

Maestro Gary White Celebrates 10 Years at Sinfonia's Podium



Maestro Gary White

Ten years in the nascent stage of the birth of an orchestra is essentially a blip in time.

That is why Philadelphia Sinfonia's accomplishments in the past decade of its 12-year existence – under the baton of Music Director and Conductor Gary White – have been nothing short of remarkable.

This season marks Gary White's 10-year anniversary with Sinfonia, whose meteoric growth has been highlighted along the way by awards, accolades, an enhanced regional and national reputation, collaborations with stellar musicians, concert tours abroad, and more – all fueled by significant changes in the orchestra itself. In the past 10 years, Sinfonia has grown in size, in the level of musicianship and in the complexity of repertoire.

All of this adds up to one extraordinary feat, for which those both inside and outside Sinfonia credit White's exceptional musicianship and the relationship of mutual admiration and respect he has developed with the Sinfonia musicians.

"It is not an easy task to take a group of students of such different ages,

backgrounds, and levels of experience, and then create one of the best youth orchestras in the Philadelphia area," says Sinfonia horn player Molly Flanagan.

Philadelphia Sinfonia's triumphs under Maestro White's tutelage are numerous and outstanding, from performances at the Republican National Convention and the Liberty Medal

Ceremony to playing for appreciative audiences in Finland, Russia, Italy, and Central Europe, to a magnificent side-by-side rehearsal on the stage of Verizon Hall with The Philadelphia Orchestra.

Carol Brown, Sinfonia Board President since 2002, has had a front row seat to the dramatic transformation the orchestra has experienced under White's leadership.

"Artistically, in Gary's 10 years, Sinfonia has risen to the top among youth orchestras," Brown says. "People talk constantly about the musicality of this orchestra. The orchestra and musicians have grown because Gary has taught them well. To have an orchestra of young musicians follow his conducting so closely they are able to switch on a dime and stay with him when he decides to take something differently in mid performance is pretty unusual. It says volumes about the attention they give him. It is a very symbiotic relationship that requires respect from both sides, a level of trust, and the proper musical tools."

Luis Biava, Professor of Music at Temple University, former Conductor in Residence

with The Philadelphia Orchestra, and one of Gary White's most revered mentors, attributes White's success to the intuitive manner with which he is able to communicate with the young musicians.

"I am very proud of this, but to be honest, that comes from within," Biava says of his protégé. "You cannot teach it. He has a love for music, he believes in his musicians, and he is a passionate believer in what he does. That is why Sinfonia is a beautiful, quality orchestra. It is wonderful – the balance, the sound, the phrasing, the intonation."

"The conductor is the lifeblood of the orchestra," says Marv Weinar, a past Sinfonia Board President involved in the hiring of White. "We sensed right away that it was so important to him that the musicians not just play, but also learn – about music, but also about things like the values of citizenship and leadership. He is all about the education.

"Gary is just an honorable person," Weinar adds. "He has things in the right order – the kids come first, the music is important, but not at the expense of the musicians."

High school senior Madeline Gralish, a violinist, has been a Sinfonia member for five years, the last four as Concertmaster.

"Gary always stresses that no one player or section is more important than any other," Gralish says. "Everyone is equally valued, each musician is responsible for contributing to the orchestra, for playing his or her best, and helping the orchestra sound its best. If we do not give our all, we are not working up to our potential. The whole is bigger than the parts."

Percussionist Adam Bailey, a high school senior, was a guest musician with Sinfonia

President's Column

So long as the human spirit thrives on this planet, music in some living form will accompany and sustain it and give it expressive meaning.

— Aaron Copland

This quotation from Aaron Copland headed one of our financial appeals this year. It was accompanied by a letter written to us from a parent about the profound effect his son's experience at Sinfonia has had on their family. Together, they illustrate the powerful potential within a musical program for young men and women to find a voice, a place — in short — meaning.

Every article in this issue of *Sonata* attests to the presence of the human spirit and its remarkable tie to music. In a year that has seen economic downturn and a lot of fear about the future, we turn around and everywhere we see a strong and vital human spirit at work. I find this incredible and truly sustaining.

