

Inside the Mind of a Conductor



Ever sat in a concert hall, watching a conductor lead an orchestra through its repertoire, and had a fleeting thought of “I could do that.” You’ve got rhythm, right? All you need is a tasteful tux or classy black dress, a stick to wave around, and move over Muti.

Obviously, it’s not that easy — just think of the nightmare of trying to get some 30, 40, 90 people to pay attention to you, do what you tell them to, and do it in unison. And if those 30, 40, 90 people are teenagers? And you’re armed with a mere twig?

Best to leave conducting to the experts, eh?

All levity aside, to conduct, one must be learned in all aspects of music — repertoire, the array of orchestral instruments, baton technique, tempo, phrasing, etc., etc., etc. And, perhaps most importantly, a conductor must *connect* with his/her musicians. But how?

There are probably as many ways as there are conductors.

Gary White, who has led Sinfonia for the past eight years, has a special touch, with both the music and the musicians, that results in beautiful music forged by a conductor and orchestra inspired by mutual respect.

White and the Sinfonia board have been instrumental (pun intended!) in creating an enjoyable, educational, equitable, inspirational, safe, confidence-building experience for the young musicians. Developing a mission statement and code of ethics at the outset was essential to building an orchestra that is a “level playing ground,” White says. Sinfonia strives to build not only well-rounded musicians but also well-rounded people.

“We set up an orchestra that was every bit as much about the process and the final concert,” White says. “It’s not that I don’t expect these kids to play at the highest level possible, it’s that we are not just about the final performance.”

White has trained under domineering conductors who shout and engage in podium theatrics to get musicians to perform exactly the way they want them to, and conductors who respect the musicians as individuals and involve them in the creative process.

“I very quickly realized that there are two different kinds of conductors — one who makes you part of the process, and the other who tells you what to do,” says White, who trained at the Pierre Monteux School for Conductors and Orchestral Musicians in Hancock, ME.

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See pg. 6 for details and ticket information about

Philadelphia Sinfonia’s Tenth Anniversary Gala Concert/ Reception

on Sunday, May 6, 2007!



Sinfonia Rehearses in Historic Urban Parish

Philadelphia Sinfonia has the unique privilege of rehearsing in one of Philadelphia's most sacred, beautiful, and historic gems — St. Stephen's Church.



Designed by prominent American architect William Strickland, expanded and embellished by flamboyant Victorian architect Frank Furness, and built in 1823 on the site where Benjamin Franklin famously flew his kite, St. Stephen's Church has kept watch over the changing scene in the City of Philadelphia for more

than 180 years.

Strickland's use of medieval elements in St. Stephen's, such as clustered columns, pointed windows and doors, and a vaulted

ceiling, ushered in the Gothic Revival architectural movement. Furness's influence is seen in the ornamented woodwork and stenciled interior decorations. Artistic treasures of sculpture, mosaic, and stained glass include the

first stained glass windows in America, which were imported from England, plus three early Tiffany windows, and a Venetian glass mosaic.

Early members of the church included Strickland himself; George Mifflin Dallas, U.S. vice president, 1845-1849; Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, author and medical pioneer; and many leading Philadelphia families, such as the Cadwaladers, Lippincotts, and Morrisises.

Although the surrounding residential population dwindled over the years as the area turned commercial, St. Stephen's remains the spiritual home to a small but vital congregation. As importantly, the church keeps its doors open to all in search of a tranquil respite and continues its historic ministry in healing and ecumenical renewal.

The Rev. Dr. Charles Flood, the Rector of St. Stephen's, is coordinator of the spiritual care program at the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. St. Stephen's has sent missions to Sri Lanka for tsunami relief, a mission it plans to expand into additional Asian countries to serve more victims of tsunami, earthquake and other disasters.

All are welcome to attend worship services at 10:30 a.m. on Sundays and noon on Thursdays. St. Stephen's music director is Mark Yurkanin.

"We use musical forms from the Taizé chanting tradition, and have widened the symbols of prayer and sacrament to a point where everyone feels at home here," Dr. Flood says.

Always a haven of art, culture, and music, musicians who have worked and performed in St. Stephen's over the years comprise a who's who of singers, choir directors, organists and composers of church music. Today, the Lantern Theater Company (www.lanterntheater.org) is in residence at the church's 1923 Community House, and the young musicians of Philadelphia Sinfonia — and occasionally chanting Buddhist monks! — continue to fill the vaulted church with beautiful music.

