another, and inspire one another. That, to me, is the true meaning of a side-by-side experience.

As we conclude the season, our graduating seniors will continue their musical journeys, while others will pursue different paths. Yet I hope they leave knowing that the value of music extends far beyond the concert hall. Music teaches us how to collaborate, express ourselves, listen to one another, build meaningful relationships, persevere through challenges, and remain curious about the world around us. Wherever life takes us, we continue to do what we love, never give up, find our own path, and create our own destiny.

What stays with us are the people we met and the joy we created together. For me, that has been the greatest gift of this season, and I am excited to continue building this community in the year ahead.

Linus Ip
Music Director & Conductor



Linus Ip, Music Director & Conductor



The PS and Philly Pops America 250 Festival Concert at the Kimmel Center, May 22, 2026.

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Annual Donor List and Impact Statement

Please note that while these items have in the past been included in our summer newsletter as we near the end of our fiscal year, beginning this year, they will be issued as a separate annual report. All newsletter recipients will receive the annual report within a week or two of the summer newsletter.

Chamber Music Society brings an Engaging Educational Side-by-Side to PSCO

On Saturday, April 11, Sinfonia's string Chamber Orchestra (PSCO), experienced a wonderful side-by-side event provided by musicians from an exciting new professional chamber group, Ensemble 132. Ensemble 132 brought some pretty impressive coaches to the Howard Center: violinist, Stephanie Zyzak; violist, Luther Warren; and cellist Zachary Mowitz, who worked in sectionals with our students for about 45 minutes and then joined the PSCO sections for a full group side-by-side rehearsal of Mozart's *Adagio and Fugue in C minor*.

This gift, as it was a gift (meaning we did not pay for this remarkable opportunity), was one of many educational events provided to area students by the Philadelphia Chamber Music

Society (PCMS). PCMS is a presenting organization that engages and presents to Philadelphia audiences a large number of established chamber groups from all over the world, as well as solo pianists, vocal artists, and ad hoc chamber ensembles of superb quality.

PCMS also has a strong history of community engagement and has acquired funding for gifts like ours for the region's young musicians.

For anyone listening in, there was no question about the value of the coaching each section received. Ms. Garrett, PSCO's conductor, was delighted and enthused:

"Each (visiting) artist had unique ideas in their sectionals. Our students already think at an advanced level, but these ideas really broadened their musical abilities" and the

proof, in her words....

"During the side-by-side [rehearsal], students immediately began implementing the musical ideas discussed in their individual sections, such as bow distribution, variations on the types of colors and moods, engaging more within their sections."

She only wished that the hour Ensemble 132 spent with us could have been longer, prizing the out-of-the-box ideas and creative ways that their musicians invoked and presented those ideas.

Despite their all too soon departure, we could not be more grateful to the artists of Ensemble 132 and to Chelsea Steinberg, the PCMS education director, for this remarkable opportunity.

PSP Debuts Sinfonia's First Double Bass Soloist, Michael Franz

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Double Bassist Michael Franz performing Koussevitsky's *Concerto for Double Bass* with PSP, May 17, 2026.

"After accepting my invitation, [Michael and I] quickly discussed repertoire possibilities. The Koussevitsky was a top choice for me since it was a fuller instrumentation [than] other suitable options... that were much lighter. Michael felt that the heavily orchestrated Koussevitsky can make it difficult to balance the solo over the orchestra, but he was also intrigued to

perform it. He suggested a string orchestra orchestration available.

"After some research, I was led to the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, who recently performed this orchestration. I reached out to orchestrator Paul Gerike directly and was granted permission to use this version. We are grateful, and it could not have been a better choice for our soloist and string

section."

And so, our first bass soloist and a rarely heard work headlined a concert of several classical favorites: the *Light Cavalry Overture*; a movement from Mozart's *Symphony No. 41*; Holst's lovely *Brook Green Suite*; and some very familiar dances from *The Nutcracker Suite*. One could almost imagine waltzing out the door....

"It was a pleasure to join the PSP and Maestra Garrett as their soloist! I'm grateful to Sinfonia for giving the students and me the rare opportunity to present a concerto for double bass. Although I'm usually heard playing those all-important low notes at the back of the stage, I hope our performance showed that instruments of all kinds can shine in the spotlight from time to time."