For example, several of our musicians volunteered immediately this winter to work on Sinfonia's participation in a huge national orchestra food drive. Moved by the needs of others, motivated by the chance to share a rescue job with thousands of musicians across the country, our members proceeded to organize their friends and their communities (see "Food Drive" p. 6) and food arrived by the bagful.

In this issue, we interview and write about two senior Sinfonia members, long-time leaders and pillars of this orchestra, who are graduating and moving on to new ventures in college and music school. In our look at their many years and their roles in Sinfonia (see p. 4) we see the eager spirit with which they approach challenges and their commitment to goals beyond themselves.

The two Sinfonia alumni profiled in this issue, each on the cusp of graduating from music school, share their absolute love of music, their paths since high school, and demonstrate their solid faith in the future.

Finally, Michele DiGirolamo's front-page tribute to our conductor and music director, ten years into his tenure with Philadelphia Sinfonia, speaks of the love one man brings to his job, the masterful artistic and personal transformations he directs, and the respect he engenders among those who have watched him over these ten years. He calls it an adventure, and it certainly *has* been. Gary draws us all, together, into this adventure, where human life and music are inextricably bound. It is a corner of the universe that feels sustaining, full of promise and, yes, meaning.

Carol Brown
President, Board of Directors

Vibrate: A Collaboration Between Composer and Philadelphia Sinfonia Chamber Orchestra Musicians

On March 28, 2009, Robert Maggio, Professor and Chairman of the Department of Music Theory and Composition at West Chester University and an award-winning composer, participated in a working rehearsal of his ballet suite *Vibrate*. During this unusual rehearsal conductor Gary White and members of the chamber orchestra played Mr. Maggio's piece and got his feedback regarding his musical ideas, the orchestra's interpretation and much more. This was a special opportunity for our musicians and conductor to collaborate with a living composer and be a part of the creative process that included actual input from the composer himself. *Vibrate* was then performed on a chamber orchestra concert on April 19, 2009. This exciting collaboration is part of a continuing relationship between Philadelphia's Network for New Music and the Philadelphia Sinfonia.

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Call for Spring Auditions

Please pass along our spring audition dates and times to any interested musicians you may know. We are offering auditions on all instruments. May auditions nearly fill many of our sections, with the remaining spaces filled in September. Spring is the primary audition period for our orchestra.

Spring auditions are offered this year on:

May 16, 2009: noon to 5:30 PM

May 23, 2009: noon to 5:30 PM

2009 Festival Concert

Philadelphia Sinfonia

featuring Jeffrey Solow, cello

Tuesday, May 5, 2009, 8:00 pm

Perelman Theater, The Kimmel Center

Broad & Spruce Streets, Philadelphia, PA

Music by Meyerbeer, Lalo, Prokofiev and Tchaikovsky

Auditioning musicians are expected to: perform two different movements from a concerto or sonata — one technical movement and one slower, more musical movement — without accompaniment; perform major scales up to four flats and four sharps; sight-read.

Audition flyers are available at rehearsals.

Further information can be found on our website. Direct any questions and/or make appointments by contacting Carol Brown at info@philadelphiasinfonia.com or 215-248-5814.



In honor of our donors, who helped us purchase new timpani, Philadelphia Sinfonia performed a rarely heard fanfare for four trumpets and timpani at our January concert in Germantown. Conductor Gary White suggests it may have been a regional premiere, given how little known it is, "We discovered and bought the music in the Dvorak museum in Prague in 2007, and we finally found the perfect moment to play it."



Donors, percussionists and conductor gathered around the new timpani.

Performing on timpani (left to right): Adam Bailey and Kevin Walker.