For more information, contact the church at 215-922-3807 or information@ststephensphl.org, or visit www.ststephensphl.org.

LANTERN THEATER COMPANY

2007 February 2-25

By Arthur Schnitzler

Caronde

Directed By Charles McMahon

Lantern Theater Company at St. Stephen's Theater 10th and Ludlow Philadelphia Pennsylvania 215.929.9002 www.lanterntheater.org

Season 03/07

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Cello

As an enthusiastic member of the Philadelphia Sinfonia cello section, I was very excited to learn that Philadelphia Orchestra cellist and Sinfonia parent Udi Bar-David would be conducting a sectional just for us.

I have been fortunate to work with Mr. Bar-David in the past and experience his great teaching style, so I knew his expertise would greatly advance the quality of our playing.

The hour-long sectional took place the afternoon of Saturday, December 16, in a room on the second floor of St. Stephen's, right before the full Sinfonia rehearsal began. We focused on Dvorak's *Symphony No. 8*, which we will be playing with The Philadelphia Orchestra in a side-by-side rehearsal on February 24.

We concentrated on the symphony's extraordinary cello part, which demands technique with the fingers as well as bow control. It only took Mr. Bar-David a few short



Udi Bar-David leads the Sinfonia cellos.

Photos by: Bob Cardona

moments of listening to us play before he stopped us with some excellent observations.

He first suggested we connect the opening notes of the symphony to aid phrasing and make sure that every note led to the next. He also recommended that we start more quietly; the Sinfonia cello section has a tendency to play very loudly, as we all know.

Dvorak only writes “mezzo-forte” in the beginning and often uses “piano” and “pianissimo” markings, which provide great contrast. Mr. Bar-David focused on following the dynamics exactly as Dvorak intended. Following his guidance instantly improved our playing, creating a more accurate and mature approach with noticeable contrast and musicality.

String players constantly strive for bow control and Mr. Bar-David also helped the section with this, as well as bow speed. He provided helpful advice to make drastic contrasts for the different sections in the symphony.

The sectional was truly a wonderful experience for all the Sinfonia cellists. Even though Mr. Bar-David is such an illustrious musical figure here in Philadelphia and internationally, we all felt very comfortable, rather than intimidated, working with him. He really put us all at ease and we all truly appreciated his advice and time very much.

Sara Gabalawi
Philadelphia Sinfonia
Principal Cellist



Cello section working on Dvorak.

Orchestra Outing

When a group of Philadelphia Sinfonia musicians found out that the Fabulous Philadelphians were performing Dvorak's *Symphony No. 8*, which we will be performing with them in a side-by-rehearsal in February, we jumped at the chance to go.

After Sinfonia rehearsal concluded on December 9, we raced over to the Kimmel Center to buy student rush tickets — only

\$8 a ticket to see and hear one of the greatest symphonic orchestras in the world play our piece.

We waited with the other student rush ticket holders until five minutes before the concert began, when we were allowed to fill any vacant seats. Every single Sinfonian ended up sitting in \$80 seats for only \$8, with a few people actually sitting in box seats!

A few in our group had never been to a Philadelphia Orchestra concert before, so it was fun to watch their reactions, first to the sheer beauty of Verizon Hall itself and then to the splendor and quality of the music. The concert opened with Strauss's *Festival Prelude*, continued with his *Also sprach Zarathustra*, and finished after the intermission with the Dvorak.

There is nothing like hearing the greatest orchestra in the world play a piece you've come to think of as your own.

You know every fingering, every entrance, every note. As the orchestra played, we found ourselves glancing excitedly at each other, grinning wildly. I was enthused to see that concertmaster David Kim used the same fingering I had devised at one spot in the second movement. Every note they played, from the highest piccolo call to the low blare of the tuba, had a beautiful quality to it, and I know we all resolved to try to bring this perfection to our own music.

Afterwards, we went to Cusi for s'mores and to gush about the concert. Over and over again, I heard my friends repeating the same sentiments.

"That was so amazing."

"They're so good!"

"Well, they're the best!"

Madeline Gralish
Philadelphia Sinfonia
Concertmaster



Back row, L-R: Aaron Goldberg-Leopold, Richie Stark, Jacob Flaschen
Middle row, L-R: Catherine Dierkes, Joe Duffy, Dave Tarantino, Anthony Viscounte
Front row, L-R: Alexandra Burkhart, Madeline Gralish, Sara Gabalawi

Career Day

"Career Day", a panel discussion with musicians and staff of The Philadelphia Orchestra, opened our yearlong Side-by-Side Program partnership with the Orchestra. The October 2006 event presented a lively, fascinating, and frank discussion of diverse career options in the field of music to a standing-room-only audience of Sinfonia musicians and parents.



