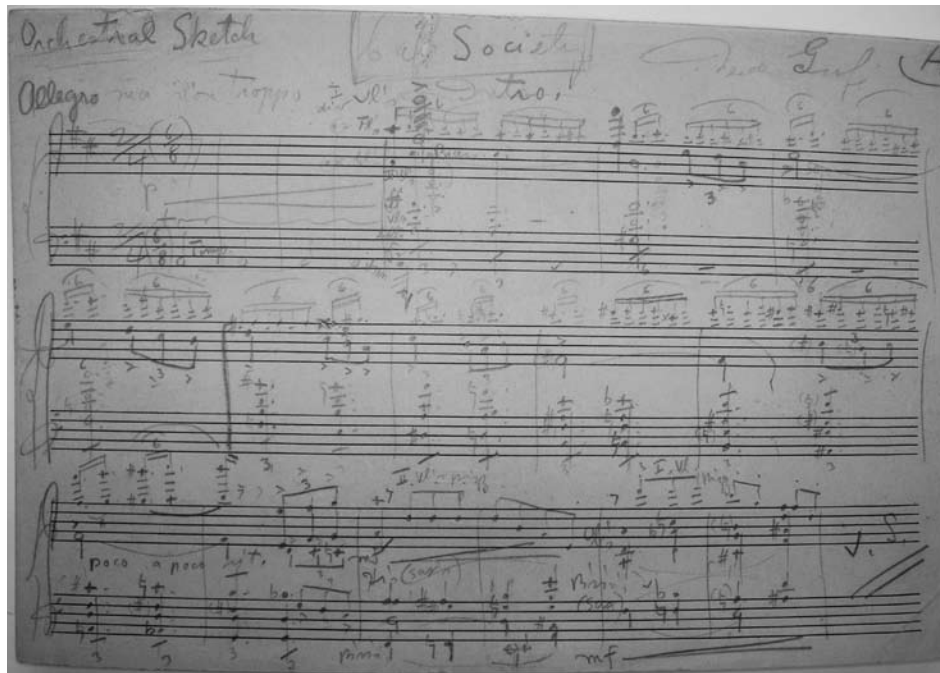


## Philadelphia Sinfonia Resurrecting Lost American Ballet

Imagine you are the conductor of an award-winning Philadelphia youth orchestra... and someone hands you an original piano reduction score of a piece you have never heard of, a ballet composed by a prominent American composer and orchestrator of George Gershwin's famous *Rhapsody in Blue*. Imagine a little research leads you to the Fleisher Collection in the Philadelphia public library, and you discover that

the only known parts for the ballet are housed within its walls. The composer, Ferde Grofé, is no longer alive, but his son gives you and your orchestra permission to perform the piece that has not been performed since 1942.

Some of the parts are fragile and fragmented, but the Fleisher Collection curator and staff reconstruct them and the score, signed by Grofé, and make beautiful copies for you.... Still, some notes and phrases are not yet decipherable. Further research leads you to the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., where many, many files of Ferde Grofé archives are held. Into the archives, you find that of all Grofé's work, the background material



Original pencil autograph of orchestral sketch - *Café Society*. Reprinted with permission from Ferde Grofé, Jr.

to this piece is the most complete. On half sheets of paper, in Grofé's hand, you find a sketch, a rough draft, an orchestration, and a final score, all complete and undamaged. These materials allow you to recreate the missing notes, phrases, and sections of the fragile parts in the Fleisher Collection.

At Philadelphia's Kimmel Center, in May, Philadelphia Sinfonia will perform this ballet, *Café Society*. It is a spoof; it is fun; and it has much of the flavor of the jazz and big band music of its time, the late 1930's. Photographs of archival material will turn the Kimmel Center performance into a multimedia event. As the orchestra is playing, a video montage will be shown above the orchestra, tracing the history

of the writing of the work, including rare film footage of the original dancers and the ballet's legendary composer. His son, Ferde Grofé, Jr., plans to attend and is the honorary chair of this exciting historical event.