~ MICHAEL FRANZ, Double Bass

Reflections on the 2025 – 26 Season in Philadelphia

Sinfonia's Chamber Orchestra

This season Sinfonia's long-time PSP conductor, Maestra Danielle Garrett, assumed the additional role of Conductor for PSCO as a support for the program for just this one year while Linus Ip moved into his first year as Music Director. It proved to be a strong year with joy evident in rehearsals and top-notch performances in the winter and spring.

Given this unique season, it seemed appropriate to ask a long-standing member of the group to reflect upon this year with Ms. Garrett.

PSCO's Principal Cellist, Micah Abraham, agreed to do this, and the following reflections pay tribute to Ms. Garrett's leadership, the season in PSCO, and his own five-year tenure in Sinfonia:

To start off, it's important to understand how I first came to know Ms. Garrett. I joined Sinfonia five years ago in its 25th season, playing in PSP and PSCO. Since my time in PSP, I have come to love the warmth Ms. Garrett brings to Sinfonia. Ms. Garrett is such a loving person who takes utmost care of each of her students. That starts with knowing their names even before they walk in through the door,

something very small but meaningful. I always appreciated that about her and Sinfonia as a whole, and I've heard that consistently echoed across many alumni (some from a while ago). Additionally, she makes it a point for everyone to reach their full potential. That's especially challenging when many of her students don't have prior orchestral experience, as was my case. I remember being amazed by how

she was able to balance being detailed and patient during rehearsals (an art form itself).

This approach has definitely carried over into PSCO rehearsals this year, as evidenced by our relaxed but very productive rehearsals. We also had a great side-by-side in April with the professionals from Ensemble 132 on Mozart's *Adagio and Fugue*, which allowed us to improve the piece. We honed in on stylistic choices such as specific kinds of releases in the *Adagio* and keeping the momentum going in the *Fugue*. Taken together with our performances at Shannondell and Foulkeways, I know I speak for the group when I say we had an action-packed season and are very grateful for Ms. Garrett's instruction. For me, this year has been a lot of fun for a more personal reason: I had the pleasure of starting and concluding my Sinfonia journey under Ms. Garrett's baton.

As I leave this wonderful program, I wish to all its members the very best. Cherish the rehearsals and moments you have with your friends. I hope you're just as excited as I am to see how much you'll grow over your time with Sinfonia. Under the leadership of Maestro Linus, Maestra Garrett, and Maestra Dzwil, I am confident you will continue to be in good hands.

~ Micah Abraham, cello



Two views of PSCO's final concert of the season at Foulkeways at Gwynedd, May 12, 2026.

A member of Foulkeways' Performing Arts Committee sent a lovely message after PSCO's concert there on May 12, 2026:

"The concert was wonderful. Both the students and Danielle [Garrett] won our hearts with their joy, their discipline, focus and...of course...talent."

PSS Wraps up 2025 – 26 with Music from Japanese Anime!

With small pieces from Haydn and Brahms, to a stunning rendition of *Amazing Grace* by contemporary composer, Jennifer Higdon, PSS closed out its year-end concert with a musical “statement” in their final number. Conductor Beth Dzwil explains:

“Back in the winter as PSS was preparing for their first performance and we were considering repertoire for the next semester, I asked the PSS musicians if there was a pop song they would like to play. They quickly suggested “Merry-Go-Round of Life” from the Studio Ghibli film, *Howl’s Moving Castle*. It was clear how deeply they loved this music and this film. I searched for an arrangement appropriate for the skill level of our musicians. Not finding one, I asked my colleague in the Fairmount String Quartet, Rachel Segal, if she would write an arrangement for us. I described the

musicians in the ensemble and she crafted a beautiful arrangement. The students were excited to work on it, and would have happily spent the entire rehearsal each week rehearsing it. I usually saved it as the last piece in rehearsal to help keep their energy level high, and so they would leave rehearsal with smiles on their faces.

“Their selection of “Merry-Go-Round” opened the door for learning about the special role of music in film. We decided to have a viewing of *Howl’s Moving Castle* after one of our rehearsals to help the students understand the role that music plays in supporting the story, and to inform their performance. PS conductor, Mr. Linus, spoke to the



PSS performs “Merry-Go-Round” from *Howl’s Moving Castle* at the Howard Center, May 2, 2026.

students about the role of music in film, snacks were shared, and we were joined by PSP friends, culminating in a heart-felt performance on May 2nd.