L-R, Sinfonia musicians Jacob Flaschen & Aaron Goldberg-Leopold with Mark Gigliotti, Co-Principal Bassoon, The Philadelphia Orchestra.



Photo 2. L-R, Philadelphia Orchestra panelists Christopher Amos, Assistant Director, Education and Community Outreach; Kathleen Van Bergen, Vice President, Artistic Planning; Mark Gigliotti, Co-Principal Bassoon; Holly Blake, Contrabassoon.

President's Column

In the first weeks of the New Year we are typically visited by Sinfonia college-age alumni back in Philadelphia for the winter break. This year was no different. We happily welcomed several former Sinfonians to our January 6 rehearsal, and it was great to learn about their lives beyond us. It was also great to see how connected they continue to be to each other and to our current orchestra members, with whom they played before they left for college. Great, but not surprising.

I say this because the job of playing and performing together is inherently social. In the view of the Sinfonia board and conductor, the collaborative process requires an atmosphere that honors each person's contribution but places that contribution within the group. Teamwork asks each player to be acutely aware of the whole picture as well as his or her individual part. This generates friendships and develops understanding of others, interpersonal and communication skills, and a sense of responsibility. All of that, in turn, contributes

to the collaborative process. In short, trust helps (and mistrust hurts) the music.

Among Sinfonia's greatest bonding experiences are our summer concert tours. Occurring every two years, our tours strengthen us, but they do not alone create the environment we seek. We start at home, in the church where we rehearse, where we try in small and large ways to cultivate a tone that brings out the best in everyone.

In this edition of *Sonata*, we explore the philosophy and style of our conductor, Gary White. The remarkable alchemy of his experience, wisdom, and approach sets the tone for everything we do. His goals are exacting and ambitious, but his manner is patient and respectful. We aim for that attitude throughout the entire orchestra.

We also include an article about St. Stephen's Church, our home and rehearsal space, for those new to this historic gem. We feature a spontaneous trip to The Philadelphia Orchestra by a group of our musicians, who discovered, as several

generations of Sinfonia musicians have discovered, that it is a very good deal (inexpensive and instructive) to team our rehearsals with an evening of music at the Kimmel Center. And we note, in several articles and the Conductor's column, the treasures we are treated to this year in Philadelphia — events and relationships with extraordinary professional musicians, including The Philadelphia Orchestra.

We are in the middle of quite a year at Philadelphia Sinfonia: a spectacular tenth anniversary, an international concert tour, and a side-by-side partnership with The Philadelphia Orchestra. But our basic broad educational mission, the development of young musicians in a supportive, educational environment, continues to be our underlying, ongoing focus. My thanks to everyone who has helped foster that mission over the last 10 years. We really could not have done it without your friendship and your help.

Carol Brown
President

From the Podium

One of my most memorable and formative musical experiences happened to me in my second year of college when I attended the Grand Teton Summer Music Festival.

Several times a week we, the students, had the privilege to sit next to some of the top professional players in the country and read and perform a wide variety of orchestral literature. The effect on my playing was quite profound. Both through what I was taking in consciously and what was simply absorbed through osmosis elevated my playing to a whole new level. This is a comment one hears again and again from students that participate in side-by-side events with professional orchestras.

The Philadelphia Sinfonia will have just such an opportunity on February 24 with one of the world's greatest orchestras, The

Philadelphia Orchestra. Every Sinfonia musician will be seated next to a professional player as they read through Dvorak's *Symphony No. 8 in G Major* with my former conducting teacher, Luis Biava, past Principal Second Violin and Conductor in Residence of the Philadelphia Orchestra.

I was extremely pleased when I learned Sinfonia had been selected for this singular honor. It is a huge credit to our hard-working young musicians that they gained the attention of our city's great orchestra and I know they will handle the side-by-side with finesse.

Each member of Sinfonia will find that reading with a player of The Philadelphia Orchestra's caliber lifts their playing to a higher plane. They will observe how these world-class musicians interact with the conductor, each other, and our musicians.