The story of Sinfonia's discovery has even more twists and local significance yet.... The original piano reduction score was loaned to Gary White by Sinfonia parent, Sharon Skeel. Sharon, a dance historian, has spent years researching and writing about Catherine Littlefield, an early 20th

Century Philadelphia choreographer of some significance. Catherine Littlefield ran a ballet company, variously called the Littlefield Ballet and the Philadelphia Ballet Company, and it was she who commissioned Grofé to write *Café Society*. Grofé's interest in uniting jazz and classical elements made him an ideal choice for the collaboration. While the premiere of the ballet was performed in Chicago, during a residency Littlefield held with the Chicago City Opera Company, she and her company subsequently produced and performed *Café Society* in Philadelphia, and took it on the road, across the United States. However, the

*Continued on pg 5.*

## President's Column

We've had a wild and crazy winter! Record snow fell in Philadelphia, causing the first rehearsal cancellation in the history of the orchestra, but the energy and excitement here, at Sinfonia, warms us all.

We opened 2010 with the now-annual alumni "Coffee with the Conductor" on January 2nd. Between 45 and 50 alumni came to St. Stephen's over the course of the day. Some arrived for morning coffee at 10:45 and did not leave until late afternoon. They listened to and enjoyed our rehearsals, talked and laughed among themselves, took photos, all the time reminiscing....

Our alumni are scattered far and wide: we have alumni in doctoral music programs and alumni in medical school; we have alumni who have learned and are fluent in Japanese and Arabic; we have alumni teaching music, at least one music therapist, composers, and many performers. Non-music majors and professionals run the gamut from science to humanities; many are pillars of their communities, their schools or work-places. They are *all* interesting people.

A list of schools our alumni currently attend is printed in this newsletter, attesting to their breadth of influence and to their achievements. We honor and thank them for the path they forged with and for us over the last thirteen years. When they visit, our alumni note how strong we have become. That fact is a real tribute to *them*!

We also honor and thank another group of very important people in this issue of *Sonata*. We could not function without

the strong support of our financial and in-kind contributors. The past year has been economically difficult for many, yet the number of people who have made donations to us in 2009-2010 has not dropped off from the year before. We are truly grateful.

As we go to press we are well into our concert season, with an ambitious program and ambitious repertoire, including Borodin's *Polovetsian Dances*, the *Adagio* from Mahler's *Symphony No. 5*, and Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 1*.

The chamber orchestra played its first *Messiah* with the Germantown Oratorio Choir in December (see photos on pages 2 & 4), and both the chamber and full orchestras performed a stellar first concert in Germantown at the end of January. More concerts are following: in February, March, April and May.

Perhaps the most adventurous part of the year has been our resurrection of a piece of American music that will be performed at our final concert, at the Kimmel Center, in May. Our front page article and Gary White's column describe the joy and value of musical sleuthing and the wonderful network of people and institutions who have contributed to the detective work. We have started to rehearse the piece; it is a different genre, a change of pace, a lot of fun. By May, as Gary says in his column, we will "know a little, enjoy a lot". Come celebrate with us and composer Ferde Grofé.... See you at the Kimmel Center!

Carol Brown  
*President, Board of Directors*



Mother and daughter performance team: Alana Youssefian (right), assistant concertmaster and her mother, Ellen, soprano at Sinfonia/Germantown Oratorio Choir's *The Messiah*, December 2009.

*Sonata*

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## Alumni Updates:

Schools of Music, Conservatories, Colleges and Universities currently attended by Philadelphia Sinfonia alumni  
(*partial listing ~ we would appreciate updates from our graduates*)

Berklee College of Music  
Boston University, College of Fine Arts  
Brown University  
Bryn Mawr College  
Burlington County Community College  
Carnegie Mellon University, School of Music  
Cornell University  
Drexel University  
Duquesne University, Mary Pappert School of Music  
Fordham University  
Goshen College  
Harvard University  
Haverford College  
Indiana University, Jacobs School of Music  
Ithaca College  
Johns Hopkins University  
Juilliard School of Music  
Mansfield University  
New England Conservatory of Music  
New York University  
Northwestern University, School of Music  
Oberlin College, Conservatory of Music  
Peabody Conservatory of Music  
Penn State University

Princeton University  
Rice University, School of Music  
Rowan University  
Rutgers University, Mason Gross School of the Arts  
St. Olaf College  
Syracuse University, Setnor School of Music  
Temple University, Boyer College of Music  
The New School for Music , Mannes College  
University of Chicago  
University of Cincinnati, School of Music  
University of Delaware, School of Music  
University of Michigan, School of Music  
University of North Carolina, School of Music  
University of Pennsylvania  
University of Pittsburgh  
University of Rochester, Eastman School of Music  
Vanderbilt University, Blair School of Music  
Villanova University  
Washington University in St. Louis  
Wheaton College, School of Music



"Coffee with the Conductor". Alumni Reunion 2010, left to right: Aaron Blacksberg, Caty Truei, Conductor Gary White, Kathy Wood, Louis Kang, Liz Maxfield, Kevin Lowery.