Sinfonia Quintet Plays for Network for New Music

The rotunda of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art is a particularly beautiful place to perform. Invited by Network for New Music, five members of Philadelphia Sinfonia's Chamber Orchestra played pieces from this season's chamber orchestra repertoire in this spectacular setting for a half-hour preconcert on April 3, 2009. The Sinfonia musicians were also invited to stay and attend the Network concert, featuring new compositions inspired by works of art. Playing for Sinfonia were Madeline Gralish, violin; Hannah Peralta, violin; Amy Goldberg, viola; Colin Hartwick, cello; and Brian McAnally, bass.

Trivia Quiz

What was so unusual about the death of Serge Prokofiev, the composer of Romeo and Juliet? How did it affect his funeral? (This is a two-part question with a two-part answer.)

The first musician to email Carol Brown (info@philadelphiasinfonia.com) with the correct answer will receive a small prize.

And the Winner Is....

Alex Rones, violin, was the first person to correctly answer our last trivia question, "In Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*, based on *Romeo and Juliet*, the rival factions representing the Montagues and Capulets were the Sharks (a Puerto Rican gang) and the Jets (an "American" gang). However, when choreographer Jerome Robbins first approached Bernstein about composing the musical score, two different rival gangs were being considered. Who were they?" The answer: the two rival gangs initially considered were a Catholic gang (the Jets) and a Jewish gang (the Emeralds).

Transitions: Honoring Madeline Gralish and Hyun Sung Park



Madeline Gralish and Hyun Sung Park

At the first concert of every season, I note the high school seniors sprinkled among the performing musicians and begin a process of letting go. Most will leave at the end of the year, and every year that transition feels like a loss.

This spring another group of fine musicians will go. Among them are two strong members who joined Sinfonia years ago and have distinguished themselves musically and as leaders. We would like to honor and thank them.

Violinist Madeline Gralish joined Sinfonia in 2004. A thirteen-year-old, she was seated as principal second violin. She shared the concertmaster position in the Chamber Orchestra that year and has played in both orchestras ever since. The following year she moved up to the concertmaster chair in both orchestras, a place she has held for four years. The youngest person to become concertmaster, her four years in that role is also a record. Madeline brings poise, talent, musicality, energy, enthusiasm and unflagging commitment to us, all of which have contributed to her success as concertmaster.

Hyun Sung Park joined in 2003. A clarinetist, he had the technical and musical skills to win our concerto competition when he was in eighth grade. He remains the youngest winner of that competition. He became clarinet section leader in 2006.

Both were named “Outstanding Soloists” by the 2008 Mark of Excellence National Orchestra Honors Competition for solos in Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Scheherazade* last year, and each has rendered many other orchestral solos with distinction.

In addition to the development of musical

skills, we care deeply about our students’ leadership skills and responsibility. Madeline and Hyun Sung took on musical challenges *and* major responsibilities early. Asked to comment about their service in all these areas, their responses focused on three points: the pleasure, honor, and growth each felt in solo work with the orchestra; the central role of communication in leadership positions; and the trust that develops between musician and conductor and is required to effectively carry out the roles of section leader and concertmaster.

Hyun Sung was very surprised to win the concerto competition in 2004 but he says that it was helpful to him as a shy, young member of the orchestra. In rehearsals of his concerto, he became a more mature musician, his listening skills improved, and he found connections and friendships through the support of other members of the orchestra.

Madeline and Hyun Sung felt honored to perform solo parts in *Scheherazade* in 2008. Madeline prefers playing orchestral repertoire to solo concerti and found that the wonderful thing about *Scheherazade* is that it is a mixture of both. Hyun Sung is grateful that Maestro White taught him to be more expressive and to play out as the clarinet soloist in this work. Both musicians feel that they grew from the experience.

Their eighth grade roles (Madeline as section principal and Hyun Sung as concerto winner) put them in the position of interacting and communicating with the conductor at a young age. They found that

Gary White was respectful, supportive, instructed carefully and elicited the input of his musicians. He had high expectations, but he viewed the work between himself and his players as a team effort, establishing a foundation for the trust that flourished in both musicians’ later leadership roles.