They will gain a great deal that they are immediately aware of; more benefits will occur weeks later as they continue digesting all the information they take in that day and during the sectionals with Philadelphia Orchestra members prior to the side-by-side.

This season's partnership with The Philadelphia Orchestra is an invaluable gift for each and every Philadelphia Sinfonia musician. They are getting the chance to experience what it is like to work with and play with world-class musicians in a professional setting.

I have no doubt that some of our players will one day join the ranks of the Fabulous Philadelphians and all will certainly gain a better understanding of what it means to play in a professional setting.

Gary D. White
Music Director & Conductor

Get Your Tix for a “Rhapsodic” Gala Concert!

You can't go wrong with Gershwin, so you will want to fill out the form below, write out your check, and drop it in the mailbox.

George Gershwin's masterpiece, *Rhapsody in Blue*, will be a major highlight of Philadelphia Sinfonia's Tenth Anniversary Gala Concert at 3 p.m., Sunday, May 6, at the University of Pennsylvania's magnificent Irvine Auditorium.

The concert event promises to be a fitting finale to Sinfonia's tenth spectacular year.

Led by Conductor Gary White, the Philadelphia Sinfonia musicians will perform *Rhapsody in Blue* with Grammy-nominated arranger, composer, and jazz pianist Bill Cunliffe, and a medley from *The Sound of Music* with The Philadelphia Boys Choir & Chorale. Joining in the medley as soloist and singing a beautiful piece of her own, “Glitter and Be Gay” from *Candide*, will be soprano Carla Smith, whose many credits

include performing with Peter Nero and the Philly Pops.

Famed for its haunting opening clarinet glissando, its unique mélange of classical and jazz rhythms, and its playful repartee between piano and orchestra, *Rhapsody in Blue* is one of America's most popular concert works.

The venue is glorious – the French Gothic style Irvine Auditorium, circa 1928, resembling a cathedral with spires, turrets, and gargoyles outside, richly ornamented walls inside, and the 11,000-pipe Curtis Organ.

The concert will be followed by a festive reception next door in the Hall of Flags in Houston Hall. Featuring cocktail fare and a silent auction, the anniversary party is co-chaired by Sinfonia parents Sharon Javie and Emily Blumberg. Plan to mingle and chat with Conductor Gary White, our soloists,

and, of course, the marvelous Sinfonia musicians, bid on some auction items, and celebrate our ten spectacular years.

Tickets for the concert and reception, or the concert alone, can be ordered by mail using the form below, purchased at Sinfonia rehearsals beginning in April, or bought at the door the day of the concert until curtain time. Students with valid ID may purchase tickets for the performance the day of the concert for \$15. Sinfonia musicians are invited to the post-concert reception free of charge.

Proceeds from the concert, reception, and silent auction will help defray Sinfonia's European concert tour in June. Consider bringing extended family members, friends, neighbors, music teachers, etc., to enjoy this wonderful concert.

To donate a silent auction item, please contact Sharon Javie at sjavie@aol.com or 610-642-6471.

**Philadelphia Sinfonia
Tenth Anniversary Gala Concert/Reception
3 p.m., Sunday, May 6, 2007**

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Concert & Reception _____ # of tickets @ \$45 = \$ _____

Concert Only _____ # of tickets @ \$25 = \$ _____

Total # of Tickets: _____ **Total Cost:** \$ _____

Please check one:

- Mail tickets to address above (will be mailed by April 22).
- Hold tickets for pickup the day of the concert at the Irvine Auditorium box office.

Please note:

Concert/reception tickets for season ticket holders will be mailed by April 22. Season ticket holders should only use this form to order additional tickets.

Please make checks to “Philadelphia Sinfonia” and mail with completed form to:

Philadelphia Sinfonia Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 996
Philadelphia, PA 19105-0996

For questions or more information, please call Philadelphia Sinfonia at 215-351-0363 or email info@philadelphiasinfonia.com. Thank you!

*Tenth
Anniversary
Gala
Concert
Reception*

Inside the Mind of a Conductor

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White has also studied with Arthur Chodoroff, Professor of Music at Temple University, and Luis Biava, retired Conductor-in-Residence of The Philadelphia Orchestra, to whom he heavily credits his attentive and appreciative conducting style.

Respect and empowerment — not browbeating — allows the musicians to be part of the creative process, White says, and that in turn creates good music.