“Projects such as this are what make Sinfonia such a unique and special place. Students’ input is valued, other levels of the organization and colleagues outside the organization are invited in, and community is created. In the end, mutual respect and community are what create meaning both on stage and in life, and is the most important lesson learned.”

Call for Fall Auditions

Going into its 30th 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): string ensemble to build orchestral skills for musicians age 10 – 16. More information below. | Rehearsals: Saturdays 9:20 to 11:00 AM

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 (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.

FALL DATES FOR IN-PERSON AUDITIONS:

Saturday, August 29:

10:00 AM – 6:00 PM

Saturday, September 5:

10:00 AM – 6:00 PM

Sunday, September 6:

10:00 AM – 6:00 PM

OPENINGS AVAILABLE FOR ALL INSTRUMENTS!

Auditions take place at the Howard Center for the Arts, 1212 Wood Street, Center City Philadelphia.

ALUM PROFILE:

Naomi Aires: Cellist at London's Royal College of Music

Naomi Aires was only in 8th grade when she auditioned into the PS cello section so it is not surprising that she has moved on to a fascinating career in cello performance

Naomi performed with PS for five years and with the Sinfonia Chamber Orchestra for three. Her first year with Sinfonia was especially memorable because as an 8th grader, she felt “thrown into the deep end.” Playing Stravinsky’s *Firebird*, Dukas’ *Sorcerer’s Apprentice* and Tchaikovsky’s *6th Symphony*, she vividly remembers how exciting it felt to play within a large ensemble for the first time. “It’s hard to sum up how much being a part of Sinfonia changed my life. Playing with the Chamber Orchestra and PS exposed me to so much incredible repertoire and led me to develop a really strong connection with classical music. I definitely never would have considered going to conservatory or desiring a career as an orchestral player if it weren’t for Sinfonia.”

When Naomi graduated from high school in 2020 and started her studies at Northwestern University, she pursued music and other interests as well. Inspired by a great course called “Language and the Brain,” Naomi decided to major in cognitive science, taking classes in psychology, learning sciences, philosophy, and computer science, in order to better understand the mind. She combined this with her passion for music by spending one summer working with a professor on a music cognition research project – via Northwestern’s

music cognition department! Studying both subjects, music and cognitive science, was a great fit for Naomi.

As her studies at Northwestern drew to a close, Naomi decided to audition for graduate cello programs, adding the Royal College of Music in London to her list, somewhat on a whim . . . and that is where she chose to attend after being awarded a full scholarship. Now studying music only, Naomi has substantial practice time, and no longer has to balance non-musical studies with performance. So far, she’s greatly enjoyed being in an environment where everyone is passionate about and “singularly dedicated to music.” And interestingly, Naomi has found that most of the musical terminology in the U.K. is different too — half notes, quarter notes and eighth notes are called “minims,” “crotchets” and “quavers” – so her studies include a bit of ‘foreign language’ as well!

Naomi’s graduate study at the Royal College has been great for fulfilling her passion for travel too. Since moving to the UK, she has visited Spain and performed at a festival in Malta. In addition, she will attend the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival in Germany this summer and perform in Switzerland this December. And she was also recently offered an orchestral fellowship with Sinfonia Smith Square, a training orchestra in London, for its 2026-27 season! Studying in London has certainly provided Naomi with the opportunity to broaden her orchestral work, both in content and geographically!



Naomi Aires

Naomi shares: “I wouldn’t love orchestra as much as I do if it weren’t for Sinfonia! I’m so grateful for the years I played with PS and would advise current members to make the most of it! Philadelphia is such an incredible city—go to as many Philadelphia Chamber Music Society and Philadelphia Orchestra concerts as possible!”

We wish Naomi the best in her studies and performances, travels, and future!

Please feel free to contact Naomi at airesnaomi@gmail.com.