As concertmaster, Madeline carries responsibilities for the entire orchestra. Communication, musical and organizational, verbal and non-verbal must be fluid. But fluid doesn’t mean unclear; Madeline says, “I try to be as clear as possible when I lead so that we can achieve a better sound.” The relationship between conductor and concertmaster is critically important, and Madeline cites her first year as principal second violin to be an important training ground. She also watches professional concertmasters carefully when attending concerts and cites the value of her extraordinary experience sitting next to David Kim, concertmaster of the Philadelphia Orchestra, during our side-by-side rehearsal with them in 2007.

Hyun Sung learned about leadership from others, too. He appreciates the mentoring role Jackie Arrington (Class of 2004, Flute Section Leader) played when he was a new member of the orchestra. She “approached me with kindness... and introduced me to many other members... Then I realized what a strong section leader [she] was.” Both musicians watched others in action, and their observations contributed to their effective leadership.

Madeline is going on to music school. Hyun Sung plans to double major in biomedical engineering and clarinet performance. While we will miss them, we thank them for the strengths they brought to us and for the commitment they have always demonstrated. They are in a graduating class of exceptional people, all of whom will be missed. It is our greatest hope that we all stay in touch and that they will find the connections they made and the music they loved while with us to be useful for the rest of their lives.

Carol Brown

From the Podium

A Decade Long *Adventure*

Each week Carol Brown, Board President, and I talk for one to two hours about current and future Sinfonia business. Our conversations often go off on delightful tangents about the arts, education, philosophy and language. Language is very important to our organization. So as I reflect on my past decade with the Philadelphia Sinfonia I wanted to use just the right word to describe it. *Adventure* - 1. An exciting undertaking 2. An unusual and stirring experience; To risk; venture. This is exactly the word I would use to describe my time with this award-winning Philadelphia institution.

From the first day I began working with the Philadelphia Sinfonia I knew this was one of the most exciting and ambitious undertakings I had pursued. In our weekly conversations Carol and I often speak of the great responsibility we feel when working with the talented and dedicated members of our orchestra. We need to take the greatest care as we create an

environment that challenges, nurtures and supports the growth of fine musicians.

My *adventures* throughout these past ten years have been plentiful and varied. I have had the privilege of guiding our talented members as they begin their orchestral journey (many for the first time), work with first class professional and student soloists in many exciting collaborations, tour Europe, Russia and shortly Argentina and of working with some of the finest and most devoted Board and administrative staff. My time with Sinfonia has been musically and socially rich with experiences that have challenged me to grow and continue to develop as a musician, conductor, educator and person, and for this I am most grateful. When I began my association with the orchestra I never imagined so much would happen in just ten short years or that we would grow so quickly - though I certainly planned and hoped for it!

I want to thank all of our parents, administrative staff, and Board members for all they have given to

make these past ten years the *adventure* of a lifetime. I also want to give my special thanks to my dear friends and colleagues Carol Brown and Danielle Garrett, our Orchestra Manager. They continue to make each day an exciting new one filled with the greatest potential. Most importantly, I want to thank our past and current orchestra members. Through their talent, energy and support, it is the musicians who are a constant source of inspiration to me.

I can't wait for the next ten years and beyond!

Gary D. White
Music Director & Conductor



Maestro Gary White Celebrates 10 years

Continued from pg 1.

last year and became a full-time member this season.

"Gary was the deciding factor in my choosing to become a member of Sinfonia," says Bailey. "He addresses the orchestra with a high level of respect and professionalism that is lacking in most youth ensembles. It is apparent in every rehearsal that Gary is well-trained, prepared, and passionate, something that is then observed and mirrored by the ensemble. It is more than a youth orchestra, but rather a community of musicians."

Flanagan, a high school senior who has performed in many musical ensembles, says she has been led by conductors so easygoing that little was accomplished, as well as those who achieved high quality results but were so unpleasant they alienated most of the musicians in the process.

"Gary manages to achieve the balance between professionalism and warmth better than anyone I know," Flanagan says. "He sets high expectations and does not hesitate to get on us when we are not performing to our full potential. Rather than choose repertoire to fit the level of a youth orchestra, he chooses pieces that challenge us and encourages us to rise to that level."