“It taps into their energy and makes them want to perform well,” he says. “That’s the way I conduct and I’ve made it part of Sinfonia. I don’t want to pound the kids down; I want to lift them up. Selfishly, someone who you allow to be part of the process will ultimately give you more. Fearful musicians might give a clean performance but it will not be passionate. Getting the notes is the bare level. That is base one. It’s the musicality that makes it.”

The orchestra goes through gentle ups and downs, sometimes even within each season, White says.

“But the Sinfonia musicians always truly play with passion and with heart, they pull from within themselves, and that is what makes a passionate performance, and that comes from not being excluded from the creative process,” White says.

White also believes it is important to provide his young musicians with some music history, anecdotes about the composers, etc., to place their repertoire into context.

“I weave this into the rehearsal,” White says. “I think it is fun for the kids when they think I am going off into a tangent. But I’m not. It’s very deliberate.”

White says he acts as a mediator to shape each piece of music, sometimes melding his ideas with the orchestra’s, and always combining the technical with the musical.

“Somebody has to have the final say,” White says. “Sometimes I’m more heavy-handed, sometimes I let them go. I used to feel like I had to say everything and pull a lot out of the orchestra. Now there are many times the orchestra comes to the table ready and I know it’s not going to be just my vision of

the piece. That says the orchestra is maturing and growing into well-rounded musicians.”

The Sinfonia musicians have also grown through the years in their interpretational proficiency (“A good musician has 30 different fortes!”) and become more adept at following the nuances White expresses through his baton.

“My whole interpretation is done through my stick technique,” White says. “The orchestra has really come to understand and embrace these kinds of things. Philadelphia Sinfonia has gotten so strong and I want to continue fostering that musical growth, continue to refine and hone it and keep getting better and better.”

Alas, the nature of a youth orchestra is somewhat ephemeral.

“Every year when I lose a crop of seniors it is painful, however, the understanding that has grown between the orchestra and me carries on,” White says. “The seasoned players mentor the younger ones and teach them, sometimes verbally and sometimes in just how they play and the musicality continues on.”

Trivia Quiz

For many years Dvorak’s 8th Symphony was called the “English” Symphony. Why?

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

And the Winner Is...

Violinist Hannah Peralta, who knew the answer to the fall newsletter trivia question, “What was ‘festive’ about the Shostakovich overture in our current repertoire?” Peralta correctly identified that Shostakovich composed the *Festive Overture* to commemorate a festive occasion in Russia — the 37th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. The piece also represents a happier time in Shostakovich’s life, when he was unburdened by Soviet censorship and could compose freely.

Sara Gabalawi Wins Concerto Competition

For the second year in a row, the principal cellist has won the Philadelphia Sinfonia Concerto Competition.

Congratulations to Sara Gabalawi, 15, who wowed the judges in the October competition with a lovely rendition of Luigi Boccherini’s *Cello Concerto in B Flat Major G. 482*. Gabalawi will perform this “forgotten gem” of the cello repertoire with the orchestra on April 15 at St. Stephen’s.

The 2005-2006 Concerto Competition winner was then-principal cellist Jonathan Atkins, now a Sinfonia alumnus, who played Antonin Dvorak’s *Silent Woods*.

Gabalawi, an honors sophomore at Lower Merion High School, has been playing cello for almost six years. Her other interests include reading, drawing, playing piano, traveling, learning languages, and chamber music.

Boccherini (1743-1805), an Italian cellist, wrote the *Cello Concerto in B Flat Major* between 1760-1770. German cellist Friedrich Grützmacher revamped it in the late 1800s into a more virtuosic, Romantic period piece. Although it is one of the more famous cello concertos, its popularity waxes and wanes, and it is not as commonly played as cello concertos by Antonin Dvorak, Edward Elgar, Joseph Haydn, and Edouard Lalo.

Notice Anything Different?

Philadelphia Sinfonia’s newsletter and concert program have a new look, just in time to celebrate our tenth spectacular season!

The program for this season’s opening concert on January 21 (which was smashing, by the way — congratulations to all!) sported the new look and this issue of *Sonata* debuts the newsletter’s new style.

Our thanks to Philadelphia graphic designer, Hanna Manninen, streamdesign, and Apple Press, Exton, Pa., for the design makeover.



Gary D. White
Music Director and Conductor

Danielle Garrett
Orchestra Manager

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Mission Statement

Philadelphia Sinfonia supports the artistic growth of young musician 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 threefold: to provide ensemble performance opportunities for your musicians, to achieve the highest level of artistic advancement, and to educate your people broadly to be strong citizens 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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