~ Diane Penneys Edelman

A Brilliant Afternoon Salon in Chestnut Hill

Ten remarkable musicians presented a fabulous recital to a rapt audience at our annual fundraising salon on Sunday, April 19, 2026. From Vivaldi to Bruch, and including Florence Price and Cecile Chaminade, strings, flute, and piano graced the program and raised some valuable support for the Sinfonia’s scholarship program. There was even a contemporary genre-spanning piece *Thinking Out Loud*, that rocked the room played by cellist, Micah Abraham! Many thanks are due to the participating musicians, to the board’s amazing reception committee, to the donors who attended, to our absolutely generous hosts, and to accompanist Hannah Albrecht and to Music Director Linus Ip for masterminding the program.



(left to right) Jeffrey Fan, Elliott Zhang, Alex Hilliard, Kevin Lim, and Micah Abraham performing Florence Price’s “Juba” from *String Quartet No. 2* at the 2026 Sinfonia Salon.

ALUM PROFILE:

Ethan Frankel: Senior Business Analyst and Sinfonia Volunteer

Ethan joined Philadelphia Sinfonia's second violin section in 9th grade.

A year later, he joined the first violin section AND the chamber orchestra — as Concertmaster! The following year, he became Concertmaster of *both* orchestras, roles he retained until graduating in 2019. Over those years, PS had multiple side-by-side rehearsals with professional ensembles, including the Philadelphia Orchestra and the East Coast Chamber Orchestra. And with sectional rehearsals often led by members of The Philadelphia Orchestra, Ethan appreciated the “great opportunity to learn from such amazing and highly respected musicians.”

Ethan found serving as concertmaster to be a “life-changing experience.... When I was asked to be concertmaster of [the] Chamber Orchestra in 10th grade, I felt completely overwhelmed; I had never held a significant leadership role before. In the days leading up to the first rehearsal, I practiced very carefully and spent hours dissecting every note, rhythm, bowing, articulation, dynamic marking, tempo marking, etc. I also listened to the music over and over to understand the different parts. I took that opportunity to really step up to the challenge and hopefully not make Gary regret his decision (ha-ha!).”

Ethan approached his role as PS concertmaster in the same diligent way. Always over-preparing allowed him to “focus on leading and not worrying about the notes and rhythm. The skills I gained as concertmaster helped me to become a confident and capable leader outside of music as well.”

At Brandeis University, Ethan explored both music and business. Although he majored in economics and minored in

computer science and studio art (sculpture), he also served as concertmaster of the Brandeis-Wellesley Orchestra (BWO)! He loved the varied aspects of his college experience and felt that his diverse and challenging curriculum “turned me into a creative and critical thinker.”

Ethan now uses these skills as a Senior Business Analyst with Odessa Technologies, Inc. a software company headquartered in Philadelphia. Odessa offers software products and consulting services to banks and other financial services companies which provide products, such as leases and loans for commercial equipment (e.g. forklifts, printers, planes) and/or consumer automobiles. As an expert on Odessa's products and his clients' operations, he helps clients adopt new technologies and scale through automation of their processes. He works mainly in Philly but travels across the U.S. and works closely with Odessa's teams in India.

And music still plays an important role in Ethan's life. He practices most days and takes lessons as well. “There is ALWAYS more to learn and something new to perfect with my technique. I love that I have something outside of my career to really dedicate myself to!”

And that includes giving of himself as a Sinfonia volunteer. Since leaving Sinfonia, Ethan has frequently helped with auditions: “it's great to welcome the incoming students and share my experience as a former member of the orchestra.” He has also been part of the reception committee for Sinfonia's fundraising Salon and was thrilled to be asked to speak at Gary White's 25th Annivesary celebration in 2024. He is a consistent financial donor believing it is



Ethan Frankel

important to support the organization that supported his growth.

In addition, Ethan has recently been meeting with other alumni and leaders within the staff to form an organization that encourages alumni to remain involved with Sinfonia and each other.

Not surprisingly, Ethan credits Sinfonia for turning him into “a lifelong music lover and confident leader.” Keep your eyes peeled — perhaps there will be a Sinfonia *alumni organization* that Ethan and fellow alums can proudly support!

Please feel free to contact Ethan at ethanfrankel@comcast.net.

~ Diane Penneys Edelman



Linus Ip, *Music Director and Conductor*

Robert Hodges, *Managing Director*

Danielle Garrett, *PSP & PSCO Conductor and Librarian*

Beth Dzwil, *PSS Conductor*

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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.