"The best part about Gary's leadership is that he makes us want to play our best," adds flutist Joanna Gardner, also a senior. "I don't know how he does it, but he makes us want to play as well as we can, and then better. The energy he brings to every rehearsal is incredible."

Madeline Gralish is often queried by other young musicians about whether they should join Sinfonia. "I always say 'Yes,'" Gralish says. "One of the reasons I give them is that Gary is such a wonderful conductor. He's

fun to work with, he's kind, he's smart, he's funny, he always has great stories about the music, and the composers, the history, the period, so that we are better informed and can play the music more artistically."

So what does White have to say about all this?

"I consider being Sinfonia's conductor an honor and a privilege," Maestro White says. "I wake up every Saturday morning and think, 'Wow, I get to rehearse with the orchestra today!' I never tire of it. I love it and consider myself really fortunate to be able to build this orchestra, and to work with the amazing musicians, parents, and board. What Sinfonia has achieved in its 12 years is pretty remarkable."

Michele DiGirolamo

Alumnus Profile: Juliana Beckel

Juliana Beckel was such an angelic baby that her mother knew that she would be a harpist — in the delivery room. Although that expectation might be challenging for many, her mom's prediction came true when Juliana took up the harp at the tender age of four.

Juliana soon learned that performing on the harp might be limited in her community, where there was no string instruction in the public schools. She began to study piano in fourth grade and played harp in the Rowan Youth Orchestra from sixth grade until high school, and would get together with other harpists and play in ensembles that included up to *eight* harps.

In Philadelphia Sinfonia, Juliana found an orchestral home for her talents and passion for the harp. Joining in ninth grade, Juliana was the solo harpist for three of her four years with Sinfonia. Among her favorite memories of Sinfonia was the trip to Russia and Finland that followed her senior year of high school. Juliana remembers with great fondness the rides to small towns in the Russian countryside where the magic of Sinfonia was so evident that audiences applauded until Sinfonia ran out of encore material. "Our trip took me to places where I might never have thought to go or never would have had

the opportunity to go — except as a music ambassador," remembers Juliana.

Juliana is now a senior, majoring in harp performance, at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, where she has had not only a challenging education, but also the opportunity to play harp with local orchestras, perform in numerous summer festivals, as well as in many Nutcracker performances at holiday time, where a harpist is always in demand. Juliana is now juggling her coursework and performances while she auditions for graduate school in harp performance. Along the way, she has found time to take some business courses and hopes to earn two master's degrees — one in performance and one in business — so that she can both perform and get involved in arts administration. Juliana's approach may be a practical one in difficult economic times. As she says, "It's good to have a creative mind in the business world, and a business mind in the creative world nowadays."

When she is busy with solo performances and auditions, Juliana thinks back fondly to a countryside performance in Russia, where it was clear that the Sinfonia members could feel one another's energy as they performed. After an exhilarating concert, exuberant Sinfonia musicians took to the cobblestone streets of the town's kremlin,



Juliana Beckel

where they played baseball — gently — with a balled-up piece of paper, music stands and instrument cases. Quite a sight, but this memory of togetherness and energy sustains Juliana as she pursues her dreams as a musician. We wish her well as she plans the next step of what will undoubtedly be a successful career in the arts.

Please feel free to contact Juliana at juliana.beckel@gmail.com.

Diane Edelman

Sinfonia Joins Orchestras in National Food Drive

A film release; a food drive; a Philadelphia Sinfonia concert — all the pieces came together just right as Sinfonia joined a national musicians' effort to feed the hungry. In February, Sinfonia learned about the nationwide food drive "Orchestras Feeding America." The project was a collaborative mission of the League of American Orchestras, Feeding America, and Participant Media, and it aimed to show that while orchestras fulfill people spiritually, they can join forces to provide physical nourishment as well. Hundreds of

orchestras all across the country agreed to participate in the food drive on March 27 and 28. Since the Sinfonia already had a concert scheduled on that same weekend, it was a perfect opportunity for the orchestra to get involved, promote the community's awareness, and make an impact.