## The "Greening" of Sinfonia

One summer day at St. Stephen's Church, I overheard something troubling. The church, wanting to reduce their weekly trash, informed us that most of their trash was coming from Sinfonia's rehearsals. Luckily, they had a great suggestion — why not buy reusable water bottles for the entire orchestra, so that we could stop selling disposable bottled water at snack bar. The idea caught on immediately, since it lessens our demands on the church staff and also reduces our collective impact on the environment.

The bottles we distributed this fall were carefully selected to be made of BPA-free plastic (a safer alternative to the plastic in disposable bottles), to be appealing to the students who will use them, and to attrac-

tively display the Sinfonia logo. Containers of cold water for filling bottles are now available during rehearsals, and are simply refilled by the church each week. Sinfonia water bottles are available at \$10 each.

Last year, we estimate, the total number of plastic bottles sold and thrown away by Sinfonia was around 400. Musicians bringing disposable bottled water added to the trash. Now, by keeping our water source local, we eliminate more than just this trash; we also eliminate the environmental impacts of producing, packaging, and transporting bottled water. That really adds up, and I hope everyone is as proud as I am to be a part of this change.

Hannah Albrecht  
*Administrative Assistant*

*Note: snack bar cans will be recycled from now on, as well.*



## From the Podium

### *Know a Little, Enjoy a Lot*

I believe that the best way to enjoy listening to music is to know something about it. Admittedly, to this day I sometimes struggle to hear an unfamiliar work for the first time. I can feel lost, confused or distanced from a piece. What is its musical form? Why did the composer write it? In what historical context was the piece written? I think answers to these questions and others make a piece more accessible to the listener. Acquiring knowledge of a work can range from in-depth study to just learning some small interesting tidbits. For me as a conductor/musician, the more I know about a work, its composer and history, the more I feel capable of making the piece come to life for the orchestra and audience. This is one of the tenets behind my work with the talented members of Philadelphia Sinfonia.

This past summer I was given a unique opportunity to begin a musical journey of discovery. I cannot adequately describe my delight, surprise and total fascination when an unknown original ballet score *Café Society* by prominent American composer, Ferde Grofé was shown to me by one of our Sinfonia parents, Sharon Skeel (see page 1 for the complete story). Here was the chance of a lifetime to research and explore an orchestral work on my own — with help from Sharon, a dance historian of course.

Though we found some small citations in a few brief histories about Grofé and a very comprehensive Master's thesis on his life, little is known or written specifically about this particular piece of Americana. What sparse information we have comes from newspaper articles and old programs. To learn more about *Café Society*, we quickly realized, we would require access to the composer's own notes and records. So the proverbial icing on the cake came when the composer's son, Ferde Grofé, Jr. became excited about our interest in performing his father's ballet. He allowed us complete access to the original sketches, rough and final drafts of the work and to scrapbooks and letters — all currently housed at the Library of Congress.

I have had the good fortune to go through literally hundreds of Grofé's handwritten manuscripts, personal correspondence and newspaper clippings. I have learned a great deal about why he wrote *Café Society* for whom he wrote it, quite a bit about his compositional process and his feelings about American music and his role as an American composer. While this has already been an incredible experience for me personally, the Philadelphia Sinfonia rehearsals and performance of *Café Society* represent the true reward. As I begin rehearsing the work with the orchestra and pass on to them what I have discovered, their performance of this piece will be

greatly enhanced and lead to a performance that will be rich and rewarding for both the musicians and our audience.

So I end this column where I began and say that it is okay to feel confused or misunderstand a piece on a first listening. I think for many of us this is normal. But don't let it scare you away from classical music or any music for that matter. Just reading a concert's program notes or looking up a piece on the internet will help you get the most out of the concert experience. Your own exploration can be as detailed as our continuing journey with *Café Society* or as simple as a quick scan of liner notes. Any way you do it, a little bit of knowledge makes any concert all the more enjoyable. I hope you will come to our May 2, 2010 Kimmel Center concert and hear Grofé's *Café Society* and share in the excitement of our discoveries.