The drive was inspired by the film "The Soloist," showing in theaters this spring. Based on the book by Steve Lopez, it is the true story of Nathaniel Ayers, a former string bass prodigy and outstanding Julliard student whose mental illness rendered him

homeless, playing a two-stringed violin on noisy city streets. The author initially recorded his developing friendship with Ayers in a series of newspaper articles before its astounding growth into not only a book and a movie, but a national campaign.

The Sinfonia ran its own extensive food drive beginning on March 14 and ending with the concert on March 29. Members contributed a generous share of canned goods at rehearsals each of the three weekends. The musicians also expanded

Alumnus Profile: Kevin Lowery

Kevin Lowery was immersed in music from an early age. Born in California, Kevin spent most of the first eleven years of his life in Austria and Hungary, where his parents were missionaries — and where classical music was just about everywhere. In an atmosphere that encourages children to study music when very young, Kevin started music lessons at age six. Why the cello? When his music teacher showed instruments to the children for the first time, Kevin was drawn to the cello right away and knew that it was the instrument for him.

And study he did. When Kevin's family moved back to the States and he attended school in the Upper Dublin School District, Kevin kept up his cello study at school, at Settlement Music School, and with Philadelphia Sinfonia. He had the privilege of spending five years with Sinfonia, in both the chamber and full orchestras, and juggled high school orchestra, along with district, regional, and state orchestra obligations as well. Kevin fondly remembers Maestro Gary White's pleasant demeanor and fine musicianship during that time.

Kevin's long stint with Sinfonia allowed him to go on three tours abroad — to Italy, Central Europe, Russia and Finland. Unlike most tour members, Kevin got to spend part of the Central Europe tour visiting with friends from his childhood in Budapest

— a wonderful benefit of growing up in a country where classical music and musician-ship is so prized.

Not surprisingly, Kevin's lifelong passion for music and years with Sinfonia led him to become a cello performance major at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, where he is in his fourth year of a five-year Bachelor's in Music program. During the past few years, Kevin has had great experiences playing with other accomplished students and professional musicians under the baton of prestigious conductors; his summers have included study and performance at the Eastern and Brevard Music Festivals in North Carolina, and he has substituted in the Greensboro Symphony Orchestra as well.

Constantly busy with preparing solo and chamber pieces, Kevin's favorite remains orchestral music. This coming year, he will be busy preparing for his Senior recital, applying for graduate programs in performance and pursuing

his dream — auditioning for a seat in a professional orchestra. "To me, it's just as important for others to hear music as it is for me to play it," offers Kevin.



Kevin Lowery

Let's hope that in the coming years, we'll have the opportunity to see — and hear — Kevin at his cello in the orchestra of his dreams.

Kevin can be contacted at kevinalowery@gmail.com.

Diane Edelman

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their effort beyond the rehearsal and concert space by requesting donations from family, friends, schools, and local businesses. Sinfonia was grateful to be joined in the drive by the St. Stephen's Church parish and by the Lantern Theater Company, resident company of the St. Stephen's theater. Altogether, we formed an impressive network!

The food drive culminated in a collection from the audience at the Sunday concert at St. Stephen's. Sinfonia encouraged maximum participation with a reduced

ticket price to those who brought food donations. The orchestra sacrificed a portion of its own profit to ensure the project's success.

This is the tradition at Philadelphia Sinfonia: musicians dedicate their time and resources not only to advancing musically, but also to serving the community. Many thanks to everyone who contributed to this worthy cause!

Hannah Albrecht
Administrative Assistant

Philabundance, our foodbank partner, called the Sinfonia drive a great success.

Philadelphia Sinfonia donated 300 cubic feet of non-perishable food to the local foodbank.

Our thanks to all donors!

— The Food Drive Committee



Gary D. White
Music Director and Conductor
Danielle Garrett
Orchestra Manager
Hannah Albrecht
Administrative Assistant

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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.



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