Gary D. White  
*Music Director and Conductor*



Chamber orchestra performs Handel's *Messiah*, December 2009.

## Philadelphia Sinfonia Resurrecting Lost American Ballet

Continued from pg 1.

last known performance of the work was here, in Philadelphia, in May 1942, when the Pennsylvania W.P.A. (Work Projects Administration) Orchestra performed a concert version of the piece. Scholars believed the score and parts no longer existed.

*Café Society* lampoons a world that developed from the speakeasies of prohibition-era America to become the fashionable clubs of the 1930's. Speakeasies ranged from back-alley dives to elegant lounges patronized by respectable customers, both men and women. The wealthy, who traditionally entertained at home, began socializing in public places, including speakeasies. Mrs. Skeel says that "class and gender boundaries were eroding. And the society columnist known as Cholly Knickerbocker had noticed one way this social shift was playing out: society matrons could be seen sharing tables with music hall stars and the like. Knickerbocker dubbed this new coalition 'café society'. In café society, being famous mattered as much as being wealthy." In the 1930's clubs of New York, movie stars, sports heroes, socialites, college boys, debutantes and tourists lucky enough to get in mingled.... In the words of one observer, "The show consists of the common people looking at the celebrities and the celebrities looking in the mirrors..."

Littlefield was known for works with American themes, a number of them lighthearted and combining elements of classical ballet with musical theater. Ferde Grofé shared her interest in Americana and the blending of orthodox and popular forms. Both had worked in vaudeville and movie palaces, and they both held the view that art should be entertaining.

The ballet that resulted from their collaboration is comic and satirizes the fashionable club scene of their day. It opens with a cab whistle and the flashy entrance of Club 2222 (too-too-too-too)!

Besides owning the piano reduction score, Sharon Skeel had viewed silent film footage from Chicago's Newberry

Library archives showing *Café Society* in performance. She could see the characters and action portrayed by the dancers, but as a non-musician, she could make little sense of the score and was eager to hear the music behind the film. She sent an email to me last summer to ask if our conductor and music director, Gary White, would be interested in seeing the score. Well, next to conducting and performing, Gary likes little better than a musical history puzzle, especially if it is a good teaching device, and this project was *immediately* appealing to him.

Thus, with the gracious assistance of Ferde Grofé, Jr., the composer's son; Kile Smith, also a Sinfonia parent and the curator of the Fleisher Collection; the staff at the Library of Congress; the Newberry Library in Chicago, and the musicians of Philadelphia Sinfonia, Maestro White is bringing the music of *Café Society* to life. It has been a thrilling process to watch.

The history-making performance is scheduled at 3:00 PM on Sunday, May 2, 2010 in the Perelman Theater of Philadelphia's Kimmel Center. Tickets will be available at the Kimmel Center box office several weeks ahead of the event.

Carol Brown



American composer, Ferde Grofé, with the manuscript of his popular *Mississippi Suite*.

## Concerto Competition Winner

Fifteen Sinfonia musicians competed on October 31, 2009 to perform as a soloist with our orchestra this year. While extremely impressed by the overall quality of the contestants, the judges selected Philip Carter as the winning soloist. Philip plays the violin and has been a member of Philadelphia Sinfonia for two years. He is assistant concertmaster for the full orchestra and concertmaster of our chamber orchestra. He will perform the first movement of Tchaikovsky's beloved Violin Concerto in D Major on March 21, 2010 at St. Stephen's Church. Concert time: 4:00 PM.

## Orchestras Feeding America National Food Drive

1 out of 8 people in our country do not know where their food is coming from. In response to this critical situation, the League of American Orchestras, of which Sinfonia is a member, has organized its second annual food drive for March 2010.

Initially inspired by the movie *The Soloist*, the League has partnered with Feeding America, a national food bank, to unite the field of orchestral musicians and become a catalyst for change. It is a unique effort by orchestras to address hunger in America.

Philadelphia Sinfonia has signed on again this year, and we are partnered with the local food bank, Philabundance. We will collect canned goods throughout the month of March, culminating in our concert at St. Stephen's Church on March 21, 2010. Please help us do our share in this project!

## Alumnus Profile: Ted Blohm

In his own words, Ted Blohm's *entrée* into the world of bass trombone was "sort of weird."

Having played trombone for many years, Ted found himself seated as fourth chair in the All Catholic Jazz Band at the beginning of his sophomore year in high school. Knowing that that seat was usually reserved for a bass trombone player, Ted borrowed his high school's bass trombone to begin to teach himself that instrument. As fate would have it, Ted wound up with braces on his teeth, and lost his upper range for playing the tenor trombone. When Ted eventually had his braces removed, he had so fallen in love with playing the bass trombone that he just couldn't put it down.

Ted joined the Philadelphia Sinfonia in 2004, midway through his freshman year at the University of the Arts. Although Ted joined Sinfonia later than many, once he completed the group's 2005 tour of Russia and Finland, he knew that he had made friends for life. He remembers fondly Sinfonia's first concert in Russia, where the venue was packed and the crowds just "wouldn't stop clapping." Ted told himself, "That's why I became a musician – for moments like this."

Ted found the UArts faculty terrific, both in class or outside of the classroom. Since earning his Bachelor's degree in Music Performance, Ted has taught music in a variety of venues, from a beginner brass class in a West Philly elementary school, to marching band at Archbishop Ryan. Just last year, Ted was named the Jazz Band Director at Archbishop Ryan, and had the opportunity to teach music technology there, too. He decided to go back to UArts for his M.A.T. in Music Education, which he will complete in May.

Ted's performance career has taken off as well. He has played in orchestras, big bands, wedding bands and pit orchestras and his band, On Display ([www.myspace.com/ondisplayband](http://www.myspace.com/ondisplayband)), has opened for Jacks Mannequin, Ben Folds, and Westbound Train, and played in Boston, Virginia, and here on WRFF 104.5 FM. The band has

performed charity gigs as well, released its first album, "Before the Curtain Call," and has its second in production. On Display will open for Big D and the Kids Table on the main stage of the Trocadero in February.



Ted Blohm

If that's not enough . . . Ted also plays with the Jersey Shore Pops ([www.jerseyshorepops.org](http://www.jerseyshorepops.org)) and the Rittenhouse Brass Trio. He has also performed with well-known artists like Sarah Chang, Jim McNeely, Bernie Dressel, and John Fedchock.

What advice does this well-rounded performer and teacher have for Sinfonians considering music school or a musical career? "Ask a lot of questions. Do a lot of research on the school that you are going to and what is happening in that city or region musically. You should not go to a school based on academics alone; you also want to make sure you're provided opportunities to further your musical experience. . . . If a school offers a degree in education as well as performance, do it. Just make sure you keep your options open for anything."

Ted's dreams are broad and open. He'll be happy playing music in any number of bands or orchestras, and teaching as well. And the good news for us is that Ted will be happy to do it here, in Philadelphia.

Feel free to contact Ted at [ted.blohm@gmail.com](mailto:ted.blohm@gmail.com).

Diane Edelman

## Trivia Quiz

Given the social mores of the 1700 & 1800's most women composers and performers were marginalized and are barely known. Maria Anna "Nannerl" Mozart was considered a great talent on the piano. Had she been allowed to continue her musical career past childhood, as her famous brother Wolfgang did, some suggest she would have equaled or surpassed him on the piano. Which other famous 19<sup>th</sup> century brother & sister had a similar story to the Mozart siblings and what did this famous brother do to make amends?

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

### And the Winner Is...

Two musicians shared the prize for being the first to answer correctly our fall newsletter trivia question. They were Patricia Jancova, violin, and Cameron Clarke, cello. The question was:

"Schubert's Overture to *Rosamunde* was part of music he wrote for a theater piece. Dismissed by critics, the drama was only performed twice. Since the future of the music was uncertain, Schubert recycled one of the movements for another work.

Which movement was reused and in what famous work? And what famous 19<sup>th</sup> Century composer rediscovered the score to *Rosamunde* in a pile of manuscripts and helped to make it popular again?"

Both musicians agreed that the person who rediscovered the score was Arthur Sullivan of Gilbert and Sullivan fame. However, the *andantino* theme was used again in two works: Patricia correctly answered Schubert's String Quartet in A minor, D804; Cameron correctly answered the Impromptu Op. 142, No. 3 in B-flat major.

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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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**Sinfonia to Perform Historic Grofé Ballet at the Kimmel!**